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Revealing Colonial Schooling: Rejecting Racialized Norms of School Reputation and Student
Worth Via Youth and Teacher Resistance

By

YANIRA I. MADRIGAL-GARCIA
DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Revealing Colonial Schooling: Rejecting Racialized Norms of School Reputation and Student Worth Via Youth and Teacher Resistance

Yanira I. Madrigal-Garcia

Neoliberal advocates frame school choice as the solution to the many issues plaguing public schools, including not meeting state standards, the opportunity gap, and disengagement. This market-driven approach makes school reputation—ideas continuously made and remade about schools dependent on perceptions or experiences—a critical dimension that influences the investment and resources attached to schools. This dissertation asks: How does the reputation at two contrasting high schools shape the school culture and the worth attributed to students, teachers, and the overall school? To answer this question, I conducted a comparative ethnographic study of two high schools in an urban city in California. Logro High School, a diverse school with a growing White student population, showcases award-winning and notable student activities: theatre, engineering, robotics, computer science, orchestra, and tech innovation. Poder High School is also a diverse school but with a Latinx majority, perceived as underperforming and undesirable. Data collection for this study consisted of one academic school year of comparative ethnographic research, including 77 formal interviews, document analysis, and over 200 hours of classroom observations per site.

Three main findings emerged from this study. First, Logro High has transformed a “failing urban school” into an academically rigorous and desirable school; nevertheless, the culture was experienced as divisive both socio-economically and racially with little intermingling. On the other hand, Poder High has maintained a longstanding negative reputation as a result of enduring instability and limited support; however, Poder students and teachers

actively challenged these negative perceptions by highlighting caring teachers and a welcoming environment, which create a familial school culture. Second, racialized discourses—that is, language or communication that positioned one group as superior and another as inferior—in Logro framed working-class students of color as unworthy and influenced school-wide funding that prioritized prestigious programs that enrolled largely White students. Racialized discourses in Poder framed students as unable to achieve academically or think critically, which justified multi-generational disinvestment and district efforts to convert Poder into a charter school. Third, despite oppressive contexts, young people and teacher allies at both sites resisted; at Logro, students of color created safe spaces through student organizations. At Poder, students collectively engaged in grassroots organizing to challenge a charter takeover and a walkout to march in resistance to condemn the punitive assault of a school security officer on a student.

By integrating theories of coloniality, decoloniality and school culture, this research provides a timely addition to a few studies that examine the multifaceted dimensions of K-12 school reputation. In line with scholarship that explores the processes related to gentrification and schools, my work reveals the profound impact of both a positive reputation, that is, a rigorous and academic school, and a negative reputation, that is, a dangerous and failing school on student and teacher experiences. In addition, my findings demonstrate how racialized discourses—about who is and is not worthy—solidify funding priorities that benefit those who experience the most privilege while creating instability for those most disadvantaged. Moreover, by examining the influences of market-driven neoliberal forces in schools, this work sheds new light on the ways that the school system is implicated in the dispossession and violence that vulnerable young people face in the urban context.

Table Of Contents

List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
Acknowledgements	x
Dedication	xiv
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Historical Context: The Color-Line as the Foundation of Social Organization in the U.S.....	2
Statement of the Research Problem	5
Rationale of the Study	8
Purpose of the Study: The Critical Significance of School Reputation	11
Positionality: My Intersecting Identities and Lived Experience	12
Research Questions	16
Theoretical and Conceptual Approaches	17
Colonization and Coloniality	18
Violence and Racialization as Central to Coloniality	21
Racialized Human Value and Worth	22
Racialized Human Worth and Deservingness in Education	24
School Culture	25
Decolonization and Decoloniality	27
Dissertation Roadmap	29
Chapter Two: Literature Review	31
Market-driven Neoliberal Public Schooling	31
Gentrification in Urban Communities and Schools	34
Race and Class Forces that Shape Urban School Quality	38
Criminalization of Young people of Color	39
The School to Prison Nexus	40
School Reputation	42
Conclusion	47
Chapter Three: Research Design and Analysis	49
Methodology and Methods	50
Critical Ethnographic Research Methodology	52
Chicana Feminist Epistemology	53
Historical Context of the Research Setting	55
Sampling	62
Site Selection: Pilot Study	62
Monte Caoba Unified School District (MCUSD)	63
Comparative Case Study	64
Logro High School	65
Poder High School	68
Research Participants	72
Validity.....	72
Study Procedures	73

Interviews	74
Student Interviews	76
Teacher Interviews	77
Administrator and Staff Interviews	79
Participant Observations.....	80
Data Sources	81
Field Notes	81
Photographs	83
Analytic Memos	83
Data Analysis	84
Positionality	86
Timeline	89
Research Timeline	91
Limitations.....	91
Chapter Four: Contextualizing the Urban Community and School	93
Vulnerability and Worth	94
Deficit Thinking	95
Historical Construction of the Urban	98
Historical Urban Segregation	99
Historizing Schooling: A Project of Coloniality	101
Urban Schooling: How Did We Get Here?	105
Factors That Influence Urban School Quality.....	107
Neoliberal Influences Shaping Communities and Education	108
Latinx Demographics and Emergent Bilinguals	110
Newcomer and Unaccompanied Students	111
Newcomers Programs	113
Findings Overview	114
Chapter Five: The Transformation of Logro’s Reputation	116
Logro’s Negative Reputation	117
Longstanding Strong Programs at Logro	123
Tools of Dispossession	130
Logro a Highly Desired School in Monte Caoba	135
Getting Along and Academically Oriented Climate	138
Socio-Economic Forces Influence Logro’s Demographic Shift	142
“The Other Monte Caoba”: White families Opting Out of or In to Urban Public School	149
Race(ism) and Class(ism) Entangled Systems	152
A Racial and Socio-Economic Divisive School Culture	161
Counter-Narratives: Contesting Logro’s Positive Diverse Reputation	166
Privilege	172

Conclusion and Discussion	176
Chapter Six: Interrupting Colonial Unworthiness and Dehumanization via Decolonial Student Activism	181
Forces Shaping Poder High School’s Reputation	182
Sensationalizing Monte Caoba’s Crime	187
Poder’s Longstanding Negative Reputation	190
Limited Support and Enduring Instability	193
Implications of Perpetuating a Negative Reputation	198
Multi-Generational Racialization that Harms Poder Students	203
Denying Poder Student Worth and Leadership	206
Systemic Disinvestment	207
Material and Human Resources	207
Facilities and Equipment	209
District Resource Allocation	211
Colonial School Culture	214
Continuous Change and Instability	215
Divisive Climate	223
Systemic Criminalization and Dehumanization of Poder Students	230
Decoloniality: Constructing Poder’s Counternarrative	236
Decolonial Practices that Mitigate Colonial Conditions	241
Interrupting Colonial School Culture: Student Activism	245
Conclusion and Discussion	250
Chapter Seven: Summary, Implications, and Conclusion	255
Revisiting the Study.....	255
Study Aims	257
Summary of Chapter Five Findings	258
Summary of Chapter Six Findings	260
Methodological Implications	261
Theoretical Implications	262
Recommendations for Practice and Policy	264
Conclusion	267
References	269
Appendix A: Interview Protocol (Student Interview)	313
Appendix B: Interview Protocol (Teacher/ School Administrator)	314
Appendix C: Data-Intake Sheet—Participants	315

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Grayscale photograph of winning ribbon medals.....	126-27
<i>Figure 2.</i> Grayscale photograph of winning ribbon medals	127
<i>Figure 3.</i> Grayscale photograph of Check from the Bechtel Foundation	127
<i>Figure 4.</i> Grayscale photograph of Check from the McCarthy Foundation	127-28
<i>Figure 5.</i> Grayscale photograph of a Community Building Circle Activity	140
<i>Figure 6.</i> Logro High School Racial-Ethnic Enrollment Data 2005-2015.....	160
<i>Figure 7:</i> Grayscale photograph of images during the Raza Student Union Assembly	171
<i>Figure 8:</i> Grayscale photograph of images during the Raza Student Union Assembly	171-72
<i>Figure 9:</i> Grayscale photograph of images during Poder Students Walk Out	247-248
<i>Figure 10:</i> Grayscale photograph of images during Poder Students Walk Out	248
<i>Figure 11:</i> Grayscale photograph of images during Poder Students Walk Out	248

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Interview Participants</i>	75
Table 2. <i>Research Questions and Modes of Data Collection</i>	84
Table 3. <i>Research Timeline</i>	91
Table 4. <i>Monte Caoba Census Racial Demographic Trends 1990-2018</i>	160

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Dedication

Para Tlahuizlampa, el Padre Sol.

Para Huitzlampa, Necalli, Samantha y Nataly.

Para Cihuatlempa, la Madre Tierra.

Para Miclampa, nuestros Ancestros.

Chapter One: Introduction

Through the exploration of narratives of school reputation, this dissertation study seeks to uncover the nuanced experiences of young people and their teachers in urban context. By focusing on two school sites that are understood to have contrasting reputations, one prestigious and another as low-achieving, this dissertation seeks to challenge simplistic perceptions and impressions that emerge from overarching reputations. Using ethnographic methods, this dissertation asks the question, how does the reputation at two contrasting high schools shape the school culture and the worth attributed to students, teachers, and the overall school? The Monte Caoba Unified School District (MCUSD)¹ has and continues to serve primarily students of color (85%) who also qualify (75 percent) for free-or-reduced lunch.

Although the local media has covered MCUSD's organization and financial turmoil, Logro² one of its high schools, has received positive press of rigorous curriculum and award-winning programs that during the last 10-15 years has seen a significant increase in the enrollment of White students. On the other hand, Poder³ a Latinx⁴ majority high school has consistently received negative press, that identifies it as a negative and low performing school. Given that the schools are relatively close in proximity, roughly about five miles, it is imperative to examine what are the forces that are driving the construction of a positive or negative school reputation.

¹ Pseudonyms will be used throughout to maintain anonymity of participants. References with the actual name of the city will not be cited.

² Logro is Spanish for success, that is, reaching a goal by an individual or a collective. This term is significant of the aspirations of working-class, and first-generation young people as well as their families to reach educational success as a way to have more economic stability and a path toward collective wellbeing.

³ Poder is Spanish for power. Drawing from the Black Power movement, this term attempts to highlight the wealth of Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of color. Despite the multiple modes of oppression, individuals and communities mobilize their community cultural wealth to move forward to build transformative spaces in schools and beyond.

⁴ In this dissertation, Latinx is used as a gender-inclusive term instead of "Latino" a term that emphasizes masculinity, or Latina/o which foregrounds a gender binary.

The objective of this dissertation is twofold. First, it provides ethnographic knowledge of how young people and teachers experience urban schooling by comparing their experiences at two schools with contrasting reputations. This dissertation hones in on the ways that school reputation can shape the type of worth that young people and teachers attribute to themselves, their school, and community. Second, the dissertation offers an entry to understanding how young people of color and teacher allies resist colonial forces that currently emerge in schooling contexts.

Historical Context: The Color-line as the Foundation of Social Organization in the U.S.

During the first Pan-African Conference in 1900 held in London, W.E.B. Du Bois addressed the nations of the world and declared that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 5). The color-line refers to the classification of humanity based on skin color. Du Bois (1903) described the Negro as “a sort of seventh son, born into a veil and gifted with second-sight in this American world” (p. 10) and constructed as the problem. Du Bois rendered the veil as something that constricts and inhibits opportunity and dehumanizes. The veil permits seeing the world from a different perspective. This double consciousness refers to the experience of being Black American⁵, particularly, understanding oneself through the eyes of those who construct them as problem people (Gordon, 2007). Gordon

⁵ Black and African-American is used interchangeably in this dissertation. African-American usually describes ethnicity, while Black describes race. In the U.S. the Black diaspora encompasses multiple experiences, but is highly influenced by the experience of enslaved Africans who were kidnapped and brought against their will to different part of the Americas during the period of colonization. In particular, the “one drop” rule in the U.S. means that a single drop of Black ancestry makes that person Black. Although slavery became outlawed in the U.S. with the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865, new iterations of racialized control to support capitalist profit have persisted and included Jim Crow, segregation, and some would argue present-day imprisonment. During the 1960s the Black Power movement reframed Black identity as power, which continues to be utilized today in movements that include the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Black diaspora, acknowledges that Black people have immigrated to the U.S. at different points in U.S. history from multiple nations in Africa, the Caribbean, as well as Central and South America. While these groups come with a different experience, they find they have to adjust to a racialized experience wherein the Black-White dichotomy prominently dictates experiences.

(2007) contends that grappling with being constructed as a problem and not being able to “gain the legitimating force of recognition” (p. 125) is inexorably linked to the interpretations and perceptions that emerge from a white gaze (Morrison, 1998), or what Tuck and Yang (2014) describe as the colonial settler gaze. It is this colonial settler gaze that continues to shape social organization, however, has morphed into prominent ideas of color-blindness and a post-racial era.

Although, mainstream discourses assume that we are in a post-racial era, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has laid bare how compounding oppression of race, class, gender, language, and legal status among others have been maintained by white supremacy. The pandemic alongside the Black Lives Matter movement—an ideological and political intervention following the extrajudicial killing of named and unnamed Black women, men, and gender nonconforming—make visible the difficult task at hand, but also the power of grassroots organizing and resistance. Du Bois (1898) challenged dominant narratives that constructed Black Americans as problems and unearthed the systematic opposition to incorporate Black Americans into mainstream society. Similarly, Du Bois disconfirmed myths of racial inferiority that were made natural by pseudo-science and uncovered how European colonialism along with white supremacy and white racism were the causes of worldwide conflict (Wenland-Liu, 2020).

It was Carter Godwin Woodson in 1933 who explored the educational consequences of a system that inhibits opportunity and dehumanizes. Woodson (1933) reflected on the philosophy that served as the foundation of the educational system and that “justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching” (p. 4). Although nested in democratic ideologies of freedom, opportunity, and ethics; this system denied its contradictions that included colonization, slavery, conquest, and racism. In the 1930s Woodson argued it was imperative to do away with schooling

methods that harmed Black Americans. Significant gains have been made in the field of education that support Black, Indigenous and other student of color populations obtaining degrees, however, colonial forces that shaped the school system from its inception persist. For example, Mr. Porter a Spanish teacher at Poder High School shared the following statement when prompted to describe some of the forces that make it difficult to feel like a successful teacher. With a mildly exasperated tone, he relayed frustration with feeling like a failure and to some degree obligated to fail young people. He shared,

The system should be the one getting an F, whether that's to me capitalism, racism are the ones responsible, but we wind up thinking we're [teachers] the failure, and we have to fail the kids to a certain degree, and you wind up giving the kids an F where it's not really them that should be getting the F either. Us as a society, we haven't educated them, and then we individualize it and make it like it was about them. To answer your question, to me, just validating a person's work and effort, and reminding them that it's not necessarily their fault, that not everything works out. (Mr. Porter, Teacher Interview, April 21, 2016).

Mr. Porter unapologetically deconstructs mainstream notions of school failure that refer to the academic struggles that both Poder students and teachers experience. He draws the curtains to reveal colonial conditions that are reproduced and sustained by capitalism and racism. Mr. Porter argues that the academic struggles of so many of his students are the result of an oppressive system. Mr. Porter is turning the paradigm of school failure on its head and questioning its validity and effectiveness to understand the most pressing issues in education. A school failure paradigm is a tool of colonial schooling because it uses a meritocratic frame to make sense of achievement by individualizing it. Mr. Porter uncovers that it is easy to blame students for

“academic failure” and difficult to acknowledge that “Us as a society, we haven’t educated them.” In essence, Ponder students are penalized for attending a poorly funded school with limited support. Mr. Porter concludes his thought with a tone of impotence to work against the grain to challenge colonial forces. Nevertheless, he offers an important reminder of teachers’ power to validate student effort and work, highlighting how teachers can engage in decolonial pedagogy.

The words of Mr. Porter offer a segue to understanding how urban young people and teachers experience schooling, in particular, the contradictions that stem from ideologies of democratic education that should nurture creativity, discovery, and creative thinkers, yet where young people of color have come to be seen as problems rather than as resources that merit investment for the future (Giroux, 2009).

Statement of the Research Problem

Typically, inner-city schools in major American cities is code for schools that serve predominately Black, Brown, and low-income students (Anderson & Anderson, 2017). Deficit-oriented narratives of urban youth can construct this population as unworthy and can result in school disinvestment (Anyon, 2014; Noguera, 2003). Deficit-oriented analysis that include the cultural deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997; 2010) are used to make sense of social disparities which stigmatize urban communities and schools as violent and disorderly (Anderson, 2012). A cultural deficit frame argues that the family transfers deficiency and assumes poverty is the result of laziness, pathology, and violence (Foley, 1997; Lewis, 1966; Moynihan, 1965; Valencia, 2010). This distortion of culture ignores how social structures are centrally involved in the challenges that poor young people face (Ladson-Billings, 2017). False narratives of urban youth who: “do not value education,” “have limited potential,” and “are a burden on society,” can construct this population as unworthy, invalidate efforts to

increase financial investment (Rodriguez, 2007), and result in criminalizing and punitive policies (Kim, Losen & Hewitt, 2010; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Morris, 2012; Rios, 2011; Winn & Behizadeh, 2011).

Nationally, an unprecedented racial and ethnic transformation has occurred in U.S. schools specifically “a 28% decline in white enrollment, a 19% increase in the black enrollment, and an almost unbelievable 495% percent increase in the number of Latino students” (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014, p. 6). Orfield and Frankenberg (2014) found that school segregation is increasing. For example, they found that in urban settings, Latinx and Black students have relatively low exposure to White students. Schools made up largely of Latinx and Black students are also made up of low-income students who experience double segregation (Orfield, Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, 2012; Orfield, Siegel-Hawley & Kucsera, 2011). These findings are particularly acute given the “strong relationship between racial and economic segregation and inferior educational opportunities” (Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2016, p. 1). In other words, urban contexts that are largely, working-class students of color offer inferior educational opportunities that do not adequately support student educational success.

Inferior educational opportunities manifest in multiple ways. In California schools that serve 90 percent or more Black, Latinx, and Native American students are more likely to be designated as critically overcrowded and have shortages of qualified college preparation teachers and advanced placement classes (Rogers, Oakes, Fanelli, Medina, Valladares, & Terriquez, 2007). Urban high poverty schools are also more likely to experience teacher layoffs, rapid teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001), teacher inexperience, and lack proper credentials (Chapman, Hicks, & MacShane, 2015). It is clear that schools that serve those most vulnerable need additional support and resources. Without providing schools the needed support, national

accountability efforts penalize schools designated as underperforming (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Orfield & Lee, 2005).

Focusing on the experience of Latinx students, Gándara and Contreras (2009) explain that schools in working-class communities are the first line of response for psychological, legal, or medical issues that the students face. The schools like the families they serve have limited resources to offer adequate interventions. There is a mismatch between the type of support and guidance that working-class Latinx students need and those that are available at their schools. Researchers that include Pérez Huber, et al. (2015) represent the implications of this mismatch as the leaks in the Chicana/Chicano educational pipeline. In other words, they found that as a result of educational systemic issues that included campus climate (e.g., racial stereotypes, harassment, discrimination, and bias), inadequate facilities, and human capital (e.g., non-credentialed), only sixty percent of Latinx students successfully graduate from high school.

Additionally, urban contexts in California are undergoing a new iteration of gentrification, identified as the fastest growing in the country and resulting in displacement for long-time residents (Zhou, 2020). Studies that explore urban gentrification identify the changes in urban communities as “improvements” to health services, retail stores, housing, quality street repair, sanitation, and lower crime (Chong, 2017; Lavy, Dascher & Hagelman, 2016). Urban communities nationwide are grappling with gentrification-related issues that have proven to be detrimental to longstanding low-income residents who face displacement (Newman & Wyly, 2006). While some low-income residents remain, research has found that they do not benefit equally from “urban renewal” improvements (Keels, Burdick-Will, & Keene, 2013). In terms of urban schooling, research has explored what the influx of middle-income students means for the longstanding presence of low-income students. Findings indicate that minor changes that occur

initially become more drastic changes to the school district administration, admission procedures, and rebranding of schools that contribute to the stigmatization of working-class youth of color (Cucchiara, 2008; Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Hassrick & Schneider, 2009; Posey, 2012). In other words, while an increase in “middle-income families may increase the school’s aggregate cultural, economic, and social capital, . . . at the student’s level, within-school inequality may be exacerbated” (p. 241). A growing body of literature has examined gentrification in California as the result of a tech boom (Opillard, 2015) and income inequality (Chapple, 2016) that has reproduced displacement in community contexts. Scarce literature however, focuses on how gentrification processes impact schools, mainly school demographics (Diem, Holme, Edwards, Haynes & Epstein, 2018).

The above context unearths the permanence of racism, mainly, colonial relationships, that have been implemented in contemporary systems—that include education and function to reproduce and maintain oppressive contexts (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; 2002; Macleod, 1987; San Miguel, 1987; Tyack, 1976). Notwithstanding the permanence of racism, scholars of color that included W.E.B. Du Bois, documented resistance and offered counter-narratives. An urban education focus offers an entryway to understand how deficit-oriented perceptions materialize on the ground as inadequate support and resources (Rogers, Bertrand, Freelon & Fanelli, 2011). Further, the prominent gentrifying conditions in the study setting offered a unique opportunity to explore the racial dynamics entangled with school reputation and educational opportunities available at the study sites. The following section further rationalizes this dissertation study.

Rationale of the Study

An underlying goal of this dissertation is to amplify the meaning of violence—as more than visible acts that harm but also invisible, symbolic, and systemic colonial forces that

reproduce inequity. This dimension of violence encompasses the visceral day-to-day realities connected to poverty, inferior educational opportunities, and also the racialization that justifies the construction of working-class, students of color as problems. Research on discipline, mainly, on the school-to-prison nexus (Annamma, 2018; Meiners, 2007; Sojoyner, 2016; Stovall, 2016) has extensively documented the hostile, punitive, and criminalizing schooling that disproportionately harms working-class young people of color. Despite these oppressive contexts, young people and their teacher allies engage in efforts to resist the above realities and demand education that is equitable and race-conscious (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

The Advancement Project (2010) defined the school-to-prison pipeline as the interplay between zero-tolerance and high-stakes testing. Combined, these policies and practices actively pushed vulnerable student populations, mainly working-class and students of color out of school and on a path to prison. Punitive policies and practices in schools emerged from the war on drugs declared by the Nixon administration as early as 1968 (Díaz-Cotto, 2006). In the United States, the war on drugs criminalized historically racialized and marginalized populations using rhetoric of “law and order” (Alexander, 2012; Díaz-Cotto, 2006). Díaz-Cotto (2006) details that the discourse of “law and order” surfaced as a response to the Civil Rights Movement and a way to redirect U.S. criminal actions abroad. These efforts included zero-tolerance policies and practices such as mandatory and drug-related sentencing laws, increased arrests, and imprisonment (Alexander, 2012).

In the 1990s zero-tolerance began to be incorporated in schools as a way to address student misbehavior (Advancement Project, 2000; Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, & Booth, 2011). Schools adopted punishment as a means to maintain order or what has been understood as a growing threat to safety (Welch & Payne, 2010). It is a myth however

that exclusionary discipline—where students are being taken out of the classroom as punishment—addresses student misbehavior and instead is associated with lower academic success and higher juvenile delinquency (Welsh & Little, 2018). Continuing biases reproduce different treatment and systemic inequities wherein young people of color are disproportionately harmed (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, Peterson, 2002).

High-stakes testing became the avenue to ensure accountability for the educational system after 1983 when President Reagan indicated that the nation was at risk due to low standards in the public-school system (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983). It was the *Nation at Risk* (1983), report that led to the incorporation of neoliberal educational agenda (Lipman, 2011). Educational policies under the Reagan Administration broke away from equity, to focus instead on “excellence.” Lipman (2011) details that the new era ushered centralized accountability that was measured by high stakes tests and culminated with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2002. Research has found a direct effect of high-stakes accountability and the loss of thousands of young people, disproportionately young people of color from public schools (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, Vasquez Heilig, 2008; Tuck, 2012).

Although literature on discipline has extensively focused on how working-class students of color experience these harmful contexts, scant literature explores the modes of resistance young people and teacher allies engage in to challenge racialization, and oppressive schooling contexts (Fernández, Kirshner, Lewis, 2016). This dissertation seeks to contribute to this nascent area of research that considers how young people and teacher allies confront criminalizing schooling contexts.

Purpose of the Study: The Critical Significance of School Reputation

In the current era of privatization of public education in the U.S. that refers to the “rollback” of big government and push to support privately managed but publicly funded schools (Buras, Randels, & Salaam, 2010; Burch, 2009; Lipman, 2011), along with school choice or a sense of freedom in choosing a school (Harvey, 2005; 2018; James, 2014), the reputation or labels assigned to a school can pull or deter families, resources, and support to and from schools. In theory, school choice gives parents, no matter their racial and/or socio-economic status (Weininger, 2014) the option to choose the school they want for their children.

School choice, however, has limitations in working-class urban communities of color wherein schools have been constructed as under-performing and undesirable, in light of what Lipman (2004) describes as high stakes accountability. Schools in affluent, predominantly white communities, in many cases, are desirable because they provide more resources to their students (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; Rowan-Kenyon et al. 2011). Research has recently highlighted the fierce competition that exists in urban school settings for families to obtain the limited spots in desired “high performing” schools (Hannah-Jones, 2016), and reveals that in such settings the schools are essentially choosing the students (Pattillo, 2015). Labels that designate a school as high or low performing can mean little when attempting to understand the types of experiences that urban young people and teachers share on campus. It is important to understand what school reputation is connected to because it does not stand alone. It can be part of broader spatial, economic and temporal narratives of the community and city.

Positionality: My Intersecting Identities and Lived Experience

During the eve of the civil war in El Salvador, my family was driven to action by liberation theology that stressed how socio-economic structures were implicated in the social oppression of the poor (Gutiérrez, 1988). Similar to Archbishop Óscar Romero, a passionate advocate who spoke out against the displacement and violence perpetrated on poor and rural populations, my uncle Froilan Cruz was detained in his home while he slept and subsequently disappeared as a result of his community organizing efforts in Sonsonate. Violent clashes in the community along with ongoing threats of forced recruitment into the military drove my father to flee his home, he was not yet 18 years old. He immigrated to Guatemala and then to México where my parents met, were married, and started a family. A similar economic uncertainty in México drove my father and the entire family to immigrate for a third time to the U.S., a place, where my parents knew their three daughters had a better opportunity for an education.

We immigrated to the working-class community of Monte Caoba (pseudonym), California my hometown. Schools in Monte Caoba in the 1990s enrolled predominately (93-96%) students of color along with a significant percentage of Emergent Bilinguals⁶ that in 1995 made up 44 percent of enrolled students. As a Spanish monolingual speaker, I was placed with a monolingual English teacher. There were endless recitations of the alphabet and counting from one to one-hundred in English. Later that year, I was glad to be transferred to a classroom with a bilingual English- and Spanish-speaking teacher, with whom I could communicate, ask questions, and not feel reprimanded for not understanding.

⁶ García, Kleifgen, and Falchi (2008) conceptualize Emergent Bilinguals as an asset-based approach to acknowledge the bilingualism that students can and often must develop through schooling in the United States. When this is ignored, the authors explain, it perpetuates inequities because it discounts the home languages and cultural understandings of these children and assumes their educational needs mirror those of monolingual children.

Monte Caoba had multiple historically Black neighborhoods. As a Latinx student in this context, I benefitted from Afrocentric education that allowed me to read Black authors and learn about the contributions of African Americans historically. Since elementary school, I was taught by numerous Black teachers, many who had over thirty years of teaching experience. Alcázar High school was my assigned school and was made up exclusively of Black and Brown students that included, African-American, Latinx (primarily Chicanx),⁷ and Southeast Asian and Pacific-Islander that included Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian and Polynesian. Some of my peers were immigrants (like myself) or children of immigrants, who spoke English as a second language and who were first in their family to attend high school. My peers also included African-American friends who I met in elementary school and attended the same middle and high schools.

The climate of Alcázar High school and the surrounding neighborhood involved the criminalization of youth of color. Scholars that explore mass incarceration understand criminalization of young people of color as getting tough on crime policies and practices that manifested as more aggressive policing that was substantiated by zero-tolerance approaches of the 1990s (Davis, 2003; Giroux, 2009; Rios, 2006; 2008). In particular, I recall the ever-presence of police officers on campus, who used handcuffs and yelling as methods to intimidate all who attended Alcázar.

At the end of my junior year, my family submitted an inter-district transfer for myself and a younger sibling as a result of an injury sustained by an older sibling earlier that year during a lunch period fight. The high school I attended for my senior year was located about a one-hour bus ride from my home. The neighborhood that housed my new school seemed to be a world apart. Store-fronts were not boarded up and buildings did not seem deteriorated. There were

⁷ In this dissertation, Chicanx is used as a gender-inclusive term instead of “Chicano” that emphasizes masculinity, or Chicana/o which foregrounds a gender binary.

mini-marts, restaurants, and a grocery store available to students during the open lunch period to purchase their food. The policing and to some degree criminalization of young people was also present but was not as prevalent as in Alcázar High school. While the school was 94 percent students of color, it was during my senior year when I first shared classrooms with white peers, some of whose parents were university professors. The teachers of the advanced placement classes held high expectations and offered college-level reading and assignments. What struck me was the contrast between both high schools that I attended in terms of courses offered, tracking, and available resources. I was left wondering about the ways that educational systems can designate or deny privilege and worth.

In college, Ethnic Studies⁶ gave me the language and tools to understand how colonial forces provided the structure, ideologies and systems that uphold white supremacy. An Ethnic Studies orientation taught me to center the experiences and cosmologies of groups experiencing compounding oppressions, and to highlight how they engage in resistance to challenge colonial conditions. My experiences as a descendant from survivors and those who were sacrificed by systematic oppression, war, and violence taught me to understand *educación*, as not just the end but also the means that happens through moral and social responsibility. Members of my family in México and El Salvador who are K-12 teachers, organizers, and community workers have dedicated their lives to serving diverse populations facing social and economic marginalization. Putting into practice this oral history inspired my efforts to work on the ground with community organizations to support student success and degree attainment in spaces that facilitate building

⁶ Ethnic studies, a multi and interdisciplinary field of inquiry, centers race and racism as the ground of academic inquiry by exposing the prominence of racialization and works to legitimize the histories of groups that have been systematically oppressed in a U.S. context as well as a global context.

mentoring relationships and that nurture a sense of inquiry among young people but that also highlighted their promise and actively helped their college-going efforts.

Following my undergraduate degree, I worked as a case manager for Uplift⁷, a comprehensive community school partnership that provides youth-centered holistic learning and parent leadership development. I supported on-time graduation and post-secondary enrollment. In this role, I witnessed a schooling system that conceals the multiple barriers that inhibit year-to-year matriculation and eventually high school graduation for working-class young people of color. In particular, what was described as a racial achievement gap (Noguera & Wing, 2006), referred to students of color who were disproportionately receiving D and F grades in contrast to white students who were either affluent and/or children of white and blue-collar workers, but who academically outperformed their minority peers. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) problematized the term “racial achievement gap” because it constructs students from a deficit perspective, and proposes educational debt as a way to hold all parties accountable in particular historical, social-political, and economic systems that influence the experiences of young people.

The success of Uplift was visible through graduation rates. However, school wide students of color were disproportionately labeled as “disengaged,” “defiant,” or “unwilling to work,” which resulted in efforts to transfer these students out and into a continuation high school. As a case manager, I came to understand that young people and their families care deeply about their education, school, and community. Not only are they critical of unequal social conditions but also engage in efforts to challenge them. The disconnection between the labels placed on young people and the way I came to understand them prompted a more in-depth exploration about how schooling can inflict harm on young people. I pursued graduate school to

⁷ Uplift is a pseudonym for this academic support and college preparation program.

understand the structures and processes that shape educational disparities and that inflict harm and violence on students. Utilizing school culture and educational policy lenses, I explored urban schooling, school discipline, and qualitative research methodologies to be able to return to this setting and document how young people understand and make sense of the labels and reputation placed on them, their school, and community. Additionally, I explored the implications of these labels and how it matters that a school has an overall positive or negative reputation. My return to a school setting four years after transitioning to my graduate studies allowed me to relearn how to exist in a school setting. As a way to promote the educational success of students who navigate multiple forms of oppression, it is necessary to look beyond labels placed on schools and young people to figure out what the practices and efforts are that work to support academic success and overall wellbeing.

My positionality undoubtedly shaped this study. I understand this work, particularly, the process of meaning-making, as an opportunity to challenge a White and middle-class understanding of education by drawing from my herstory of marginalization, resistance, and complicity to make visible alternative identities and discourses that lie in the margins (Villenas, 1996). This means that, as the study progressed, my approach was to maintain a researcher's open-mindedness about how the different dimensions at play that include gender, race, and class shaped experiences. Engaging in this work means that as I engage in praxis (Freire, 2000), I work toward being an empathetic listener and human being. Further, this work offers a mirror to see my previous path, witness the narratives of others, and create a path to my healing. The following offers an overview of the research questions.

Research Questions

In the interest of exploring how young people understand and make sense of labels that

include prestigious and low-performing school reputations, along with whether and how these labels influenced the worth attributed to certain student populations, this comparative ethnographic case study uses multiple data techniques that include interviews, participant observations, and photographs. The overarching research question that this dissertation is:

Research Question: How does the reputation of two contrasting high schools shape the school culture and the worth attributed to students, teachers, and the overall school? The dissertation was further guided by the following research sub-questions:

- 1) How do the reputations of two contrasting high schools shape the culture at each site?
- 2) What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation?
- 3) How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions?

These questions were explored simultaneously throughout the yearlong study. As a comparative study, the findings chapters are broken up into two chapters, Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Sub-question 1, sub-question 2, and sub-question 3 are all tackled in, Chapter Five that focused on the Logro site while Chapter Six focused on the Poder site.

Theoretical and Conceptual Approaches

This study is grounded in theoretical contributions in school culture, coloniality, and decoloniality. My conceptual framework uncovers the reverberations of colonialism, termed coloniality, as violent hegemonic structure that among other things manifests as racialization. In education, the term coloniality makes explicit how racialized ideologies are embedded in the social fabric and perpetrate violence on vulnerable student groups, wherein only those who align with White and middle-class norms are designated as worthy or deserving. Even with the power and reach of the colonial project of schooling that prioritizes cultural assimilation and inflicts

harm, asset frames and school culture offer tools to interrupt and uncover its inner workings. Decoloniality (otherwise known as decolonization) is a movement that affords breaking out of coloniality and rehumanizes as well as centers education as a site for contestation and transformation. A decolonial frame reveals how young people of color experience marginality and teacher allies engage in resistance via grassroots organizing to disrupts oppressive policies, practices, and discourses.

Colonization and Coloniality

A coloniality frame offers this work a strong historical grounding to make sense of oppressive conditions that became systematized as a result of colonization, enslavement, and conquest. It is this legacy of racism, exclusion, and dehumanization that has shaped the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) in the United States. Prior to the institutionalization of schooling, policies and practices functioned to restrict literacy and control the minds and bodies of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (Brave Heart, Chase, Altschul, 2011; Du Bois, 1903; Lomawaima, 1999, 2008; Patterson, 1982; Robinson, 2017; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Schooling has never meant to be a neutral project. As a project of coloniality, schooling has been and continues to be violent.

The European colonization of the Americas influenced the trajectory of the world and surfaced as a colonial hegemonic system that birthed different modes of social oppression (Quijano, 1988). Maldonado-Torres (2016) explains that colonization is often understood as historical events that no longer apply to the current socio-political and economic realities. While colonial administrations no longer exist today, colonial forces (e.g. systems and discourses) continue to mediate relationships between those who experience privilege and/ or oppression (Quijano, 2000). For example, colonial forces shape what is currently understood as

neoliberalism, or economic and social policies that are entangled with forms of governance and associated ideologies that “promote individual self-interest, unrestricted flows of capital, deep reductions in the cost of labor, and sharp retrenchment of the public sphere” (Lipman, 2011, p. 6). In other words, these broader economic and hegemonic forces, have rearticulated the priorities of public education that value choice, and individual interest over collective goods.

The colonization of the Americas came with the imposition of Eurocentric modes of expression, beliefs, and culture, along with the extermination of Indigenous people, which destroyed innumerable societies and cultures (Quijano, 2007). Quijano (2007) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) reveal a trifecta that together cement this colonial system that includes coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. **Coloniality of power** refers to the ability of colonial systems and ideologies to be reinvented into contemporary social arrangements (Quijano, 2000). Coloniality supersedes colonialism because it refers to a “long-standing pattern of power... that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). **Coloniality of knowledge** refers to both the production of knowledge but also the systematic repression of knowledge and ontologies—claims and assumptions made about social reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016)—that did not fit with the global colonial hegemony (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Quijano, 2007).

Coloniality of being, presupposes an absence of rationality, in other words, subjects who do not think or do not think properly thus should not exist and/or are dispensable (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). This line of argument justifies and sanctions ideologies of genocide and perpetuates dimensions of permanent war (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Making war natural does not only refer to policies and practices to exterminate Indigenous people but also ensures the dispossession of their land and resources. Ideologies of a colonial system held that “the

colonized are meant to be bodies without land, people without resources, and subjects without the capacity for autonomy and self-determination whose constant desire is to be other than themselves” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 17). Further, the underlying purpose of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being was to designate what entailed humanity which meant that colonized and otherwise oppressed became disposable and nonhuman (Giroux, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

The elements of coloniality used to designate humanity include race, capitalism, and gender. The element of race was the method of classification that legitimized Eurocentrism and created a difference between European settlers that later became White Anglo-Americans and non-European groups (Quijano, 2000). This difference became articulated as biological inferiority (Menchaca, 1997) and subsequently became cultural deficiency (Valencia, 1997; 2010). A focus on phenotype may have solidified social relationships of power that privileged whiteness (Quijano, 2000). Capitalism operated in conjunction with race as a system established to control labor and resources (Quijano, 2000). Nonpaid or non-waged labor was rationalized as suited for non-European groups because of assumed inferiority and unworthiness, while paid labor was a privilege only for Whites (Quijano, 2000). Similarly, gender as an element of coloniality has functioned as a system of subject-object duality (Anzaldúa, 2012) that has been used to destroy people and their cosmologies as a way to legitimize the hetero-patriarchal system of coloniality (Lugones, 2007). It is critical to recognize how axes of oppression that include race, class, and gender are intersectional, in other words overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991).

The above offers an overview of coloniality and its elements that together make up an ever-changing system of power that seeks to maintain control and make a profit (Quijano, 2000).

Coloniality offers this study a frame that contextualizes how colonial forces manifest as racialized discourses, and practices within different systems. It is important to make visible the colonial forces that continue to be embedded in the social fabric of the educational system because doing so will reveal the schooling priority of assimilation, but also allows us to understand that students are expected to align with White and middle-class norms to be designated as worthy or deserving. Further, it is important to articulate the ways that the colonial project of schooling is violent and inflicts harm. As such, the following section explores violence and racialization as central to the maintenance of coloniality.

Violence and Racialization as Central to Coloniality

Fanon (2004) described colonialism as a violent structure that demarcated humans from those designated as non-human. Violence was a method to keep order where people experiencing oppression learned to stay in their place (Fanon, 2004). It was violence that destroyed the social fabric such as the cultural practices, economic systems, and the connection to the land for Indigenous people (Fanon, 2004). Further, coloniality was central to the formation of a world where the non-ethics of war were naturalized through racial categorization—and has emerged nationwide as policies and practices that include mass incarceration and the school to prison nexus (Davis, 2003; Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016; Rios, 2006). The colonial regime of violence continues to reinvent itself and is connected to the conditions that Black and Latinx young people experience that include inferior educational opportunities (Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2016), and inadequate resources which can influence four-year university eligibility (Rogers et al., 2010).

Coloniality manifests as racialization and occurs through marking some bodies, some as superior and others as inferior (Grosfoguel, 2016). Grosfoguel utilizes Fanonian concepts of the

zone of being and the *zone of non-being* to argue social groups who are racialized as superior are those positioned above the line of the human and become part of the zone of being and “enjoy access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women rights and/or labor rights), material resources, and social recognition to their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies, and spiritualities” (p. 10). Social groups who are racialized as inferior are positioned below the line of humanity and thus part of the zone of non-being. That is, not only is their humanity questioned and or negated, “the extension of rights, material resources and the recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spiritualities, and epistemologies are denied” (p. 10). Grosfoguel’s (2016) framing of colonial racialization uncovers how school reputation and the labels placed on urban young people are connected to worth, in particular, who is deemed superior or inferior, and how this, in turn, influences the everyday schooling that this youth population experiences.

Racialized Human Value and Worth

Cacho (2012) explores how human value is determined through violence that is racial, gendered, and state-sanctioned. For Cacho (2012), social value is assigned and denied on racial terms where “[r]ace is the methodology of social value; it’s used to contest erasure, reveal neglect, call out contradictions, claim injustice, and make explicit hidden assumptions that justified and reproduced narratives about already not-valued lives of color” (p. 17). Building on Barrett (1999), Cacho details that violence becomes how value is introduced. Cacho’s framing of human value aligns with the above conceptualization of coloniality and Lipman’s (2011) understanding of neoliberalism given that both concepts reveal the economy as central to shaping social values and moral behavior. In other words, human value is often measured alongside economic value (Cacho, 2012). For Cacho (2012) value is relational which means that to ascribe value to devalued groups, “normative criteria” of American white middle-class ideals is used.

Similar to Grosfoguel (2016), Cacho (2012) examines how the humanity of certain populations is something that cannot just exist but rather something that has to be achieved or earned. This rationale emerges when considering mainstream notions of U.S. birthright citizenship because some are treated as alien citizens whose “citizenship is suspect, if not denied, on account of the racialized identity of her immigrant ancestry” (Ngai, 2007, p. 2521). Ngai (2007) details that the citizenship of people of color is permanently questioned and whose social, political, and economical integration is conditional. Social groups who are the most vulnerable also experience criminalization that includes youth (Rios, 2011), Black (Alexander, 2012), and Latinx (Díaz-Cotto, 2006) among others which means they are excluded from the protection of the law (Cacho, 2012). The implementation of laws that are impossible to follow has been a prominent method used to criminalize certain bodies that have been labeled as “illegal aliens,” “gang members,” and “terrorist suspects” both historically as well as currently (Cacho, 2012). It is those policies and practices that naturalize criminalization that targets working-class communities of color and reinforces the racialization of “social (de)valuation” (p. 28).

Cacho (2012) reveals that people of color are not eligible for rights and liberties because whiteness has a different legal history, unlike racial differences. Building on the work of Harris (1993), that sets forth how whiteness has functioned in law as a property interest, where “whites have come to expect and rely on these benefits, and over time these expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law” (p. 1713). To further unpack whiteness as property, Hong (2007) details that property can be described as “a set of social relations,” that includes the subject, its property, but also the system that protects that right to property and keeping others from owning property. The whiteness as property ideology provides additional

context and reveals how coloniality functions to designate humanity but further, who has access to rights and liberties.

Racialized Human Worth and Deservingness in Education

Patel (2015) makes the case that what delineates humanity is the discursive frame of worth. For Patel, coloniality helps us understand how different systems shape how different people are racially minoritized and majoritized which in turn creates distinct social positions, rights, and relationships. The different modes in which deservingness is deployed are projects of coloniality because they not only create and maintain White statehood but also construct the [un]deservingness of Black and Brown people (Patel, 2015). Further, Patel (2015) explores how the rhetoric that is used in the media and by politicians that focuses, for example, on immigration and immigrants is filled with themes of deservingness. It is this very rhetoric, Patel explains “that casts as unwanted and damaged/damaging, the primary messaging conduit is their lack of worth” (p. 12). In other words, the designation of worth has become a way to racialize and criminalize certain populations which makes them “ineligible” for state protections, liberties, and rights.

As a colonial project, education is often framed by majoritarian stories as a pathway to social mobility and is an extension of the American dream and meritocratic ideologies. Broadly, the American dream promotes the idea that individual hard work and dedication will result in material success and social mobility. Meritocratic ideology replicates the belief that all have an equal chance to be successful, but does not consider racialized and classed structures (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Therefore, meritocratic ideology becomes an avenue to rationalize inequities, given that those who experience disparities are understood as failures who do not work hard enough or have the necessary skills or talent needed to succeed (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Hidden behind meritocratic rhetoric is how education reproduces inequalities and magnifies disparities.

Schooling prioritizes knowledge and the production of knowledge that maintains and protects Eurocentrism through curriculum and pedagogy (Calderon, 2014; Patel, 2014) that includes the banking method (Freire, 2007), where students are positioned as empty vessels into which knowledge is poured by the expert teacher. Moreover, as a colonial project education and schooling racializes vulnerable students. Vulnerable students include urban young people of color who face gender, race, class, sexual, language, and citizenship oppression.

School Culture

While dismantling the colonial project of schooling may seem insurmountable, asset frames and school culture offer tools to interrupt (Stovall, 2016) and/or begin to untangle its varying tentacles. As discussed already, urban schools are often charged with serving vulnerable student populations experiencing difficult conditions. Yet urban schools can also bring about educators like Mr. Porter, who work tirelessly to understand how best to serve students and engage in pedagogical efforts to interrupt colonial systems. Similarly, schools as a whole engage in asset-based approaches that build a positive school culture and function as hubs infused with social services that offer relevant learning and engagement for families and the broader community (Martinez & Hayes, 2013). This means that there are urban schools that are equipped with onsite health clinics, first aid, dental care, pregnancy counseling, and immunizations. Further, these schools provide afterschool tutoring, coats in the winter, as well as youth enrichment opportunities (Noguera, 2003).

Drawing from and building on asset approaches, this dissertation utilized school culture as a lens to explore how the participants at each school site understand the reputation of their school and whether this overall label influences their experiences at the school site. Deal and Peterson (2016) detail that school culture offers an intuitive and appealing way for school leaders

and others to “better understand their school’s unwritten rules and traditions, customs, and expectations” (p. 7). Culture refers to “a pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems...that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1985, p. 9). Culture has been understood as a system or an underlying social meaning of shared beliefs and values that create norms, shape behavior, and bring a community together (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Deal & Peterson, 1990; Mintzberg, 1983; Schwarts & Davis, 1981). These basic assumptions can exist unconsciously and be taken for granted (Schein, 1985) as well as serve as the basis to determine the types of relationships that emerge (Dyer, 1985).

School cultures represent a complex network of stories, rituals, and traditions that evolve as the actors that include students, teachers, administrators, and parents who work as a unit to address challenges as well as celebrate successes (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Schein, 1985). Culture can also refer to ideologies that convey the values and beliefs unique to an organization (Ouchi, 1981). Culture shapes how daily transactions are interpreted, it gives meaning to what people say and do and exists when there is a shared view of reality (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Connected to school culture is school climate, which has been described as an “enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools” (Hoy, 1990, p. 152). To identify a healthy school climate, the different aspects of the organization should be balanced and cohesive; the school should meet its needs and cope with disruptive outside forces (Hoy & Feldman, 1987).

Decolonization and Decoloniality

Tuck and Yang (2012) are critical of current mainstream uses of decolonization. They argue decolonization has become a metaphor for all civil and human rights-based social justice projects. Further, the authors detail that discourses that claim decolonization are absent of settler colonialism which erases Indigenous people and makes invisible the “epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). For Tuck and Yang (2012), the relationship between being and land should be forthcoming and clear as a way to halt the erasure of Indigenous people, their struggle, and recognition of their sovereignty. Byrd (2011) argues that the United States is a settler colony where the appetite for the land is unquenchable and central to the relationships that surfaced, in particular, the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land. My exploration and grounding in coloniality and decoloniality are informed by my life story shaped by the United States as an empire in Latin America. As described by Patel (2014), a life history of “interrupted relationships to land and culture, forced assimilation, and resistance to those cultural histories” (p. 358), makes me both colonizer and colonized (Villenas, 1996). The racialization that Grosfoguel (2016) describes is fluid and ever-changing, dependent on time and place (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015), which means that coloniality is amorphous and as such can constantly be interrupted (Stovall, 2016). Similar to Patel (2014), it is my place to acknowledge my responsibility to dismantle coloniality.

It is important to be vigilantly wary of work that employs superficial references and uses of decolonization that lack a thorough grounding in settler colonialism and/or coloniality. This dissertation draws from decolonial scholar Frantz Fanon and scholars from the Global South, in particular from Latin America and the Caribbean who over the past fifty years have amassed a large corpus of research on colonialism, coloniality, decolonization, and decoloniality. For

Fanon (2004) decolonization refers to “change[ing] the order of the world,” (p. 2).

Decolonization is a historical movement that shapes and gives substance to history (Fanon, 2004). Decolonization alters ways of being and allows for the transformation of subjects who have been deemed illegitimate and marginal to become “privileged actors” (Fanon, 2004, pg. 2). Moreover, as a movement, decolonization demands recognition, legitimacy, and calls for the most essential value of the land.

Decoloniality is described as a process to rehumanize our world, to interrupt the hierarchies and discourses that divide and dehumanize many populations (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). This movement has created discourses, practices, and knowledge that exist beyond coloniality to demonstrate other ways of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). As such, decoloniality refers to a process wherein the oppressed social groups surface as those who question and create (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). In 1963 Fanon wrote about the colonized and their awareness of structural processes of oppression, yet made it clear colonized people know they are not evil, animals, or inferior. Decolonization encompasses the realization that “the skin of a colonist is not worth more than the native’s” (Fanon, 2004, p. 10). It is this consciousness that Fanon argues, drives resistance to colonial processes. Decolonization refers to empowerment and liberation that can support the role as one who questions, thinks, theorizes, writes, and communicates, in other words, an agent of social change (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

The philosophy grounded in decoloniality is one of “restoring love and understanding, restoration of the human, including nature” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 22). Maldonado-Torres (2016) builds on the work of Chela Sandoval to reframe western notions of love in particular notions of romance and instead consider how Third World writers explore love which is “a ‘breaking’ through whatever controls in order to find ‘understanding and community’...”

(Sandoval, 2000, p. 139). Sandoval elucidates the breaking through, as Chicana Feminist Gloria Anzaldúa's *Coatlicue* state, "which is a 'rupturing' in one's everyday world that permits crossing over to another; or as a specific moment of shock..." (Sandoval, 2000 p. 139). The "breaking through" or "crossing over," Sandoval argues, allows subjects "toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 139). While "breaking through" is outlined as an individual process, Maldonado-Torres reminds us that decoloniality is a collective project. Its purpose is not individual salvation, but rather making visible that which has become invisible and should emerge with the "critical reflection of the invisible people themselves" (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Overall, Maldonado-Torres (2016) details that schools and universities are critical sites for the struggle of decolonization which allows the present dissertation to provide empirical evidence of the ways that young people and teacher allies in urban schools engage in decolonization.

Dissertation Roadmap

Chapter One establishes the need to explore school reputation comparatively from the perspective of students and teachers to learn if and how school reputation influences how they experience school culture. Chapter One also describes my positionality, which informed the theoretical frameworks this dissertation implements. Chapter Two describes the literatures connected to the communities I researched, particularly gentrifying contexts, school choice, and reveals how school reputation connects to racialized perceptions of school quality. Moreover, Chapter Two describes how school reputation is described, understood, and what it represents. Chapter Three describes the methodology, methods and contextualizes the setting and sites to examine how positive and negative school labels can influence not only school culture but also the worth attributed to urban young people. Chapter Four examines what makes up the urban and

urban schooling in an effort to contextualize the findings. Chapter Five hones in on the Logro High school site while Chapter Six hones in on the Poder school site. Lastly, Chapter Seven includes a summary, offers implications, and concludes the dissertation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The previous chapter offered broad strokes of conceptual grounding. The present chapter provides a more detailed description of the literature connected to the educational communities I researched. This literature review pulls from interdisciplinary works connected to school privatization, choice, and discipline to unearth how racially biased perspectives shape perceived school quality. Doing so, this literature contextualizes my comparative ethnographic study of two contrasting high schools to understand how school reputation can shape school culture and the implications for worth attributed to students, teachers, and the resources allocated to the school.

National policies have been a driving force of school reform, particularly the privatization of public education that emphasizes school choice in the context of urban schools. Although, gentrification processes are not new, working-class and predominately urban communities of color are undergoing different gentrification related iterations that transpire as dispossession. Moreover, this literature establishes a dearth in the literature that squarely examines the dimensions of school reputation, thusly this chapter examines the meanings and representations of school reputation.

Market-driven Neoliberal Public Schooling

State influences have been central to the privatization of public education. Giroux (2016) spells out the drastic modifications to the system of education that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, he explains how national funding for education and other institutions meant to uphold the U.S. democratic dimension dwindled (Giroux, 2016). These forms of deregulation, or what Harvey (2007) describes as neoliberalism, emerged as essential to the advancement of human wellbeing by free markets, trade, and private property. Neoliberalism took center stage in the late 1970s and 1980s as the most recent iteration of capitalism that harms those most

vulnerable (Harvey, 2005; 2018). Neoliberalism refers to market-driven reform that aligns all aspects of human life with the market (Harvey, 2007). What cements neoliberal ideology is individual freedom, or the ability to choose the lifestyle, jobs, values, and relationships with no government interference (De Lissovoy, 2015). Thus, individual freedom becomes essential and the most significant source of power (Harvey, 2007). Beyond individual decision-making, Tuck (2012) details that the purpose of neoliberalism is “government without government” to create the conditions where policies work to benefit transnational corporations (p. 17).

The privatization of public education refers to the rollback of big government and push to support privately managed but publicly funded schools (Lipman, 2017; Wilson, 2016). Privatization is a transformation that diminishes care, concern for others, and commitment to public education (James, 2014). In turn, public education is no longer a public social good but instead something that individuals mediate. A central argument to market-driven education is that competition will drive underperforming schools to improve (Lipman, 2015; Wilson, 2016). This means that families from working-class communities can opt to go outside of their neighborhood to find a school that is performing well academically (Lareau & Goyette, 2014; Rhodes & Deluca, 2014; Weininger, 2014).

Policymakers frame school choice as the solution to the many issues plaguing public schools, including not meeting state standards, the opportunity gap, and disengagement (Carter & Welner, 2013; Fredricks, Parr, Amemiya, Wang & Brauer, 2019). Although school choice has become the driving force of schooling reform, James (2014) argues it has failed to “actually improve academic outcomes” (p. 1100). In theory, school choice gives parents the option to choose the school they want for their children, no matter their racial and socioeconomic status. In practice, school choice conceals racial and socio-economic disparities with limited educational

alternatives that prove inadequate to meet the needs of those most vulnerable (James, 2014; Robertson & Riel, 2019). For example, we know that socio-economics shapes the academic skills students bring with them to school starting in kindergarten and are important because the disparities between wealthy white students and working-class, mainly Black and Latinx, students remain constant as they go into higher grades (Reardon & Portilla, 2016).

Scholars skeptical of school choice posit that these approaches will further segregation by race, class, and achievement (Oluwole & Green, 2018; Stulberg, 2015). School choice ideology functions to “sanitize inequality in the school system” by offering multiple options and placing the responsibility on families to choose (James, 2014, p. 1134). An emphasis on individual choice means that the failure to improve student outcomes becomes an issue of individual decision-making (James, 2014). Further, by providing various options, the school system becomes no longer responsible for addressing core issues that produce unequal educational opportunities for working-class students of color (James, 2014; Robertson & Riel, 2019). It is important to hold schools accountable for the inequitable conditions.

This market-driven approach makes school reputation a critical dimension that influences perceptions and social investment and resources. The reputation or labels assigned to a school can pull or deter families, resources, and support. For example, in a New York Times Magazine article, Nikole Hannah-Jones, an investigative journalist, chronicled one of the toughest decisions she faced, which consisted of choosing as a school for her daughter in central Brooklyn, a community that was rapidly gentrifying. Hannah-Jones (2016) documents the fierce competition in urban school settings for families to obtain the limited spots in desired “high performing” schools. By honing in on the experiences of working-class Black parents in Chicago

to enroll their children in schools, Pattillo (2015) argues schools are essentially choosing students.

Public schools in affluent, predominantly white communities, in many cases, are desirable because they provide more resources to their students (Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2014; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2011). In working-class urban communities that are predominately Black and Latinx, historically, public schools have been constructed as under-performing and, undesirable, in light of high stakes accountability (Lipman, 2011). Public schools that serve vulnerable student populations should be recognized for what they do, which is, offer vital social services to the communities they serve (Noguera, 2003). However, these are the same schools that not only experience disinvestment but also face sanctions for not performing in line with standards (Daly, Der-Martirosian, Ong-Dean, Park & Wishard-Guerra, 2011). The following elaborates on what happens in urban schools that experience disinvestment in gentrifying contexts.

Gentrification in Urban Communities and Schools

Gentrification was first introduced by Ruth Glass in 1964, however, continues to surface as a significant force that shapes the urban setting. Chong (2017) defines gentrification as the process when communities previously denied capital, services, and goods that suddenly experience a surge in investment and resources. Similar to the systematic forces to maintain segregation and racial isolation (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018), scholars argue that patterns of racial inequality structure gentrification in working-class Black and Latinx neighborhoods (Havekes, Bader, & Krysan, 2016; Hwang & Sampson, 2014; Lewis, Emerson, and Klineberg, 2011; Pattillo, 2007). Moreover, gentrification refers to policies that emphasize urban renewal (Lavy, Dascher, & Hagelman, 2016), along with the influx of affluent people in neighborhoods

that historically faced limited resources and support (Pattillo, 2007; Richardson, Mitchel & Franco, 2019).

Although gentrification emerges as an increase in goods and amenities, it also signifies the displacement of longstanding residents, businesses, and social institutions (Brown-Saracino, 2016; Hyra, 2015; Pattillo, 2015; Perez, 2004; Laska & Spain, 2013). The displacement of longtime residents refers to families who cannot stay and others coerced to leave (Marcuse, 2016; Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapple, Gorska, & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2017). Gentrification policies and practices have disproportionately displaced Black families (Goertz, 2011; Jackson, 2014). While Black neighborhoods continue to experience gentrification by White gentrifiers, research documents that these processes are often set in motion by the state (Lees, 2016). In other words, a combination of efforts by corporations, the state, and individuals who decide to embrace urban living that facilitates gentrification (Aalbers, 2019; Hackworth, 2007). These are complex processes, given that middle-class Blacks have also been identified as gentrifiers (Hwang, 2016; Pattillo, 2007).

Beyond displacement, other challenges connected to gentrification include the inability of all residents to share equally from economic revitalization for the remaining working-class residents (Ding & Hwang, 2016; Keels, Burdick-Will & Keene, 2013). Urban real estate development is connected to capital accumulation and gentrification but relies on containment and racial exclusion (Lipman, 2015). Urban development becomes justified by the pathologizing of Black and Brown communities which denies the humanity of those dislocated from their homes, school, and communities (Nopper, 2018; Winsett, 2019). The participants in this study bring forth their understanding of gentrification in Monte Caoba as a process wherein those driven out are Black and Latinx families and those moving in are White persons with higher

socioeconomic status. Moreover, participants elaborated on how forces of gentrification contributed to a positive school reputation at Logro, one of the few schools in the city with abundant resources, that has a fast-growing White student population.

Strategies to mitigate displacement in the local context include policies for mixed-income housing and schools; however, these reforms align with deficit-oriented ideologies that pathologize race and poverty (Nopper, 2018). Lipman, Pearson, and KOCO (2007) examine a Chicago context and reveal that in African American communities undergoing transition, the decline of resources and support from the school district has intensified, which mirrors longstanding local disinvestment. Ergo, these contexts create the conditions wherein urban schools become identified as failing, devalued, and ultimately candidates for closure (Lewis, 2018). Once closed, the strategy to reopen involves a new image with the distinction of a middle-class school that refers to exclusivist policies and practices (Doucet, 2020). The construction of the urban as space and people that are dangerous, disorderly, and dysfunctional supports processes that result in displacement (Doucet, 2020). A combination of school and housing policies alongside socio-cultural forces function to exclude young people of color from attending mixed-income schools (Lipman, 2008). For example, Monte Caoba uses a lottery system to determine student placement, that identified enrollment priorities, one of which is neighborhood of residence which means that the schooling system is reproducing housing disparities.

Large urban school districts that historically have faced underfunding and little support have been found to embrace an enrollment increase of White and more affluent children because it has become a way to plug in more funding and resources, which is argued benefits all children (Carlson & Bell, 2021; Kahlenberg, 2012). Those described as gentrifying parents detail that they did not expect to stay in an urban setting to educate their children in public schools, yet

many chose to stay (Freidus, 2016; Kimelberg & Billingham, 2012). Local efforts support mixed-income schools and assume that an increase of middle-class parents benefits working-class students, yet studies have found that middle-class parents mobilize the resources at their disposal to support their children's educational advantage (Makris, 2015; Pearman & Swain, 2017; Roda, 2015). Further, middle-class parents prioritize not improving the collective but the individual achievement of their children (Cucchiara & Hovart, 2009; Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2016). In a gentrifying context, White parents draw from a repertoire of resources and cultural capital to obtain advantages for their children in the classroom and school contexts (Kimelberg, 2014).

Research continues to unpack the benefits of the presence and involvement of more affluent and predominately White middle-class parents in urban public schools and considers how changing demographics can marginalize working-class students (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Kotok, Frankenberg, Schafft, Mann, & Fuller, 2017; Roda, 2018). Keels, Burdick-Will, and Keene (2013) detail, “there may be tipping points after which the number of middle-income students begins to harm the remaining low-income students” (p. 242). A growing number of studies document skepticism that working-class students benefit from the influx of middle-class families into urban public schools (Cucchiara, 2008; Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Posey, 2012; Roda, 2018). In particular, Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara (2013) detail that these realities raise questions about renewed forms of exclusion and marginalization for vulnerable students. The above literature highlights the most recent iteration of urban gentrification and explores the perspectives of White parents on public schools. There is, however, a dearth of literature that examines student, and teacher perspectives about gentrifying contexts in California

urban contexts. The following section explores how racial biases can shape the perceived school quality.

Race and Class Forces that Shape Urban School Quality

The racial and socio-economic demographic composition of public schools emerge as prominently connected to perceptions of school quality (Lareau & Goyette, 2014; Lewis et al., 2011). For example, neighborhood schools in predominately Black and other communities of color are often perceived as lower quality without considering academic performance or the type of resources available (Lareau & Goyette, 2014; Lewis et al., 2011; Milner, 2015). School choice in this context intensifies competition in enrollment in a desired school.

The transformation of schools is highly influenced by the efforts of white middle-class parents to create good quality schools for their children that involve fundraising and marketing; yet these same efforts are those that marginalized working-class parents connected to their ability to become involved, along with diluted institutional norms of inclusivity and equity (Billingham & Kimelberg, 2013; Cucchiara, 2013; Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Kimelberg & Billingham, 2013; Posey-Maddox, 2013; 2014). For example, Posey-Maddox (2013) found the increase of involvement from middle-class and White parents, exacerbated historical issues connected to race and class. More specifically, although the focus of parents was bringing in more resources and programs, these efforts decentered, a focus on access, inclusivity and equity (Posey-Maddox, 2013).

There are multiple benefits from White middle-class parent involvement in urban public schools but also drawbacks. The successful transformation of a formerly under resourced school that creates the desired profile, that supports more completion rates, attracts other White middle-class families and at the same time creates barriers for working-class families to access these

exclusive and highly sought-after schools (Cucchiara, 2013; Kilmerberg & Billingham, 2013; Posey-Maddox, 2014).

A growing body of literature has explored gentrification in historically disinvested and racially segregated urban neighborhoods wherein urban schooling are changing (Billingham, 2019; Cucchiara, 2013; Freidus, 2016, 2019; Green, et al., 2020; Pearman, 2021; Posey-Maddox, 2014). Quantitative analyzes explore how schools change in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification (Candipan, 2019; 2020). Further, we know that neighborhood changes that include gentrifying forces can influence demographic changes in schools (Butler, Hamnett, & Ramsden, 2013). Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, and Cucchiara (2014) detail that the changes experienced by urban schools may be a factor that intensifies gentrification. Although research elaborates on the ways that neighborhoods undergoing gentrification, can impact the school enrollment and demographics (Butler, Hamnett, & Ramsden, 2013), no analyses examine the connection between gentrification and school reputation, explicitly. Although multiple social and economic forces shape what constitutes what is or is not an academically-oriented school, it is important to examine how and amorphous construct like school reputation can be used to designate who is and is not worthy. To highlight how racism is one of those forces that shapes who is frame as unworthy, the following examines how historical federal policies functioned to criminalize young people of color engaged in liberation movements of the 1960s, which subsequently informed school disciplinary policies.

Criminalization of Young people of Color

Mogul, Ritchie, Whitlock (2011) unpack how crime is socially constructed and is used to make normal behavior like eating, sleeping, and gathering in public spaces criminal. The liberation movements during the 1960s and 1970s led by young people that engaged in more

militant efforts to demand social and economic change were met with politician-led campaigns that coupled efforts to achieve racial equality with crime (Feld, 2017; Mogul, Ritchie & Whitlock, 2011). White anxieties and resentments about the Civil Rights Movement intensified, strengthening calls for “law and order” and “get tough on crime” (Mogul, Ritchie & Whitlock, 2011). Richard Nixon ran on a tough-on-crime platform that criminalized these overlapping communities of resistance and worked to suppress them (Feld; 2017; Mogul, Ritchie & Whitlock, 2011). During the 1990s, the “get tough on crime” approaches, such as “zero tolerance,” became adopted in schools and, although initially meant to deter weapons on school grounds, became central to shaping disciplinary policies and practices (Feld, 2017; Stevens & Morash, 2014).

Zero-tolerance policies have made it so young people, in particular Black and Latinx who engage in minor, non-violent offenses face serious legal consequences (Bell, 2015; Rios, 2017). The following explores the disproportionate criminalization of Black, Latinx, and other young people of color at the nexus of school and prison.

The School to Prison Nexus

Stovall (2018) argues that U.S. schooling centers on order and compliance, and functions to perpetuate existing oppressive relationships. The school to prison nexus clarifies that young people of color are not sorted from school to prison, but rather that the school works in conjunction with prisons to criminalize, control, and harm racialized young people (Davis, 2003; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Sojoyner, 2016; Stovall, 2018; Wun, 2015). This line of inquiry was first conceptualized as the school-to-prison pipeline and explored how zero-tolerance policies and practices target vulnerable young people. Zero-tolerance policies and practices create criminalizing and militarized environments that actively push Black, Latinx, and other young

people of color out of school and on a path to prison (Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016; Stovall, 2018).

Punitive discipline refers to severe forms of punishment that result from the violation of school policies (Mallett, 2016; Welsh & Little, 2018) The specific violations include fighting, bullying, drug use, along dress code violations (Skiba et al., 2011; 2015). Although an overwhelming majority of schools in the nation adopted zero-tolerance to maintain order and student safety, these approaches do not deter misbehavior (Welsh & Little, 2018). Zero tolerance has adverse outcomes that include higher rates of suspension and expulsion (Skiba, Chung, Trachok, Baker, Sheya & Hughes, 2014) and a higher likelihood that students are pushed out (Annamma, 2018; Morris, 2016).

Zero-tolerance policies have racist origins (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017) that are justified by the political rhetoric that couples deviance and criminality with young people of color (Feld, 2017). Black students are twice as likely as White students to receive office disciplinary referrals at the primary level and become intensified four-fold at the secondary level (Skiba, 2015). Similarly, Latinx students are overly disciplined at the secondary level (Skiba, 2015). Black students are more likely to be suspended and expelled for infractions that included truancy and disruption (Welsh & Little, 2018). Overall, young people of color not only receive office disciplinary referrals disproportionately, but they are also more likely to receive harsher consequences at the administrative level for minor infractions (Skiba et al., 2011). Racialized constructions of Black, Latinx, and other young people of color exacerbate the disproportionate punitive treatment they experience in schools (Skiba, et, al., 2014). Not only does the nexus undermine the assets of working class and students of color but it also frames them as problems. In other words, these oppressive contexts not only create the conditions to criminalize vulnerable

young people but also contributes to the overall image of schools that mainly serve working-class students of color, as low-performing and dangerous. The following explores literature more directly connected to aspects of school reputation.

School Reputation

Blogs and other media publications examine the critical dimensions of K-12 school reputation. These usually center on parent experiences searching for the best school, as well as, detailing the crucial “five steps” or “ten steps” to choose the best school for their child. For example, Tyner (2017) details some of the characteristics of a good school that include “high-achieving,” “well-behaved students,” and a “welcoming atmosphere.” Similarly, Murray (2017), points to rigorous programs, but also data, that is, test scores, graduations rates, college-going numbers, teacher education levels, and diversity. These mainstream online platforms are useful because they highlight that school reputation is a prominent parent concern along with how individuals navigate school choice.

These publications, however, emerge from a White, and middle-or upper-middle class perspective wherein parents not only know the multitude of choices but also know how to navigate the process. Posey-Maddox, et al. (2021) explore the educational decision-making of Black parents in White suburban districts. Specifically, Posey-Maddox, et al. (2021) find that Black parents engage in ongoing risk assessment to determine what is best for their children. While school reputation is a factor that parents consider, race and anti-Black racism emerged as more central factors that inform the process of Black parents choosing a school for their children (Posey-Maddox, et al., 2021). The above offers a broad overview of how school reputation is understood and how it can inform parent decisions about what school to choose for their

children. Although, school reputation can be an important topic of conversation that informs the school choice process, it is necessary to understand how it has been explored empirically.

Internationally, researchers from Turkey define school reputation as “the way in which an organization is perceived by internal and external stakeholders” (Sagir, Dos & Cetin, 2014, p. 137). By learning from school leaders, Sagir, Dos and Cetin (2014) ask how schools obtain a reputation. They find that the components that influence the type of reputation that is attributed to a school includes, spatial location and the socio-economic profile of the students and parents. More significant components include student academic success that refers to test-scores and grades, but also graduation rates. Researchers from Sweden examine how urban spaces that are polarized by class and ethnicity are central to structuring the conditions for local school markets (Bunar & Ambrose, 2016). Using ethnographic methods at three compulsory schools Bunar and Ambrose (2016), examine how symbolic capital or “hot knowledge” about this school market, influences the schools, and the urban spaces. Bunar and Ambrose (2016) find that school choice policy is not implemented in a fair and transparent manner, but that it aggravates prominent patterns of segregation in education and housing. This international research offers some grounding with a useful conceptualization of school reputation (Sagir, Dos & Cetin, 2014), and evidence at an international scale of how residential segregation forces continue to stratify schools and the school choice process via social capital, that is, informal local discourses (Bunar & Ambrose, 2016).

In a United States context, Holme (2002) explores the experiences of parents who can afford homes in areas recognized for “good” schools. Using qualitative methodologies, Holme (2002) examines the unofficial choice market that privileged—almost entirely White and middle to upper income parents, navigate. Holme (2002) examines the choice process itself but also the

underlying beliefs about what made certain schools “good.” She finds that parents did not: know much about the programs of the chosen school, have information about test-scores, nor visited the school they chose. The individual judgements of the participants, Holme (2002) explains, were informed by the beliefs part of their social networks. Not only did these social networks, pass information, but more importantly, construct school reputation and the status associated with the schools. The ideologies connected to status, Holme (2002) elaborates were constructed using meritocratic ideals that not only denied discrimination, but further, rationalized laying claim to superior status positions. Holme (2002) reveals that parents were aware of how their choices meant material advantages linked to a predominately White and wealthy body and, further, accepted the premise that their choices emphasized school quality, not a school population that was majority White and middle-class.

The findings that Holme (2002) sets forth counters the central arguments of school choice proponents, mainly, that school policies level the playing field for working-class and families of color. Holme (2002) demonstrates that the choices parents made was not about school quality, but about the kind of information they garnered from their social networks. Additionally, Holme (2002) points to how school reputations are socially constructed by the social networks the parents were a part of. Moreover, Holme (2002) highlights the idea of status as central in the choices the parents made. Nevertheless, Holme’s (2002) analysis does not consider the experiences of students, nor the possibility that a school that is perceived negatively can transform to obtain a positive reputation.

Similar to Holme (2002), McWilliams (2017), examines the stratifying effect of school choice. Specifically, McWilliams examines the implications of the exodus of students from traditional schools to charters—resulting in lower enrollment rates and the concentration of high-

need students in traditional neighborhood schools. Using ethnographic methods, and with a focus on Philadelphia, McWilliams (2017) examines how young people, teachers and other school staff experience and respond to these realities along with what the neighborhood school has come to signify. McWilliams (2017), reveals how market stratification shapes stigmas that surround traditional neighborhood schools and finds that notions of race, educational quality, and limited school choices, influence the neighborhood and school's collective sense of worth.

McWilliams (2017) contributes to the literature by unearthing how the reality of market-driven school choice, makes the stigma connected to a neighborhood school stronger and simultaneously creates a climate of shame for the students that attend. The negative stigma, McWilliams (2017) finds, influences the sense of belonging that students and teachers experience. Specifically, McWilliams explains, study participants, confront absorbing the characterizations of their school as dangerous and failing. Moreover, McWilliams (2017) uses the construct of worth to reveal how youth participants believed it negatively influences their opportunity to access college. Both Holme (2002) and McWilliams (2017) set forth how school quality and stigma are socially constructed phenomena that have socially stratifying implications. Neither study, however, uses a comparative or temporal lenses to understand school reputation explicitly, and instead focus on school quality and stigma.

Squarely focused on school reputation, Jenkins (2020), examines perceptions of school reputation in Washington DC. By using a place reputation lens⁸ and focusing on interviews with teachers and administrators at a secondary school, Jenkins (2020) examines how they believe their school is perceived by external stakeholders. Jenkins (2020) finds that public school

⁸ Place reputation refers to a combination of perceptions, stereotypes and mental images that are connected to certain places, including schools (Anholt, 2009; Bell, 2016; Hayden, 2000; Tani, 2001). Scholars examine the ways that place reputations can result in material effects such as stigma (Hayden, 2000; Tani, 2001). Even though aspects of the place may change, the reputation carries on via discourse and other means (Tani, 2001).

reputation served as a site of struggle for educators, connected to partnerships, challenges with enrollment and struggle with place. Due to a declining budget, the school relied on partnerships to fill major gaps, however partners at times relied on deficit-oriented constructions about the school and community. Nevertheless, Jenkins (2020) reveals that participants rejected these deficit constructions about the school, students and families. Second, Jenkins (2020) finds that the school's reputation as a "troubled neighborhood school" influenced the ability to attract and retain students because the labels elicited negative images for parents and others. Third, the school was located in an area largely composed of working-class, African-American and Latinx residents, which Jenkins (2020) finds was understood with racial stereotypes that drove the school in some ways to distance itself from the neighborhood in an effort to mitigate the negative reputation.

Jenkins (2020) contributes to the literature by examining school reputation explicitly in an urban and U.S. context. Jenkins (2020) elaborates on how the struggles connected to school reputation are both material, given the serious budgetary issues, but also discursive, because teachers and administrators faced challenging negative views about the school and community. Jenkins (2020) describes reputation as a social construct and specifies that school reputation refers to images and perceptions that are negotiated on an ongoing basis, via performance, gestures and discourses. Moreover, Jenkins (2020) elaborates on how declining enrollment and connected funding, is a direct result of a negative school reputation. Although Jenkins (2020) hones in on an urban U.S. context, it is in the East Coast, which means it is important to examine how the exploration of school reputation is similar or different.

Conclusion

The market-driven educational reform, particularly school choice, has restructured the education system that now offers a multitude of choices. Although it claims to be a solution, Holme (2002) finds that the structure further benefits those with numerous privileges. In combination with school choice, urban centers nationwide are grappling with current iterations of gentrification that are restructuring long-standing working-class and communities of color that often results in displacement (Brown-Saracino, 2016; Hyra, 2015; Pattillo, 2015; Perez, 2004; Laska & Spain, 2013). Public schools in these gentrifying contests have become sites of struggle because as Posey-Maddox (2013) explains, middle or upper middle-class parents who in many cases are White are bringing in more resources and programs to urban schools, however, these efforts decenter access, inclusivity, and equity.

In addition to the forces of coloniality that include neoliberalism that shape urban neighborhoods and schools, racialization emerges as prominent in shaping the above contexts. Specifically, understanding that crime is socially constructed and that both historically and currently shapes, primarily Black and Latinx youth as criminal and violent (Burns, Burns, & McMahon, 2012; Feld, 2017; Stevens & Morash, 2014). The school to prison nexus unearths how schooling works in conjunction with prisons to criminalize, control, and harm racialized young people, which creates oppressive schooling contexts (Davis, 2003; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Sojoyner, 2016; Stovall, 2018; Wun, 2015).

The above demonstrates that there is scant literature on K-12 urban school reputation, but what it has said is that it is socially constructed, that it can influence enrollment, and framed using racial stereotypes. Ultimately this demonstrates schooling is not a common good. The rhetoric that all schools are equal is not true. School reputation is used as a euphemism, to

distinguish underfunded poor schools that are primarily students of color and wealthier schools that are primarily White. Moreover, not only can labels and assumptions shape policy, people also act on labels to reproduce a stratified and racialized school system.

In combination, the above literature informed my research questions to hone in on school reputation, to explore the worth that is attributed to students, to consider the implications for school resource allocation, and lastly to explore how young people and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions. Given the dearth of literature squarely focused on school reputation, it is necessary to explore this phenomenon in depth which led me to utilize qualitative and ethnographic methodologies. Moreover, the theoretical frameworks, coloniality and decoloniality that this dissertation builds on drove me to utilize a critical methodological approach.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Analysis

This dissertation study examined how participants understand school reputation at two urban high schools with opposite profiles to unearth racialized discourses of worth (Quinn, Hopkins, & García Bedolla, 2017) in a rapidly changing urban context. This dissertation builds on the school to prison nexus research to uncover how colonial schooling enacts violence on working-class urban and vulnerable young people of color. This youth population is not only treated as disposable but is actively pushed out of school and on a path toward incarceration (Freeman, 2021; Giroux, 2009; Madrigal-García & Acevedo-Gil, 2016). This study aimed to understand how despite the racialization of colonial schooling, youth engaged in efforts (Cohen, Kahne, & Marshall, 2018; Street, Jones-Correa, & Zepeda-Milán, 2017) to resist oppressive colonial schooling (Patel, 2014) with the support from justice-oriented teachers and school agents (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

More specifically, this dissertation focused on the temporal and spatial contexts linked to school reputation at two traditional urban high schools within the same district as a way to discern colonial schooling realities that privilege and/or harm young people. This comparative ethnographic study explored how participants made sense of the types of perceptions that outsiders (individuals with no connection or distant connection to the site) disseminate about the young people, teachers, and schools at the center of this inquiry. Through a decolonial perspective, this comparative ethnographic study explored how young people and teachers are conscious of and resist deficit and criminalizing discourses—that exist and are reproduced by outsiders, insiders, the media, and the district office—about the city of Monte Caoba, its schools, and youth. I used the qualitative methods of field observation that included: field notes and analytic memos (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), in-depth semi-structured interviews (guided

conversation) (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), and document analysis that included photos that captured images of school facilities, posters, and flyers on classrooms walls and hallways. In combination, these methods gathered data to address the following research questions:

- 1) How do the reputations of two contrasting high schools shape the culture at each site?
- 2) What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation?
- 3) How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions?

I employed multiple methodological tools to address the above questions rigorously. This comparative critical ethnographic study took place during one academic year from August 2015 to July 2016. After data collection, I pulled from the multiple data collection methods detailed above to provide triangulation. The following describes the context for the methodologies and methods engaged in this study. I then examine the connection between epistemology, methodology, and methods. Lastly, the data analysis is outlined, along with trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

Methodology and Methods

Qualitative research is interested in how people interpret their experiences, including how they understand and give meaning to their world (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research is concerned with context and seeks to better understand human behavior and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Merriam (2009) describes qualitative research as the meaning people have constructed and how they make sense of their world and experiences. Frake (1977) explains that people are mapmakers and readers in that they are part of creating and navigating their reality. Qualitative research acknowledges that the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions influence the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). A qualitative researcher gets close to

the situation or phenomenon under study and engages directly with the people involved (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). As such, qualitative research offered the present study an entryway to map and delineate the parameters of colonial schooling in Monte Caoba.

This study was interested in exploring the social context. It engaged in a reflective research process and positioned participants as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Fine, 1994) through in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis. In particular, this study explored how young people and teachers understand their school's reputation and how this, in turn, is connected to individual and/or collective self-worth. Qualitative researchers understand that “there are multiple truths” (Merriam, 2009, p. 10), not only a single truth. Qualitative research is iterative and seeks to account for the complexity of the population and setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Understanding school reputation and exploring how reputation can shape school culture and individuals' sense of worth necessitates collecting data about individual and collective common-sense understandings of groups and people (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Ethnographic research clarified this study's priorities; to be immersed in the world of others, that is, get close, and to understand that the experiences of participants are essential, meaningful, and fluid (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 2011). Ethnography allowed for an understanding of the character of study participants' day-to-day life (Lareau & Schultz, 1996). Broadly, ethnography describes what informants know enables them to behave appropriately given their understanding of common sense in their community (McDermott, 1976). Ethnography also describes culture from an insider point of view (Spradley, 1979). As such, an ethnographer should be a learner and open to be taught. Ethnography entails active participation that is not detached or passive to get close to informants and understand how they respond to everyday occurrences and circumstances

(Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 2011). Active participation affirmed a responsibility to abide by “a code of moral regulation” (Wax, 1980, p. 272-273). The ethnographer's central task is to “reveal the multiple truths” evident in the lives of others (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 2011, p. 4). Overall, the desire to get close and be taught, along with having a critical feminist and anti-racist orientation, prompted me to settle on critical ethnography and Chicana feminist epistemology as guiding methodology.

Critical Ethnographic Research Methodology

Methodology refers to a theoretical perspective as general logic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Critical research foregrounds epistemological issues that shed light on how unequal power dynamics can distort truth claims (Carspecken, 1996). As such, education and social science scholars who engage in critical work understand research as a political act that involves ethics and love (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; Sandoval, 2000). This political and community liberatory work (Rojas, 2011) emerged from oppressive social inequities and as a means to reach social change and justice (Carspecken, 1996; Fine & Torre, 2019; Torre & Ayala, 2009). Thus, critical research's overall intent involves participants and engages in efforts that yield a positive outcome to those who have and continue to experience subjugation and oppression (Morrell, 2004; Figueroa & Sanchez, 2008). This orientation was central to understanding youth and teachers' sense of worth at two schools with contrasting reputations during a period of citywide demographic and social shift. Moreover, my attention to participants' temporal, social, and cultural realities (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998) distinguishes this qualitative study as a critical comparative ethnography. Critical ethnography reveals how power is entangled with social relations and thus should be accounted for when analyzing the interpretations of the informants' shared realities (Bogdan & Biklen, 2012). In other words, a theoretical understanding of social

and human behavior through a critical ethnographic frame reveals the analytical process as not entirely inductive, given the structures at play that include racism, the economy, and schooling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2012). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) affirm that analysis is both inductive and deductive, and draws from Baldamus (1976) to use the analogy of a carpenter who changes the shape of a door but then has to reshape the frame of the door to have a better fit.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology

Chicana feminist epistemology (CFE) as a methodology provides theoretical and analytical tools to support the research process, such as framing the research questions and assessing the findings (Delgado-Bernal, 1998; Harding, 1987). As a decolonial methodology, Chicana feminist epistemology enables Chicanas and other Scholars of Color to embody their background and the tensions that accompany working with communities that mirror their home communities. It refers to “confront[ing] the research process with our total selves—our grief, our fears, our desires, and our love” (Delgado Bernal p. 534). Chicana feminist epistemology carves out a space for research “that does not fit into predetermined categories, that is messy, full of contradictions, often very personal, and sometimes quite painful” (Delgado Bernal p. 535). Moreover, Chicana feminist epistemology centers and reunifies the bodymindspirit.

Chicana feminist epistemology builds on hooks (1989) to compel researchers to interrogate how research questions or approaches perpetuate or reinforce domination. Further, to consider what and whose history and knowledge becomes legitimized through these approaches. Delgado Bernal (1998) details that Chicana feminist epistemology questions the foundation of Western knowledge that outlines rigid dualities and refers to privileging the mind over the body, the subject over the object, objective truth over subjective emotion as male over female. In this way, we learn that Chicana epistemology draws from indigenous roots that embrace a more

holistic approach that rejects false dichotomies of opposition and no reconciliation. Chicana feminist epistemology is rearticulated as a “path of decolonization” (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 514) and refers to challenging traditional and western methodologies to recover neglected voices (Elenes, 2011).

Employing decolonizing methodologies enables Chicana and other Scholars of Color to confront who they are, including if they come from marginalized communities, and work with the same communities. Chicana feminist scholars Figueroa and Sanchez (2008) detail that research is not depoliticized nor a solo act because what inspires them to do research with Latinx communities is connected to “el bienestar de nuestra comunidad” (p. 148) or the well-being of the community. Despite the tension of being accountable to the academy, Figueroa and Sanchez detail how Chicana researchers are accountable “to the communities who have shaped us our entire lives as well as to other academics of color who hold similar epistemologies” (p. 170). This research process enables a deep engagement with the community at the center of the study. Self-reflectivity accounts for the researcher's multiple positionalities and epistemologies. Self-reflectivity supports liberatory work or a commitment to change oppressive systems by being intentional, taking action, and being accountable (Rojas, 2011).

My journey as a youth activist, youth academic advisor, former high school counselor, community organizer, and now as a university teacher and researcher has been informed by “endarkened” feminism (Delgado Bernal, 1998) which makes visible my cultural intuition, “a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic” (p. 568). Delgado Bernal (1998) searched for a theory that legitimized the history and saberes (epistemologies) (Urrieta, 2016) of Women of Color, People of Color, and Chicanas which led to the creation of Chicana feminist epistemology. It legitimizes Chicanas as holders of knowledge.

It centers Chicanas as “sovereign subjects” (p. 494), and as such, can be understood as threatening to White Anglo-American’s sense of who are subjects. Chicana feminist epistemology offers Chicana and Latina scholars an avenue to have the autonomy and confidence to explore their knowledges and stories that have been subjugated and trust their research process. Moreover, Chicana feminist epistemology is “grounded in a rich historical legacy of Chicanas’ resistance and translates into a pursuit of social justice in research and scholarship” (p. 562). Chicana feminism as part of my research functions as a bridge to understand the complex realities and lived experiences of youth of color, particularly Chicana/Latina youth, as well as teacher participants and examine aspects of language, immigration, migration, and legal status among others (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Chicana feminist epistemology simultaneously attends to the influence of race, class, gender, sexuality, and unequal opportunity structures that influence the experiences of a diverse set of participants (Crenshaw, 1991).

This study positioned young people and teacher informants as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Mendoza Aviña, 2016). Similarly, this study sought to respond to the assault on urban youth of color in America (Giroux, 2018), which has been exacerbated by governments not attending to the social conditions that young people of color and their families face. Although this assault is relentless and persists, young people have mobilized to make institutions more accountable to their communities (Noguera, Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Historical Context of the Research Setting

The City of Monte Caoba was established in the middle of the nineteenth century on Ohlone land,⁹ a region colonized by Spanish rule and controlled by California’s mission system

⁹ Pseudonyms will be used throughout to maintain anonymity of participants. References with the actual name of the city will not be cited. Demographic figures are presented in rounded terms to maintain City’s anonymity.

(Miranda, 2013). Disease and warfare decimated the Ohlone people, and the U.S. conquest set off the settlement of European immigrants and Anglo-American migrants (Miranda, 2013). At the turn of the century, the local economy consisted of machine manufacturing, construction, coast trade, and raw material processing from the rural areas. By 1911, there were as many as sixteen hundred trains a day that moved through the city. There were textile mills for cotton and canneries for fruit and vegetables, which offered seasonal employment. The population grew from 66,000 in 1900 to 150,000 in 1910. By 1920 the population reached 216,000, and the majority of the population was of northern European origin, who were immigrants and native-born. By 1950, Monte Caoba became a medium-sized city of 400,000 people that faced with industrialization and population change challenges.

Racial formation, or “the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 109), was central to creating a White middle class in Monte Caoba. While it acknowledges the social construction of race, it also accounts for the consequences that emerge from this social construction. The country experienced an economic recession in the 1920s after World War I, with a growing unemployment rate (Alvarez, 2008; Escobar, 1999). Industrialization in Monte Caoba came with a growing working-class population and union labor organizing (Escobar, 1999). Nativist fears, along with a growing White Anglo-Protestant middle class—led to an active Ku Klux Klan in multiple urban centers nationwide, including in Monte Caoba, where Whites made up 90 percent of the population (Gordon, 2017).

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, 30 percent of Monte Caoba residents experienced unemployment. The challenging social and economic circumstances nationwide drove White families from the Southern Plains to migrate to California (Escobar, 1999; Gregory,

1989). During the Great Depression, roughly 350-400 thousand people migrated from out of state to California (Gregory, 1989). By 1940 manufacturing jobs employed about 21 percent of Monte Caoba's regional population. In addition, it was a newly opened military base that employed thousands of residents and decreased the unemployment rate from 15 percent in 1940 to 2 percent in 1944.

During the 1950s, the African American community in Monte Caoba made up approximately 12 percent of the population. By the 1960s, African Americans made up 23 percent, partly due to the second great migration of Southern Black families moving west (Gregory, 2009). For Mexican migrant workers, the Bracero Program channeled many to California, with roughly 40 percent staying in Southern California. They worked exclusively in agriculture, and a minority (who were able) moved to other sectors like the railroad for better pay (Blauner, 2001). The Monte Caoba census in 1940 counted foreign-born Mexican migrants as less than one percent. In 1950 those identified as White but with a Spanish surname made up 4 percent. By 1960 the Mexican American population was 6.5 percent and remained stable through the 1970 census.

Father Alberto¹⁰ personal Latinx acquaintance, who grew up in west Monte Caoba in the 1940s and 1950s, shared during a personal communication that he recalls a Spanish language radio station, restaurants, a ballroom, corner stores, and later community and political organizations that made the presence of Latinx residents visible in Monte Caoba. African American and Latinx Monte Caoba residents experienced racialization, "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 111). Black and Latinx people's confinement in the western sector of the city

¹⁰ A pseudonym is used to protect the privacy of this personal acquaintance.

meant that by 1950 west Monte Caoba was 80 percent African American while east Monte Caoba was predominately White. During the 1960s, a combination of population growth alongside urban renewal projects that included highway construction pushed the African Americans and Latinx Monte Caoba residents to other parts of the city. Massey and Denton (1993) argue that urban renewal projects, framed as saving areas of “urban blight,” was to remove Blacks from their homes.

The Civil Rights Movement and political activism of the 1960s manifested across the U.S. and beyond worldwide. These overlapping communities of resistance connected their struggles (Gilmore, 2007). There was growing opposition to the War in Vietnam and anti-apartheid forces worldwide (Gilmore, 2007). There was also more militant anti-capitalism—that garnered international solidarity and became aspects of U.S. antiracist activism (Gilmore, 2007). In 1968, the Third World Liberation Front Movement at San Francisco State University erupted via student activism and sent ripple effects nationwide (Bates & Mejari, 2019).

The Black Power Movement of the 1960s worked toward reaching self-determination via Black nationalism, community control of local schools, ending police brutality, and broadly political and economic empowerment (Allen, 1990; Ture & Hamilton, 1967). Black nationalism and broadly cultural nationalism refer to the idea that identity and culture are modes of empowerment (Allen, 1990). The act of naming and shaping individual and collective identity becomes a critical avenue to foster cultural pride (Allen, 1990). Beyond the urban street rebellions (Bates, 2020) during the 1960s in Birmingham, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, Milwaukee, and Watts (Massey & Denton, 1993), political action was brought forth by supporting people to get on the ballot for school board positions, and further promoting voting (Allen, 1990). The media and mainstream society understood Black Power with horror and fear (Allen, 1990). The

shock of mainstream U.S. society that the movement reframed Black identity as power is a symptom of endemic anti-Black racism that exists as one of the central pillars of White supremacy (Smith, 2006). The system came down swiftly on the movement with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) infiltration and assassinations, which became visible with the declassification of internal documents to halt the Black Panther Party's momentum (Churchill & Wall, 1990).

The Chicano Movement emerged from a difficult reality shaped by colonialism and conquest. The label of “permanently illegal” offers an idea of the different ways that Chicana/Latina people face marginalization (Amaya, 2007; Ngai, 2007). Similar to the Black Power Movement, the Chicano Movement sought political, economic empowerment (Gonzalez, 2001; Muñoz, 1989), and community control—to put an end to both police violence (Mariscal, 1995) and subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). These demands materialized with the East Los Angeles walkouts (García & Castro, 2011) and the Chicano Moratorium (Mariscal, 1995). In addition, the movement called attention to the staggering disproportionate death rate of Mexican-American service persons in the Vietnam War (Amaya, 2007) and the colonial labor practices that oppressed farmworkers, and the need for unionization (Pratt, 2017). Multiple contradictions within these nationalist struggles included homophobia and misogyny (Anzaldúa, 1983; Combahee River Collective, 1983; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Sandoval, 1991) that is heteropatriarchal racial nationalism (Smith, 2006). Women of Color and U.S. Third World Feminists became disillusioned by these liberation movements and mobilized against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression. The understanding that systems of oppression are interlocking drove Women of Color to develop an integrated analysis and practice (Combahee River Collective, 1983).

In Monte Caoba, the civil and human rights uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s centered on demands for employment, housing, social services, and curbing police violence in predominately Black but also emerging Latinx communities. It was 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson declared the unconditional War on Poverty (Davis, 2003). This campaign promoted deficit views that reasoned that what plagued poor and/or working-class communities was the family, social disorganization, and delinquency (Valencia, 1997).

In 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson declared the War on Crime. On the ground, Monte Caoba lost over nine thousand jobs in manufacturing when companies relocated to suburban locations. By the late 1960s, unemployment was approximately 12 percent. Research on deindustrialization detail that major employers that included Ford and General Motors relocated for cheaper land, bigger space, and non-unionized employees (Davis, 2006). By 1985 an estimated 24,000 livable wage jobs left Monte Caoba. Economic factors, along with residential and schooling integration that Black and Latinx people experienced as racial tensions and police violence—drove roughly 57000 or 17 percent of White residents to move out of the city between 1960 and 1970.

Simultaneous with the losses in stable employment, the crack epidemic of the 1980s ravaged urban city centers nationwide with drug addiction and violent crime (Brownstein, 1996; Stetzer, 2017). The crack epidemic or the mass influx of rock cocaine was characterized by politicians as a threat to American society and mediated with anti-drug extremism, solidifying the War on Drugs—launched in 1970 by the Nixon Administration (López, 2016). Legislation that included the Controlled Substances Act and refers to mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenses prioritized locking up those selling and using crack, while policymakers gave public health response little priority (Alexander, 2012; Stetzer, 2017). In

addition, Reagan's plan to reinvigorate the economy by gutting social service programs intensified the criminalization of working-class Black and Brown communities (Danziger & Haveman, 1981).

The budget proposed by the Reagan Administration in 1982 represented a reduction of \$44 billion in income security and education (training, employment, and social services) (Danziger & Haveman, 1981). The cuts to social service programs represented a sharp break from the priorities of the 1960s and 1970s, and that came to define the priorities for the following 20 years (Danziger & Haveman, 1981). A combination of factors that include job availability and cuts to social service programs resulted in higher poverty rates for vulnerable populations that had single-family households headed by women, African-Americans, and broadly, families near the poverty threshold (Chaudry, Wilmer, Macartney, Frohlich, Campbell, Swenson, Oellerich and Huan, 2016). Currently, the poverty rate in Monte Caoba is higher than in California at 14 percent (Bohn, Danielson, and Thorman, 2019). In addition, poverty disproportionately impacts Latinx (24%), African Americans (17.6%), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (16.4%) residents when compared to Whites (12.5%).

The demographics of Monte Caoba have continued to change. In 1990 African Americans composed 43.9 percent, while Asians made up 14.8 percent, Latinx made up 13.9 percent, and Whites made up 28.3 percent of the overall population. By 2010 the African American population decreased to 28 percent, the Asian community increased slightly to 16.8 percent, the Latinx community almost doubled to 25.3 percent, and the White population increased to 34.5 percent. A technology industry boom in California has made Monte Caoba and surrounding communities desirable and continues to draw individuals and families from across the nation and abroad (Mandel, 2015). In addition, socio-economic factors continue to shape

Monte Caoba's residents' experiences, including limited affordable housing, which exacerbates homelessness and displacement issues (Marcus & Zuk, 2017). The above factors offer a window into the experiences of young people of color and how their families struggle to keep pace with the demands of a rapidly changing urban context.

Sampling

Site Selection: Pilot Study

A pilot photovoice that refers to a participatory photo-elicitation methodology (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Burris, 1997), a research study at five California high schools, informs the current dissertation. The pilot study utilized purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) to understand how school resources, disciplinary patterns, and academic supports shape school climate and educational experiences for Latinx students. With the support of a co-researcher, we conducted fifteen photovoice interviews with students and six with teachers. Data revealed that a climate of challenging conditions prevailed at all schools. Hence, we documented the New Juan Crow (NJC) in Education, which refers to inadequate school resources, academic underachievement, zero tolerance, and high security that hinders post-secondary preparation (Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016). The five school sites are located in three distinct districts, and one district housed two of the comprehensive high schools and one charter school. The goal was to sample various sites to understand the diverse experiences of the different school settings. A stark difference emerged connected to reputation and perceptions about the schools and the students at two comprehensive high schools within the same district that I identify as Monte Caoba Unified. This stark difference manifested as a school perceived in a positive light, which I identify as Logro High. A second school was perceived as low-performing and dangerous, which I identify as Poder High. The above relationship and how young people, teachers, and other actors made

meaning at both sites about the perceptions and ideas of worth became the driving force for the present study. The pilot study proved helpful and informed the early stages of research design, data collection, and preliminary data analysis (Merriam, 2009; Sampson, 2004).

Monte Caoba Unified School District (MCUSD)

During the data collection year 2015-16, MCUSD enrolled roughly 50,000 students combined in traditional and charter schools. Enrollment in charter schools stood at about 12,000 students. Students' racial demographic breakdown is 41% Latinx, 27% African American, 11% White, 15% Asian Pacific Islander, and roughly 3.5% multiracial. Teacher demographics district-wide are as follows, 23% African American, 13% Asian, 14% Latinx, and 50% White. In addition, roughly 42% of students attend a neighborhood school, which means that most students travel outside of their immediate community to attend school.

MCUSD utilizes a lottery system to determine student placement. In November, families apply online or on a hard copy application before the enrollment year. Families and/or students rank their school choices. MCUSD lottery system recently identified five enrollment priorities that include: 1) *sibling of a current student*, which gives priority to students with enrolled siblings in the desired school; 2) *opportunity*, which offers priority to students whose school is closing or physically moving as a result of school mergers; 3) *neighborhood*, that refers to students who reside in the immediate community houses the school; 4) *school staff*, which refers to children of MCUSD staff; and 5) *general lottery*, which refers to families that do not meet the above enrollment priorities. During their 8th grade year, students are provided with a hard copy or electronic form wherein they can choose up to five schools. Students identify their first, second, third, fourth and fifth choices. The MCUSD enrollment website details that it takes steps to ensure each student has equitable access to the district's opportunities, however, study

participants detailed that, White and middle-class parents, have the time go down to the central office to put pressure and to ensure their children are placed in the school they desire.

During the study year, 71.5% of students districtwide were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, there were 30% English Emergent Bilingual students. In terms of a college-going culture (Acevedo-Gil, 2014), district wide there were 53% of students in their sophomore, junior, and senior years in high school enrolled in college or career pathways. The year before data collection, the graduation rate stood at 61%. The enrollment of newcomer students (referring to refugee, asylum, and unaccompanied minors) makes up 4% or 2,000 students. As far as student homelessness, the district began to track it during the 2018-19 school year and found that district-wide, there were roughly 300 foster and 900 homeless students enrolled.

Comparative Case Study

Qualitative case studies search for insight and meaning. The case study design becomes an avenue for discovery and a way to understand where the researcher functions as the instrument for data collection and analysis. The outcome is an in-depth description of that bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) details that a bounded system refers to the “what,” or a single entity that can be “fenced in” (p. 40). The single entity or the “what” refers to the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation (Merriam, 2009). Cresswell (2007) explains that a researcher can explore “...a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection...” (p. 73). The research design in the present study entails two bounded systems or cases, given that I explored the experiences of informants at two traditional urban high schools. Stake (2006) explains that schools can be cases that are real things that can be visualized. Merriam (2009) details that the topic of study of

ethnographic case studies explores the culture of that social group(s). Moreover, the case study offers in-depth descriptions and explanations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The present study was a comparative case study, which refers to collecting and analyzing the data from both cases (Merriam, 2009). I looked at a high school perceived as desirable with a second as undesirable within the same school district. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that a comparative case study offers a detailed description to understand similar and/or contrasting case findings that explore how, where, and why. Further, a comparative case study “strengthens the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29).

The fieldwork for comparative case studies is usually done at one site first. Then, the focus shifts to the second site, given that simultaneous data collection can be complex in data management and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). The pilot study, personal connection to the research setting, and prior relationships with teachers and/or staff members at both sites were factors that contributed to confidently committing to conducting data collection at both sites simultaneously (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978). The approach of data collection at multiple sites moves away from “place-based notions of the field” (Hall, 2004, p. 109) and toward a “multi-sited research imaginary” that explores how ways of making meaning connect people as they circulate “across time and space” (Hall, 2004). This approach shifts attention from the actual place to explore how meaning-making is understood, taken up, moves, and exists in different situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). In other words, how meaning-making is understood (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016).

Logro High School

Logro High School is located in the *Blossom Hill Neighborhood*, a community described as “trendy” that houses numerous businesses, including restaurants, cafés, and grocery stores.

The Blossom Hill neighborhood combines residential, commercial, retail spaces, and historic architecture, including apartment buildings and single-family homes with access to local parks and hiking trails. The amenities include eateries, churches, ice cream shops, corner stores, yoga studios, bike shops, and even art galleries. The local newspaper articles detail that the neighborhood has “improved,” including building renovations and walkable practical amenities, and services and goods including gourmet coffee and eateries, which cater to more middle-class consumers. Unfortunately, improvement means the displacement of long-term residents and businesses.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Blossom Hill neighborhood grew to become an Italian-American neighborhood until about the 1960s. Monte Caoba was an Italian immigrant destination where some of the residents owned their businesses, including restaurants, deli’s, and produce shops. Italian Americans and those who were recent immigrants faced prejudice and institutional barriers. Yet, Blossom Hill was a vibrant community where the residents worked in the auto industry, construction, janitors, and seasonal food canning. While Italian Americans and recent Italian immigrants experienced discrimination, other more vulnerable populations, including Black and Latinx, were prohibited from purchasing homes in neighborhoods that included Blossom Hill due to racist lending practices (Jan, 2018). More recently, this neighborhood has seen waves of migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia that continues to add to Blossom Hill’s diverse makeup that is 66% White, 7% Black, less than one percent Native American, 10 % Asia, 30% Latinx, and 15% from two or more races.

The Blossom Hill neighborhood boundaries include, on the east, the artery that houses Logro High school. The western boundary is a freeway located east to west. On the north side, the boundary divides Monte Caoba from a neighboring city, and the southern boundary divides a

more commercial downtown area. Logro High is located in a two-lane, two-way boulevard with a tree-lined median; it is a busy boulevard with two traffic lanes in both directions. Parking can be a challenge for residents and visitors to the area, especially during scheduled street sweeping days that happen twice per month. There is new construction of six-story apartment buildings two blocks away from the high school. A new shopping center is three blocks away from Logro, with a Chase bank branch, Safeway, Starbucks, multiple restaurants, nail shops, and cleaners. Neighboring streets are lined with single-family homes. The homes showcase lush lawns, vegetable gardens, or water-resistant landscaping. The houses usually have one or a combination of updated paint jobs, newer roofs, dual pane windows, and benches on the front porch. On the southern end of Logro, the boulevard also houses new and used car dealerships, three-story apartment buildings, and adjacent streets lined up with single-family homes.

Logro High School school's mission is "to be a thriving and inclusive community that prepares students for college and career success by providing services, supports, and programs, that foster academic, social, and emotional responsibility in school and community." Monte Caoba recognized the building that houses Logro High as a city landmark because it is over one hundred years old. In 1959, Logro High was identified as a "model urban learning institution" by a national education organization. During the 1960s, students at Logro high school established one of the country's earliest Black Student Unions.

Over the last ten years, student enrollment at Logro has been diverse. During the data collection year 2015-16, student enrollment at Logro was as follows, 18% Latinx, 20% Asian Pacific Islander, 31% African American, and 24% White (California, Department of Education, 2018). In total, there were 2216 students enrolled. The percentage of students who qualify for free-or-reduced price lunch is 64%, and 17% English Emergent Bilingual. The school has 90

classrooms housed on the big campus and a smaller campus located two blocks away or a ten-minute walk. The school has five academic pathways and twenty-three advanced placement (AP) and honors courses. The prior school year had documented close to 400 students who took slightly more than 700 AP tests, with about three-fourths of these passing with a score of three or higher on a 1-5 grade scale¹¹. The school profile showcases award-winning and notable student activities: theatre, engineering, robotics, computer science, orchestra, and tech innovation.

The student enrollment at Logro High has fluctuated. While it has maintained a diverse student demographic, the student makeup has shifted over the decade preceding the study year. There has been a significant decrease in the enrollment of African American students and an increase in White students. For example, during the 2005-06 school year, student enrollment was as follows, 13% Latina/o, 19% Asian Pacific Islander, 59% African American, and 7% White, enrollment was made up of 1661 students that year (California Department of Education, 2018). The above figures detail that close to one-half of the African American student population has decreased for ten years while the White student population has increased threefold.

Poder High School

Poder High school is located in the *Zócalo* neighborhood, a community known for its street vendors who sell various foods that include fruit cups, corn on a stick, and *tamales*. Similar to Blossom Hill, it is a neighborhood that combines residential, commercial, and retail spaces. Multiple restaurants serve Mexican, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan cuisine. Some restaurants serve Middle Eastern, Cambodian, and Chinese cuisine. In addition, there are numerous Mexican bakeries, convenience stores, produce stores, clothing retail stores, furniture stores, and traditional herb remedy shops. Colorful murals adorn multiple building walls, and *papel picado*

¹¹ The figures are presented in rounded terms to avoid disclosing the school's identity.

decorates streets during the Día de los Muertos celebration. The Cinco de Mayo was celebrated in Zócalo during the 2000s until 2011, when organizers canceled due to budgetary issues.¹² Día de los Muertos is a yearly celebration in Zócalo for the last twenty years. More recently, these celebrations have seen roughly 70,000-100,000 attendees.

Zócalo has three intersecting city arteries that allow traveling across the city from Monte Caoba's Downtown to Chinatown and then into the city's eastern part, Zócalo's location. Historically, Zócalo has been home to predominately Mexican, Mexican-American, Central Americans (otherwise labeled as Latinx) residents who are first and second-generation and recent Indigenous immigrants, Mam speaking¹³ people from Guatemala. During the 1950s and 60s, what was termed "urban renewal" and connected to freeway construction created displacement and pushed Latinx residents from the western part of the city to Zócalo and resulted in an emergent Latinx community. Zócalo was the center for the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 70s, with visits from César Chávez, the noted labor leader, community organizer, and civil rights activist. It was a hub of activism for the Brown Berets and other social justice leaders who served the Latinx community. For example, in 1971, three law students inspired by the philosophies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and César Chávez came together to provide access to high-quality, culturally appropriate health care for working-class populations. This effort resulted in the creation of a community-based clinic they named El Amanecer.¹⁴ This neighborhood clinic has grown and continues to serve the community. Besides El Amanecer, multiple community-based organizations in Zócalo offer services primarily to the Latinx, Spanish, and Mam or Mayan-

¹² Cinco de Mayo, a celebration to commemorate the victory of the Battle of Puebla against the French has been celebrated in Monte Caoba since the 1920s in the western part of the city.

¹³ According to an NPR editorial, over the last forty years, an estimated 18,000 Mayan Mam-speaking people have immigrated from Guatemala—to flee poverty and violence and have made Monte Caoba and the surrounding cities home. Many Mam people do not speak English or Spanish, and also many do not read or write any language.

¹⁴ Pseudonym and Spanish meaning the sunrise. Pseudonyms will be used throughout to maintain anonymity of participants and settings.

speaking communities on legal and social matters, including immigration, housing, and labor.

The streets lined with single-family homes offer different home shapes and styles in varying conditions, with well-maintained outside and lush gardens growing tomatoes, beans, *chiles*, corn, and zucchini. Other homes have chipping paint, overgrown weeds, and roofs in need of repair. On Sundays, Zócalo's Catholic church has four scheduled mass celebrations in Spanish, two in English and one in Vietnamese. During my attendance at the eight-fifteen Spanish mass, the church pews filled to the brim with attendees. While sitting in a pew, I recall over ten women who wore traditional handcraft textiles that included a *huipil* or women's blouse, *corte* or skirt, *faja* or belt, and the *huipil* blouses woven in an array of colors. Those that caught my eye were purple, green, and pink handcrafted designs. Some carried a baby on their back with the help of a *rebozo* or shawl.

In local news stories, Zócalo community members detail that within the last 10-15 years, their neighborhood "has changed a lot" in particular, they see affluent White and Asian families that are buying homes. The rents have increased drastically by roughly 83% compared to 71% in similar neighboring neighborhoods. These trends have driven families out of the community altogether to other parts of the state with cheaper rent. Using census data, researchers have investigated how this neighborhood has changed in light of multiple development efforts. They found that thus far, Zócalo has lost one percent of its Latinx population, which begs how long the trend of having a majority Latinx and working-class demographic will hold, given the ongoing increase in the cost of living. When walking along one of the city arteries, building construction is visible with cranes overhead. Yet, street vendors that sell fruit cups and corn on a stick continue to use the corner of a busy intersection as a business site.

Poder High School was established in 1905. During the 1920s, Poder was named one of

the best-equipped high schools in the city with a state-of-the-art athletic field. The campus was tended to carefully and was known as a place of beauty. A subsequent fire, in the 1930s ravaged the building, which the Board subsequently proposed to construct a new building. Currently, Poder's mission is to "provide a rigorous, inclusive, and equitable education to Monte Caoba's students." Poder High's vision is "to provide a diverse community that instills creativity, critical thinking, and technological skills that allow students to enjoy a rich intellectual life and to be ready for the college and career of their choice."

Similar to Logro High, Poder High is diverse. During the study year, the student racial-ethnic breakdown was 64% Latinx, 6% Asian-Pacific Islander, 22% African American, and 2% White, reflecting a majority Latinx student demographic. In total, there were 773 students enrolled. The percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch is 84%. There are 43.6% of students identified as English Emergent Bilingual, wherein close to 30% of the school population are designated as Newcomer students. The school has three academies and eight AP courses.

Multiple schools in Monte Caoba became configured as small schools in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This reform aligned with the small school movement that outlined the benefits of smaller learning communities to foster student connectedness, more individualized attention, and a way to positively influence completion rates (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006). Poder High was configured as three high schools, each with its administration and housed in different parts of the same facility. This configuration lasted for ten years and then reverted to the big school model with one administration. Teacher and staff informants shared that these configuration changes created instability in enrollment, teacher turnaround, and the school's overall feel.

Research Participants

Study participants included students, teachers, administrators, counselors, staff members, community members, and parents across Poder and Logro High Schools. It was necessary to learn from multiple informants across both sites to answer the research questions:

- 1) How do the reputations of two contrasting high schools shape the culture at each site?
- 2) What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation?
- 3) How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions?

The procedures instituted allowed me to cast a wide net and contact multiple actors, participants, and select informants across both sites. My efforts allowed me to build respectful relationships that enabled ongoing conversations throughout the study to obtain insight to answer the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). There were multiple informal and unstructured interviews conducted during the eight-month data collection with young people, teachers, administrators, counselors, community members in the non-profit sector, and parents. Casting an initial wide net allowed me to figure out where my interests lay, which allowed me to hone in as the study progressed. Specifically, I was interested in learning from young people who engaged in student leadership activities as well as teachers and staff who utilized their practice to provide more equitable education opportunities.

Validity

Maxwell (2005) describes validity, not as a product but a goal. It refers to the soundness of an argument (Carspecken, 1996). Qualitative researchers contend that reality is uncapturable given that “validity is relative” (Merriam, 2009). Ethnographers do not offer a “pure” representation of the meanings, interactions, and events (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Even

so, researchers, or human beings, who are the instrument of data collection, are “closer” to that reality when compared to other research tools (Merriam, 2009). As such, this study employs multiple qualitative methods to support validity and reliability. Specifically, member checks (Maxwell, 2005) refer to feedback solicited from informants, which allows for the clarification of misinterpretation of events and interactions and can be garnered once or throughout the study. Complimentary to members checks included triangulation or multiple methods to collect data (Denzin, 1978). Employing this type of triangulation ensures trustworthiness (Guba, 1981). Lincoln & Guba (1985) conceptualize reliability as dependability and consistency. Reliability refers not to the replicability of findings but rather to whether the results align with the data collected (Merriam, 2005).

This comparative ethnographic case study employs multiple data procedures that include: a) semi-structured, unstructured, and informal interviews with students, teachers, counselors, parent leaders, and administrators at both school sites; b) participant observations at both school sites, recorded as analytical memos and detailed field notes of sitting in multiple classrooms, walking the hallways, sitting in the cafeteria, watching school assemblies, and spending lunchtime with teachers and/or youth groups. I also conducted participant observations in the neighborhoods surrounding the school sites. c) researcher produced photographs (Preskill, 1995; Walker, 1993) of scenes in the school sites, posters, flyers, pamphlets, applications, and information about social services offered to students and families. The interpretations and/or assertions set forth around students and teachers are set in specific school sites, districts, and city contexts.

Study Procedures

A critical ethnographic approach afforded this study multiple levels of analysis to answer

the guiding research questions that seek to understand how the experiences of young people and teachers are shaped by the reputation of their school, in particular, whether it shapes the culture at their school and their sense of worth. The data collection techniques implemented include: a) semi-structured, unstructured, and informal interviews with students, teachers, counselors, parent leaders, and administrators at both school sites; b) participant observations at both school sites, recorded as analytical memos and detailed field notes of sitting in multiple classrooms, walking the hallways, sitting in the cafeteria, watching school assemblies, and spending lunchtime with teachers and/or youth groups. I conducted participant observations in the neighborhoods surrounding the school sites. c) Researcher produced photographs (Preskill, 1995; Walker, 1993) of scenes in the school sites, posters, flyers, pamphlets, applications, and information about social services offered to students and families.

Interviews

Interviewing was critical for this study. Dexter (1970) describes an interview as a purposeful conversation. Interviews are a way to understand individual meaning-making and how they organize their world (Patton, 2002) that cannot be observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Embarking on this project, I understood that the initial research questions were changing, but served to offer focus (Creswell, 2007). Informed by the pilot study interviews in 2014-15, and years as a case manager at a high school, I outlined the first set of interview questions (Agee, 2009). After entering the field, collecting data, and reviewing relevant literature, the research questions changed (Creswell, 2007). The research process of honing in on specific topics was iterative (Agee, 2009). As the interviewer, I drew on Spradley's (1979) techniques and methods to draft the research questions and a subsequent revision of research questions and interview protocols (See Appendixes A and B: Semi-structured Interview Questions). Ethnography aims to

learn from people by listening to their views and language (Spradley, 1979). As such, I implemented Spradley’s unrestricted or open-ended method to listen for culturally specific words and meanings, which supported the organization of domains that refer to multilevel symbolic categories (Spradley, 1979).

Interviews were one-on-one, 40-90 minutes long, semi-structured, and transcribed verbatim. I heeded to Bogdan and Biklen's (2016) advice to “listen carefully,” and to not interrupt interviewees unless the conversation was highly tangential, “to change the direction of the conversation” (p. 100). I implemented Spradley's (1979) principles to facilitate rapport. My process was to provide an overview of the study and restate what informants said during the interview. Interviews with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and members of the community examined the following topics: teacher profession path, teaching demands, school organization, school leadership, innovative pedagogy, teacher leadership, parent involvement, parents leadership and advocacy, socio-economic factors influencing student attendance, student activism, student future aspirations, school discipline, diverse demographics, educational goals, high need students, gentrification, connections between immediate neighborhood and schools, housing and food insecurity, and multidimensionality of reputation, among others.

Table 1: *Interview Participants*

Semi-structured Interviews	Poder High School	Logro High School
Students	18	22
Teachers	16	15
Administrators and Staff	3	3

Student Interviews

There were two types of opportunities to talk with the students from Poder High and Logro High about the reputation of their school, the surrounding neighborhood, the broader city, and their overall feelings about their high school experience. I used interviews to understand how students made sense of the reputation attached to their school and what type of worth they attributed to their school and/or themselves. The first entailed spontaneous informal and unstructured interviews with students regularly during the first half of the year, and sporadically during the second half during my visits to classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias. The open-ended questions were intended to start conversations about classroom activities, how their day was going, and aspects of their school they appreciate and/or found difficult. For the second, during the latter part of the spring semester, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 22 students at Logro High and 18 at Poder High.

I recruited students interviewed at both sites, in 9-12th grade English (including English Language Development), history, art, youth leadership courses, and youth groups. Short five-minute presentations offered an overview of the study and my interest in learning about their experiences as students. At Logro High, 73 students expressed interest in being interviewed and filled out a data intake sheet, included as Appendix C. Of the 73, there were 22 who submitted parent consent. Out of the 22 youth formally interviewed, eight were twelfth graders, five were eleventh graders, and nine were tenth graders. Ninth-grade students expressed interest; however, they did not submit parental consent. At Poder High, 55 students expressed interest, and 18 submitted parental consent. Out of the 18-youth interviewed, two were twelfth graders, six were eleventh graders, seven were tenth graders, and three were ninth graders. Challenges with meeting for interviews included students who worked after school and during the weekends, or

lived far away from school. Some students worked on their own in restaurants or selling fruit boxes on the corner of street intersections. Others worked alongside parents cleaning houses, gardening, or overseeing family-owned liquor stores. Additionally, some students commuted from across Monte Caoba or other cities as far as forty miles away.

The semi-structured interview questions were open-ended and utilized a mix of descriptive, structural, and contrast questions to learn about the neighborhoods where students reside, and if different, the community that houses their school. Questions explored perceptions held by outsiders, or individuals who are not residents or do not have a connection to the school, about their neighborhood and school. Questions posed to students encouraged them to describe if they found similarities and/or differences between their neighborhoods and their school. Broadly, questions sought to understand student feelings about their school. Lastly, the questions asked about student aspirations and goals for the future, as well as what they considered as support systems to reach those goals.

Teacher Interviews

At both sites, during the first part of the school year, school administrators emailed all teachers to inform them about my yearlong study and to forward a letter on my behalf that offered an overview of my study and a sheet to fill out if they were interested in participating. There were two types of opportunities to talk with teachers from Poder High and Logro High to explore topics about the reputation of the school, the surrounding neighborhood, the broader city, and how they experienced teaching daily. I used this approach to understand how educators make sense of the reputation attached to their school and whether they believe it influenced the worth attached to the school and/or themselves as educators.

The first entailed spontaneous informal and unstructured interviews regularly during the first semester and sporadically during the second semester. The time and location for these interviews varied but included in classrooms during prep periods, in the hallways, in the courtyard, and/or at lunchtime. I used open-ended questions to start a conversation about how their day was going, what they were struggling with, sharing something they were looking forward to, and how they were doing. These ongoing informal interviews with teachers across both campuses were crucial to building rapport. For the second, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers at Logro High and 16 teachers at Poder High during the middle of the spring semester. At Logro High, the racial-ethnic breakdown of teachers interviewed included: seven White, three Latinx, three African-American, and two Asian-American. At Poder High, the racial-ethnic breakdown of teachers interviewed included: four Latinx, two African American, four White, five Asian-American, and one multi-racial.

The semi-structured interview questions were open-ended and utilized a mix of descriptive, structural, and contrast questions to learn what drove teachers to become educators. Teachers were asked to detail the students they serve and some of their realities at home and in their neighborhoods. Questions asked teachers to share what they know about the neighborhood surrounding the school and the neighborhoods where some of their students reside. Questions asked veteran teachers who have worked for ten years or more at either site about how their school has changed or stayed the same. Questions asked about their efforts to support students and their feelings about their everyday experiences at their site, in short, understand their sense of belonging, comfort, and investment.

Administrator and Staff Interviews

I conducted formal semi-structured interviews with two administrators at Logro High and an informal interview with a counselor. At Poder High, I formally interviewed the community manager, who mobilized and integrated school and community resources to improve their impact on student learning, one counselor, and one informal interview with an administrator. The administrators at Logro High and the community manager at Poder High have a longstanding presence at each site. One of the administrators at Logro High coached the girls' soccer team 18 years ago, later became a teacher, and now works as an administrator. The administrator follows in the footsteps of a family member who worked as an administrator at Logro High twenty years earlier. The second taught at Logro for four years before becoming an administrator, and has family members who attended and graduated twenty years ago. The community manager graduated from Poder High roughly about 20 years ago. They demonstrate a deep commitment to the school and the success of students. The community manager and one of the Logro administrators were informants who shared a great deal about each site's history and trajectory. One of the counselors at Poder High was also interviewed and offered valuable insight as a staff member recruited one month after the school year and who works to support student's academic success.

The formal semi-structured interviews, which lasted approximately 45-90 minutes, were recorded and transcribed. I conducted interviews at a time and place convenient for the participants; the interviews took place in and out of school. All interviews were audio-recorded and stored electronically on my password-protected personal computer. I informed participants that their participation in this study was voluntary. The identity of the participants, school sites, district, and city were kept strictly confidential. The interviews were crucial to understanding the

school culture, school climates, school organization, and structure that influence the day-to-day functioning and school community.

Participant Observations

Spradley (1979) describes participant observations as a strategy to listen and watch actors and informants in natural settings. Participant observations refer to systematic descriptions of behaviors, language, and interactions (Cresswell, 1998). It is a strategic method that puts researchers where the action is and involves going out (Bernard, 2006). It refers to a description that engages all five senses and maps the study topic (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Participant observations facilitated interactions with multiple actors and informants across both sites. Participant observations proved to be an essential technique to gain the trust of select informants at both sites. The ongoing conversations that emerged from participant observations facilitate learning the culture at both sites from the native point of view (Spradley, 1979). Specifically, participant observations explored how participants understood their school's reputation, and the reputation of the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, observations documented how the school culture and climates manifested. Moreover, observations centered on examining how agency shaped the everyday experiences of participants.

I engaged in participant observations at each site two times per week for approximately eight months. Permission was well negotiated, which allowed me to do participant observations openly, “the advantage of release from the duties of being a regular participant and therefore, the freedom to come and go as you wish” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 79). At Logro High, 25 teachers permitted me to visit their classrooms to conduct participant observations. In total, I conducted participant observations in 35 classes because select teachers agreed that I could visit more than one of their classrooms. At Poder High, 19 teachers permitted me to visit their

classrooms to conduct participant observations. Similarly, select teachers allowed me to conduct participant observations at more than one of their classes, and in total, I observed 27 classrooms. During participant observations in classrooms, I maintained a peripheral role and understood that my presence influenced the classroom and the students because field research is not entirely neutral; a detached observer independent of phenomena observed are unlikely (Emerson & Pollner, 2001). Observations focused on the school's everyday workings: school organization, pedagogical styles, classroom demographics, the types of communication and interactions between students, teachers, and administrators, among others.

At both sites, I conducted participant observations during student-led assemblies, information sessions about academies, and visits from middle school students considering enrolling in Logro High or Poder High. At lunch, I sat with teachers and participated in student group meetings with permission. I walked through and sat in the attendance office and cafeteria. I walked the hallways and hanged around both campuses and in the surrounding communities. Additionally, I attended community meetings at Poder High School to discuss a lack of support by the district, which the Poder community articulated in public flyers posted on campus. I recorded observations of what I saw, I reflected during and after each observation. Efforts to separate what I observed from what I inferred, interpreted, or was feeling included a field-note journal with a vertical line in the middle of each page that functioned to separate observations from inferences, interpretations, or comments.

Data Sources: Field Notes

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) define fieldnotes as “writing about one’s experiences and observations derived from intense and involved participation” (p. 5). Fieldnotes or “inscriptions” of a chosen social context function as a written way to make it more transparent

and facilitate the study, review, and reflection of that social life (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Erickson (1984) describes the purpose of fieldnotes as making visible what has become normalized or make the familiar strange. Geertz (1973) represents “thick description” as an ethnographic practice that offers an in-depth description of life experiences. This practice allows for participatory mapping (Chambers, 1992). Central to meaning-making was to engage with “informants as persons rather than as objects” (Geertz, 1973, p. 20). This study utilized a critical comparative ethnographic approach to understand how actors, participants, and informants understand school reputation at two urban high schools with opposite profiles. Fieldnotes were written chronologically during and after each visit. With the help of a margin on the right-hand side of a fieldwork notebook, I recorded experiences, ideas, questions, emotional responses, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, interpretations, and connections to theory (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Spradley, 1979). These practices were essential because, as Gubrium and Holstein (1997) remind us that in ethnography, the “what” is intrinsically connected to the “how,” which means that the activities and circumstances along with the researcher emotional responses of fieldwork are forces that shape observations and the recording of the lives of others (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

At the end of fieldwork for the day, I transferred handwritten notes into a computer document to create an expanded account (Spradley, 1979) that filled in details using thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). I followed Schatzman and Strauss’s (1973) tri-model of organizing expanded fieldnotes as different packages that included observational notes (ON) that refer to the “Who, What, When, Where, and How of human activity” (p. 100). Theoretical notes (TN) refer to “self-conscious” efforts to meaning-making through impressions, connections, and interpretations. Along with methodological notes (MN), or activities that are completed or

pending, and function as a guide of what is next, what is missing, or a reflection of emotional responses and critiques of my process. Moreover, the hand-written fieldnotes of participant observations and informal interviews were scanned to a portable document format and saved in a folder created for fieldwork conducted each day of data collection.

Photographs

Scholars have explored photography as a method to present social research (Preskill, 1995; Walker, 1993). Gold (2004) describes visual research as a tool that can complement other methods. Photographs are sources of data and tools that support the research process (Schwartz, 1989). Chen (1992) interviews Minh-Ha and finds that images emphasize critical processes, relationships, and themes. A tension connected to using photographs as data has been how they get used by those who capture the images and view them (Schwartz, 1989). For this study, photographs were used as data generators (Schwartz, 1989) to record information connected to school culture, events of interest, and emergent patterns. Specifically, photos included posters, flyers on community events, college information, school academies, pamphlets about programs, and/or social services offered to students and families.

Analytic Memos

Analytical memos were written approximately every two weeks or when necessary, and focused on documenting experiences and learning, particularly the emergent themes, patterns, and connections (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The analytic memos became a way to begin developing codes for data analysis. The analytical memos included sense-making and offering some context of the when and where. Memos centered on terms used by teachers and students such as “diversity,” “racism,” “poverty,” “gentrification,” and “trauma,” among others. Writing

analytical memos on participant observations and interviews was a way to identify codes connected to racialization in the school context, youth resistance, and teacher resistance.

Table 2: *Research Questions and Modes of Data Collection*

Research Questions	Modes of Data Collection
1) How do the reputations of two contrasting high schools shape the culture at each site?	Participant observations, fieldnotes, interviews
2) What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation?	Participant observations, fieldnotes, interviews
3) How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions?	Participant observations, photos, documents, fieldnotes

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis is inclusive and a way to uncover categories, dimensions, and relationships between and among these (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). It represents a systematic examination of a social system as a way to learn its parts, the relationships between those parts, and the relationship to the whole (Spradley, 1979). A systematic examination refers to working with data; to organize, breaking it up into units, code, summarize, and exploring the emergent patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Data analysis emerges from interpretation--developing ideas about findings and connections to the literature or broader social concerns (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). For this study, data analysis and collection occurred simultaneously to inform ongoing observations and interviews (Charmaz, 2001).

There were two stages of analysis that included a within-case analysis that explored each case as a comprehensive unit (Merriam, 2009). Once the analysis of each case was complete, the second stage of cross-case analysis began (Merriam, 2009; Rihoux & Lobe, 2009). The first stage of analysis utilized a combination of inductive and deductive approaches (Maxwell, 2013).

The second stage of cross-analysis used solely inductive approaches. There were two levels of deductive analysis. The first reading of field notes and photographs occurred before conducting the interviews and explored the connection with the pilot study's findings (Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016). In particular, deductive codes from the pilot study examined in the field notes and photographs included: school material resources, caliber or quality of education, criminalizing schooling practices, and student aspirations. The second reading occurred upon the completion of data collection and considered patterns across student and teacher narratives and coded using the theories from my conceptual framework to uncover examples of “colonizing conditions,” “schooling violence,” “critical consciousness,” and “resistance.” I delayed the secondary deductive analysis to allow for the inductive codes to first be fully explored.

An inductive analysis involves a detailed reading of data to derive concepts and themes through data interpretation. In other words, it refers to the theory that “emerges from the bottom up (rather than from the top down)” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 9). Inductive codes were derived utilizing three coding levels in grounded theory—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). During the first level, I engaged in open coding. I identified and named the categories present in the data. In the second level, or axial coding, I identified relationships between categories while attending to how larger structures shape the data (Malagon, Perez Huber & Velez, 2009). In the third level, or selective coding, I identified core categories to answer the research questions. Data analysis was iterative and occurred for the duration of the study. The first reading of data occurred before collecting teacher and student interviews, and the second happened once I completed all interviews. The third reading occurred once all data was collected. Theoretical memos were used to identify and clarify the relationship between each data category (Glaser, 1998).

Positionality

The research setting and sites were not new spaces for me in 2015-16, given my personal connection to the setting along with the pilot work that I conducted at both sites. Yet, getting to know these spaces as a researcher yielded a new understanding of both schools and community members' daily practices. Villenas (1996) writes to untangle the multiplicity of her identities and dilemmas that emerge from mitigating the circumstances of being a colonized woman of color and the colonizer given her role as a researcher and connection to the university. Villenas (1996) identifies a “native” ethnographer as one who deals with a marginalized position in relation to the dominant society. I am a “native ethnographer” who works within and writes about my community. I carry the baggage of marginalization, resentment, “*orgullo* (pride), and celebration.” (Villenas, 1996, p. 726). As a “native” ethnographer, I critically engage with my family’s history of colonization and conquest and my position as a Woman of Color to challenge an assumed role of “privilege” and colonizing White researcher.

I enter this community as a descendant of survivors and those sacrificed by war and economic oppression. My father fled his home in El Salvador when the civil war intensified due to U.S. direct involvement that provided funding, weapons, and military training (Quan, 2005). Forced recruitment into the military of young boys rounded up in public places (Dickson-Gómez, 2002). He immigrated from El Salvador to Guatemala. He did not stay and entered México; a migration process described as step migration. My father arrived to Michoacán and worked a laborer to send remittances to his family in El Salvador. The step migration culminated with crossing the border into the U.S. (Hamilton & Stoltz-Chinchilla, 2001). My mother grew up in a small rural pueblo, Santa Fe Del Rio, Michoacán. Her parents were third-generation farmers who worked the land, *trabajaban la tierra*. My mother migrated to

Morelia—the capital—to work to support her family. It was in Morelia where my parents met and later were married. They were a young couple with small children, during *la década perdida* or the debt crisis in México and other Latin American countries with a stark decrease in the GDP along with an interruption of external financing (Ocampo, 2014; Rodríguez, 1991). Job and housing insecurity drove my father to cross a border for the third time without his family.¹⁵ As a transnational family, we lived apart for five years. My father made the sacrifice to be away from his family to work in the U.S. and to obtain a more stable economic future (Cortes, 2008). It was 1990 when my family immigrated together to the U.S. and began to reside in the city of Monte Caoba. My mother and father obtained no more than a middle school education, which meant they worked low-wage jobs for my mother, fish packing, and my father, demolition. These labor-intensive jobs resulted in bodily injuries that drove my parents to become self-employed.

As newly arrived immigrants during the 1990s, my parents had growing fears about statewide xenophobic and racist legislation such as Proposition 187 and Proposition 227 and the accompanying nativism and racism. There was also discourses of fear that circulated in the media that referred to a climate of violence that claimed to be prevalent in the city and schools. These negative misconceptions that were deployed in the media framed both Monte Caoba and its youth of color as dangerous. In the 1990s, Monte Caoba was emerging from a crack epidemic. State and national efforts to mediate this national epidemic were to criminalize and punish those who were caught selling and using (Hartman & Golub, 1999).

¹⁵ Los Tigres del Norte a regional Mexican music band immortalized this experience and trajectory with the song *Tres veces mojado* released in 1988. It details the journey of people from El Salvador who are driven to cross three borders as a result of difficult socio-political circumstances to arrive to the United States. Despite being uncertain about their journey or whether they will make it to the U.S. they risk their life in search of the opportunity for a better way of life.

Davis (2003), Gilmore (2007), and Alexander (2012) explore mass incarceration as judicial policies and practices that are rooted in U.S. history and function to maintain racial power relations with profound disproportionate racial impacts. The criminalization of drug possession and sales, along with more aggressive policing that included racial profiling and stop-and-frisk procedures, became the elements of mass incarceration. The tough on crime policies punished minor offenses and criminalized everyday practices (Davis, 2003; Feld, 2017) Davis and Gilmore challenge discourses of fear and offer context to violent crime trends in cities like Monte Caoba to explore the crumbling economic infrastructure, triggered by high unemployment, minimal social services, and continued racial segregation that concentrates poverty (Gilmore, 2007; Massey & Denton, 1993).

I enter this work as a grounded community activist and former case manager professional at a high school in a neighboring city. Uplift is a high school agency that functions as a comprehensive community school partnership that provides holistic learning and academic opportunities, alternatives to suspension practices, and parent leadership development.¹⁶ As a case manager, I worked with working-class young people of color and families to support on-time graduation and pursuit of higher education by reducing the impact of outside barriers that interfere with personal and academic wellness. Students were continually labeled as “disengaged” or were blamed for their “unwillingness to work hard,” which pushed some students out. This experience further propelled me to engage in research as a means to create change on the ground.

Members of my family in El Salvador spoke up to reach *justicia* or social justice for those facing social and economic marginalization. This trajectory and orientation of solidarity informs

¹⁶ Pseudonym.

my work with working-class communities in Monte Caoba as a researcher and beyond. Once I transitioned into my Ph.D. program at UC Davis, I remained committed and involved in community efforts that include building capacity for the Uplift agency. I have also offered college information workshops for El Amanecer young people as part of a peer-health youth program and volunteer efforts for a Monte Caoba parent advocacy organization around transformative family engagement.

In qualitative research, ethics refer to moral principles of right and wrong accepted by a group at a particular time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Ethics are discussed as informed consent and protecting informants that no harm comes to them (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). The approach taken in this study reveals ethics as a reflexivity of values and beliefs as well as the responsibility to uphold informants as “constructors and agents of knowledge” (Spivak, 1988) and to remain vigilant not to reproduce colonial or “imperial translation” (Fine, 1994). Moreover, this study sought to utilize humanizing approaches that refer to “build[ing] relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness-raising for both researcher and participants” (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi). I committed to truly listen (Bakhtin, 1990; Bartolome, 1994; Schultz, 2009). As a critical ethnography, this dissertation sought to engage in humanizing research that involved building relationships of dialogical care and raised consciousness for the researcher and participants (Paris, 2011). Paris (2011) explains that a humanizing stance is particularly pressing when working with communities facing oppression and marginalization. A humanizing stance calls on researchers to push back on their findings and their engagement in the research act.

Timeline

I obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval from UC Davis and approval from the Monte Caoba Unified research unit. Monte Caoba Unified offered a conditional approval

pending site approval. Site approval from Poder High came from the community manager. A Poder High teacher, a participant in the pilot study, was my first point of contact and connected me with the community manager. Site approval from Logro High came from an administrator. I connected with the administrator via a friend who is part of my network and the administrator's family member. The pilot study afforded me rapport with two teachers at Poder and one teacher at Logro. My first efforts were to build rapport with the school community beginning at the end of August, September, and October 2015. Data collection during fall 2015 focused on mapping each site; the ongoing informal interviews were a strategy to engage in member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to get a sense of how my understanding aligned with that of insiders. After the winter break, I engaged in renewing rapport with the school community, ongoing participant observations, and informal interviews, which informed the questions I asked during the semi-structured interviews with teachers in March and April 2016. Teacher interviews explored their experiences as educators and understood the community of students they serve and information about the neighborhood that houses their school. It was of utmost importance for this study to learn from young people how they experience schooling and their understanding of school and neighborhood reputation. Interviews with students occurred during May and June 2016. At the end of June and the first part of July 2016, I conducted the last informal interviews with teachers, staff, and students participating in the summer bridge activities at both sites about their efforts to welcome incoming students. It became necessary to learn from students, particularly about the views they held about each site as they were getting ready to begin their ninth-grade year there.

Research Timeline

Table 3: *Research Timeline*

Months	Activities	Sources of Data
August-October 2015	Build rapport, Participant observations	-Fieldnotes (that include informal interviews) -Photos
October 2015	Participant observations, informal interviews with students and teachers, collection of photos	-Fieldnotes (that include informal interviews) -Photos
January-February 2016	Renewing rapport, Participant observations, Informal interviews with students and teachers	-Fieldnotes (that include informal interviews) -Photos
March-April 2016	Participant observations, teacher interviews	-Fieldnotes -Transcripts -Photos
May-June 2016	Participant observations, student interviews	-Fieldnotes -Transcripts -Photos
July 2016	Informal interviews with teachers, summer program staff	-Fieldnotes -Photos

Limitations

As a comparative ethnographic case study of two high schools with contrasting reputations, generalizability questions might emerge. In particular, whether the research findings bear up beyond the research participants, sites, and setting. Generalizability was not the goal of this study, nor does it generate the standards for rigor. Instead, this study sought to offer an in-depth temporal and spatial understanding of how participants understand school reputation aspects at two diverse urban schools in the same district and whether it has some weight on

feelings of worth. Questions might also emerge about whether my attitudes and decision were factors that biased the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). When discussing Chicana feminist epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998), I argued that research in this tradition is full of contradictions given how personal it is. The personal connection I have to the research community, I find to be a strength in this study. While this study utilized multiple methods to collect different data sources to answer the research questions and achieve trustworthiness, the research design has limitations that include a small sample size and participants' self-selection. Yet saturation was reached early, and 23 codes emerged within the first nine interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

Chapter Four: Contextualizing the Urban Community and School

This critical ethnographic study explored how the school reputations of two urban schools can shape the type of worth that young people and teachers attribute to themselves, their school, and their community. Conceptually, this study elaborates on how schooling operates as a system of coloniality. Manifestations of coloniality include deficit perceptions and discourses that are produced by the media, the MCUSD office, but also insiders, that is, those who reside in Monte Caoba communities. While urban communities have demonstrated to be dynamic and ever-changing, prominent historical scholarly works have constructed the urban negatively as a stagnant place that is disproportionately Black, poor, and criminal (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007; Noguera, 2003). These deficit portrayals emerge from works in our history framed as scientific yet have proved to racialize and construct those most vulnerable as problems (Du Bois, 1903; Chavez-Garcia, 2012; Gordon, 2007). Moreover, these deficit views justify social disparities, which are not attributed to structural inequalities but rather to individual decision-making and cultural pathologies (Chavez-Garcia, 2012; Valencia, 1997; 2010).

Instead of continuing this trend, this dissertation offers multiple counter-narratives that talk back to those imaginings and assumptions about urban youth of color. First, the following unpacks the construction of vulnerable individuals and populations and its connection to worth. Second, the evolution of deficit thinking will be explored to highlight its connection to coloniality to understand how deficit thinking that manifests through school reputation is a tool to oppress and justify social and educational disparities. Third, this chapter explores what make up urban and urban schooling to contextualize the findings for this study. Moreover, the

following offer tools to understand and challenge reductive perceptions of Black, Latinx, and other young people of color in urban communities and schools.

Vulnerability and Worth

Ideas about worth make visible the colonial hegemony that has become invisible, but that nonetheless dictates, who is designated as valuable and who is relegated to vulnerability. Marc Lamont Hill (2016) sets forth that those who are relegated to be nobodies are vulnerable. He argues that the creation of nobodies connects to the defunding of social welfare, privatization, mass incarceration, and broadly systemic racism. Hill (2016) uncovers the ways that the state is implicated, in particular, the ways that America is waging war on the vulnerable. Hill's (2016) analysis unfolds by exploring the deaths of Black, unarmed, young, poor, and mentally ill at the hands of police. This approach allows him to identify the interconnected forces that systematically oppress trans, queer, working-class poor, Black, Brown, and immigrant. Those categorized as nobodies experience vulnerability and violence because they have been "abandoned by the state" (Hill, 2016, p. xvii). Discourses of being undeserving or unworthy of investment rationalize abandonment and limited protection from the social contract, leading some populations to premature death (Cacho, 2012; Hill, 2016).

Historically, the territorial birthright citizenship of Anglo-Saxon and White Americans has been normalized along with the foreignness of people of color (Ngai, 2007). Mills (1997) argues that the rights and liberties that proclaimed all men were created equal were meant only for white men with property. The social contract refers to an implicit agreement among members of society to be law-abiding and to use nonviolent means to dispute rules through legal channels. On the other hand, the racial contract is an unspoken ideology that reveals that legal protections do not apply to Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in the same way

as whites (Mills, 1997). As discussed in previous chapters, while race(ism) is central to experiencing vulnerability, multiple systems of oppression that include gender, class, and ability (among others) are entangled and operate as one (Hill, 2016).

The racial contract manifests as White innocence and Black guilt and is made visible with the death of Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man who was out on a run when two White men shot him down because they thought he was a burglary suspect (Serwer, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the racial contract, particularly the disposability of essential workers, including California's 420,000 farmworkers.¹⁷ Serwer (2020), with *The Atlantic*, reflects on how the lives of essential workers, those in the front lines of the pandemic, have been deemed worthless because employers forced them to work under unsafe conditions. Those disproportionately affected by these circumstances were Black and Brown workers, whose lives are expendable to fuel the economy (Serwer, 2020). To further explore historical forces that create nobodies or non-beings (Fanon, 2004; Grosfoguel, 2016) who are vulnerable and disposable, I turn to the evolution of deficit thinking.

Deficit Thinking

Deficit thinking refers to the continued racialization of vulnerable nonwhite populations for the daily disparities they experience (Valencia, 1997; 2010; Grosfoguel, 2016). One of the earliest examples of deficit thinking, which occurred during the European colonization of the Americas in the 15th century (Menchaca, 1997) Spain, was the Las Casas-Sepúlveda debate wherein Sepúlveda argued that Indians were irrational and inherently inferior, which justified their enslavement (Hernández, 2001). Conversely, Las Casas argued Indians were sensible

¹⁷ Not only are farmworkers disproportionately undocumented, but they lack health insurance and are also unable to access unemployment or the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act stimulus (Garcia-Navarro, 2020).

human beings and, as such, should not be enslaved (Hernández, 2001). This debate became a way to articulate doubts about “the right of conquest and just war” (Hernández, 2001, p. 95). The limitations of this debate were multiple. The Indigenous people of the Americas did not participate, nor their cosmologies used to challenge Spanish ideologies of superiority, conquest, and war (Hernández, 2001). Racialization refers to the marking of bodies as superior and inferior that designates Indigenous, Black, and other nonwhites as biologically, intellectually, and morally inferior (Grosfoguel, 2016; Menchaca, 1997). These categorizations rationalized settler colonialism (Byrd, 2011) and the institution of slavery (Washington, 2008). The presumption that Indigenous, Blacks, Mexican, and Puerto Ricans were inferior served to justify colonization, slavery, and current modes of exploitation and subordination (Fredrickson, 1981; Horseman, 2009; Noguera, 2003).

The foundation of genetic pathology refers to social Darwinism or inherent intelligence; Galtonian eugenics or improving the human race through selective breeding; and Mendelian genetics, which refers to the perpetuation of stratification like segregation (Valencia, 1997). Researchers conducting these scientific studies held biases and implemented flawed methodological approaches to meet Whites’ political priorities (Valencia, 1997). The set of beliefs that emerged from scientific racism included that Blacks were less intelligent, sub-human, and did not experience pain (Washington, 2008).

Deficit thinking evolves and adapts based on what is temporally, spatially, and socially acceptable. In the 20th century, cultural deficit thinking held that the family unit transfers deficiency (Foley, 1997). A prominent example is the culture of poverty, which designated negative traits that included being lazy, pathological, violent, and overall dysfunctional to those who faced poverty (Lewis, 1966). The assumption is that the negative values, norms, and social

practices are the aspects that sustain a cycle of poverty that can exist across generations (Foley, 1997). Similarly, the Moynihan report (1965) attributed deficiencies to the African American family, including instability, women-headed families, and welfare dependency. The Moynihan report (1965), relied on white heteronormativity to make its claims of dysfunction and assumed that the African American family was insular and not influenced by socio-historical and structural forces. For example, although it references a high percentage of nonwhite families applying for public assistance during the 1960s, a prosperous economic period, it neglects to disclose that the scope of entitlements became expanded and thus finally accessible to African Americans during this period (Neubeck & Cazenave, 2001).

Research on school achievement attributed the struggle with the achievement of working-class Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities to cultural deprivation, inadequate socialization, and accumulated environmental deficits (Fordham, 1995; McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1987). These works detail that culture shapes academic performance, which is not openly racist, yet ensure that lack of culture—which refers to a presumed lack of intellectual stimulation at home and dearth in the language—holds Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students back and requires interventions (Ladson-Billings, 2017; Pearl, 1997). These works showcase how racist beliefs are deeply rooted in U.S. society and are used to blame parents who are assumed to be “uncaring” or students as “lazy.” There is little focus on supporting the needs of vulnerable children (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011). Instead, labels that include “at-risk” are used to describe vulnerable students, yet overemphasizes shortcomings and do not account for strengths young people and their families hold (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

Deficit thinking is grounded in a limited understanding of structural and systemic oppression and its functions to racialize (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). Schooling approaches in

the past and present day assume that young people and their families are deficient. Thus, schooling is framed as an avenue to overcome deficiency by adhering to White, middle-class behavioral standards, and English as the dominant language norms (Paris, 2012). The portrayal of Black and Latinx students as uneducable, that is, not worthy of adequate school funding and support is insidious and harmful (Anyon, 2014). The following section will further unpack the meaning of the urban that denotes a place and people.

Historical Construction of the Urban

I am weaving several bodies of literature that explore the symbolic constructions of the urban and examine the difficult social and material conditions in urban settings. Scholars of color, in particular, have helped us challenge deficit literature that blame BIPOC populations for the systemic inequalities they experience. Noguera (2003) describes the urban as a social and cultural construct used to describe a place and people that have attained socioeconomic and racial dimensions. In particular, Noguera (2003) found that terms like “community” and “urban” are less understood in terms of geography and more connected to identity and perceptions of interests. Similarly, Tuck (2012) explains that the urban has become a coded way to talk about race, particularly working-class people of color. Fine and Ruglis (2009) detail that naming the urban is to bring forth the historical construction of oppressive forces that deteriorate. In particular, the urban refers “to a nexus of material conditions and experiential realities” (Tuck, 2012, p. 12). According to Fine and Ruglis (2009), the urban is a landscape that cements a relationship defined by the parasitic nature of racism where Whites benefit from ongoing dispossession of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. The myth that fuels the colonial project of education is that adherence to mainstream public education will result in social mobility (Patel, 2014) and, broadly, entitlements (Paperson, 2010). However, Paterson (2010)

argues that “entitlements require exclusion” (p. 12). In other words, an abundance of oppressive spaces that can emerge as underfunded schools, connects to the development of very few exclusive schools that sustain privileges (Paterson, 2010).

The imagined meanings of the urban, as a ghetto, and disorganized place can normalize and justify deficit thinking by legitimizing Black, Brown, and Indigenous people who reside in urban communities as lazy, pathological, and deviant (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007; Moynihan, 1965). These characterizations support stereotypical images reproduced in the media and politicians (Diaz-Cotto, 2006; Rios, 2008). Lipman (2011) details that the construction of Black and Brown people as the “undeserving poor” rationalize the elimination of social programs funded by the government, which does away with the responsibility of the state to provide social welfare. By exploring the cultural politics of race, Lipman (2011) contends that efforts to pathologize Black and Brown urban poverty become tools that validate the dismantling of struggling communities. Accounting for the imagined meanings of the urban is essential because it makes visible the dehumanization that Black, Latinx, and other young people of color who are presumed to be delinquent experience (Pinnow, 2013; Rios, 2006; Rios, 2008). Moreover, the normalization and acceptance of the deficit and racist images of the urban assert that spending money in urban schools is a waste because young people in these settings “do not value education” and “are not going anywhere” (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007; Rodriguez, 2007).

Historical Urban Segregation

Longstanding efforts to uphold residential segregation were critical to shaping the urban imaginary as a predominately Black and Brown place of decay and crime (Lichter, Parisi, De Valk, Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018). Residential segregation is presented as the principal structural feature that perpetuates urban poverty and racial inequity in the United

States (Massey, 2016; Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018). Combining individual racist behaviors and systemic and institutional forces in the local and national levels manufactured segregation and racial isolation (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018). Individual racism refers to terrorist attacks and violent actions that include physical assault against Black and other people of color visiting a White neighborhood or moving into a neighborhood undergoing racial transition (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018). Systematic efforts included neighborhood associations focused on improvement that sought zoning restrictions and institutions like banks that would not provide home loans to Black applicants (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018).

The nation underwent a period of economic transformation during the 1970s and 1980s, which influenced predominantly Black, urban, and working-class communities (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018; Wilson, 1978). In addition, there were court-ordered busing to schools and deindustrialization (Ruby & Mirel, 1997), which refers to an economic recession, inflation, the elimination of good-paying jobs, and lower wages (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018). A combination of busing and economics factored into the massive exodus of White middle-class residents from urban centers (Massey & Denton, 1993; 2018) and was supported mainly by government subsidies and federal lending programs that facilitated their homeownership¹⁸ (Lipman, 2011; Lipsitz, 1995).

The economic and social factors discussed above were devastating for urban centers, including the withdrawal of hospitals, doctor offices, supermarkets, department stores, banks, and even movie theatres (Anyon, 1997). However, Massey and Denton (2018) argue that “Segregation, not middle-class out-migration, is the key factor responsible for the creation and

¹⁸ Federal lending programs that included the Federal Housing Administration Loan (FHA) and Veteran Administration (VA) that supported the exodus of middle-class Whites from the inner city and into suburban communities and resulted in urban decline (Massey & Denton, 1993).

perpetuation of communities characterized by persistent and spatially concentrated poverty” (p. 118). By the turn of the twenty-first century, Black and Latinx families with income over \$60,000 were more likely to reside in working-class urban communities due to persisting discrimination (Anyon, 2005; 2014). The U.S. housing markets continue to show multiple indicators of segmentation by race and class, which also stratifies access to benefits of resources by race and socioeconomic status (Massey & Brodmann, 2014; Sharkey, 2013). Although the levels of segregation have dropped since 1980, and higher income has resulted in higher levels of interaction with Whites, African Americans continued to remain quite segregated from Whites (Intrator, Tannen & Massey, 2016). In other words, African Americans continue to experience less integration and higher levels of poverty even when compared to other minority groups (Intrator, Tannen & Massey, 2016). These trends parallel the segregation trends in schooling, and how inferior schooling disproportionately harms Black and Latinx students (Orfield, et al., 2016).

Historizing Schooling: A Project of Coloniality

Since its inception, U.S. schooling has been a violent system of power and control. The trifecta of coloniality explored in chapter one, I argue, has been central to the schooling that vulnerable children experience. The trifecta of coloniality consists of: *coloniality of power* that reinvents colonial systems into contemporary social arrangements that privilege and oppress; *coloniality of knowledge* that refers to the production and distribution of western and White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) ideology and knowledge; and *coloniality of being* that creates people who are problems and frames them as disposable (Gordon, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2000). While education became institutionalized starting about 1850, policies along with practices were previously instituted to restricted literacy and

control the minds and bodies of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (Du Bois, 1903; Lomawaima, 1999; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Williams, 2005; Zephier Olson & Dombrowaki, 2020). Further, carrying out the purpose of schooling has resulted in the subjugation and repression of non-western knowledge and people (Quijano, 2000).

The first phase of compulsory education or universal school attendance in the U.S. began roughly about 1850 and ended right before the turn of the 20th century (Tyack, 1976). The ideology that proponents of compulsory education used was that schools were essential to the health and well-being of the republic. A democratic education set forth that future generations should play an active role in the nation's economic, cultural, and political life (Dewey, 1916; Mills, 1956). Racialized ideas of inferiority prevented Blacks, Indigenous, and other People of Color from attending school during the initial groundwork of schooling infrastructure (Tyack, 1976). Overall, compulsory education became a way to strengthen White-Anglo Saxon Protestant norms (Tyack, 1976). Schooling became a tool to assimilate all children utilizing White and middle-class norms (Paris, 2011; Patel, 2014). These efforts have been violent, ruthless and continue to inflict harm.

The history of compulsory education neglects to account for how the education of enslaved Black people was strictly outlawed. Enslaved people were surveilled, controlled, and restricted by using slave codes (Robinson, 2017). The institution of slavery was violent and emblematic of total domination and power by White and oppression of Blacks (Patterson, 1982). Enslaved people experienced physical whippings, torture, and rape (Jones-Rogers, 2019; Patterson, 1998). The remembrance of slavery, the legacy of forced labor, and violent control in the U.S. continue to shape the experiences of Black Americans (Caruth, 1995).

While slavery became outlawed in the U.S. with the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865, new iterations of racialized control to support capitalist profit persist and include Jim Crow (Robinson, 2017) and imprisonment (Alexander, 2012). The outlawing of literacy for Black enslaved people was central to the maintenance of a racialized structure of domination, given the “South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 27). W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) offered a rendering of the establishment of schoolhouses in the South after the war that “showed itself in ashes, insults, and blood” (p. 27). Williams (2005) examines the relationship between African Americans and literacy during slavery and the first decades of freedom and recounts an intense determination of African Americans to become literate amid White violence. Although White violence was central to circumventing the educational efforts of freedpeople, it was their determination and creativity that supported their efforts to learn to read and write (Williams, 2005). Williams (2005) unearths the resolve of freedpeople—not northern Whites—during and after the war to commence an education movement in the South.

During the second half of the 19th century, the dominant ideology used to justify schooling for Indigenous communities was that they were savages and deficient; schooling or a way to civilize and convert them into the Christian faith (Lomawaima, 1999). Federal policy in the 1870s mandated the education of Indigenous children in boarding schools (Zephier, Olson & Dombrowaki, 2020). The underlying goal of boarding schools was to “Kill the Indian, save the man” (Lomawaima, 2008). As a result, there were generations of Indigenous children who were taken from their families and required to renounce their traditions and language as a way to meet Anglo-White American standards of civility (Zephier Olson & Dombrowaki, 2020). The traumatic implications of the abuse that entailed-kidnap, torture,

rape and sometimes murder, exerted by boarding schools have been well documented (Brave Heart, Chase, Altschul, 2011). Despite the severe and devastating outcomes of the Indian boarding schools, children, families, and entire tribal communities resisted and ensured the survival of oral traditions and histories (Zephier Olson & Dombrowaki, 2020). Moreover, Indigenous communities that included the Hopi refused to send, and sometimes never sent their children to the boarding schools, which showed their resistance to the state and broadly settler colonialism (Tuck & Wayne, 2014).

The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 ended the U.S.-Mexico War and ratified the U.S. annexation of territory by conquest (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). This Indigenous land was colonized by the Spanish and subsequently governed by the Mexican state (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The people were multi-racial but primarily were of Indigenous, Spanish, and African descent. By virtue of where they resided were Mexican and after 1848 became U.S. citizens. After that, schooling was tasked with transforming the cultural identities of Mexican children because they were perceived as inferior, deficient, and permanently foreigners (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Although schools were in existence before the conquest, they were part of community life and contributed to promoting literacy and culture in these frontier regions (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Subtraction methods were used to remove the Spanish language, cultural practices, and curriculum connected to their experience (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The purity of Anglo-American culture was argued to unify all under a common language and culture. Early subtractive campaigns of English-only did not succeed because there were politically solid communities like in New Mexico (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). From 1850 to about 1930, Mexican Americans became economically

impoverished, politically powerless, and isolated, which resulted in inferior schooling (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990).

Segregated schools were inequitable by multiple indicators. The indicators refer to the teacher-to-student ratios, per-pupil expenditures, and promotional practices. Specifically, Mexican American children were retained in the first grade for more than one year; it did not matter if they performed well academically (Luna, 2017). By 1930 85% of schools in California were segregated. In Texas, the percentage of segregation was more significant at 90% (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990). Additionally, the facilities were inferior, with bare concrete floors, lavatories outside the building, and no walls separating stalls (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). This inferior and segregated schooling led many children to struggle with school success, which resulted in high attrition rates (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). These inferior segregated schooling conditions were met with vociferous resistance by Mexican American families during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Those families organized major legal campaigns to reach educational equity (Christopher, 1986; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998).¹⁹

Urban Schooling: How Did We Get Here?

Like urban communities, the imaginary of urban schools is that they are dangerous, are failing, and are primarily Black and Brown. Focusing on Newark, New Jersey, Anyon (1997) explores the historical factors that led to a school system of disrepair in the 1990s. In the 1930s, urban schooling was primarily for White working-class students, which changed during and after World War II when Black families from the South migrated to various urban centers (Anyon, 1997). By the 1940s and 1950s in Newark, primarily Jewish, Irish, and Italian teachers were in

¹⁹ The following includes a list of major legal campaigns that were brought to the court to challenge schooling segregation for Hispanic or who we understand today to be Latinx communities. *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930, 1931); *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District* (1931); *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946, 1947); *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop Country et al.* (1948).

the classroom with Black children from the South (Anyon, 1997). Teachers who were retiring perceived the incoming students as “more difficult to teach,” “unruly,” and “unmotivated” (Anyon, 1997, p. 91). White teachers' racialized and deficit perceptions about Black, Indigenous, and other students of color that manifested during these periods of racial transition were never addressed or mitigated in any way, which fueled tensions (Pizarro, 2014).

By the 1960s, when Newark schools became majority Black, Anyon (1997) details that educational funding was lowest. Less spending on education meant that educational quality also diminished (Anyon, 1997). U.S. schools facing aging infrastructure, with buildings, were over 100 years old. In particular, Anyon (1997) explains, “The U.S. Civil Rights Commission found that, in 1950, 10 of the 12 central cities spent considerably more per pupil than did the surrounding suburbs; by 1964, in 7 of the 12, the average suburb spent more per pupil than did the central city” (p. 90). Funding inadequacies translated into textbooks shortages, low pay for teachers, and a shortage of qualified teachers (Anyon, 1997).

Although integration efforts in 70 urban cities, including Newark, during 1964-65, racial segregation became a central element of urban schools (Anyon, 1997). The segregation that continues until the present day stratifies access to benefits by race and socioeconomic status (Massey & Brodmann, 2014), which means allocating fewer resources to nonwhite communities and schools. Anyon (1997) concludes that the outcome of economic and political decisions across multiple generations—that include a 60 percent decrease in federal funding to cities in the 1980 and early 1990s—have resulted in inadequate education and employment opportunities, limited resources, and multiple social issues. The hourglass economy or high wage jobs for those with advanced degrees, low wage jobs for those with little or no degrees, and few positions for those with modest education (Portes & Zhou, 1993) offers a framework

to make sense of a rise in U.S. economic inequality since the 1970s (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Wolff, 1995). It seeks to understand how households with wage(s) can still not meet basic needs, along with a steady increase—12 percent since 2007—in homelessness (National Alliance to End homelessness, 2020). Wealthier communities have vocal constituencies that policymakers attend to, given their goal of reelection (Anyon, 1997); while policymakers might understand the urgency of pumping social services and funding to communities impoverished communities of color, this does not usually translate as a legislative priority.

Factors That Influence Urban School Quality

Numerous works have shown that poverty contributes significantly to school underachievement (Anyon, 2005; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2008; Wright, Chau, & Aratani, 2010). Conditions that include crime, drugs, as well as losing loved ones to violence are stressors that can impact the overall mental and physical well-being of urban young people (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Moore & Tonry, 1998). Additionally, housing affordability, food insecurity, and access to health and dental care are considerable influences that shape schooling experiences (Coleman et al., 1966; Lipman, 2011; Milner & Lomotey, 2014; Noguera, 2011). Families with low wage earnings or no employment are more likely to move, creating instability (Ullucci & Howard, 2014). Nationally there has been an increase of unhoused students (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). Moreover, if a young person feels like they do not own adequate clothing, they might not want to attend school (Sauerwein & Cohen, 2000). Young people in poverty experience constant stressors where their basic human needs are under attack, resulting in depression and anxiety (Barajas, Philipsen, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Basch, 2011; Duncan-Andrade, 2009). The economic realities for families mean that students have material,

emotional, and social needs that influence their ability to learn (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Noguera, 2003).

It is essential to understand that schools depend on the resources and support of local communities (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011). Urban public schools confront multiple issues and are assumed to fail when unable to improve outcomes, even though it is challenging to meet student needs. We know that schools in high-poverty districts have inadequate facilities, materials, and courses (Boyd, Lakford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2003; Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2005; Phillips & Chen, 2004; Rogers, Oakes, Fanelli, Medina, Valladares & Terriquez, 2007; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). There is a high turnover of teachers and leaders like superintendents and principals, creating instability (Darling-Hammond, 2010, 2004). Further, novice teachers and school leaders receive low pay and are on the frontlines of these complex issues (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Working-class students have decreased educational outcomes, more difficulty with social-emotional development and academic success (Barajas, Philipsen & Brookers-Gunn, 2008; Lin & Harris, 2009; Murnane, 2007; Noguera, 2010). Noguera (2003) describes urban public schools that work with poor children as “the last and most enduring remnant of the social safety net for poor children in the United States” (p. 7). Public schools are a vital lifeline for families experiencing poverty, which means there should be broader efforts at the local, state, and national levels to address the social contexts that create insurmountable barriers for so many children.

Neoliberal Influences Shaping Communities and Education

Lipman (2011) argues that education is shaped by and deeply implicated in globalized political, economic, and ideological processes that redefine cities over the past 25 years. Neoliberalism is an ideological project to reconstruct values, social relations, and social

identities—to produce a new social imaginary (Lipman, 2011). The neoliberal ideological project has shifted national priorities that include education. In the 19th and 20th centuries, proponents of compulsory education framed schooling as a necessity for the democratic government and the foundation for active citizenship (Welter, 1965). This ideology changed during the 1970s and 1980s with the massive rollbacks of social welfare and a shift to free-market capitalism (Lipman, 2011). The arguments that support a free-market (in every aspect of society) include that government is inefficient and that capitalism promotes individual liberty, or better, free people (Harvey, 2003; Suzuki, 2020). A neoliberal ideology has redefined democracy to mean choice and individual freedom to be consumers (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal ideology strips away ideas of social responsibility, solidarity, equality, and collectivity to focus instead on efficiency (Giroux, 2016). The educational system has changed drastically as a result of disinvestment (Giroux, 2016). There have been multiple efforts put in place to privatize education (Giroux, 2016).

Urban communities are changing and look different from 20-30 years ago (Lipman, 2011). Urban communities in different parts of the U.S. encompass zones of extreme poverty that include homeless encampments (Marcus & van Kempen, 2000; Sassen, 2006) and zones of hyper-affluence (Lipman, 2011). Local economic disinvestment in working-class, primarily Black and Brown communities in Chicago, Lipman (2011) argues, creates the conditions for Gentrification. Gentrification refers to efforts that dismantle the sustainability of working-class neighborhoods and subsequent revitalization to appeal to an incoming middle-class demographic (Hackworth, 2007; Lipman, 2011). These efforts reproduce inequality, displacement, and an overwhelming number of homeless people on the streets (Lipman, 2011).

Latinx Demographics and Emergent Bilinguals

In 2019, the Latinx population in the U.S. reached nearly 61 million (Neo-Bustamante, López, & Krogstad, 2020). Nationwide, Latinx people make up 18 percent of the population, making this the largest racial-ethnic minority group in the nation. In education, Latinx children are the second largest population after Whites and makeup 27.3 percent of those enrolled in K-12 schools (California Department of Education, 2020). Although segregation, in particular school segregation, is understood as a Black and White issue (Gándara, 2010), we know that roughly 78 percent of Latinx students attended minority schools primarily compared to 73 percent of Black students (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2008). In addition, Orfield & Frankenberg (2008) found that Latinx students in urban areas in the western U.S. are more than 60 percent hyper-segregated, which refers to segregation by race/ethnicity and poverty. Thus, urban communities are not necessarily shifting from Black to Latinx, but it is clear that the urban context is multidimensional. Latinx communities represent a pan-ethnic group with multiple communities with different needs and desires (Mora, 2014).

In fall 2015, 4.9 million students in public education identified as Emergent Bilinguals (E.B.), wherein three-quarters or over 77 percent were Hispanic-Latinx (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). There has been a 1.5 percentage increase in E.B. students enrolled in public schools from 2000-2017, which means that by 2016-17 there was 9.6 percent of E.B. students enrolled (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Although the percentage of E.B. students in California has decreased slightly, it continues to be the state with the largest percentage, 20.2 percent. The E.B. population in California consists of 85.3 percent Spanish Speakers distributed across the major urban regions of Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Area and in regions like the Central Valley categorized as urban, suburban, and or rural

(Edward, Leichty, & Wilson, 2008). At Monte Caoba Unified, the enrollment of E.B.'s, has fluctuated and currently rests at 34 percent.

Newcomer and Unaccompanied Students

Young people who are recent arrivals to the U.S. are identified as newcomer students by the schooling system. Newcomers are a vulnerable group because of the high exposure to trauma and violence before and during their journey to the U.S. (American Psychological Association, 2019). As a result of safety concerns, families send their children unaccompanied to search for safety (Sawyer & Márquez, 2016). The label, unaccompanied minors, refers to children under 18 years separated from their parents and are not cared for by a parent or a legal guardian in the U.S. (United Nations Human Rights, 1989). The number of unaccompanied minor children apprehended in the U.S.-Mexico border has increased but has also fluctuated year-to-year. In 2011 there were 16,067 apprehensions; in 2014, there were 68,541; in 2017 there were 50,036; and in 2019 there were 72,873 (Kandel, 2019).

Although, before 2009, 82 percent of unaccompanied minor children were from Mexico, by 2019, children from countries in the Northern Triangle: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, made up 85 percent (Kandel, 2019). Child and family migration results from poverty, persecution, conflict, and violence (Rosenblum, 2015; United Nations, 2014). The U.S. government faces mitigating unauthorized immigration flows while simultaneously protecting vulnerable immigrant groups (Rosenblum, 2015). Prominent outcries of human rights violations were prevalent during and after the 2018 six-week zero-tolerance policy set forth by the Trump Administration that separated thousands of children from their parents (Kandel, 2019). Connected to these realities of migration and asylum, there is a growing number of young people who are newcomer and unaccompanied minors enrolling in U.S. schools.

Once in the U.S., cultural, social, and linguistic disconnections fuel the vulnerability of unaccompanied minors as they attempt to adjust to a new home (García Coll & Marks, 2011; Rasmussen, Crager, Baser, Chu, & Gany, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The traumatic experiences that unaccompanied children have experienced can influence subsequent psychological well-being (Collier, 2015; Kennedy, 2014). Moreover, social and emotional stressors that include adjusting to a new culture, environment, poverty, and increased responsibilities can influence their academic performance and increase vulnerability (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, & Hart, 2002; Suárez-Orozco, Bang & Onaga, 2010).

It is important to note that newcomers are not one uniform population with one experience. Research has found that a fraction of newcomer students has experienced limited and or inconsistent formal education (De Capua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; McBrien, 2005). Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) is a label that works to categorize students who: speak a language other than English, have gaps in formal education, and are not at grade level in reading and mathematics (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Trickett & Birman, 2005). The limited or no literacy in their native language as in English make it difficult for this newcomer population to reach their potential (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007). The language barriers make navigating the education system in the U.S. and completing a high school degree nearly impossible (Hos, 2016). Supporting the needs of newcomer students, particularly those with interrupted schooling, is difficult for secondary school teachers given the time limits to meet content areas and other requirements (Hos, 2016). Despite these challenges, these are innovative teachers and school leaders who are designing and implementing programs to meet the needs of their students. The following provides an overview of some of the priorities identified in the literature by newcomer programs.

Newcomer Programs

Schools can be sites of opportunity for newcomer students. The central guiding principle to foster newcomer programs that serve the needs of students is to provide a safe environment (Hos, 2016). A safe space allows young people to become acclimated to school and begin to have positive learning experiences (Hos, 2016). The goals of the newcomer programs should center on the acquisition of English skills and core content instruction while also strengthening the literacy of the student's native language (Short & Boson, 2012). Some programs have created the structure to separate academic environments from mainstream English students for a period that could vary from six months to two years to support their language and literacy development (Short & Boson, 2004). Strategies implemented by programs described as working well include flexible scheduling, targeted professional development, reading interventions, instruction in different content areas, and longer instructional and support time (Short & Bryson, 2012). Further, programs take on a more holistic approach similar to case management programs that keep in touch with families, connect students with social services, and overseeing individual progress (Short & Boson, 2012). These approaches support consistent academic gains that can support learning goals as well as overall wellness. Some of the challenges these programs face include efforts to do away with bilingual programs (Flores & García, 2017) and high-stakes testing requirements (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Further, educators in schools with limited funding and little support find it challenging to carve out these transformational spaces when they are overburdened, underpaid, and underappreciated.

The present chapter provides context to study findings by unpacking the racialized and colonial dimensions that have cemented the deficit perceptions of the urban as a static place of decay. The difficult realities of living in urban settings, including poverty, crime, and colonial

schooling, are not attributed to structural forces but rather to individual choices and pathologies. Deficit discourses construct vulnerable populations not entitled to the benefits of the social contract. Urban schools that are majority students of color and serve other vulnerable populations like Emergent Bilinguals experience limited funding, which, in different ways influences school quality. Urban schools exist within a larger neoliberal structure of the economy and politics; wherein there is a re-articulation of the purpose of schooling and how it functions. Although the realities of urban schools might seem bleak, young people, their families, and justice-oriented teachers eagerly seek out educational experiences affirming and providing them with the opportunities to graduate, but that also prepares them to continue onto post-secondary education. Schools that already respond to the needs and desires of their communities are full-service community schools. The goal of full-service community schools is to improve educational outcomes by offering a range of academic, social, and health services for students, their families, and the broader community (Varlas, 2008). This level of support requires significant funding, which can be challenging to obtain; it is important to document where and how this is implemented.

Findings Overview

The following chapters detail some of the most important themes that emerged from collecting and analyzing data for an academic school year that attend to my research questions and theoretical framework. The following findings chapters detail how labels, in other words, school reputations, can shape the type of worth that young people and teachers attribute to themselves, their school, and their community. Additionally, the following detail how young people of color and teacher allies not only resisted colonial schooling conditions that dehumanizes and criminalizes but also demanded schools be responsive to their needs, desires,

and strengths. Specifically, Chapter Five identifies Logro High as a transformed urban school with rigorous programs. The overarching school culture emerged as racially and socio-economically divisive that harmed working-class students of color. Students of color resisted by creating safe spaces of belonging. Chapter Six identifies Poder High as a school with a longstanding negative reputation, fueled by enduring instability and limited support. The overarching school culture emerged as a colonial school culture, that emerged as systematic disinvestment, the longstanding racialization, and dehumanization of Poder students.

Chapter Five: The Transformation of Logro's Reputation

The present comparative ethnographic study explored narratives of school reputation. The school sites at the center of this study have contrasting reputations. Logro High School²⁰ is perceived positively as having strong programs and excelling students. On the other hand, Poder High School is perceived negatively as a dangerous place that enrolls students who are not meeting standards. The ideas connected to school reputation, whether positive or negative, do not offer specifics about how young people, mainly working-class Black, Latinx, and other students of color, experience these settings. By focusing on the Logro High School site, Chapter Five addresses, Research Question One: How does school reputation shape the culture at the site? Research Question Two: What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation? Along with Research Question Three: How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions?

Chapter Five examines how Logro High has transformed from a school with a negative reputation to an academically rigorous and desirable school. Two climates contribute to the overall culture at Logro High: the first refers to a positive climate wherein students get along and have a strong focus on academics. The second emerged as a socio-economically and racially divisive climate where there is little intermingling.

A temporal analysis of Logro High's reputation revealed that, similar to other urban schools, Logro was previously perceived negatively. These racialized perceptions of school reputation are based on deficit perceptions of a majority Black and Latinx urban school. While Logro's reputation has improved dramatically since the 2008 financial crisis, strong programs and academies have been a longtime staple at Logro High. These programs' success and

²⁰ Pseudonyms have been assigned throughout to protect the privacy of the participants.

wellbeing depend on committed veteran teachers who choose to stay and build partnerships and secure funding. These programs supported students to be academically successful; however, those who benefit comprise only a small segment of the overall school population.

Logro's transformation manifested as a demographic shift connected to economic and social forces, including the 2008 financial crisis and gentrification. The demographic changes influenced the class and the school's racial makeup—specifically, an increase in White, middle-class, and wealthy students and a decrease in Black students. Data revealed contrasting climates, including Logro as an academically oriented school that is diverse and where students get along, while also a divisive and tense space.

Students of color detailed negative experiences connected to the racially and socio-economically divisive climate, mainly, limited access to prestigious programs, biased teachers and experiencing racial battle fatigue in the prestigious programs. In spite of these difficult schooling realities, students resisted, by denying Logro's positive and diverse school reputation. Moreover, collectively, students of color established safe spaces that allowed them to mitigate isolating experiences in prestigious programs, and feelings of lack of belonging. Moreover, students put on assemblies to highlight racialization as a means to change school norms that made students of color feel invisible.

The following section provides data to establish the transformation from an urban school perceived negatively to a desirable urban school that draws students from private schools and the forces attributed to this transformation.

Logro's Negative Reputation

During formal and informal interviews with students, teachers, school leaders, and other staff members, questions explored participants' perspectives on Logro's reputation. The majority

of participants boasted that Logro is an excellent school, but also that it was uncommon because other traditional high schools in the district did not have good reputations. A group of teachers and students responded, “this school has changed so much over the years.” Mr. Nevin, a 12th grade English teacher at Logro for sixteen years, shared what he remembered from his first years as a teacher:

Oh, man, there was so much more violence...I almost feel like things that happened during the Reagan Administration, things that happened with like crack/cocaine in Monte Caoba, all those things were part of what we were dealing with in terms of the kids. In about 2004, it was like it ended. It was really weird. Like, 2004, 2005 suddenly there was a punctuated drop in the number of kids who were crazy...The school has continually gotten better, but in terms of my arrival here, it was almost fortuitous in a way, and I was lucky because I ended up probably at the best school, a big comprehensive high school in Monte Caoba, and even though I had to go through hell and fire to get where I am because my classes that first year were...They pretty much consisted of ninth graders that other teachers didn't want (Mr. Nevin, Teacher Interview, March 24, 2016).

In the above excerpt, Mr. Nevin described a historical profile of Logro as a violent place. Mr. Nevin described the violence as student threats, student physical altercations, and the use of profanity. To contextualize this “violence,” Mr. Nevin referenced the Reagan Administration. In previous chapters, this dissertation explores the criminalizing political rhetoric that targeted Black and Latinx young people during the 1980s and 1990s (Bell, 2015; Rios, 2017). This criminalizing rhetoric of drugs justified mass incarceration and zero-tolerance in urban schools nationwide (Feld, 2017; Stevens & Morash, 2014). For Mr. Nevin, this period of crisis and “crazy” kids ended in the early 2000s. The term “crazy” indicated what he understood to be out

of control behavior—for example, Mr. Nevin shared that in the middle of one of his classes, a young man, not in any of his classes, walked in and proceeded to throw everything off his desk.

In the 1980s and 1990s, rhetoric that included the superpredator thesis constructed Black and Latinx youth as juvenile criminals, which changed juvenile justice and schooling practices to incarcerate young people of color for non-violent offenses (Giroux, 2016; Rios, 2009). By this logic, Rios (2009) argues, young people of color do not have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. These experiences shaped Mr. Nevin’s understanding of the young people in his classes and the need for discipline. In his first year at Logro, Mr. Nevin’s attended three disciplinary hearings. In particular, he shared, “It was kind of terrible, but that first year, I probably attended three...Basically, it’s like a hearing to decide what to do with a student because a student threatened me or did something totally crazy.” Mr. Nevin described these early experiences in his teaching career as going “through hell and fire.”

The experiences that Mr. Nevin shared as a new teacher stand in contrast to his upbringing in a wealthy community—a fifty-minute drive from Monte Caoba. During his interview, he shared that in the 1970s, his predominately White high school became integrated with Black, Vietnamese, and Latinx students. Despite those local efforts to achieve integration, the school remained segregated, he shared, in course enrollment and broadly student social groups. His upbringing and schooling experiences provided context and possible points of contention that came into play as he adjusted to an urban school teacher identity. We know there is a cultural mismatch between a teaching force that is disproportionately (80 percent) White and middle-class, even though students of color make up more than 50 percent of the student population nationwide (Goldenberg, 2014). The cultural conflicts emerge in classrooms wherein

White teachers normalize White-middle-class norms to teach and measure learning, not recognizing that students of color hold their own unique cultures (Milner, 2010; Paris, 2012).

Further, Mr. Nevin detailed that it continued to be challenging, but less so, to work at Logro because of the “self-oppression” that young people imposed on themselves. When seeking clarification, he explained that the youth “create the conditions of oppression that they’re trying to free themselves from...by not going to school.” This colonial perspective aligns with meritocratic notions of success that those who work hard will succeed while those who are “lazy” will not. However, the rhetoric of meritocracy does not account for systemic and institutional racism that creates, reproduces and maintains inequities (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Seven teachers voiced deficit views when referencing Black and Latinx youth and families of color, whom they believe avoid responsibility and have multiple “deficits in learning and skills.” Educator perspectives that blame individual students or their families for the disparities they face that inhibit educational success engage in deficit thinking (Davis & Museus, 2019). Deficit approaches do not consider the power and influence of oppressive systems that cause harm and are pervasive (Davis & Museus, 2019).

Ms. Stanton, an AP U.S. History and American Government teacher who has taught at Logro High for more than 30 years, shared additional insight about Logro. She explained, “Logro was a school that was considered violent.” Ms. Stanton’s former student-teacher working as Logro’s principal recruited her in the 1980s to come to Logro to create an academic school. Despite her multiple efforts during the first ten to fifteen years, she learned that a prestigious private university in the area did not bother reviewing Logro student applications. Ms. Stanton actively worked to change these negative perceptions by inviting admissions representatives

from that university to witness the college-level instruction she implemented in her courses. The work that Ms. Stanton engaged in early on was not easy. In particular, she explained:

To me, it was a challenge to come to a place that had a bad reputation. People had sort of given up hope in it, and then to go through teaching all these years and seeing all the students doing so well and expanding the program, the AP program in the whole school, and now it's kind of the school everybody wants to come to. So, it's a nice thing to see all of that transpire over all those years (Ms. Stanton, Teacher Interview, April 25, 2016).

Ms. Stanton's tenure at Logro began during a period that emphasized the privatization of education, particularly the national efforts of the Reagan's administration that sought to dismantle the Department of Education (Giroux, 2016). While the Department of Education remained, efforts to defund different aspects of education were severely felt at the local level, which explains what Ms. Stanton shared as "people had given up hope" (James, 2014). Although it was difficult for Ms. Stanton to work in a school with a "bad" reputation, her hard work, she explained, was worth it given the expansion and success of the Honors and AP Social Science and Humanities program, *Philomath*, Greek meaning a lover of learning and studying. Ms. Stanton explained it was rewarding to see the fruit of her labor to build up that program and witness the students' success and overall desirability of Logro.

Ms. Marciano, a 9th grade English 1 and California History teacher, has taught for eight years. However, it was only recently that Ms. Marciano began teaching for MCUSD. She explained that she enjoys teaching in the community where she lives. She moved to Blossom Hill recently and had to commute to a neighboring district but missed running into the students and immersing herself in the community, which drove her to apply to teach at Logro. When encountering people who visit Logro, she shared:

People coming in often comment that Logro seems like a positive place. The halls are full of energy, but it doesn't seem like things are out of control. Sometimes people coming into high schools have perceptions about them being a scary place, and I've had people sort of comment, "Oh, it's calm and organized here." So, I think that's a perception from the outside. It might be colored by a negative preconceived idea that people have coming in (Ms. Marciano, Teacher Interview, April 20, 2016).

Stereotypical perceptions of urban schools predominately Black, Latinx, and working-class contend that they are dangerous and out of control. Negative images attached to urban schools are pervasive and difficult to eliminate. Ms. Marciano noticed that when people come in to visit, some comment, "oh, it's calm and organized here." Although participants detailed that Logro has changed substantially, moments like those described by Ms. Marciano persist. On October 7, 2015, I visited Mr. Castañeda's fourth-period American Government class for the second half and lingered after, during the lunch period.

I asked Mr. Castañeda how his day was going, and he shared that he was doing well but that a lot was going on. He shared that recently Logro had a visit from WASC, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the accrediting commission for schools. Some of the comments from the WASC representatives he recalls included, "it's so clean" and "everything is so calm." Mr. Castañeda smiled, closed his eyes, and began to shake his head. He slightly giggled when he asked, "What were they expecting?" Mr. Castañeda went on to share that Logro is a good school and that they [teachers] do a good job of prepping students, particularly in English and History (Field Note, October 7, 2015).

As a person who grew up in Brownsville, Texas, on the U.S. Mexico Border, or the borderlands, a place with prominent racialization, Mr. Castañeda was visibly irritated by the comments made by the WASC representatives. The question Ms. Castañeda poses of “What were they expecting?” was a way to challenge the racialized and stereotypical perceptions that presuppose urban public schools will not be clean and will not be calm.

Longstanding Strong Programs at Logro

Mr. Castañeda began teaching at Logro in 2012. Ms. Stanton recruited him and worked with him closely as his mentor. Mr. Castañeda explained he felt fortunate that Ms. Stanton, “an amazing teacher,” guided his learning about teaching the AP Government course. Mr. Castañeda shared that he is learning about the history of Logro High but concluded that for a long time, Logro housed some robust programs.

During her more than thirty-year tenure, Ms. Stanton has worked in different capacities to ensure the success of the Philomath program. Not only has she worked to build up the program that currently begins at the sophomore level and continues to the senior level with multiple classes that integrate curriculum in English, literature, poetry, history, government, and political theory. The senior AP Government course comes with a college-level textbook and over 300 additional readings, which means, as explained by Ms. Stanton, “students have to be really good readers [pause] to be able to manage the curriculum.” The Honors courses have the same kind of teaching, using Socratic style or a shared dialogue between teacher and students. Both entities push the discussion forward by asking questions and a curriculum that is not quite as demanding. Ms. Stanton detailed that the high-quality instruction in this program allows 100 percent of the students in the AP Government course to pass, but roughly 88-90 percent receive a five, which is the highest possible score. Ms. Stanton explained that student AP scores have improved over

time nevertheless have been impressive for more than twenty-five years. To be considered, at the end of the ninth-grade, students have to obtain a teacher recommendation and submit an application. Ms. Stanton engaged in fundraising efforts and received private donations to ensure that students in her program had what they needed, including up-to-date textbooks. Every year Ms. Stanton organized a Close-Up trip to Washington D.C. to visit the capitol with the goal that all seniors in the AP Government courses experience firsthand what they have learned. She shared how things usually work out:

There's always something out there that makes it happen. I don't know what it is. I had a donor that was giving me \$10,000 a year, and he got very old and unable to give money anymore. I had him for at least a decade. And then, lo and behold, one of my former students contacted me. I never contacted her, she contacted me, and she said, "Oh, I heard that you're taking kids to Washington again. Here's a check to help." \$10,000. It's the same amount that I lost, and she didn't know about that. And I almost think there's some little spirit up there or something kind of watching out to make sure that every kid gets to go. So, I never want to leave the kids behind, and they know it (Ms. Stanton, Teacher Interview, April 25, 2016).

Like the Philomath program, the Wellness Academy has been around since 1984. It has a longstanding reputation for supporting students, including those struggling academically, to engage in courses and experiences connected to professions in the health and medical fields. Students submit an application that should include a teacher recommendation and subsequently have an interview. Conversations with academy directors and attending the Logro Academy Fair provided insight into Logro's academies.

Today, Logro hosted the Academy Fair. Student representatives from all five academies were the experts and provided information about enrollment and academy graduation requirements. Ninth-grade students attended the fair during their English class. On my way to the quick lunchroom located in Logro's basement, the announcements on the loudspeaker reminded freshmen students that applications to join an academy were due that Friday (February 19) and that student interviews would take place the following week. Students have the option to choose an academy to start their sophomore year. The student representative in the Wellness Academy Booth shared that students get connected with internships over the summer. By the end of their senior year, students should complete 50 hours of community service. When asked how they like their academy, the student provided a personal reflection, "The Wellness Academy has been great. The internships that I've done have given me plenty of hands-on experience." Mr. Smith, a Wellness Academy Co-Director whom I spoke with later that day, explained that an emphasis is to enroll students willing to commit to the academy even though their grades might not be the best. He explained that the Wellness Academy commits to moving students forward. (Field Note, February 17, 2016).

Mr. Smith's classroom included a lecture room with tables and chairs and a second lab room with laboratory tables and other equipment that included microscopes, Erlenmeyer flasks, watch glasses, beakers, and test tubes, among other equipment. The rooms had generous lighting from windows all along the wall on the opposite side of the door.

The Building and Architecture Academy was founded in 1986 by Mr. Myles and his colleague, who implemented a curriculum that emphasized mechanical physics and a heavy application of math. Teacher and student narratives revealed that to apply, interested ninth-grade

students completed a math assessment and submitted an application along with a writing sample. Document analysis of the Building and Architecture Academy information sheet revealed that the evaluation of student applications includes the review of transcripts. Mr. Myles permitted me to observe two of his classes, a junior-level Descriptive Mathematics, and a sophomore-level Engineering Foundations course. Media outlets have documented the success of the Building and Architecture Academy, notably, that it sends students to prestigious universities that focus on math and engineering. Photos of the winning ribbon medals that included first, second, and third place designations document this longstanding academic success. These are included below in Figures 1 and 2. Some of these awards date back to the early 1990s, and others as recent as 2015. Similar to the Philomath program, the Building and Architecture Academy benefited from private donors. Figure 3 below is a photo of a check from the Bechtel Foundation made out to Logro High School-Building and Architecture Academy for three-hundred thousand dollars and dated September 28, 1993. Figure 4 is a photo of a check from the McCarthy Foundation made out to Logro's PTSA with funds designated for the Building and Architecture Academy. The check is dated December 13, 2013, and made out for \$15,000. The classroom that housed the Building and Architecture Academy was large and well equipped. The classroom included drafting/drawing tables, a classroom set of PCs, a restroom, a closet space, and what seemed to be a warehouse area.

Figure 1: Grayscale photograph of winning ribbon medals.



Figure 2: Grayscale photograph of winning ribbon medals



Figure 3: Grayscale photograph of Check from the Bechtel Foundation

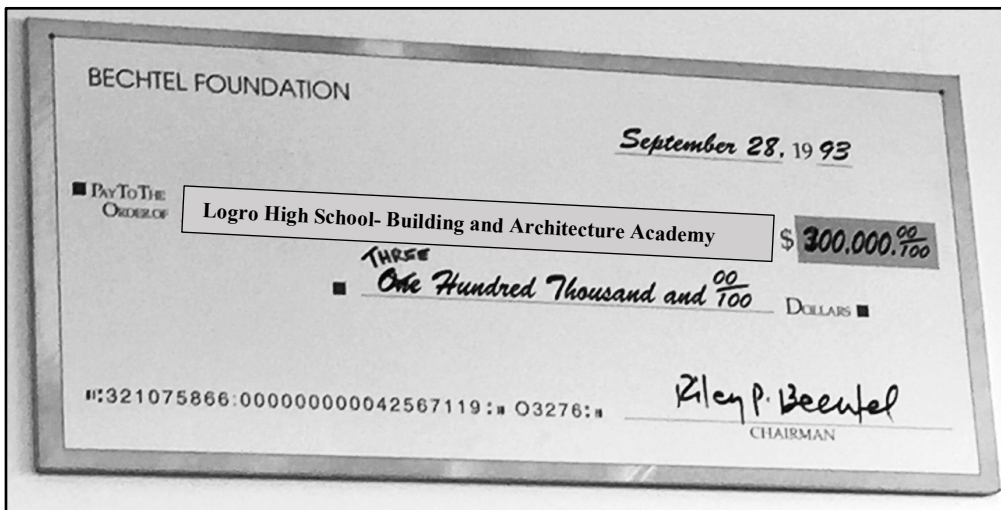
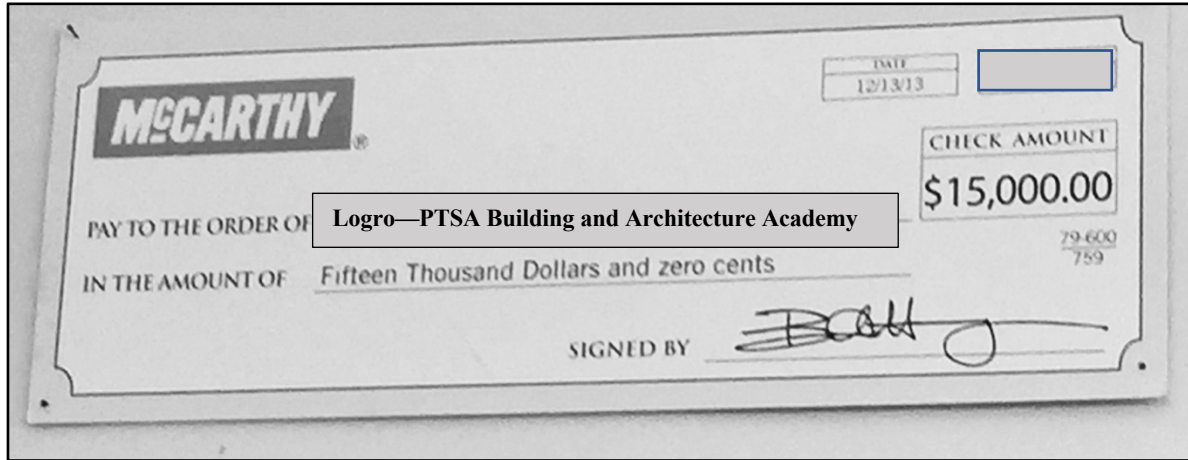


Figure 4: Grayscale photograph of Check from the McCarthy Foundation



The Microsoft Academy was founded in 1996 by Mr. Umaru. Mr. Umaru has taught for over 25 years, and 20 of those years have been at Logro High. Mr. Umaru was previously involved with district initiatives to introduce technology by conducting workshops with teachers. In the 1990s, the principal at Logro attempted to recruit Mr. Umaru to be a physics teacher with the Building and Architecture Academy, but something did not appeal to him. In particular, he hesitantly shared:

Well, Uhm, I [pauses]. There are certain things here in our school that you do not say. You don't say certain things. I'm somebody who is sensitive to equity and access. You walk into an environment, and you look at the environment, and you say, "Wow, this does not look like the school population." So, what's going on? I don't want to find myself in a situation like that. It was a good thing because when I started the Microsoft Academy, those were the things I was more aware of. I was very careful with every step we took, every strategy we used to make sure we were representative. Particularly students who are underserved and underrepresented. How can I get those students to be achieving? How can I get them to be retained? (Mr. Umaru, Teacher Interview, May 3, 2016)

Central to the Microsoft Academy approach is to broaden the participation of young people of color and the underserved by supporting their excitement for careers in technology and computing. Interested students have to submit an application and participate in an interview to highlight their interest in technology. Many Microsoft Academy students attend college and major in computer science or other majors related to technology. Mr. Umaru has built partnerships with colleges and companies in the area. Similar to Ms. Stanton and Mr. Myles, Mr. Umaru pursues funding to support the academy's success. He shared that for 17 years, he has applied for and received state funding, a \$90 thousand grant per year. Alumni from the Microsoft Academy are working for big technology companies; others engage in graduate work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and UC Berkeley, while others work for NASA.

In the fall of 2012, the Graphic Design, Arts and Merchandising (GDAM) Academy was formally adopted. The Life Science and Pharmaceuticals (LSP) Academy has had a longstanding presence in a neighboring city high school since 1993. Ms. Kirk, the LSP Academy Director, shared that they were only starting to build up enrollment. During an informal interview, Ms. Kirk shared that twenty students enrolled in LSP as juniors and twenty as seniors. LSP did not enroll students at the sophomore level because the requirements to join include completing both the Chemistry and Biology classes. Both academies were quickly building a solid foundation in Logro with numerous local partners and funding streams.

Although all five academies serve many students, they cannot enroll all Logro students. Obtaining a spot in an academy was not easy, particularly for the highly desired programs and academies. The positive reputation and increased interest that Mr. Esteva, a Latino Assistant Principal at Logo, described in his interview made the process of enrolling into an academy more competitive and less accessible. Despite the earlier “bad” reputation that was central to the Logro

High image, teacher accounts corroborate that the premier programs and academies present at Logro have not only existed for a long time but have been successful at supporting student academics in different ways. The following section makes visible the structures connected to the longstanding prestigious programs at Logro that privilege a small percentage of students while creating colonial conditions for largely working-class Black, Latinx, and other students of color.

Tools of Dispossession

The impetus that brought Mr. Umaru to Logro to start the Microsoft Academy was a commitment to ensure equity and access for underserved students. Mr. Umaru's observation of Logro High is that it functioned as a school within a school. In particular, he explained:

If you look deep down and examine the programs, there is a minority of students who end up having access to the best teachers. You have the majority of students who do not have access to a lot of the things at the school. Many of them are relegated to classes taught by substitute teachers, inexperienced teachers, brand new teachers. Those kids are underserved. Resources within the schools are portioned, to those minorities that have way more resources, be it paper, printing, [and] copying. The majority of the other students do not have access to that. This school is spending a disproportionate amount of money on the small population of students who are considered elite, while the other students who should really indeed have more attention more access are relegated to basically nothing (Mr. Umaru, Teacher Interview, May 3, 2016).

Mr. Umaru's overview of the structure of Logro is that it benefits a minority or a small percentage of students. Students considered "elite" have access to more human resources that refer to teachers with more experience and "way more" material resources, including books, paper, printing, and access to copying through their involvement in selective programs. On the

other hand, Mr. Umaru described the relegation of a majority of students, who are not involved in “elite” programs, to be taught by substitute teachers or teachers with minimal experience. What created the conditions for these realities are private donations and funding decisions made by Logro school leaders at the organizational level that prioritized the wellbeing of the prestigious programs. As a result, Mr. Umaru argued that Logro spends a “disproportionate amount” on a small percentage of students whom he explained are considered elite.

The structure that Mr. Umaru identified has race, class, and gender dimensions that emerged—the following only examines the race and class dimensions. The “elite” population that is white and middle-class is a minority and does not reflect the broader school population. Grace, a White senior student, shared, “Like in Philomath it’s like, very white, and a lot of AP classes [are] very white, and like a lot of the academies are like [pause] hailed.” Danielle, an African American senior, concurred and elaborated when discussing demographic diversity and shared, “I can speak for our [Philomath] class exactly because we had a situation where we counted. I think there were 30 kids, and there were nine of us [Students of Color].” Danielle detailed that the Building and Architecture Academy was less diverse than Philomath. When exploring how her school compares to other public schools in the district, Danielle elaborated:

I think we are a very good one—the academies and Philomath, [pause] part of that [pause]. I feel like a lot of it is teachers, especially because they stay. In other schools, you don’t get teachers who want to stay for that long. Then also funding. We get a lot more affluence, I think here. The Building and Architecture Academy is well funded. That is all parent funding. They get lots of money from their parents, and it stays in the Building and Architecture Academy. That’s the thing. When you have all the White and Asian kids in the Building and Architecture Academy, they get all the money for their

[academy] stuff. That's a little bit frustrating, but when people are more invested, that always helps as well—financially invested (Danielle, Student Interview, June 14, 2016).

Danielle explored the factors that make Logro a very good school which included teachers who want to stay. In other schools in Monte Caoba, she explained, that was not the case. Danielle revealed, “we have more affluence here,” which refers to wealth and money. The private funding that comes from parents and other entities greatly benefited the Building and Architecture Academy. Private funding remained in the academy, which is frustrating for Danielle, given the broader school needs. Nevertheless, the financial investment of the collective, Danielle believed, is important and helpful. The disproportionate enrollment of White students and middle-class students in these “elite” programs is no coincidence but built into the structure of the academy and broadly highlights the priorities made at the school level. The implications of the hierarchal structure identified by Mr. Umaru included that the students enrolled in the prestigious programs were in a dominant position, privileged, and entitled. In contrast, those not in the program were placed in a subordinate position.

More specifically, to be considered for the Building and Architecture Academy, students were required to take an exam covering geometry concepts and submit a writing sample. Therefore, students who are coming in as ninth-graders should know to take geometry their first year to pass the exam. When asked if she could change something about her school, Faith, an African American junior, shared:

Okay, because I feel like certain academies are [pause], you have to have a certain requirement in order to get into the academy. Like for the Building and Architecture Academy, you're supposed to be in a certain math in order to be accepted within the academy. They only select a few people. So, I feel if they could change that and make it

more easier for more kids to get into all of the academies ... Yeah. I think that would be the one thing that I would change about my school (Faith, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

Faith shared her familiarity with the requirements connected to the Building and Architecture Academy admission process that included knowledge of Geometry to pass the assessment. She also explained that there are only a few students who are selected each year. Moreover, she voiced her desire that the requirements for admission to this academy needed to change. When asked if the requirements prevented some students from joining, Faith responded:

Yeah. Because I was trying to sign up for the Building and Architecture Academy my freshman year, but I wasn't in the certain math class that you would have to be in that year in order to get accepted to the academy, and that was because my middle school didn't have that math course. So, I had to come here, and I had to take the math course that was required right after that. So, I wasn't eligible for the Building and Architecture Academy (Faith, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

Faith shared that she wanted to be admitted to the Building and Architecture Academy; however, she was disappointed when she learned that she was not eligible. Faith was unaware that students interested in the Building and Architecture Academy were expected to take Geometry to prepare for the assessment. Enrolling in Geometry her first year was not possible because she had to take the Algebra class first. In addition, algebra was not a course offered in her middle school. Faith maintained a soft tone throughout the interview but was adamant that admission to the Building and Architecture Academy needed to change. Connected to this lack of transparency Ms. Yang, an English and History teacher for the Philomath program, shared:

I think, especially with Philomath and Building and Architecture Academy, there's a lot of information that's not public. That's information that's conveyed through parent groups and through parent conversations or, "My oldest child went through this, so I know how it goes." A lot of information is passed, with culture [pause]. A lot of cultural traditions or cultural practices or the culture of a workplace, they're a lot of unspoken rules. I think with some of the programs, there are unspoken rules and unspoken requirements. Many students didn't know that if you wanted to be in Building and Architecture Academy, you probably should be in geometry your freshman year because the assessment or the entry test tests you on geometry. Is that publicized? No. Do parents know? Yes. How do they know that? They've talked to other parents. They've had other children go through the program. They have family members, neighbors, so there's information that's passed, but not public, fully public, or transparent. I think that that creates the sense that there's elitism that is happening (Ms. Yang, Teacher Interview, June 28, 2016).

While Mr. Umaru explored what has happened historically and currently in terms of prioritizing funding at the school organizational level for specific programs, Ms. Yang examined additional forces beyond the school that created the conditions for elitism to emerge. Specifically, Ms. Yang highlighted information connected to the Philomath program and the Building and Architecture Academy that is not public, that is, unspoken rules and requirements. For example, she explained that it is the student's and the family's responsibility to ask teachers or other staff members about these programs early on to learn the requirements.

Furthermore, Ms. Yang revealed that networks existed and emerged formally as parent groups or informally as parent conversations that facilitated information sharing. The cultural

traditions and practices that Ms. Yang pointed to can refer to attending a Logro tour for interested families, joining the PTSA, and attending family school events. Families whose children attended Logro, those with a family member, or a neighbor who went through Logro's prestigious programs have built these networks as an avenue to share information. During her interview, Ms. Stanton shared that ninth-grade teachers are asked to share with students the eligibility requirements for Philomath; however, data analysis revealed these are not formal or dependable recruitment efforts. Ms. Yang argued that because the information connected to the Philomath program and the Building and Architecture Academy is not public or not fully public and transparent, this created a sense of elitism. Further, the limited access to information allowed teachers to control their student populations to ensure a narrow range but a still high level of preparation in advance of their entrance into the selective academies. The following section further examines the positive reputation and desirability of the Logro site.

Logro a Highly Desired School in Monte Caoba

Student participants shared that they attended a good school and that it was one of the best, if not the best traditional public high school in Monte Caoba. When asked about how her school compares with others in the district, Fuchsia, an African American junior, explained:

Logro draws students not just from Blossom Hill but also students maybe from Monte Caoba Hills and parents who are fighting to get their kids into Logro because they've heard about Logro's reputation. (Fuchsia, Student Interview, June 6, 2016).

The neighborhoods that Fuchsia referenced include the trendy Blossom Hill and Monte Caoba Hills, another exclusive neighborhood that houses homes worth millions. Moreover, Fuchsia mentioned that the parents are "fighting to get their kids into Logro," which revealed that it is competitive getting admitted to Logro. Mr. Esteva provided additional insight by sharing that the

student assignment office is the one that makes admission decisions. Part of what has worked, he mentioned, is for parents to advocate for their children. Specifically, he explained:

That's what a lot of privileged white families do. They'll go down and pressure them and use their privilege, be like, "I really want my kid to be in there."

During the data collection year, Mr. Esteva explained that the enrollment "formula always changes." As an administrator, once he received the list of students who will enroll the following year, he keeps track of the data. He explained:

That's where I can definitely map out how the percentages of ethnicities that come in and the areas [neighborhoods], and we put two and two together on that one. The areas that are majority low socio-economic status just happen to be African-Americans and Latinos who are coming from there. It's like, Oh (Mr. Esteva, Administrator Interview, May 3, 2016).

Mr. Esteva explained that every year when he received the data for the students who would enroll, he analyzed it to map out the types of students that enrolled each year at Logro. The patterns that have emerged for Mr. Esteva included the correlation of Logro students who are working-class, low-income, and African-American, and Latinx. The dynamics of race and class are complex because some Black and Latinx students at Logro are middle-class and live in some of the exclusive neighborhoods in Monte Caoba. Nevertheless, Mr. Esteva explains that working-class students from impoverished neighborhoods are disproportionately Black and Latinx. For example, during the data collection year, 48 percent of students qualified for free-or-reduced priced lunch. Currently, the Monte Caoba student assignment office uses a more stringent formula to abide by the designated priorities due to equity concerns stemming from the substantial increase in White students and the decrease in Black students. These nuances reveal

how privilege emerges and how parents mobilize their privilege to ensure their children benefit. The above provides one example of the resounding positive perceptions about Logro and how competitive getting admitted into Logro has become. To highlight the difference that exists between Logro and other traditional urban high schools in Monte Caoba, Ernesto, a Mexican American Senior, explained:

I want to say that, compared to all of the schools [in Monte Caoba], I say we are the best public school [pause]. I have a lot of friends who go to different schools. They don't have the resources that we have. We have more AP classes [and] more honors classes. My neighbor went to [Harper High], she told me, "Agh, my calculus teacher wasn't that good." She got a C in the class. She didn't do that well in the AP test. I knew some people here; they weren't geniuses but got good [AP] scores...Some schools are not getting as many opportunities. Some of the students that go here usually go here because they don't want to go to other schools because of what they've heard (Ernesto, Student Interview, June 20, 2016).

Logro is believed to have the necessary resources to provide, as shared by some students, "a good education." The human and material resources highlighted at Logro contributed to the good reputation. Ernesto highlighted the multiple Honors and AP courses at Logro. Ernesto understands that not all schools in Monte Caoba have the resources that Logro offered. Ernesto argued that the limited resources influenced the types and number of opportunities that schools can offer. For example, Ernesto's friend details a negative experience with her AP calculus teacher at Harper High, another traditional public school in Monte Caoba. We know that less experienced and less effective teachers disproportionately serve working-class students of color (Mason-Williams, 2015; Palardy, 2015). Research has documented the difficult conditions that

urban schools present, including underfunding, which influences the available resources to adequately compensate teachers, which means that more experienced teachers might opt to work for a district with adequate pay (Mosenkis, 2014; Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015).

Getting Along and Academically Oriented Climate

Connected to Logro's present positive reputation, data analysis revealed that one of the climates that existed revolved around being academically oriented, positive, and for students to get along. Ms. Stanton provided insight into what this looks like and reflected on aspects that contribute to school culture. In particular, when asked to reflect on the culture that existed at Logro, she shared:

A culture at Logro, which is, "you need to be in class." "You need to be learning." "You can't be roaming the halls. You can't be fighting, beating up other people, you can't be harassing other people." Right?... Everybody in the administration is on the same page with that. And unfortunately, not all the teachers are. But I'll go into the hallway and see kids, and I'll say, "You know, you need to go to class. Why are you out here?" Other teachers walk right past and leave them there. But this administration is pretty good about [pause], and it has been for a number of years. About saying, "We're going to have a culture at this school where students are going to understand that we're here for business. We're not here for troublemaking and whatever." (Ms. Stanton, Teacher Interview, April 25, 2016).

Ms. Stanton provided some context about some of the steps school leaders and teachers implemented to create a climate centered on being academically oriented where students get along. Shared in a didactic tone, Ms. Stanton provided examples of what students should not do in a school setting that includes roaming the hallways during class time, fighting or harassing

others, which she detailed occurred previously. The creation of an honor system was the foundation that supported the sense that Logro students were expected to be in class and learning. Ms. Stanton explained that these efforts should be collective, where teachers and school leaders share the responsibility to offer reminders to students about the expectation they go to class. In agreement with Ms. Stanton, Marcus, an African American senior, shared:

There are rules at Logro High that all students follow, like a code of what a Logro student is supposed to be or how they should act. If students abide by this code, it can actually make them into a better person, once they complete high school (Marcus, Student Interview, June 28, 2016).

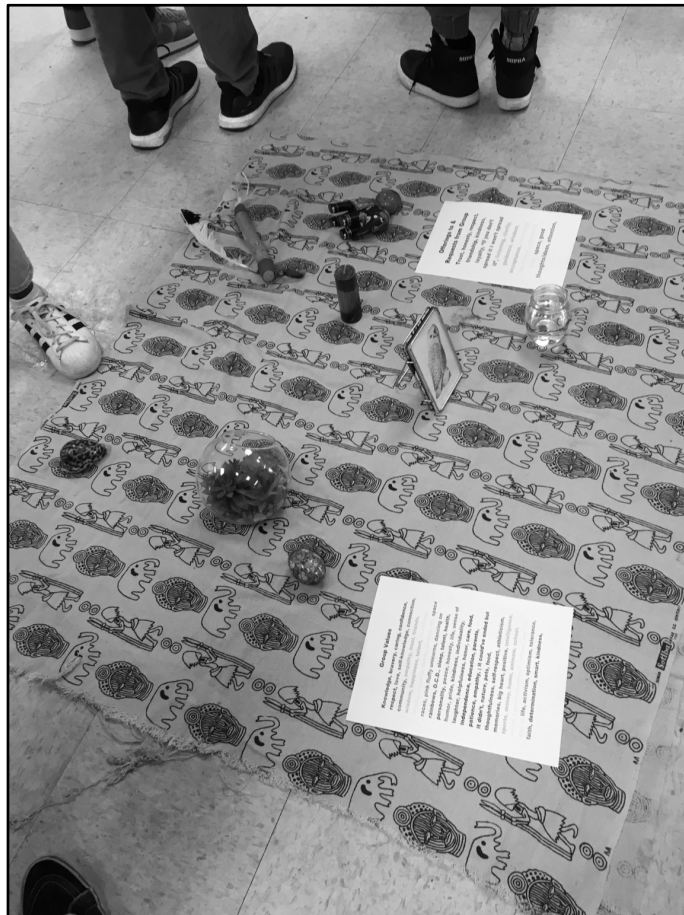
When asked if this was something he learned in a course or a workshop, Marcus elaborated:

No, it was just in general. Like, say if we got in trouble, we'd have to talk about the honor system and what value we didn't follow, and if we would have followed that particular value, things probably would have been different. I feel like, personally, we have a different way of going about discipline. We take time with every student to see what's wrong with them. We don't assume that the student did something just because somebody said it happened. They try to assess the situation first before they react to it (Marcus, Student Interview, June 28, 2016).

The data collection year was the first year a full-time Restorative Justice (RJ) facilitator worked at Logro High School. I attended a summer bridge program activity for incoming ninth-graders that included a restorative justice component to support incoming students build community. I have included an of a community-building circle activity in Figure 5. Although the RJ program was just beginning, Marcus shared that his experiences connected to discipline were positive. The approach was to engage in conversation about the honor system and Logro's values. In

addition, Marcus detailed a more individualized approach to handle disciplinary issues. School leaders made a strong effort to understand what was happening with the student to choose an appropriate approach.

Figure 5. Grayscale photograph of a Community Building Circle Activity



When asked to describe Logro to somebody who is unfamiliar with the school, Libertad, a Latina senior, shared, “Diverse, loving...people here are really intelligent, teachers care a lot. I don’t think I would say anything bad about my school.” It has been Libertad’s experience that “everyone likes each other” and that “people respect each other’s opinions.” Further, Libertad elaborated on the discipline component and shared:

Libertad: I think that it used to be like a lot of more discipline. Like immediately just like [pause], give you a punishment if you do something wrong. But I think that now it's more and more support, like help out the person if they do something wrong.

Yanira: When did that change take place, do you know?

Libertad: I think it took place like my freshman year. I remember they started looking for peer mediators or student counselors. By my third [year], the counseling department started becoming a little more prevalent. People would say like, "Oh, you know if you need someone, I'm here." They would actually make announcements about it and stuff. (Libertad, Student Interview, June 27, 2016).

In combination with the honor system, Libertad remembered during her freshmen year when it switched from a punitive discipline approach, that is, immediately getting punished to restorative justice or more support and help when somebody does something wrong. Libertad recalled the switch because school efforts included looking for peer mediators and student counselors. In addition, announcements made in the overhead speaker alerted Libertad of the recruitment efforts.

The academic emphasis of the academies and the Honors and AP Philomath program are two aspects that Mr. Esteva explained pulled students into Logro. Cindy, an Asian-American tenth grader, detailed that at Logro:

Students here [in Logro] are more success-driven. You see more people caring about school in here. Whereas in other schools, there's some people who care about their school, and there's a lot of people who really don't, and they sort of just slack off, mess around, and get into other stuff that they shouldn't be getting into (Mr. Esteva, Teacher Interview, May 3, 2016).

Cindy shared that she had friends who attended other schools in the area. Conversations with friends allowed her to conclude that other schools and the students who attend do not prioritize academics. Cindy explained that the students at Logro are “success drive,” which means they want to do well in school. Cindy believed that other schools in Monte Caoba do not have students who do not have too much interest in school and instead have students “slack off, mess around a and get into other stuff they shouldn’t be getting into.” Cindy focused on the individual student effort to be success driven; however, it does not account for the different levels of support that Logro offered compared to other traditional high schools in the district. Cindy’s impression of Logro demonstrates that school leadership and teachers’ successful messaging allow students to embody a success-driven persona.

Socio-Economic Forces Influence Logro’s Demographic Shift

When asked for possible reasons for Logro’s positive reputation, Fuchsia explained:

Maybe it started way back a long time ago. Well, not a long time ago. A lot of my family members went here [to Logro High]. This school, if you look at it now from how it was just ten years ago, it looks completely different. Ten years ago, there were a lot of Black [students], a couple Asians [and] a couple Whites. Now there’s more Whites. Also, because the gentrification that’s happening in Monte Caoba. (Fuchsia, Student Interview, June 6, 2016).

Unlike the teacher participants quoted above, Fuchsia did not specify that Logro High had a poor reputation previously. However, she explained that the school was “completely different” from “how it was just ten years ago.” While Logro continued to be diverse, close to one-half of the Black student population decreased over the decade preceding this study while the White student

population increased threefold. Moreover, Fuchsia connected the demographic changes at Logro to forces of gentrification that happened at Monte Caoba.

There were 27 out of 37 interview participants who referenced socio-economic factors that include the economy, the housing market, and gentrification as drivers for school-wide and city-wide demographic changes. For example, when asked to describe the student population, Mr. Esteva, one of the administrators, explained:

Overall, it's pretty diverse. We have approximately 35 percent, African-American students. The White population has definitely been increasing since 2007, 2008, or 2009. The Latino population has been steadily declining, roughly around, I think, 10-13%, and the Asian population hovers around 20% or so. Then the rest is...mixed. It was very different even ten years ago. Around 2006, I think, it was up to 60 percent African American. The White population in 2005 or 2006 was roughly around eight percent. So, it's definitely jumped because of the housing crisis in 2008. A lot of people from the Hills didn't want to pay their tuition in the private schools. There was an article that came out in 2008 that literally said, "Why send my kid to a private school when Logro High has great AP programs for free?" That opened up the floodgates...and the reputation started growing like crazy (Mr. Esteva, Administrator Interview, May 3, 2016).

Mr. Esteva agreed with Fuchsia; the demographic change in Logro High occurred relatively expeditiously given the drastic decline in enrollment of Black students and a significant increase in the enrollment of White students. One of the factors that Mr. Esteva argued contributed to the increase in enrollment of White students includes the 2008 financial crisis. Data analysis revealed that the practice of the middle-class Monte Caoba families, primarily White, was to send their children to private schools. The financial crisis in 2008 drove many of these families

to reconsider this practice because, for some, it was no longer an option to cover tuition ranging from eighteen to forty thousand dollars per year. Coincidentally, a newspaper article was published that same year, providing a positive assessment of the different offerings at Logro High that included the rigorous Philomath program and available academies. The newspaper article posed the question that Mr. Esteva provided here, which drove many families with reservations about urban public schooling to reconsider because Logro offered a stellar education for free.

A housing market analysis report published in 2017 found that economic conditions in Monte Caoba and the neighboring cities have strengthened significantly since 2012. Jobs increased in 2015 by 3.1 percent or 32,800, while 2016 saw a 2.5 percent increase or 27,000. The COVID-19 pandemic produced a rise in unemployment nationwide for all; however, as the economy began to stabilize, the unemployment for People of Color remained high at 24.4 % (Couch, Fairlie, Xu, 2020). Although high unemployment rates persist as the economy and other sectors transition to reopen, the housing market in the Monte Caoba region remains robust (Collins, 2021). As discussed previously in this dissertation, Blossom Hill is a community that has undergone neighborhood revitalization, in other words, gentrification, which was explored in depth by participants.

When asked to describe the Blossom Hill community that houses Logro High, thirteen out of fifteen teachers and staff participants and twenty out of twenty-two student interview participants touched on gentrification. Select participants were asked to detail how they understand gentrification. Ms. Yang explained:

How do I understand it? A series of processes in which an area that has been deemed or perceived to be low-income, or not as valuable, or prosperous is shifting to one that becomes more prosperous economically. The assets of what had been there is no longer

valued, so that the culture of it shifts. It also creates a lot of displacement of generations of families who had lived there before (Ms. Yang, Teacher Interview, June 28, 2016).

Ms. Yang's definition of gentrification emphasized communities that previously were denied capital and services that began to experience investment. When asked to describe the Blossom Hill community, Ms. Yang explored the way gentrification has emerged in Blossom Hill specifically:

On the backside in the western side of the school, it's a neighborhood, single-family and apartment buildings. The southside...is very industrialized, a lot of car dealerships. For a long time that area at night, you wouldn't see a lot of foot traffic. That has changed considerably. There is a very high-end coffee shop across the street [from the school]. There is a dance studio down the street. There's a lot of new buildings going up three blocks down. There are new businesses coming in. Economically, that helps the area seem less of a ghost town. The neighborhood is shifting, and the medium prices for the homes in the area are rising considerably (Ms. Yang, Teacher Interview, June 28, 2016).

According to Ms. Yang, the influx of businesses close to Logro was positive because it supported the economic development in the area, which changed what previously seemed like a "ghost town." The influx of amenities that included a "high-end" coffee shop and dance studio along with new buildings made Blossom Hill much more vibrant, trendy as described by local newspapers, and as such appealing to a White middle-class demographic. Moreover, Ms. Yang described the community as having more foot traffic at night, which she alluded to a safer community. We know that urban policing practices use the broken window theory to crack down on minor infractions as a preventive measure to curb more violent crime (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). Although O'Brien, Farrell, & Welsh (2019) found that neighborhood disorder does not

drive residents to commit more crimes, the broken window theory continues to shape policing. The police force and the criminal justice system as a whole operate under the understanding that working-class communities of color are dangerous and are an ever-present threat (Lurie, 2019). The influx of businesses and capital in Blossom Hill may be factors that influenced the type of policing that occurs in Monte Caoba.

In Blossom Hill, gentrification emerged as the influx of businesses and an uplift to the economy, and a rising cost of home prices. Other Monte Caoba communities were also undergoing changes driven by an unaffordable housing market unaffordable. Mr. Ko, physiology, biology, and environmental science teacher, shared that he was interested in buying a house and started the process; however, he soon realized that his salary did not allow him to afford a house in the Blossom Hill neighborhood. The Monte Caoba housing market for the last 30 years encompassed periods of market growth and declines; however, it found itself in the middle of a high-tech boom during the data collection year.

Reyes, a 10th grade Mexican American student, shared that his community in East Monte Caoba does not feel the same. He explained:

It feels a little different, but I can tell that more is going to happen. It's kind of making me sad because I know that Monte Caoba is such a great place and that the natives are going to have to move out, some are going to be lucky, but others are just going to have to be forced to move out, and leave the great Monte Caoba (Reyes, Student Interview, June 20, 2016).

Media outlets published news stories about all-cash offers, multiple offers, and offers that come in above the asking price. Faith detailed how gentrification emerged in her neighborhood. She explained:

I don't really think it impacted our family in a bad way, but you just see different types of people coming into the neighborhood and some leaving. And the neighbors that you're with for a long time and you just see them leaving, and then new people coming in. So, it's just... Yeah (Faith, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

Faith did not consider gentrification to be bad or good; however, she believed that it would be easier to share the neighborhood with people who look like you because she explained, "then, it's more easier to feel wanted within your neighborhood." The idea of "feeling wanted" that Faith sets forth connects to what hooks (2015) describes as a homeplace or a site of resistance and healing that exists outside of the physical spaces that reproduce racial oppression. Faith carefully shared, without sweeping statements about gentrification as good or bad. However, Faith mentioned how difficult it is when neighbors part of the community for so long leave and new neighbors move in.

Cecilia, a sophomore Latinx student, drew from notions of authenticity and explained: The feeling of the neighborhood. Like it's not as, I don't know if this is the word to use, but like not as authentic as it used to be. Like it used to be filled with more Hispanic people, and now it's like getting more filled with like White people, yeah. It just feels different (Cecilia, Student Interview, June 20, 2016).

Cecilia detailed that her neighborhood, which used to be predominately Latinx, began to feel and look different. Faith and Cecilia both examined how they experienced gentrification firsthand. Socio-economic forces that include gentrification have changed the neighborhoods where Faith and Cecilia reside. Faith examined what it means for neighbors who are not able to stay and is explored as displacement (Marcuse, 2016; Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapple, Gorska, & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2017). Two student participants shared that they recently moved to a different

community because the rent was becoming too expensive. Both students continued to attend Logro High and commuted daily from suburban cities located roughly fifty minutes to over an hour, depending on traffic. Cecilia explained that her community is different. She used the word authentic to mean that even the people who give meaning to her community and upbringing are changing. Adaego, an African American sophomore, shared that Blossom Hill Boulevard has undergone a major shift:

Well, like, in Blossom Hill Boulevard, I'd say it's pretty diverse. Because we have, like, a lot of Asians there, but then you also have, like a lot of Blacks because that street used to be, like, a lot of Black-owned businesses. And then we have a lot of White people that are moving in. So, it's kind of, it's gotten more diverse recently. (Adaego, Student Interview, June 14, 2016).

Adaego offered her knowledge of the Bloom Boulevard as a diverse place, wherein Blacks and Asians reside, and a place previously known for its Black-owned business. We know that Black entrepreneurs have a shared responsibility to help improve Black communities and a strong commitment to job creation for Black residents in urban working-class communities (Boston, 2006). In other words, Black-owned businesses are a source of employment for Black residents and other residents of color. On the other hand, White-owned businesses predominately hire White employees (Boston, 2006). Adaego described a socio-economic shift and explained that Bloom Hill Boulevard “used to be” a place that housed multiple Black-owned businesses; however, many “White people were moving in.” Adaego identified demographic changes as one of the implications of Whites moving into an area, and the other is the displacement of Black-owned businesses. Data analysis revealed gentrification as one of the forces that influences the overall makeup of the Blossom Hill neighborhood and the broader city of Monte Caoba. As

discussed already, socio-economics was a connecting factor, in particular the 2008 financial crisis.

“The Other Monte Caoba”: White families Opting Out of or In to Urban Public Schooling

Data analysis revealed that the trend for middle-class White Monte Caoba families was to opt to send their children to private school. Thomas, a queer, White student, described the community he grew up in North Monte Caoba as “heavily White,” “rich,” and “privileged.” In particular, Thomas explained:

I’ve never felt unsafe or anything. It’s very [pause], it’s kind of as close as you can get to being in suburbia while still in Monte Caoba, which is both good, and also I feel like maybe sheltered me a little bit more than I would have preferred (Thomas, Student Interview, June 27, 2016).

In contrast to some of the stereotypical perceptions about an urban city like Monte Caoba with high poverty and crime rates, Thomas detailed that he grew up in a heavily white, wealthy, and privileged place. It is a place where he explained has never felt unsafe. He detailed a parallel between his neighborhood and suburbia, which he believed is good, and even described feeling sheltered. Thomas detailed that he has everything he needs in his neighborhood, including “food,” including groceries and “stationery.” Unlike the experiences of the other student participants, Thomas did not describe a community where the neighbors are moving out. Instead, he mentioned, “everyone is friendly, it’s very tight-knit. I mean, I work for a lot of people on my block, so that’s nice. It’s a nice little support net.” We know that urban segregation is a central feature that perpetuates urban poverty and racial inequality (Massey & Denton, 1998). The segmented U.S. housing market by race and class stratifies access to benefits of neighborhood resources (Massey & Broadmann, 2014; Sharkey, 2013). Thomas detailed that he

worked because there are occasions when his family struggles with money, which demonstrates that not all families in this neighborhood are wealthy. Nevertheless, multiple benefits come from residing in a community that is “white,” “privileged,” and “wealthy,” which include multiple amenities, resources, and safety.

Similar to his peers, Thomas also explained that Logro High held a positive reputation. In particular, he argued:

I think it’s kind of [pause], at this point, it is the ‘go-to’ school. I know it hasn’t always been that way. It used to be [Heavenly High] or whatever, and Logro High used to be somewhere where nobody wanted to send their kids. And recently, I assume that the district is changing and there’s... I guess there’s more money or whatever. The teaching staff has changed. But people are eager to send their kids here. Which is, I guess it’s good for Logro because just the MCUSD, in general, doesn’t have the best reputation (Thomas, Student Interview, June 27, 2016).

From personal experience or family who attended Logro High previously, Fuchsia shared that the school has changed significantly. Thomas provided a more pointed account to explain that Logro was a school “where nobody wanted to send their kids.” Thomas generalizes that *nobody* wanted to send their children to Logro, even though Fuchsia shared that her family members attended. Thomas’ point highlighted that some students, particularly those with economic means or cultural capital, have the opportunity to attend a desirable school they choose, while working-class and low-income students do not. Fuchsia did not specify whether family members decided to attend Logro High; however, previously, Monte Caoba Unified was a neighborhood school district wherein students were assigned to a designated neighborhood school based on where the student lived. The term “nobody” that Thomas used is meaningful, as conceptualized by Hill

(2016) to highlight how the state is waging war on the vulnerable. Hill (2016) argues that this state-sanctioned war depends on the designation of nobodies and is connected to social welfare defunding and systemic racism. We see that Thomas used the designation of *nobody* to highlight that Logro High was not a school that middle-class, particularly White families deemed worthy or valuable.

Thomas mentioned some district-level changes, in particular, more funding. Additionally, Thomas mentioned a change in the faculty, which was corroborated in teacher interview data that specified teachers who have “more energy,” who “really have the kids back,” and who are willing to learn the teaching craft. Data analysis revealed that Logro’s reputation transformation from “bad” to “prestigious” resulted from socio-historic and economic processes that included segregation and the 2008 financial crisis. The challenging economic realities for many middle-class White families in Monte Caoba after 2008 compelled them to no longer send their children to private school due to monetary constraints, but also because Logro, a public school, offered rigorous and respected programs.

When asked if Logro High was his first choice, Thomas paused for a few seconds and then explained that:

Thomas: It wasn’t always so clear. So, we live. Obviously, we live so close that it made logical sense to go here. But I think that there was some worry because I had always gone to private school beforehand, before the recession. And then there wasn’t enough money for that and I think there was worry that I wouldn’t make it. Which, in retrospect, I think is kind of silly.

Yanira: You wouldn’t make it, like?

Thomas: I just wouldn't be able to navigate the school. Because it is big, it is urban, it is very diverse and I just, you know, it was kind of a big transition cause I went to, like, a little tiny prep school in Borsala with, you know [pause] everyone was white, almost. We were all very well-to-do, and it was very competitive, and then I was here, and it was like, you have to [pause] there's no hand-holding anymore (Thomas, Student Interview, June 27, 2016).

Thomas shared that the logical choice was to attend Logro because of its proximity to their home. Nevertheless, the decision to choose Logro was not certain given the multiple family concerns. Mainly, Thomas and his family worried about the dangers they assumed existed in urban schools. They worried that he would not make it, which referred to getting hurt and also Thomas' inability to obtain a quality education. These concerns seemed particularly acute given that Thomas only attended private school prior to Logro. Moreover, these concerns align with research that finds middle-class parents work to buffer their children from working-class young people of color, particularly those who do not meet standards (Oakes et al., 1997). More specifically, racialized constructions of young people of color as criminal and violent (Feld, 2017; Stevens & Morash, 2014) may drive White middle-class parents and their students to worry they will not be safe in urban schooling contexts. Thomas reflected on initial concerns and came to consider them as silly, given that his experience at Logro has been overall positive. Nevertheless, the above provides evidence about how urban schools, with high percentages of students of color, are a concern for white parents who worry about the safety of their children but also whether they will have a rigorous education.

Race(ism) and Class(ism) Entangled Systems

The overarching Logro story is that it went from a “bad” school to a “good” school. Further consideration, however, revealed that it was not that simple. As evidenced in the above findings, programs and academies at Logro have been strong for a long time. Socio-economic forces that included gentrification but particularly the 2008 financial crisis became factors that drove middle-class White families to decide to send their children to Logro High. For example, Mr. Nevin details:

I think we still have a lot of at-risk kids, but what happened between 2004 and we really started seeing it in 2008. As a result of the Bush Administration and a lot of it—it’s sort of free-market policies—things kind of fell apart, and what happened is a lot of middle-class families started sending their kids here. The issues didn’t really center around [pause]. I think the problems and issues didn’t center around race. It centered around socio-economic issues, and so with more middle-class kids here, they just changed the culture of the school. It was kids who did it in a big way (Mr. Nevin, Teacher Interview, March 24, 2016).

Mr. Nevin provided an overview of Logro students that he detailed, “a lot” continue to be “at-risk kids.”²¹ Labels or terms such as “at-risk,” used as descriptors of young people, as though it were some genetic trait, are deficit-oriented and loaded with racialized perceptions that construct certain young people as problems (Valencia, 1997, 2012). Moreover, a deficit-oriented approach blames individual students and does not acknowledge that this status was produced by oppressive and biased systems within which they live and study. Ladson-Billings (2017) clarifies that deficit lenses like the culture of poverty function to label urban communities, families, and

²¹ There are multiple factors that are connected to the label “at risk”: that include low-socioeconomic status, single-parent home, changing schools, below average grades in middle school, held back a grade, siblings who stopped out of high school, and negative peer pressure (Smerdon, 2002).

children as dysfunctional and make the case that populations cannot function as part of mainstream society. The prominent use of the label “at-risk,” as mentioned by Mr. Nevin, is one example of colonial schooling, particularly the dehumanization that continues to shape urban students' experiences of color and labeled as problems.

Mr. Nevin argued that what happened between 2004 and 2008 connected to national free-market policies were factors that shaped the overall feel of the school. Particularly, Mr. Nevin made the case that the implications of these policies and the 2008 financial crisis centered on class and not race. Mr. Nevin’s point suggested that middle-class students at Logro are representative of the broader student population at the school. Data analysis revealed that while there are students of color who are middle class, the majority are White. Mr. Esteva contends that based on his mapping of Logro’s enrollment data, he found that the working class and low-income students at Logro were disproportionately Black and Latinx.

An increase of middle-class students at Logro, Mr. Nevin argued, created a more positive school culture, but positive for whom? Mixed-income schools are argued to benefit all children (Carlson & Bell, 2021; Kahlenberg, 2012), but we know that middle-class overwhelming White parents prioritize the individual achievement of their children (Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2016). Moreover, research argues that there is a tipping point at which the incoming White middle-class students in urban schools may begin to harm the remaining working-class students of color (Keels, Burdick-Will, & Keene, 2013). When describing the school culture, Mr. Nevin shared,

I think for most kids, this is kind of a special place. I think about where I went to school. Man, it was so segregated...This school, it doesn't necessarily have these...Like a group of jocks. The jocks actually hang out with smart kids, and some of the jocks are smart

kids, right? Of course, but it's not divided, and then you've got middle-class kids who hang out with kids who come from really difficult circumstances, and it's kind of like, I don't know. I've seen a lot of positive exchanges. It's almost like there's this diffusion of experience that happens so that the more at-risk kids actually get support from their friends and vice versa (Mr. Nevin, Teacher Interview, March 24, 2016).

The point of comparison for Mr. Nevin is his own high school experience during a period of outright animosity in communities nationwide that were unwilling to desegregate and that resented the mandated integration. Although Mr. Nevin assumed that Logro was perceived as this special place for most Logro students, data analysis revealed that students believed that Logro was a good school. However, it not always translated into positive and rewarding experiences. Mr. Nevin's position is informed by his role as a teacher, who has experienced firsthand Logo's transformation and the improvement in disciplinary issues, but also as a parent. Mr. Nevin's son attended Logro during the academic year and was enrolled in the Philomath program and the Building and Architecture Academy. It seemed that part of what Mr. Nevin conveyed was his son's positive experiences. Even though Mr. Nevin asserted that Logro was not segregated, interview and fieldnotes data corroborated that ninth-grade classes were diverse. Nevertheless, classes became visibly segregated as students moved to their tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. The students enrolled in the Philomath program, and the Building and Architecture Academy were the most segregated, with the highest concentration of White and middle-class students.

Student participants corroborated the positive exchanges among students that Mr. Nevin detailed, which can be attributed to school organizational approaches that included the development of the honor system to create a positive school culture across Logro. Mr. Nevin

used the term diffusion to highlight positive exchanges among Logro students. Diffusion refers to an object or person moving from an area of high concentration to one with low concentration. Students described moments of diffusion that included involvement in specific academic programs and enrichment opportunities, like sports. For example, Ramona, a twelfth-grade White student whose father has a Ph.D. when asked about the ways that Logro offered support to students she explained,

But there's also this really cool thing, my brother also did Logro; he is older than me, but he was on the football team, and they would provide dinner after practices and games. So, if people couldn't afford it or just couldn't get it right away, they'd always have something to go to, so that's something that's really, really cool. And they also, I know the basketball team and the football team, both have tutoring for the athletes. And they have specific study hall times between school and practice, so it's kind of forcing people to get their homework done and get their late work or get their stuff done early like that whole thing, that's really, really cool (Ramona, Student Interview, June 15, 2016).

Ramona described her brother's experience as part of the football team. This experience allowed both Ramona and her brother to learn that some of their peers faced food insecurity. In an enthusiastic tone, Ramona applauded the supper program and the academic support offered for Logro student athletes through the study hall. The structured time of the study hall that provided tutors benefited all students that Ramona described as "forcing people to get their homework done." These support systems were particularly beneficial to students who did not have access to tutoring at home or did not have the time due to numerous responsibilities. In the above example, the diffusion of experience emerged for Ramona and her brother, which allowed them to understand more deeply the experience of students in the football team who faced food

insecurity. However, it was more uncommon for vulnerable students to experience exposure to the more privileged experiences.

When Mr. Nevin described the different groups of students that included the jocks, the smart kids, the middle-class kids, and the kids “who come from really difficult circumstances,” he was not specific if the assessment was honing in on a specific Logro academy or program. Nevertheless, the student groups he mentioned could be found in the prestigious Philomath program and the Building and Architecture Academy of students like Ramona. She was an athlete, perceived as a “smart kid” because she was enrolled in the Philomath program and the Building Academy and middle-class. Mr. Nevin concluded that Logro’s culture was not divided. While student participants detailed positive exchanges among students, resoundingly, they detailed the different ways that Logro felt segregated and divided along racial and socio-economic lines.

For example, as discussed by Ramona, sports are a space where students with very different experiences came together. Simcha, a White senior, agreed, and when asked to share a school memory, something that was memorable, she shared playing as part of the softball team and meeting peers from different backgrounds.

It was just really inspirational. Just more really great people that I met that all moved on to do really good things went to college. Even though they came from completely different backgrounds, which is really cool. That was probably one of my favorite high school memories was just having access to those people that I don't really feel like I had access to academically as much because I was in the Philomath program. I didn't really see a lot of those people in those classes with me. To have that outlet for them outside of school was nice (Simcha, Student Interview, June 14, 2016).

Simcha explained that specific student populations included working-class and Black students that she did not have access to in her classes because she was enrolled in the Philomath program, which was described as “heavily White.” Simcha described her peers in the softball team as inspirational. The girls that Simcha is referring to were individuals whom she got to know and described as great individuals. These were girls who, despite challenging circumstances, graduated and enrolled in college. Even though Simcha used the term inspirational, she ended her thought by describing access and participation in the softball team as an outlet that sounded pathological. Simcha’s description aligned with deficit-oriented labels that designate working-class students of color as troubled with out-of-control lives. Moreover, Simcha explored her lack of access to working-class and Black students as the choices made to join or not join the Philomath program. Multiple barriers hindered students with limited information and social capital from joining.

Like Mr. Nevin, Mr. Ko examined the interaction of race and class; however, he provided a contrasting perspective. Mr. Ko shared, “race is still a thing, but I think socio-economic is probably the thing that stratifies our school more than anything else.” In both accounts, socio-economic status emerged as central to shaping the emergent culture at Logro. While Mr. Nevin presented the culture as integrated and positive, Mr. Ko detailed that it emerged as socio-economically stratified. Exploring the forces that led to the eventual school closures in Chicago’s Southside, Ewing (2018) unearths a history of race and segregation, central to creating U.S. urban contexts. Similar to Chicago, Monte Caoba is an urban city that historically has been shaped by forces of racialization that refers to the institutionalization of residential and school segregation. Even though Mr. Nevin and Mr. Ko claimed that the force driving the dynamics present at Logro is socio-economics, critical race theory scholars have argued since the 1990s

that race and racism are permanent, endemic, and intersectional (Bell, 1993; Crenshaw, 1991; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997). The way this emerges for Logro students is that they have complex and intersecting positionalities. Essentially, a class analysis is not enough to examine the factors that influence a changing school culture at Logro.

The intersection of race and socio-economics is complex. Ms. Taylor, the Chair for the Spanish Department, has taught at Logro High for twenty-two years and recalled that when she first started, the school was sixty-six percent Black, which she explained, “it’s more balanced in pluralities.” Indeed, the racial-ethnic groups represented at school had similar enrollment percentages. In terms of socio-economics, she explained that Logro was traditionally a school where fifty percent or more students qualified for free-or-reduced price lunch. However, according to Ms. Taylor, those demographics changed during the years leading to the 2015-16 school year with the influx of families who are “really high socio-economic.” The message that Ms. Taylor provided about race and class was something that other teachers corroborated. For example, Ms. Yang shared:

The population of White students has increased, not to a majority but has increased significantly from what it has been even five years ago. The overall income medium of the school has also risen significantly (Ms. Yang, Teacher Interview, June 28, 2016).

Reflective of teacher interviews, Ms. Taylor and Ms. Yang established that the population of White students increased significantly along with the school’s income medium. Even though White students, who in many cases were middle-class, did not constitute a majority, the dynamics explored thus far uncover how the system centered on both White and economic privilege. A coloniality lens is helpful to understand that it is no coincidence that the increase of White students was accompanied by the decrease in the enrollment of Black students. The

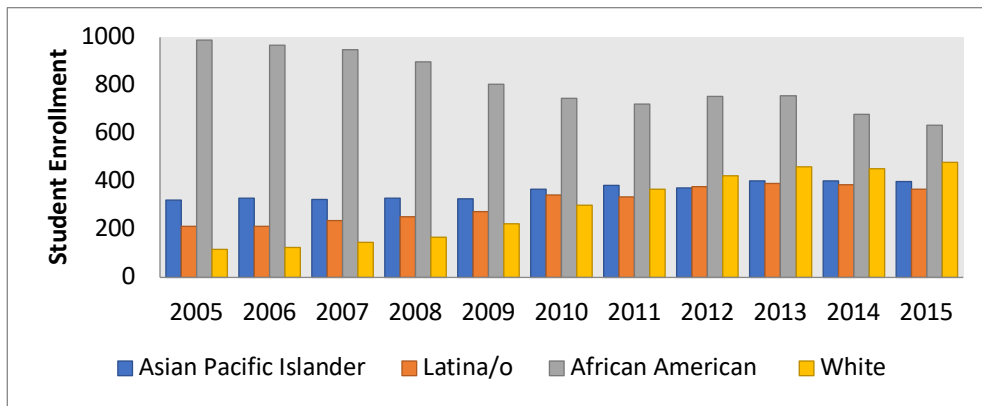
race(ism) and class(ism) processes at Logro were connected to broader socio-economic and political forces that included gentrification and the accompanying displacement. The following includes Table 1 and Figure 6 that demonstrates population trends for Monte Caoba and enrollment data for Logro.

Table 4: Monte Caoba Census Racial Demographic Trends.

Racial Composition	2018	2010	1990
African American/ Black	26.2%	28.0%	43.9%
White	29.0%	25.9%	28.3%
Hispanic/ Latinx	25.5%	25.3%	13.9%
Asian	15.3%	16.8%	14.8%

Source: United States Census

Figure 6: Logro High School Racial-Ethnic Enrollment Data 2005-2015.



The census data reveals that Monte Caoba lost nearly one-third of its Black/African American population and saw a slight increase of Whites. There was also a fifty percent increase from 1990 to 2010 for the Hispanic/Latinx population. Even though Black residents in Monte Caoba made up a quarter of the population, they have declined significantly in their enrollment at Logro High. The sharp decline in Black student enrollment could result from Black families moving out of

the area to find more affordable housing. Another reason could be that Black students are not applying to Logro, or they may be applying but are not getting admitted.

A Racial and Socio-Economic Divisive School Culture

During his interview, Mr. Cook, an American Literature teacher who teaches three College Preparatory and two Honors sections, shared a popular idiom of “the haves and have-nots” to represent the culture present at Logro. The following is an excerpt of our conversation:

Yanira: How would you describe the school culture present at Logro?

Mr. Cook: I think there is definitely a feeling between the “haves and have-nots” at Logro.

Yanira: Can you elaborate?

Mr. Cook: A divide.

Yanira: Can you provide an example of how this divide emerges?

Mr. Cook: The poorer students are vocal about it, and some of the wealthier students, at times, can be vocal about it as well in terms of [pause]. They have an air of entitlement, that “I’m better than you,” and the ones that don’t have are just like [pause] “fuck you.” I think that will [pause]. I think that’s just a natural thing and will exist, you know, not only for teens, it’s for adults too.

Yanira: I’m just trying to understand, does it emerge as relationships, for example?

Mr. Cook: I think it’s through the [pause]. Well, there’s a divide between the have and the have nots through prestigious classes and non-prestigious classes, and then in the prestigious classes is like, “well, we do all of this, and you’re not doing our level.” (Mr. Cook, Teacher Interview, April 26, 2016).

Mr. Cook described the culture as a divide between two groups of students separated by socio-economics, the haves, the middle-class wealthy, and the have-nots, the working-class poor. The

divide emerged as oppositional interactions between Logro students. It revealed patterns of racialization—when one group was positioned as superior and the other as inferior. Mr. Cook explained that the divide was something that both student groups were vocal about it and brought it up. The middle-class-wealthy students that Mr. Cook described as ‘the haves’ had a sense of entitlement that conveyed to the ‘have-nots,’ “I am better than you.” The middle-class-wealthy disproportionately White positioned themselves as superior, while the working-class-low-income students, whom Mr. Esteva explained are disproportionately Black, and Latinx were positioned as inferior. ‘The haves’ affirmed their domination which in the context of Logro referred to proprietorship of prestigious programs along with human resources, that is, the best and most qualified teachers and material resources²² that were part of those well-funded programs.

Mr. Cook highlighted the culture of the haves and have-nots passively, wherein it emerged as setting forth “facts,” or the natural order of things. He did not attempt to examine or consider the socio-economic and historical forces that shaped the dynamics that manifested as the divide he described. For example, Figure 6 above highlighted the enrollment demographics that demonstrated a steady decline of Black students' enrollment and a contrasting increase of White students. Logro’s increase of White and more middle-class students emerged alongside a sense of entitlement. Furthermore, Mr. Cook did not consider how, as described by Mr. Umaru, Logro’s funding priorities constituted a pattern wherein the needs of the prestigious programs were met first, even though these programs only served a minority of the students.

²² The types of material resources that Mr. Umaru detailed were only accessible by an elite minority and included paper, copying, and printing. Ms. Stanton explained her fundraising efforts to ensure the students in the Philomath program had adequate equipment that included up-to-date textbooks but also enrichment experiences like a trip to Washington D.C. for the students enrolled in Philomath AP Government course. Moreover, the material resources available to those enrolled in the Building Academy, that included a classroom set of desktop computers with the necessary software students needed to complete their engineering assignments.

The have-nots were aware of the divide and how the system offered privileges only accessible to the “haves.” Despite the sense of entitlement of the “haves” and the accompanying privileges provided by a colonial system, the “have-nots,” composed of working-class, low-income students of color, spoke up with courage and agency. Specifically, they used the vulgar idiom “fuck you” to convey defiance not only to the peers who asserted that entitlement and superiority but also to the system that created these distinctions and affirmed whiteness and economic privilege. Beyond Mr. Cook’s passive stance, he affirmed his sense that teachers do not support the divide. Even though teachers and school leaders may not support the sense of superiority and entitlement of the haves, data analysis revealed that most teachers and staff participants were passively concerned. Only three interview participants problematized the systemic disparities that privileged a minority “elite” student population.

Ms. Yang was another teacher participant who also examined the divide. She described the ideology that was connected to embodying an academic school that produced this divide. She explained,

I think that on the one hand, it’s good because we’re encouraging students who have a vision, who know where they want to be, and we’re supporting them. Then, how we are also supporting kids that *don’t know* when the kids that *do know* look and represent one predominant race. The kids that don’t know are the other race. Then it really creates a divide, a racial and economic divide in our school. There isn’t a lot of mix in between. There’s a lack of awareness amongst the kids because they’re also still young and still figuring out their own thing. There is this divide that is happening, and it’s impacting them (Ms. Yang, Teacher Interview, June 28, 2016).

Generally, it is a great philosophy for a school to support the students who have a vision about what they want through skill-development to support them reach their goals. However, the difficulty that Ms. Yang described was that all of the students who make up Logro do not know what they want and where they are headed. More pointedly, Ms. Yang revealed that the students who do know represent one race while those who do not represent another. The dynamics connected to this reality manifest as a prominent divide that is racial and socio-economic school-wide, and where she elaborates, “there is no mix in between.” Ms. Yang attributes the lack of awareness among some students because they are still learning about who they are and what they want, which makes sense. However, more prominent forces that created the divide included, as she explained previously, a hidden agenda or unspoken rules that did not allow an equitable distribution of information to ensure equitable access.

Ms. Marciano, a 9th grade English 1 and California History teacher, has taught for eight years. Ms. Marciano taught the same students for both courses during two periods or a blocked period. When asked to reflect on the culture present at Logro, Ms. Marciano explained that culture is a word that can mean multiple things. Nevertheless, Ms. Marciano echoed an overwhelming number of participant interviews conveying that Logro has become the one public school where middle-class parents can enroll their children. Ms. Marciano explained that:

Logro is seen by a lot of middle-class parents as the one school that you could send your kid to if you’re going to send your kid to public school in Monte Caoba. That’s exciting because it does mean that we have students from every neighborhood in Monte Caoba, and again, I really believe that that is how public education should work. I think that everyone should go to public school. It also is the cause of some pretty serious issues in terms of kind of different amounts of privilege in the school, and [pause] some divide

connected to tracking and achievement at the school (Ms. Marciano, Teacher Interview, April 20, 2016).

Lipman (2008) explains that policies to create mixed-income schools work to “reduce poverty and the inequitable educational opportunities and outcomes affecting low-income students.” (p. 119). Although mixed-income policies are framed as “egalitarian solutions” to educational issues and other social problems, they do not address poverty or unequal opportunities. Further, mixed-income policies can then compound marginalization and exclusion for working-class families of color (Lipman, 2008). In an effort to fulfill the promise of mixed-income policies, it is essential to explore the prevalent patterns of power that exist at Logro and examine what steps should be taken to make it an equitable institution that benefits all students equitably. The fact that middle-class parents wanted to send their children to Logro, Ms. Marciano argued, resulted in different amounts of privilege along with the divide. Similar to Mr. Cook, Ms. Marciano referenced a “divide.” While Mr. Cook described the “divide” as a social positioning that privilege at the intersection of race and class, Ms. Marciano described the divide as a structural schooling issue that created tracking conditions. Ms. Marciano’s analysis detailed the benefits of mixed-income schools, however similar to Mr. Cook; she utilized a socio-economic lens to examine the issues with the divide, which she detailed emerged as tracking.

School tracking is the process of placing students into different categories based on a slow, average, or fast learner classification along with standardized test outcomes (Oakes, 2005). Studies have demonstrated that within-school tracking influences student outcomes (Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013; Mickelson, 2015; Welner & Oakes, 1996). Tracking at the high school level emerges as honors and Advanced Placement courses that provide broader curricula, qualified teaching, and academically-driven peers (Oakes, 2005). Oakes (2005) explains that White and

middle-class-affluent students are more likely to enroll in these upper-track classes than working-class students of color.

Counter-Narratives: Contesting Logro's Positive Diverse Reputation

The divisive culture that emerged stood in contrast to what student and teacher participants described as an incredibly diverse school. Although the demographics depicted a diverse school along race-ethnicity and socio-economics, among other factors, the diversity was not reflected in certain classrooms. The student participants recalled a mix of students in their ninth-grade classes and then a dramatic shift during their sophomore year that remained constant for their junior and senior years. Some student participants described the shift from ninth to tenth grade as uncomfortable given the stark contrast of an equal distribution of Black, Latinx, Asian and White students to noticeable segregated classrooms wherein White students became isolated. Beyond the class break down, Tommy, an Asian-American sophomore, when asked to describe if he could change something about his school what would it be, shared, "I think they [students] need to mix more and talk to each other more because I think they stick to their own race groups." Tommy described a divide that existed beyond the classroom and into the lunch period and broadly friend groupings he described as racially segregated.

Jenny, an Asian-American junior, examined the misconceptions connected to Logro and its reputation as a diverse school. Mainly, Jenny drew parallels between Logro and her home neighborhood and focused on how they were both segregated. She shared,

So, people have a misconception that like it's [Logro] so diverse and everyone lives in harmony, and it's perfect. I don't think it's quite like that [long pause]. Diversity doesn't reflect exactly how some classes are, and diversity doesn't necessarily mean that everything's chill and really nice (Jenny, Student Interview, June 15, 2016).

Jenny problematized the positive significance connected to the term diversity, particularly ideas of harmony and perfection. Jenny argued that even though Logro is incredibly diverse, that did not mean the school setting was positive or easygoing. When prompted to elaborate on the challenges, Jenny explained how difficult it was to be one of very few students of color enrolled in the Philomath program. Mainly, Jenny shared,

Freshman year is very like [pause], it was chill like we're all new and we're all getting to really feel the school and all of that, and it's like I was the only Asian in my class but that wasn't really a noticeable thing. But then the next year when I got into Philomath, it was very noticeable that there was only, you know, there was one Latina girl, there were two black girls and like six Asians in the class, and I mean it's like less than half the class, and everybody else is White. It was very noticeable, and very, it's almost like uncomfortable. I know a lot of my friends who were in things like the Building and Architecture Academy and Philomath dropped out because it was just, there weren't people like them and, they weren't getting this vibe of you can succeed as well in these classes, and so they dropped out (Jenny, Student Interview, June 15, 2016).

Although Jenny was the only Asian student in her English 1 and California History block, she shared that it did not feel noticeable because other students of color enrolled. Jenny compared the integrated experience in ninth-grade, where students got to know the school and each other, to her sophomore year in her Philomath classes that only enrolled nine students of color, which comprised less than half of students. Jenny described the shift as not only noticeable but uncomfortable. The class breakdown, along with the class dynamics, she explained, created an atmosphere that was not only not welcoming but also detrimental to students of color. Specifically, Jenny described friends, students of color who enrolled in the Philomath program

and/or the Building and Architecture Academy as sophomores and found these spaces to be hostile. The difficult experiences included a small representation of students of color and an overarching atmosphere that did not affirm their potential nor the assets they brought to these spaces, which drove them to opt-out of the honors and Advanced Placement.

Similarly, Adenike, an African-American of Nigerian descent who was a sophomore and enrolled in the Philomath program, also examined the challenges connected to enrollment in the Philomath program. Notably, she explained,

It was good; freshman year was diverse. It was like, "Oh, it's nice meeting all these people." Now it's just being one of the few Black kids in the class. Everybody's looking at you like, "Oh, it's the Black girl." Or whispering and not talking to you at all just makes you feel so out of place. I often wonder, "What am I doing here? Why am I here? Why did I sign up for this? I should have never been in this." They [White students] know that too, but they don't say anything. They don't want to discuss anything about race. I wanted to join that class because I knew that I would learn a lot. Just being a minority shouldn't prevent you from learning anything you want or being whatever you want in the future (Adenike, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

Adenike shared the challenges connected to being one of few Black students in the Philomath program. She described feeling like the White students in her Philomath classes stared, whispered about her, and did not talk to her. These racially charged interactions drove Adenike to feel out of place and unwelcomed in this privileged space. Moreover, it drove her to reflect on whether she should continue in the Philomath program. Critical race scholar William Smith (2008) coined racial battle fatigue (RBF) as distressing mental and emotional conditions connected to cumulative race-related stress. RBF emerges from ongoing racially dismissive,

demeaning, insensitive, and/or hostile racial environments. RBF offers language to identify the cumulative stress that Adenike described as part of the dynamics of the Philomath program. Adenike shared that she held high expectations for herself and desired to challenge herself academically. She firmly believed that anybody could achieve what they set their mind to, regardless of race or ethnicity. Even though these continued to be her ideals and values, Adenike struggled with facing these problematic realities that did not validate her positionality or her place in the Philomath program.

While Adenike examined the racialized dynamics of the Philomath program, other students of color participants explored recurring instances outside of the prestigious programs of not being called on as much or waiting longer for the teacher to help them when compared to White students. For example, Adaego, an African American sophomore, when examining the similarities and differences between her community and school explained,

Adaego: Like I said, the diversity and also the lack of representation. And like our voices being heard.

Yanira: Maybe you can share an example where I can see how that comes up in your school.

Adaego: My gym teacher, Mr. Calipari, he's like weird. He would switch on and off. Sometimes, I would have my hand up, but then other people would raise their hand, which were like White; he would go to all of them first before coming to me. Or, if I was talking to him to try to answer or ask him a question, he would just like ignore me or whatever, or he would be joking around and some other kids, rather than answer my question. So, stuff like that (Adego, Student Interview, June 14, 2016).

Adaego described patterns of interactions with her physical education teacher wherein she felt ignored and was more attentive to the White students in the class. Adaego's observation included Mr. Calipari's approach not to answer questions equitably because even though she raised her hand first, he would go to the White students first. Weir (2016) explains that similar teacher behaviors stem from cultural misunderstandings or unintentional "implicit biases" that influence thinking and behavior. Even though Weir (2016) details that this treatment is not usually malicious or intentional, it can have serious consequences that harm students through punitive disciplinary and low expectations.

Although these difficult systemic challenges were prevalent, students of color spoke up against oppressive discourses that emerged from, as described by Mr. Cook, "the haves." As a collective, Jenny was a founding member of *Stir Up*, a student group that provided a safe space for students of color enrolled in the Philomath and the Building and Architecture Academy because, as she explained, "It can get rough when there's only like one student like you in Philomath." Similarly, although part of the experience that Juliana, a Chicana Junior, shared feeling like she was in the shadows, she was also a leader for the Raza Student Union and an organizer for an assembly dedicated to honoring Latinx heritage. During the assembly, Zayden, the RSU president a Latinx senior, read a welcome to the audience,

Thank you for joining us today. Your presence signals a big moment in the existence of the Raza Student Union (RSU) in Logro High, as it marks our visibility on this campus and in the community throughout history, and in modern-day Latinos and Latinas have been invisible in many aspects of our society, in labor, employment, school and of course politics. The mission of the RSU is to bring our community out of our shadows, to share different responsibility and outcomes with other people, and to rise above the current

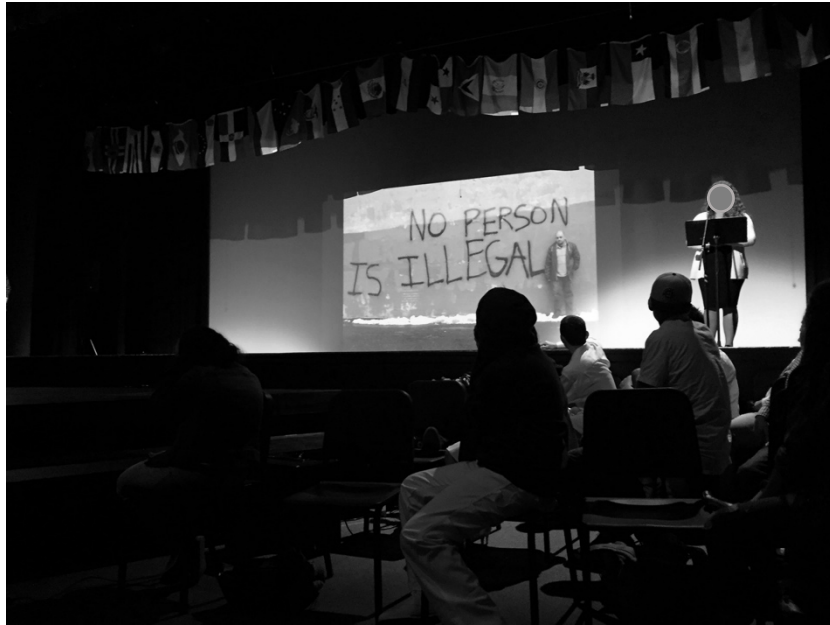
struggles we face. We also aim to bettering, and appreciation, and acknowledgement of the contributions Latinos have made, will make, and continue to make (Field Note, March 24, 2016).

The RSU mission focused on bringing the Latinx community out of the shadows at Logro because multiple Latinx student participants felt unwelcome and felt there was an emphasis on the Black-White binary with little attention on the experiences of other students of color. Moreover, the RSU assembly emphasized the importance of building alliances across racial-ethnic boundaries to support the success of all students at Logro. During the assembly, the student organizers compiled photographs that were projected on to a white screen on the stage and accompanied the spoken word, skits, and poem readings, included here are Figure 7, and 8 demonstrate the student efforts that day.

Figure 7: Grayscale photograph of images during the Raza Student Union Assembly.



Figure 8: Grayscale photograph of images during the Raza Student Union Assembly.



Privilege

Data analysis revealed privilege as a recurring theme connected to student experiences, access to information, and resources. When asked to elaborate on the divide, Ms. Marciano shared:

So, there are a couple programs that are very desirable that begin in tenth grade. There's the Building and Architecture Academy, and there's the Philomath program. I would say that some students come into Logro not knowing about those programs, and those are students who sometimes are coming from maybe areas of less privilege. So, they might be qualified to enter those programs, but because they don't know about them coming in, they don't ask their teachers about them, they don't know how to navigate the application process, that kind of thing (Ms. Marciano, Teacher Interview, April 26, 2016).

Mr. Marciano concurred with Ms. Yang and explained that some students do not know much about the prestigious programs. Ms. Yang examined the lack of transparency and information connected to accessing the Building Academy and Philomath program. Not only was the information not public, but it also seemed only to be passed through culture and parent networks.

Ms. Yang concluded that these processes brought to the fore the elitism that was happening. Ms. Marciano offered additional insight by arguing that the students who do not know about the prestigious programs come from areas of less privilege. As a ninth-grade English and History teacher, Ms. Marciano worked to prepare students for the tenth grade. She was one of the teachers who witnessed the potential and capacity of many students with less privilege to join the prestigious programs. However, many of these students did not have access to information, nor asked. For others, they were not able to navigate the application process. These processes made visible how the ‘haves,’ as explained by Mr. Cook, benefited from the transmission of a privileged culture along with access to networks of information.

When describing the students represented at Logro, Mr. Ko detailed that Logro was diverse and highlighted the racial, ethnic, but emphasized the socio-economic diversity. He elaborated and examined how he witnessed the manifestation of socio-economic diversity alongside access to information and opportunities. Mainly, he explained,

I don't think that every parent or every student knows the different options that are available to them. Some are more aware so that [pause]. So, for example, the deal with our school is it's two schools within one. You have the privileged, upper-social economic standing in the prestigious honors classes, whereas everyone else is in the general education. You have your academy students and your non-academy students, your honor students, and your non-honors students. I guess the reason why some are self-selecting, or maybe they weren't self-selecting, I don't know. Maybe, it's more institutionalized than that because they don't know the different options available to them. So, self-advocacy and going out and getting what you deserve. I don't know. I'm not sure if that's a skill or something that needs to be taught. Probably [it] is. I don't think a lot of, especially at the

high school level, these are young adults, they're unaware of the different [pause]. That they have that kind of control and power to go self-advocate for themselves, or their lives are so crazy that it's outside their peripheral knowledge, I don't know (Mr. Ko, Teacher Interview, March 29, 2016).

Mr. Ko asserted that parents and students do not always know the available options. However, before he finished his thought, he stepped back and described the broader school structure as “two schools within one.” One of the schools, he explained, enrolled students who are “privileged” and “upper social-economic standing” and took prestigious and honors courses. While the second included “everyone else,” which he did not spell out but included largely working-class students of color. Although Mr. Ko asserted that students were self-selecting into the prestigious and honors courses, he backtracked and explained that maybe they were not self-selecting. He acknowledged that “maybe” this process was more institutionalized and connected to Ms. Yang’s point about information that was not publicly available. Essentially, the institution did not support equitable access given information about program requirements, and application processes were inaccessible.

Mr. Ko turned to self-efficacy to highlight that young people have agency; however, as presented, it sounded like meritocratic notions of hard work and merited success. Although Mr. Ko attempted to highlight the power of student agency, he acknowledged that young people in high school were probably unaware of advocating for themselves. Further, Mr. Ko did not acknowledge how ideas about self-efficacy are raced, classed, and gendered. In other words, which youth groups are supported when they exercise their self-advocacy and which are not. During the 1960s, the young women and men of color involved in liberation movements were portrayed as dangerous and criminal (Duvernay, 2016). Starting in the 1990s and under the

auspices of zero-tolerance, young women and men of color were disproportionately deemed as deviant and “willfully defiant.” Throughout his response, Mr. Ko used words and phrases indicating uncertainty, “I don’t know,” “I guess,” “I don’t think.” Mr. Ko goes back and forth. He acknowledged the institutional forces and attempted to highlight the individual power of young people of self-efficacy, however at the end described the multiple challenges the students who are not “privileged” faced, which made changing the structure of two schools within one a struggle.

When prompted to offer further clarification about privilege, mainly how it played out, Ms. Marciano elaborated,

Students coming from a more privileged background come to the school because a family network has been like, “Oh, yeah, Logro is the place that you go. So, you can go to the Building and Architecture Academy.” So, they come in both knowing about the program and also with a sense of entitlement to acceptance to that program. So, that can lead to an advantage, just in that they know to talk to their teacher about it, and they know to apply. But I have also heard—I actually haven’t experienced this personally—but I’ve heard about parents pushing school officials after students were not accepted into the program. So, seeing basically parents pushing back on admissions decisions, because they had the ability, time, whatever, to advocate for their child in that way (Ms. Marciano, Teacher Interview, April 20, 2016).

Ms. Marciano described privilege as connected to the parent and family network that functioned as an informal avenue to share information about the prestigious programs and the numerous enrichment opportunities that Logro offered. The parent and family network disseminated a positive narrative about Logro, along with what was the right path to follow. Tapping into the

parent and family network, Ms. Marciano argued, gave parents and students a sense of entitlement to obtain admission into the prestigious programs. The knowledge obtained allowed students to share their interests with teachers and ensured that they applied. The privilege emerged when parents pushed back when their children were not accepted into these prestigious programs. The above demonstrated the entry point for students who experienced privilege and felt entitlement and ownership of the prestigious programs. Multiple teachers identified Logro as a school that privileged a select minority while not fully serving the majority. The parent family network became evident, which allowed teachers to witness how in many cases, White and middle-class students were supported to obtain entrance into the prestigious program. It was less common when teacher and staff participants provided a systemic analysis that identified the limited efforts by school leaders, the teachers overseeing the prestigious programs to create access. Moreover, only two participants touched on Logro's funding prioritization which favored the continued success of the prestigious programs.

Conclusion and Discussion

Logro's reputation transformed from low-performing and dangerous to a school with a positive reputation began in the early 2000s. Logro's strong academics and the rigorous Philomath program, however, were around since the 1980s and since produced impressive outcomes, such as a 90 percent passing rate for the AP Government exam and the enrollment of Logro graduates into prestigious universities. It was socio-economic forces that included the 2008 financial crisis, the housing market influenced by a tech boom, and the current iteration of gentrification that resulted in city-wide and school-wide changes. In the Blossom Hill community, gentrification emerged as an influx of new businesses and amenities that changed

what was previously described as a “ghost town.” Students of color participants detailed that new neighbors who did not look like them began to move into their community.

Historically, there was a steady presence of White residents in Monte Caoba that in the 1990s made up roughly 28 percent. White student participants shared a segregated upbringing wherein the community they grew up in was heavily White, wealthy, and privileged. The city demographic breakdown was not reflected in Logro’s enrollment, given that in 2005 Logro’s White student enrollment was at six percent. Some White student participants detailed that prior to attending Logro, their experience was solely at private school. It was the 2008 financial crisis that drove some White families to rethink private school tuition, along with a national newspaper publication that highlighted Logro’s robust academic programs that became the impetus for the shift that influenced the racial and socio-economic makeup of student enrollment.

During the early 2000s, Logro was a school that enrolled roughly 65 percent African-American students; by 2015-16 that figure decreased to 31 percent. Contrastingly, White students went from five percent in the early 2000s to 24 percent by the 2015-16 school year. Despite this noticeable shift, some teacher participants prioritized a class analysis because they explained that the racial dimension did not fully capture the dynamics present at Logro. In other words, teacher participants encountered a fraction of students of color who were middle-class and did not fit the stereotypical profile of urban working-class students. Teacher participants described the two schools within one, wherein the privileged students were upper-middle class. Mr. Umaru provided a more nuanced and historical account of a longstanding pattern of exclusivist programs, wherein the student enrollment did not reflect the overall school demographics since the 1990s. The privileging of White and middle-class students was not something that began as a result of the demographic shift in enrollment, but rather something that

was built in the infrastructure of the prestigious Building and Architecture Academy and the Philomath program and supported by the prioritization of school-wide funding.

Logro obtained a reputation as a rigorous and desirable school that enrolled students from multiple Monte Caoba communities, with parents who were “fighting” to enroll their students. The reputation during the 2015-16 school year shaped both the overarching culture and connected climates. One of the climates was positive. Participants described this positive climate as students getting along and a strong focus on academics. At the organizational level, some efforts included developing an honor system that informed disciplinary policies and a restorative justice orientation. Another connected effort was framing Logro as an academic school that emphasized class attendance. Teacher participants highlighted a shift where there was a decrease in student physical altercations, which also built a positive academic image. Organizational efforts to implement a restorative justice approach to address disciplinary matters and build a college-going culture (Acevedo-Gil, 2014) coincided with the increase of White students and the decrease of Black students. These organizational efforts highlight the power of school staff (school leaders and teachers) to shape the discipline and how academically rigorous classes are assigned (Shores, Kim & Still, 2019).

A second climate was described as a divide and although it was understood by some teacher participants as only connected to socio-economics. This phenomenon, however, was raced because, as discussed by Ms. Yang, students who were self-directed and knew the path they would follow to reach college represented only White students. In contrast, those who did not know for the most part were students of color, which created a prominent racial and economic divide in Logro. The divide referred to a physical and symbolic separation of students who were and were not part of the prestigious programs. An underlying assumption of the divide

was that the students not part of the prestigious programs were not only not intelligent but also inferior.

The divide revealed patterns of racialization wherein “the haves” were positioned as superior, more intelligent, and worthy. While the “have nots” were positioned as inferior, lacking, and unworthy. Students that benefitted from being positioned as the haves had a sense of entitlement and experienced multiple privileges. The privileges included access to information through informal parent and family networks that facilitate sharing information regarding navigating Logro’s systems about how to access prestigious programs. The students who did not have this privilege did not have access to information and did not know the options available. Teacher participants described encountering students with “less privilege” who did not know to share their interest in enrolling in the prestigious programs, which meant the teacher could not support them. Mr. Ko highlighted the value of self-efficacy. Connected to other teacher and staff participants, Mr. Ko, did not account for how unlikely it would be for students to carve out a path for themselves, given that the school system functions to benefit students coming from a place of privilege.

Although participants were able to identify the official Logro reputation as prestigious and diverse, they also identified counter-narratives. Student participants were critical of notions of diversity attributed to Logro because although their ninth-grade year was diverse, that rapidly changed during their sophomore year, wherein the prestigious Philomath and Building and Architecture classes were overwhelmingly White. Jenny was critical of the positive attributes connected to diversity because she detailed the different ways that Logro did not embody diversity. Notably, students of color shared the rough experiences they faced in the Philomath and Building and Architecture Academy. Students also shared that they experienced invalidating

experiences outside of those prestigious programs. Even though students shared these complicated realities of racialized tracking and how harmful implicit bias was, they also examined the ways they actively challenged them. Student of color participants examined how individually they knew in their heart that these difficult realities were wrong; some spoke up and would challenge entitled students using vulgar and offensive language. As a collective, students created safe spaces like *Stir Up* designated only for students of color to talk openly about the damaging experiences part of the Philomath program and the Building and Architecture Academy. Moreover, students utilized performance as part of the Latinx student assembly to bring visibility to Latinx students at Logro.

These findings align with Holme (2002), particularly, the critical nature and reliance of social networks to identify school quality and navigate the school choice process. The social networks led a large percentage of White and middle-and upper-class students to not only enroll in Logro, but also actively seek out the prestigious programs. Unlike the parents in Holme's (2002) study who denied discrimination that ensured the schools their children attended were predominately White and middle-class, Logro students and select teachers were upfront about that prominent divided culture that was raced and classed. Logro's case contributes to the literature by providing an example of a school that transformed its reputation from "negative" to "positive," that highlights the centrality of whiteness and socio-economics in the unspoken aspects of what makes a good school. Moreover, Logro's case contributes to the literature of youth resistance, that highlights the awareness of young people of color of the colonial conditions that manifests in their schooling experience, but more importantly, their determination to interrupt these colonial conditions to improve their schooling experiences.

Chapter Six: Resisting Poder's Negative School Reputation and Colonial School Culture

The present dissertation uses a comparative analysis to examine school reputation at two contrasting traditional urban high schools in the same district. Chapter Six hones in on the Poder High school²³ site by addressing Research Question One: How does the reputation of Poder High shape the culture at the site? Research Question Two: What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation? By weaving in the ways Poder students and teachers engage in decolonizing practices, Chapter Six addresses Research Question Three: How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling?

Chapter Six finds that the overarching reputation of Poder High is negative and connects to what is described as place reputation. That refers to how Poder's reputation is entangled with the negative views about both the Zócalo neighborhood and the City of Monte Caoba. The negative reputation is fueled by internal and external stakeholders that include the media, the central office, historical memory,²⁴ and or individuals with little knowledge about Zócalo and Poder. A temporal analysis reveals that part of what fuels and maintains Poder's longstanding negative reputation is enduring instability and limited support. Enduring instability emerges as the implementation of numerous educational reforms in a short period. Further, limited support refers to inadequate human and material resources to address the needs of a large student population experiencing poverty.

Chapter Six defines Poder's colonial school culture and oppressive. Poder emerged as a systematically oppressed space that dehumanizes. A colonial school culture prioritizes top-down decisions, authoritarian rules, and punishment. A colonial school culture is characterized by

²³ Pseudonyms have been assigned throughout to protect the privacy of the participants.

²⁴ Anholtt (2009) details that the reputation of a place, like a school, is not completely controlled by present actors but is also controlled by other forces that include historical memory and even social media.

continuous change that creates instability, uncertainty along with a hostile environment that centralizes punitive approaches and diminishes community power. The oppressive realities include enduring instability and limited support, which become justified with deficit and racist perceptions about Poder students and teachers. A prominent dehumanizing school culture surfaced as top-down decisions, authoritarian rules, and punishment. Moreover, a dehumanizing school culture was characterized by continuous change that created uncertainty along with a hostile environment that centralizes punitive approaches.

The racialized discourses of Poder as “dangerous” and a “bad” school’ were found to criminalize students and frame them as unworthy. The implication of these racialized designations was a negative reputation that justified the creation and reproduction of colonial schooling culture. These processes portray students negatively as unable to achieve academically or think critically. Moreover, negative perceptions that portray Poder as unworthy limit the material and human resources provided to the site, hampering the available support for academic success. Racialized discourses veil and justify the colonial conditions but also the dehumanization perpetrated on students.

Despite Poder’s longstanding negative reputation, Poder students and teachers actively challenged these negative views by highlighting caring teachers, and a welcoming environment which create a familial school climate. Students engage in leadership efforts, and teachers engage in decolonizing practices to create opportunities to involve them on internship that focused on skill and leadership development as a means to interrupt dehumanizing and colonial contexts. Despite these colonial schooling conditions, Poder students and their teacher allies resisted. Specifically, Poder students were unyielding to protect each other and their school from

systemic forces that they believed wanted to tear their school apart, but that became the catalyst to demand the MCUSD to be responsive to needs and desired of the Poder community.

Forces Shaping Poder High School's Reputation

During formal and informal interviews with students, teachers, school leaders, and other staff members, questions explored participants' perspectives about Poder's reputation. Data analysis revealed that Poder's negative reputation emerged as interconnected to negative views about the surrounding Zócalo neighborhood and the broader Monte Caoba city. Moreover, contemporary negative ideas about Poder's reputation included deficit perceptions about students with low academic performance, teachers who underserved students, and safety issues. The students and teacher participants detailed the prevalent negative views about Monte Caoba as a city, but mainly, the neighborhoods in East Monte Caoba that included Zócalo. Data analysis revealed that the assumptions from outsiders, those who did not reside in Monte Caoba, portrayed Zocalo as a violent place with drugs. The participants detailed that their neighborhood is assumed to be unsafe. When asked about the perceptions about her community, Asha, an African American ninth-grade student, shared,

I think they think that Monte Caoba's a bad place to live because there's more violence out here in Monte Caoba. I guess they think it's a bad place. It's not really a bad place. It's really nice and open-minded and a lot of open people. I think that people who don't live out here think that this is a bad place. That all the kids is dying, all the gang violence around it [pause]. No one ever sends their children to Poder because they think they going to get hurt. That's how I think that people feel (Asha, Student Interview, June 1, 2016).

Asha explained that Monte Caoba was assumed to be a “bad” place. Nevertheless, she challenged this narrative and argued that those who made up Monte Caoba are “open-minded” and are “open people.” Asha referred to open and willing individuals who shared experiences with those different from themselves and individuals who welcomed that difference in race, ethnicity, and language. Asha argued that the implications of these negative perceptions included families that hesitated to send their children to Poder because they assumed it was unsafe.

Similarly, Rihanna, an African-American junior, explained,

I think people think that we all like bad, like all our youth is really like ghetto, and we don't listen. And, we're not productive, like we're lazy. We have, hum, the perception of Monte Caoba is like, it's like we are just like really bad people. It's something wrong with being here. Like, we can't [pause] our community is unfit to do what others do.

(Rihanna, Student Interview, June 2, 2016).

Rihanna focused on how perceptions about her community were rooted in negative labels attributed to those part of her community, particularly youth. Rihanna detailed that young people are often labeled “ghetto,” which she described as erratic, problematic, or destructive behavior. Further, Rihanna shares that young people are assumed to be unproductive and lazy, which aligns with the presumption that urban young people are not working to their full potential due to disorganized communities and schools (Ladson-Billings, 2017; Tuck, 2012).

These false and deficit ideas about unproductive and lazy families and communities make up the stereotypical notion described in past literature as the culture of poverty, identifying negative traits of those facing poverty to justify what is known as the cycle of poverty (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011; Foley, 1997; Valencia, 2010). Simplistic narratives of good and bad people neglect the power and influence of structures in the everyday lives of urban working-class young people.

Rihanna exemplified how a superficial understanding of Monte Caoba is deficient and criminalized those who reside in Monte Caoba, particularly working-class and communities of color as “bad,” “unproductive,” and “lazy. ” Moreover, Rihanna explained that deficit perceptions assumed her “community is unfit,” which referred to being unworthy of participation and benefit of mainstream culture. When asked why is it that these views existed about Monte Caoba, Rihanna elaborated,

Because of past issues or like things that happen. So, somebody could get killed right now, and people think like, “Oh, that’ll happen to anybody who’ll go out there, so don’t go out there because you’ll get shot.” Things like that. Even though we live here, we know that the chances of that happening are a lot lower than what you think. But, because you hear about it, you like, “Oh, that’s a bad place. We can’t go there because something like this will happen to you.” Or something like that, you know. (Rihanna, Student Interview, June 2, 2016).

Rihanna contextualized the negative views that existed about her community and referenced “past issues” or “things that happen” to refer to violent crime, particularly, homicides. In the 1990s, similar to other urban cities, Monte Caoba was emerging from a crack epidemic mediated by punitive measures implemented at the national, state, and local levels (Davis, 2003; Hartman & Golub, 1999). Rihanna referenced violent crime because the media identified Monte Caoba as one of the most dangerous cities in the U.S. Violent crime peaked in the 1990s and since, has declined. As somebody who grew up in Monte Caoba, Rihanna understood that violent crime did occur in her neighborhood. While she knew that the likelihood that a random shooting would occur was minimal, outsiders, those not part of the community, Rihanna explained, demonstrated alarmist perceptions that included deep-seeded fears of getting shot.

Martha, a Latina junior, also called Monte Caoba home. Like Asha and Rihanna, she elaborated on the meaning of the negative perceptions. The following is an excerpt from our conversation.

Yanira: What do you believe are some of the views about your community?

Martha: It's dangerous.

Yanira: Okay. Can you elaborate?

Martha: Or [that] nobody here is ambitious. Or [pause] how do I say it? Like we just [pause]. I don't know how to say it.

Yanira: Some of these views include that nobody in the community has ambition?

Martha: Yeah, they think we don't know what's going on. I don't know how to explain it. Like we don't have a say. They don't see us. They think that [pause]. How do I explain this? Like since we're on the lower level, we don't know what's going on. I don't know how to explain it (Martha, Student Interview, June 3, 2016).

Martha echoed Asha and Rihanna's points that both Monte Caoba and Poder are perceived to be "dangerous." She elaborated and added, "Or [that] nobody here is ambitious." Deploying notions of ambition become justified with meritocratic ideas of success and assume that those with no ambition lack initiative or are lazy. Martha revealed patronizing views about member of her community that she explained, lacked societal awareness of history and present-day events outside of the community. Martha's perspective is powerful and connects to James Baldwin's (1963) speech to educators, titled, "A talk with teachers." By exploring the Black experience, Baldwin argues that Black children in American are intimately aware of the oppression they face. Martha highlighted Baldwin's point and explained that although the assumption is that "we don't know what's going on," she understood intimately and was able to describe a structure

wherein “we don’t have a say,” “we are in the lower level,” and “they don’t see us.” The structure of coloniality that Martha described elucidated how her community is placed in subordinate position, wherein they do not have a voice, rights, and the power to be part of decision-making. Martha engaged in decolonization and demonstrated her critical awareness of the power structure and ability to challenge those views.

The above exchanges with study participants demonstrated how the reputation of Monte Caoba is understood uniformly as unfavorable. Asha, Rihanna, and Martha demonstrated their awareness of the dominant negative narrative, nevertheless actively challenged it. The following section explores how violent crime becomes sensationalized in the media and reproduces the negative reputation of Monte Caoba, Zócalo, and Poder.

Sensationalizing Monte Caoba’s Crime

Connected to the negative perceptions about Monte Caoba, six students and five teachers interviewed shared that the media was central to sensational portrayals of violence in the city. Rihanna’s examples above included a sensationalist tone surrounding ideas about Monte Caoba. Wenzel, Nadler, Valle, and Hill (2018) detail that parachute journalism, where a journalist is assigned to report a story in a setting with limited experience and knowledge, leaves communities feeling misrepresented. The authors examine the mistrust in the local news in urban and suburban Philadelphia and uncover histories of stigmatization. In particular, the authors find that in a predominately African-American and progressive neighborhood, residents felt that the media covered crime and not the community.

When asked what are some of the things that people from outside think about your community? Samuel, a Latinx junior, explained,

Well, what they mostly talk about is how violent it is. That it's a really bad place because that's what's on the media. That's the majority of things that's in [the] media. In my community, there's a lot of good things. People enjoy going to this place or another. There's a lot of good things here as well, but people only see what the media or news is telling them or informing them about (Samuel, Student Interview, May 31, 2016).

Like Rihanna, Samuel examined the negative perceptions outsiders held about Monte Caoba as a violent place. Samuel argued that the media's emphasis on what was wrong with his community that included crime and prostitution shaped the ideas that were generated about his community. Moreover, he argued that the problems that his community faced become heightened with sensationalist media coverage. Even though these negative portrayals are prominent, Rihanna and Samuel challenge them. Du Bois' double consciousness is specific to the Black experience in the U.S. and helpful to unpack the ways that both Rihanna and Samuel are making meaning of who they are and what their community is about through the eyes of those who construct them as "problem people" (Gordon, 2007). A decoloniality lens unearths that Rihanna and Samuel are conscious of the dominant narrative that criminalizes their community and understand that there is much more to their community than what the media portrays.

Ms. Heo has worked in Poder for eight years. She taught multiple sections of Biology and Physiology. Ms. Heo grew up in Bray, a city located in the suburbs roughly a 30-40-minute driving distance from Monte Caoba. She began teaching through Teach for America (TFA) right after college. Poder High was the first and only school where she has taught. When asked about how she believed how outsiders perceive Monte Caoba, she shared,

I feel like if you focus on just what [the] media says about Monte Caoba, it could be negative. "Oh, it's dangerous, it's one of the most dangerous [cities]." [pause]. That tends

to be what you see. There's very little, from what I have seen, there's very little positive. And that's just like a media thing. Like news is what goes wrong in the world, it's not necessarily always what goes perfectly. I'd say that's even reflected in Poder. We have awesome things happening on our campus, but media tension might only get the negative side of what might be happening on campus (Ms. Heo, Teacher Interview, April, 28, 2016).

Ms. Heo argued that the purpose of the news was to focus on problems and not necessarily positives. Drawing from her experience as a teacher at Poder, and involvement in numerous efforts, Ms. Heo, was aware of multiple positive Poder efforts that took place or where underway. The challenge, she explained, was that the media usually only focused on the negatives and not necessarily on the efforts that Ms. Heo was proud of. The negative reputation that was generated and remained constant in the media about Poder was one of a problematic urban school. Samuel and Ms. Heo both offered an institutional analysis to examine the influence of the media on the mainstream perceptions about Monte Caoba. When prompted about the perceptions that existed about Poder, Ms. Heo explained that,

The more you know, the less the media is going to be the thing making you decide how you feel about the community. Cause even with people that I talk to, I'm like, "Yeah, I'm a teacher in Monte Caoba." "Oh my God, that's crazy. Do you feel safe at school?" Things like that come up. Before, they came up a lot more regularly. Like now, it's a lot less. Most of my friends already know I'm a teacher in Monte Caoba. They know what I do (Ms. Heo, Teacher Interview, April, 28, 2016).

Ms. Heo is acutely aware of the negative perceptions that emerge both about Monte Caoba and Poder. The perceptions shape the interactions with friends and other individuals she encountered.

The comments usually focused on concerns for safety which highlighted how prominent Poder's negative reputation was. Ms. Heo shared her frustration with encountering these comments because it is not reflective of how she experienced Poder and the surrounding community.

Rihanna, Asha and Martha detailed that violent crime was one factor that influenced Monte Caoba's reputation. Samuel and Ms. Heo detailed that the media's sensationalist approach to report violent crime and other social issues in Monte Caoba neighborhoods also attributed to a negative reputation. Ms. Heo explained that something that struck her the first time she visited Poder was litter on the streets and houses that seemed to be in disrepair, which she admitted gave her an initial negative impression about the surrounding Zócalo neighborhood. A notable missing feature in the discussion about what shaped reputation was race and socio-economic demographics. By multiple indicators that include crime, poverty, and education, East Monte Caoba a region that houses Zócalo fares worse when compared with more affluent parts of the city. East Monte Caoba is described as a majority-minority community of color, that is becoming Latinx majority, and wherein more than 40 percent of households earn less than 150 percent of poverty. These are two features that emerge as central to shaping reputation in light of a residentially segregated city and school district. Using a temporal analysis, the following revealed how Poder has had a longstanding negative reputation.

Poder's Longstanding Negative Reputation

Data analysis revealed that the negative perceptions about Monte Caoba, particularly, the Zócalo neighborhood in the East Monte Caoba region, parallel Poder's. Participants shared that they encountered multiple individuals who held negative perceptions about Poder. Vanessa, a Chicana sophomore who identified as a youth leader, detailed the implications of a negative reputation. When asked, how is it that people from the outside perceive Poder, Vanessa shared,

It's very bad. It's like, "Poder's the worst. Poder always has fights." Poder is always in the mouth of everybody. "Did you know that Poder did this?" Poder has students, "the poor," "the bad kids." "Everyone that goes here is bad." "Everybody's grade that goes there is bad." "Teachers don't care about their students; that's why they're failing." It's stuff like that, that I hear from Poder (Vanessa, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

Overwhelmingly, Vanessa encountered negative messages about Poder as a school with safety concerns but also poor academics. Part of what informed Poder's reputation, she revealed, included the types of students that make up the school, those who are working-class and low-income. Vanessa detailed, that ideas about students who are "poor" become conflated with students who academically are not doing well and those with discipline issues. Vanessa revealed that the negative images were not only constructed and reproduced among outsiders, but also members of the community, that included her extended family. Particularly, Vanessa shared,

Vanessa: They know about me. They're like, "Oh, so, what school do you go to?" "Poder." "What?" They get surprised. They can't understand; they can't caption how a student like me could go to Poder with all this negative connotation they have about it. So, stuff like that, that I face. It's like, "You know what? Poder's not what you think it is."

Yanira: Why do you think they have those perceptions about Poder?

Vanessa: I think because of the reputation Poder's had. Poder has been open for a while since the early 1900s. Since then, it built up a reputation. People who went here before, say in the late 70s, 80s, 90s, or whatever, I've heard that there's been a lot of stuff that went on during that time. People who were students at that time are now adults with their kids or with their families and still are around the

community will be like, “You’re not going there because when I was there, this happened.” Or, “When I was at your age, I had a friend, a cousin, a brother, or somebody that went there that I know and x, y, and z happened. You’re not going to go because maybe it’s still the same.” So, it’s the reputation it has been building up years after years (Vanessa, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

The dominant and longstanding narrative about Poder was that it was a dangerous and low-performing school. Vanessa explained that the response she obtained when friends and family members learned her school was surprise, disbelief, but also worry. She detailed that it was difficult for the members of her community to reconcile how a student leader could attend a “bad school.” The interactions that Vanessa described demonstrated how the longstanding negative perceptions about Poder had a firm grip on not only the imagination of outsiders but also members of the community. Despite the dominant and longstanding narrative, to Rihanna, Asha, Mario and Fabian, Vanessa challenged the dominant narrative linked to Poder’s reputation. She enlightened the members of her community by highlighting the ways that Poder was supporting a student leader.

When prompted why some hold these negative views about Poder, Vanessa speculated that historical events, including difficult moments were part of what constructed the longstanding negative reputation. The construct of historical memory is useful to unpack Vanessas’ point and refer to the ways that collectives and groups construct narratives about events or historical periods (Collins, Hite & Joignant, 2013). Vanessa argued that undesirable events that occurred in the past for members of the community who attended Poder, or maybe did not attend, but whose family member or friend attended, shaped a collective negative understanding of Poder. The collective construction of Poder’s negative reputation that emerged from historical memory

prevented many from sending their children or family member to attend Poder. The following section explores additional factors that feed and sustain Poder's negative reputation.

Limited Support and Enduring Instability

Data analysis revealed that Poder students and their families faced combined social and economic challenges. For example, Ms. Fields explained,

It is really diverse in some ways and not in others. Socioeconomically, it's not very diverse at all. Culturally, there's a lot of diversity. We have everything from very recently arrived newcomer students from Yemen, Guatemala, Mexico, a lot of Latin American countries. We have a significant and active Polynesian community, African American culture. We have a notable absence of white students, so if we're looking at proportional representation of the Monte Caoba's population, it's definitely not proportional, but aside from the lack of white students, it's a very diverse school. Socioeconomically though, relatively uniformly lower or working-class (Ms. Fields, Teacher Interview, April 18, 2016).

All 16 teacher and 22 student interviews mentioned that Poder was diverse. Ms. Fields noted racial and ethnic diversity that she explained, was reflective of Monte Caoba's population except for the "notable absence of White students." According to the U.S. Census, in 2010, White made up 25 percent of Monte Caoba's population. In terms of socioeconomics, Poder uniformly served working-class students. Of the students who applied for the free-or-reduced price meals, 84 percent of the students qualified for the program. For the reduced-price meals, a family of four earned roughly \$48,182 and for those who obtained free meals a family of four earned no more than \$32,060.

When prompted to describe the challenges that Poder students faced, Ms. de los Reyes responded swiftly, “all of the challenges that come with poverty.” As she unpacked her statement, Ms. de los Reyes alluded to the domino effect from limited access to: 1) nutrition, 2) opportunities that support physical health and 3) needed medical interventions. Numerous works have shown that poverty contributes significantly to school achievement (Anyon, 2014, 2005; Blankstein & Noguera, 2015; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2008; Wight, Chau, & Aratani, 2011). A federal report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that U.S. public school populations are mainly comprised of students in poverty (U.S. GAO, 2016). The report details that 40 percent of high school students attended a school where at least half of the students experience poverty, and where 14 percent attend schools where at least three-quarters of students experience poverty (U.S. GAO, 2016).

Housing affordability, food insecurity, and access to health and dental care are considerable influences that shape schooling experiences (Coleman et al., 1966; Lipman, 2011; Milner & Lomotey, 2014; Noguera, 2011). Families with low-wage earnings or no employment are more likely to move, which creates instability (Ullucci & Howard, 2014). Nationally there has been an increase of unhoused students (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). Difficult economic realities mean that students have material, emotional, and social needs that influence their preparation and ability to learn (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). Moreover, conditions that include crime, drugs, and losing loved ones to violence are stressors that can impact the overall mental and physical well-being of urban young people (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Seal, Nguyen, Beyer, 2014).

Students including Asha explored some of the social and economic challenges her family faced. For example, when asked how the school offered support to students, Asha shared, "Oh yeah, there is a thing at my school, I forgot what's, it called, but it's with the Clinic. They support us a lot. Like, me and my mom don't have housing. We're going through a lot finding an apartment right now. So, they gave me information about people that could give us housing and find us an apartment. That helped us because my mom, she's already looking at an apartment now because they helped us. That was supportive of them to help me in a tough situation (Asha, Student Interview, June 1, 2016).

Asha explained that a case manager from the Jaguar Health Clinic located on campus offered her support by connecting her to social services that helped her family find housing. The clinic served both current Poder students and recent graduates up until 21 years of age. Asha revealed the tough situation she and her mother faced as an unhoused family. Asha alluded to inaccessible and unaffordable housing resulting from a competitive housing market. Local news articles connect these socio-economic factors to an increase in unhoused students. Nationwide the number of students identified as unhoused or homeless increased by nearly 100 percent since 2006-07; this means that during the 2014-15 school year, there were 1,263,323 unhoused students nationwide (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed & Atwell, 2016). In California, that same year, 4.5 percent (that is, 235,983) of enrolled California students were identified as homeless, a seven percent increase since the 2010-2011 school year (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed & Atwell, 2016). The Jaguar case managers referred Asha and her mother to a districtwide program that supported unhoused families. Asha detailed her appreciation for the support given that it was not easy to manage schooling and housing insecurity.

Eleven teacher participants detailed that Poder students and their families faced housing and food insecurity. Mr. Porter a third-year Spanish teacher touched on the economic challenges Poder students and their families faced. During his interview, he shared,

A lot of people are unemployed or underemployed, and then even the people that are working, they are working for very low wages and variable hours. A lot of the kids, I have them do an interview with a parent or family member and granted, they don't do their homework a lot of the time. But they tell me that it's hard for them to find the time to sit down with their parent and actually do an interview with them. Part of it is that it's really hard if a parent is working nights or whatever. A parent, not only are they not there but when they're there, they're exhausted. For some certain individuals, they're probably extremely affected by it if it touched them directly, and for others, it's background stress and strain. They're all being affected by the economic situation. They have to share a house where it's too many people, or they're not close enough to where they really should have to share. There's just so much (Mr. Porter, Teacher Interview, April 21, 2016).

Mr. Porter detailed the difficult realities that Poder families faced that included unemployment and underemployment. Mr. Porter explained that there were parents who struggled to keep jobs, others who had a job but worked variable hours and/or earned low-wages. State-wide, the minimum wage in 2014 was \$9.00 (California Department of Industrial Relations, 2021).

Currently, the minimum wage in Monte Caoba is slightly over than \$14.00; however, the average rent for an 800 sq. ft. apartment hovers at \$2800. In other words, a full-time position earning minimum wage is not enough to afford housing. Ms. Porter elucidated that these difficult economic realities manifested for students as parents who were not around because they are

working all the time and when they are around, he explained were exhausted. According to Mr. Porter, financial strain and stress were part of what Poder students experienced. Eleven teachers concurred with Mr. Porter and detailed that Poder families shared living quarters with extended family or friends to afford their monthly rent.

Connected to Mr. Porter's points, Ms. Field detailed how economic factors that included housing affordability and gentrification, resulted in a rising trend of losing students whose families were driven to relocate. Eight teachers mentioned aspects of gentrification explicitly and detailed how it was re-shaping aspects of the community. Specifically, Ms. Fields shared,

Yeah, I mean, I have lost students that have had to move, like, to Robledo because families can no longer afford Monte Caoba. Robledo's just one that comes up a lot for some reason. Barranca is another area where I've heard numerous students talking about going there, so kind of getting pushed out because they can't afford rents anymore, they can't afford a place. I know one of my students recently mentioned that her family had to move out of the house they were in, and now they're in a smaller apartment, and she has to share a bed with her older sister. That's just kind of the reality that a lot of the students live with, but I think it's kind of worse, and there's this sense of kind of pressure and uprooting that is happening with that (Ms. Fields, Teacher Interview, April 18, 2016).

From conversations with students or what they talked about among themselves, Ms. Fields learned that students moved away to cities like Barranca (located 27 miles away) and Robledo (located 73 miles away). Ms. Fields described what was happening as "being pushed out" because the students desired to stay in Monte Caoba but could not afford to do so. Rising rent prices she explained, drove some families to downsize from houses to small apartments. The downsizing meant that students gave up their room and doubled up in bed rooms and beds with

siblings. Ms. Fields concluded her thought by alluding to the psychosocial implications of what Poder students were faced on a daily basis, particularly, the pressures connected to financial stress and strain. Moreover, Ms. Fields highlighted the challenges Poder students faced and not knowing how they coped with feelings of being uprooted from their home community. Teacher participants highlighted that Poder students and their families were resourceful, and found ways to make their new living arrangements work in the midst of long commutes or spending the nights with relatives in the Poder neighborhood.

Implications of Perpetuating a Negative School Reputation

The features that contributed to Poder High negative reputation did not only emerge from the media, outsiders with little knowledge about the Zócalo neighborhood and Poder, and the historical memory of community members. Ms. de los Reyes shared that she engaged in districtwide leadership which gave her insight into the perceptions that district personnel and teachers in other schools' held of Poder. The following is an excerpt from our conversation,

Ms. de los Reyes: In the district, all the teacher stuff I do across the district, I always hear the same thing, "You all at Poder though" [pause] and like dot-dot-dot.

Yanira: Is this what you hear from other teachers?

Ms. de los Reyes: From teachers [pause]. That's very interesting what happens when they're drinking the Kool-Aid, and what comes out of their mouth. Then, almost like, I don't want to say, horror when they hear that we work for Poder, but it's like their eyes go big [Ms. de los Reyes opened her eyes wide with the help of her fingers]. I don't know how to take this. Same thing I had with people when I would tell people I was coming to work in Monte Caoba. All the responses I got were, "So, do you want you're going away

present to be a bulletproof vest?" I'm like, "Dude, really. That's so low"

(Ms. de los Reyes, Teacher Interview, March 31, 2016).

Ms. de los Reyes described her experiences from her participation in hiring and teacher advisory committees. Some of the reactions she described included horror, along with sarcastic commentary or questions in vernacular, "You all at Poder though." Ms. de los Reyes used Kool-Aid as a metaphor to identify the dominant narrative of "bad school" that circulated across the district and fed the prominent negative reputation. Similar to the shocking reactions of individuals that learned Ms. Heo's place of employment, Ms. de los Rios described individuals who verbalized concerns in a sarcastic tone and offered a bullet-proof vest as a going away present, these interactions made visible the dominant negative perceptions connected to narratives wherein Monte Caoba and by default Poder were violent, unsafe and unwieldy. Ms. de los Rios described that it was difficult to know how to manage those interactions and comments because the dominant narrative had negative implications. For example, Ms. de los Reyes shared,

At Poder, one of the complaints we're making about the student placement services was that we were hearing from our students that were coming to our school how they would be discouraged from attending Poder. We lodged complaints, and we think things are getting better because we got 100 more kids, but that's what we need. At central, it's also happening not just at the top level but in places like human resources and not encouraging teachers to join the Poder team. In student placement, not encouraging kids to go to Poder because from Central's perspective at the top, our teachers "don't listen." From the parent's perspective, the family's perspective, we don't have enough to offer their kids (Ms. de los Reyes, Teacher Interview, March 31, 2016).

The negative implications that emerged from Poder's negative reputation were numerous and emerged as discussed by Vanessa from members of the community who were hesitant to send their children to Poder, but as described by Ms. de los Reyes, at numerous levels in the Central office. For example, Ms. de los Reyes explained that some of the students that enrolled at Poder arrived to campus recounted experiences wherein they felt that the student placement services part of the Central office discouraged them from enrolling at Poder. Additionally, Ms. de los Reyes explained that the human resources department also in the Central office, were not supportive of new teachers joining the Poder team. Ms. de los Reyes detailed that at the top level in leadership there were no evident efforts to distill Poder's negative reputation. Moreover, not only was the negative dominant narrative prevalent, but was also perpetuated with comments and actions that assumed the negative reputation was true. Despite the systemic forces that harmed the Poder school image, but also influenced patterns of assigning students and teachers, Poder students and teachers resisted. For example, when Poder teacher learned that students were being discouraged from enrolling, Poder teachers filed a complaint at the district level. Even though this was an ongoing issue, Ms. de los Reyes detailed that they saw an improvement with roughly a twelve percent increase in student enrollment. As explored in Ms. de los Reyes' narrative, Poder's negative reputation was prominent and perpetuated in the Central office but more so, harmed the Poder school community in different ways.

An important feature that sustained Poder's negative reputation were ideas that Poder was unsafe. Ms. de los Reyes elaborated on this point,

“It's unsafe, so very unsafe,” which it is unsafe, but it's no less than any other place.

We're safer than a lot of different places within our campus. So, hum, countered by a lot of the social media presence we've been generating for the last year-and-a-half. We're

just like, “if this is going to be everybody else’s perception within our most immediate community, then we have to do our damndest in the social media world and the international, global, that kind of community, to make a name for ourselves.” We’re kind of screwed right now in the short term. More of us in staff have become much more media-savvy because I don’t know, you have to [be]. It’s the one way you’re going to get recognized before your reputation does, I don’t know (Ms. de los Reyes, Teacher Interview, March 31, 2016).

Although Ms. de los Reyes agreed that the surrounding community could be unsafe, she argued that Poder was safer than other schools in the district. Moreover, Ms. de los Reyes examined how Poder teachers and students resisted the assumptions that Poder was a dangerous school by utilizing social media. Since the 2014-15 school year she explained, they generated a presence on social media to counteract the negative perceptions and assumptions that perpetuated Poder’s negative reputation. These efforts highlighted how Ms. de los Reyes were not only intimately aware of the negative reputation linked to Poder, but also that they were actively engaged in efforts to create a counter narrative. Ms. de los Reyes admitted that in the short-term, it was a difficult situation, given the prominence of the Poder’s negative reputation. Nevertheless, Ms. de los Reyes demonstrated to be optimistic given the determination of Poder teachers to develop the skills to become technology savvy to counteract the negative press that targeted Poder. Although these efforts added to the long list of responsibilities as teachers, Ms. de los Reyes conveyed that it was necessary to rearticulate and deconstruct the negative reputation and center a narrative Poder creates.

Connected to ideas about safety were negative perceptions about Poder students.

Representative of student participants, Lupe, a Latina junior, detailed the prominence of negative perceptions about Poder students. The following is an excerpt from our conversation,

Lupe: One of my friends is like, “You’re going to Poder. Isn’t there like fights every day?” I was just like, “No, not really.” They’re like, “Is people scary there?” They would ask me that, too.

Yanira: Why do you think they have those views about Poder students?

Lupe: They haven’t been here. They haven’t seen what is actually going on. They only see it from the outside, and only bad news flies out sometimes, and that’s all they want to hear. They don’t want to hear the good things (Lupe, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

Aligned with the idea that Poder was a dangerous school, Lupe’s friend, in a curious and worried tone, asked whether there were “fights every day.” Lupe identified the dominant narrative that existed about Poder wherein even friends (not enrolled in Poder) understood it to be a dangerous school. When prompted why those individuals held those views. Lupe responded in an assertive and levelheaded manner, “they haven’t been here,” which allowed her to conclude that those who held these perceptions or made assumptions were not really familiar with Poder. Lupe’s analysis coincided with that of Ms. Heo and Samuel, that a limited or no direct experience with Poder allowed rumors, past events, and media representations to dictate how many framed Poder. Lupe concurred with Ms. Heo and Samuel about how what contributed to Poder’s image was a sensationalist approach, which she explained, underscored the bad news because she asserted it was “what they want to hear.” Lupe pulled back the curtain and detailed that the schooling reality that she and her peers experienced was not what many made it out to be. The

following section examine, more explicitly, how the participants challenge negative perceptions about Monte Caoba, Zócalo, and Poder.

Multi-Generational Racialization that Harms Poder Students

A coloniality lens contents that racialization makes visible how individuals experience oppressive and violent realities (Fanon, 2004). As elaborated in Chapter One, Grosfoguel (2016) defines racialization as the marking of bodies, some as superior who enjoy access to rights, material resources and social recognition of their humanity. Others are designated as inferior, wherein their humanity is questioned and who do not have access to rights, material resources or whose existence is formally acknowledged (Grosfoguel, 2016). Cacho (2012) elucidates racialization as human value that is assigned or denied on racial terms and makes explicit hidden assumptions that both reproduces and justifies narratives of not-valued working-class People of Color. Moreover, colorblind rhetoric of valued, worth, and deservingness function as projects of coloniality that rationalize and maintain White supremacy (Patel, 2015). This framing of racialization reveals how school reputation can function as a medium that deploys rhetoric of worth and deservingness that deems working class and students of color as inferior and unworthy and simultaneously deems White and middle-class students as superior and worthy of all accorded privileges.

In the following, Ms. Martinez, and African American, third year teacher, director of the Multi-Media and Filmmaking Academy, and Poder alumna highlighted how racialization surfaced multi-generationally. During her interview, Ms. Martinez explained that she was committed to working at Poder not only because it was her alma mater but also because, as a student, she recalled the negative assumptions made about Poder students. In particular, she explained,

I always felt like at Poder we were sort of given, as students, we were given the short end of the stick. People made assumptions about the students that attended that school that we would not amount to anything. We were always looked down upon. And while I did have some really good teachers, I had some really horrible teachers, and I wanted to be a part of changing that narrative (Ms. Martinez, Teacher Interview, March 28, 2016).

Ms. Martinez described feeling that Poder students were treated unfairly. The unfavorable treatment, she elaborated, was connected to the negative assumptions made about Poder students. Some of the assumptions, she recalled, included that Poder students would not be academically successful nor have the capacity to reach any goals. As an adult, Ms. Martinez reflected on how this treatment and negative assumptions harmed students, which created the conditions for Poder students to feel unworthy. Moreover, these negative assumptions justified and strengthened a negative school reputation. Ms. Martinez described a strong commitment to Poder not solely because it was her alma mater, but also, she experienced first-hand the racialization of a majority of working class and Black and Latinx students. She was driven to change the narrative, that both racialized and criminalized Poder students.

Another Poder alumna, who was also incredibly committed to serving Poder students, was Ms. Segundo, a Poder alumna, ten-year Poder teacher, and one of the founders of the NIDO program²⁵. Similar to Ms. Martinez, Ms. Segundo touched on how Poder students experienced multi-generational racialization by examining the difficult conditions that Poder students faced when she was a student and that continued not that she is a teacher. Moreover, Ms. Segundo

²⁵ New Immigrant Directed Opportunities (NIDO) program was a collaborative teacher effort that started in 2008 to support Emergent Bilingual students. Ms. Segundo and Ms. Jimenez covered the math and history courses. That first year, there was one cohort of students per grade level. During the study year (2015-16) the NIDO program had three cohorts of ninth grade and three cohorts of tenth grade. A program goal was to mainstream students, which meant, that students enrolled in CTE classes and Pathways/Academies during their junior year. Ms. Segundo shared that the program enrolled roughly about 230 students.

examined how despite these difficult conditions, Poder students actively resisted. Particularly, Ms. Segundo explained,

In terms of the students, I think they've done a great job. A comment that the High School Network Superintendent made at our February meeting, it's like, "For some odd reason, Poder just develops these kinds of students, huh, Maggie [Ms. Segundo]?" Because I was that student when I was here [at Poder]. But I think it's the conditions that pressure the kids who say, "Enough is enough," and it's just like, "We're still in those conditions." Those conditions were here when I had to fight to have a teacher in my class, an AP class, that had rotating substitute [teachers]. To now having a classroom, [the] Spanish class, that doesn't have a teacher or having a demoralizing vice principal whom the kids wanted out and got out. I applaud the students. I think they're our strength, and we're their strength, and the problem is that we [teachers] were disempowered. I was happy that they [students] were not disempowered. They kind of kept us going, you know (Ms. Segundo, Teacher Interview, April 12, 2016).

The Network Superintendent that Ms. Segundo referenced, appointed shortly before her interview, was a former teacher at Poder, her teacher when she was a student. The remark he made to Ms. Segundo, "For some odd reason, Poder just develops these kinds of students, huh, Maggie," served as a reminder of the activism that Ms. Segundo engaged in as a student. Ms. Segundo reflected on the conditions that existed when she was a student, that pushed students to the breaking point to say "enough is enough." For example, as a student, she recalled a rotating substitute in one of her AP courses, which she detailed, it was a fight to obtain a permanent teacher. The conditions, she explained, "have not changed." During the 2015-16 school year, there was a similar scenario of a multi-year Spanish teacher vacancy. Further, Ms. Segundo

elaborated on a demoralizing vice principal that she described as exhibiting condescending and rude behavior. During the study year, students organized to remove the vice principal after he was involved in physically assaulting a student. The difficult conditions present when Ms. Segundo was a student persisted and continued to deny the worth of Poder student. Nevertheless, students had the agency to mobilize to demand humanizing treatment and access to quality education.

Denying Poder Student Worth and Leadership

Even though data analysis revealed strong Poder student leadership, a member of the Poder community who asked for anonymity was reprimanded for student activism. Notably, they shared,

I was summoned into a meeting last year [the 2014-15 school year] about student activism because students were fighting a charter takeover. I was told that students at Poder High didn't have the language or critical thinking skills to be putting on these efforts of activism. So, I was accused of instigating everything, from feeding students everything from language to what to fight for. The students at [Logro High], White students, in particular, would never be perceived in this way.

The Poder community member asked for anonymity because they feared possible reprisals. They described an accusatory approach by the Central office that blamed them individually for student activism that resisted a charter takeover. Seemingly baffled, they explained that the accusations denied student leadership efforts to organize and challenge what they understood to be unfair processes. The interaction revealed how district leadership held deficit-oriented perceptions of Poder students wherein they were assumed to “not have the language or critical thinking skills” to lead and organize. The member of the Poder community compared Logro students, mainly,

White students, to Poder students of color, to argue that Logro students would not be questioned of their capability to engage in youth organizing and activism. Moreover, the Poder community member highlighted the racialized constructions of Poder students that framed them not only in a deficit light but more so unworthy.

The above section detailed that Poder students were racialized based on socioeconomics and race-ethnicity. Racialization manifested as deficit-oriented negative assumptions that Poder students lacked intelligence and critical thinking skills. This multi-generational racialization was harmful because it framed students as unworthy, and also fueled systemic neglect. The following section elaborates on this point.

Systemic Disinvestment

Material and Human Resources

During the pilot study in 2014-15, a local news station interviewed a panel of Poder students, and individual Poder teachers to examine the inadequate resources they confronted. What emerged from this news story was that the Poder library was closed six years earlier because there was no funding to support the salary of a librarian. During the 2015-16 school year, field notes documented that a librarian was not yet on staff, and that the library space was used as storage for course textbooks. Additionally, the news story detailed that the music room was inoperable for an undisclosed period, in other words, it was unclear for how long Poder did not offer music classes. During the study year, there was this sense among study participants that there was a dearth of course offerings and other enrichment opportunities. Moreover, data analysis revealed that Poder faced systemic disinvestment from the Central office.

When exploring the overarching perceptions about Poder, Mario, a Latino junior enrolled in the Multi-Media and Filmmaking Academy, elucidated how Poder faced systemic disinvestment. The following is an excerpt from our conversation.

Yanira: Why do you think that is? Why do you think people have negative perceptions about Poder?

Mario: The way the district treats us and the media portrays the school.

Yanira: In what ways does the district treat you?

Mario: They've been promising us a new campus since I started here and since my mom was here too. That was many broken promises they have been telling us. When I go to another school, let's say Heavenly or Creation High, their schools are all updated, and they have the latest technology. Here at Poder, we barely have working computers. You have to work with what we have, try to learn with what we have here.

Mario offered two forces that he believed shaped negative perceptions, the first was how the media portrayed Poder and its students. The second, was how the MCUSD treated Poder. When, asked explicitly about how the district treated Poder, he highlighted the unequal distribution of material resources to various MCUSD schools. Notably, he highlighted the availability and quality of computers and software to demonstrate the differences he observed during visits to other schools. Additionally, Mario revealed a longstanding pattern of "broken promises." He shared that when his mother was a student at Poder, her generation was presented with the promise of a new facility, however, the district did not fulfill that promise. Similarly, Mario learned his ninth-grade year of a possible facility upgrade; nevertheless, with visible distrust, he explained that plan did not come to fruition. The long pattern of broken promises highlighted the

limited investment in the care and upkeep of Poder. Moreover, Mario's framing revealed trust issues between the Poder community and the MCUSD.

Data analysis revealed that educational disinvestment, that is inadequate material and human resources was a major concern for Poder students and teachers. Partelow, Shapiro, McDaniels, and Brown (2018) found that across the nation, states have systematically disinvested in K-12 funding in response to the challenges of the 2008 financial crisis. Although by 2018, only a small number of states have returned to pre-recession spending, most states have not and continue to spend less than they did ten years ago (Partelow et al., 2018). Although state funding for K-12 education might not be what it was, the participants revealed that Poder High has experienced educational disinvestment for much longer than ten years.

Facilities and Equipment

Connected to school resources, mainly the dilapidated facilities and equipment, I visited a Physical Education class taught by Coach Younger. Coach Younger is a Poder alumnus who graduated in the 1980s. The following is a fieldnote from my visit to the gymnasium that day.

I walked into the gymnasium and noticed a group of three young men playing basketball. There was another group playing soccer. Students were sitting on the bleachers, talking among themselves; others were on their phones. As I walked in, I noticed a damp smell, which may result from poor ventilation. The paint on the walls was peeling off. I sat on the bleachers briefly and noticed grime and touched a sticky surface. The bleachers had stains and pencil-pen graffiti. I walked into the weight room, and six students were doing sit-ups. I lingered by the door. The weight room also had a smelly odor; the foam exercise mats had gum stains. There were weights in different areas of the room. I noticed foam mats placed on the walls, and some were coming down on one end. I

greeted Coach Younger, and we walked out of the weight room as the bell rang for passing period. We walked into the gymnasium, sat down in the bleachers, and continued our conversation (Field Note, February 18, 2016).

During our sit-down conversation, Coach Younger detailed that one of the biggest challenges he faced as a teacher was the limited resources available. For example, he explained that the equipment in the weight room was the same equipment at the school from when he was a student in the 1980s. He shared that the 2015-16 school year was the first in a long time that the students had access to newer equipment that was donated by the Monte Caoba Police Department (MCPD). Coach Younger shared that Poder teachers were driven to mobilize their networks to mitigate the challenges faced by an under resourced school. Similarly, the dearth of resources emerged during my visit to Ms. Jimenez's first-period class. Ms. Jimenez, a Poder alumna, and taught for nine years at Poder. She worked solely with students in the NIDO program and taught two World History classes, a Humanities, and two sections of Humanities designated for Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE).

On Tuesday, September 23, 2015, after sitting in Ms. Jimenez's World History/ English Language Development level four-five. The bell rang for the passing period, and I lingered as Ms. Jimenez prepared for the next class. She arranged some of the equipment on a table and shared, "Most of the equipment in here I have purchased." She referred to a stapler, a three-hole puncher, paper, markers, and other project materials.

The overall sense among Coach Younger and Ms. Jimenez was that the inadequate resources obligated teachers to find solutions. During an unstructured conversation documented in my field notes, Ms. Jimenez explained that she was not able to rely on families to fundraise for the needed materials because a large percentage of her students faced both housing and food insecurity.

Applying to grants to cover needed materials was an option, however, she detailed that there was so much on her plate that included the responsibilities of being a teacher, an informal interpreter and even what felt like a case-manager for the students in the NIDO program, which left her with no time for grant writing. For these reasons, Ms. Jimenez decided to purchase the necessary materials and other equipment she needed in her classroom to support the success of her students. In a similar fashion, Coach Younger sought out the donation from Monte Caoba Police Department for the exercise equipment.

District Resource Allocation

Connected to resource allocation at the district level, Ms. Jimenez examined what she considered to be harsh treatment by the MCUSD that targeted Poder High. During her interview, Ms. Jimenez detailed the need for transparency and accountability from the district office and brought forth her dissatisfaction with district resource allocation by offering an example of funding for therapists. Notably, she detailed,

For example, apparently, there was money for therapists. They put them at Monte Caoba High, they tried to put one at Harper, but Harper already has six full-time therapists. Then they put some at Global High, and we have the second biggest population [of unaccompanied minors] after Global. They didn't even tell us, and when we asked, they said, "Oh, well, there's no more money." Because we're Poder High, I think there's been a lot of things that have been done to our kids as part of *payback*, "You guys have been opening your mouths so much that we're not going to give you anything." It's that kind of thing.

Ms. Jimenez described the funding available at MCUSD for high school therapists and argued that the placements did not prioritize the need across the district. Mr. Jimenez revealed that

Poder High has the second largest population, of newcomer students, which highlighted the pressing need. Ms. Jimenez shared that Poder was not part of the conversations with the district about this funding source, when Poder staff inquired about this funding, the response was that the funds were depleted. Ms. Jimenez conveyed that this was one example of multiple, wherein the district engaged in retaliatory efforts against Poder. Ms. Jimenez speculated that the harsh treatment by the MCUSD were attempts at payback given that during the 2014-15 year the community fought a charter takeover. Representative of teacher narratives, it was Ms. Jimenez conclusion that the MCUSD was supportive of the charter takeover. When prompted about the driving forces that informed MCUSD retaliatory approaches, Ms. Jimenez responded,

Gentrification. I think it's all pushing gentrification right now. It's very clearly pro-charter and at the cost of public schools. I think there's this claim of "whatever's best for the kids," but I think in conversations that we've had [Poder staff] with people who work for charters, conversations that we've had with other people in the district, I think the ultimate goal is to make Monte Caoba a charter. The whole district to go to charter.

Her experience as a Poder teacher for eight years and an MCUSD employee for nine, Ms. Jimenez offered her insight about what she understood to be district priorities that included neoliberal and pro-charter ideologies. Ms. Jimenez was skeptical of district strategies that bolstered equity because the conversations she engaged with contacts in charters and the district office, revealed what she described as plan to embrace a charter model district-wide. To substantiate these claims, Ms. Jimenez, detailed that,

They're [the MCUSD] closing down a bunch of the public schools and giving them to the charters. There's seventeen principals who've been given a pink slip, and a bunch of them are principals who have been in the community for decades and who've been in

charge of their school for a long time, and they're doing great things with their community and for their kids, but the claim is their scores aren't high enough. It's the charter model, right? Your scores have to be high, but I'm sorry, if my kids are coming in three or four years behind, their scores are not going to be high. I can do *maromas* [Spanish and signifies gymnastics]. It's not going to happen, unless I can get food in their mouths, the counseling they need, and all these things. I'm not going to be able to do it by myself, and we're also not able to push them out the way charters can. So, those kids get pushed out. A lot of our kids and a lot of our best students are ones that were pushed out of charters or counseled out.

The evidence that Ms. Jimenez discussed included schools in the MCUSD that were closing and that were under contract to be reopened as charter, along with longtime school leaders who received pink slips. Ms. Jimenez was critical of charters because these were schools that prioritized high test scores. Although not clearly articulated, Ms. Jimenez highlighted the misalignment between charter school goals of high-test scores and the needs of MCUSD's most vulnerable student populations. On a more personal note, Ms. Jimenez explained that she encountered students who were pushed out of neighboring charter schools because they were not performing as expected. Moreover, Ms. Jimenez unearthed how neoliberal ideologies informed MCUSD's goals and shaped the strategies implemented to ensure compliance with high-stakes accountability. Data analysis revealed that the district rules applied differently to Poder as a result of a longstanding negative reputation, and multi-generational racialization that framed students as unworthy of investment.

The present section examined the long-term disinvestment of Poder High school as human and material resources, facilities, equipment but also district resource allocation. Ms.

Jimenez identified forces of gentrification, and neoliberalism, particularly, pro-charter ideologies that fueled the district's harsh treatment of Poder. The following examines how a colonial school culture emerged at Poder High School.

Colonial School Culture

Colonial forces in education prioritize knowledge and the production of knowledge that maintains and protects Eurocentrism through curriculum and pedagogy (Calderon, 2014; Patel, 2014). Colonial forces in schooling are central to the racialization of students who face compounding oppressions along race, gender, class, legal status, and language dimensions. Colonial schooling, however, is assumed to exist only in the past. As discussed in Chapter Four, from its inception schooling has been a colonial project. Not only was literacy for Black enslaved people outlawed, during the first decades of freedom, freedpeople seeking to become literate, confronted White violence (Williams, 2005). For Indigenous populations federal policy mandated the education of Indigenous children in boarding schools that removed indigenous children from their families and stripped them of their traditions and language (Zephier, Olson & Dombrowaki, 2020). For Mexican children, schooling sought to transform cultural identities that were perceived as inferior and deficient (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The following unearths the reverberations of those colonial schooling forces that currently manifest in urban schools.

Data analysis revealed that the Poder's culture combined colonial conditions, that refer to systematic oppression and dehumanization. It was already established that Poder's longstanding negative reputation—stemmed from deficit-oriented perceptions about the Zócalo neighborhood and Poder along with racialized discourses about Poder students. I posit that Poder's negative reputation shaped systemic disinvestment and contributed to the multi-generational colonial

conditions that emerged as continuous change and instability, along with hostility that created division.

Continuous Change and Instability

When asked to describe Poder's culture, Ms. Bracho, a Poder alumna and former teacher, who worked as Poder's community manager²⁶ highlighted the continuous changes and inconsistencies. Particularly, she explained,

Something that our staff always comments on is that the only consistency so far has been inconsistency. We've gone through several reform efforts, from splitting up from being the big school to small schools because kids will get more support and there will be more autonomy. To going back to the big school and then trying to figure out what autonomy we still had and what things we still needed to do the same as a whole school, that's been different (Ms. Bracho, Staff Interview, June 28, 2016).

Ms. Bracho elaborated on the inconsistency and described several reforms Poder implemented in a short time period. Poder was a big comprehensive high school that in 1997 enrolled roughly 1600 students and increased to about 2200 during the 2002 school year. It was 2003 when Poder was broken up into three independent small high schools that included the: 1) Angela Davis Law and Service, 2) Multi-Media and Filmmaking, and 3) Design and Architecture. Part of the argument that was used to implement that reform, she explained was more support for students along with more autonomy.

Although data analysis revealed that the small schools made important gains, the configuration only lasted for ten years. Ms. Bracho explained that the MCUSD reconfigured Poder into the big comprehensive high school during the 2012-2013 year. The reasoning

²⁶ The MCUSD community manager positioned functioned to support teachers and students to navigate the school system as well as to build partnerships with the surrounding community organizations.

provided, she explained, was that the small schools were too bureaucratic with too many principals, secretaries, and too much of everything. Ms. Bracho highlighted examples of successful funding models for small schools, however, that was not an avenue pursued by the MCUSD.

Moreover, Ms. Bracho, highlighted two of the challenges that emerged from the continuous change or inconsistency that resulted from the implementation of multiple reforms. The first, was for Poder teachers and staff to understand the autonomy that was lost, and how to properly function under the new terms of once again being a big comprehensive high school. The second, included issues with recruitment and retention of students. Although Ms. Bracho described this issue as the result of the shuffling back and forth from one reform to another, which gave interested students the impression of inconsistency. However, it was also likely that the issues with recruitment and retention emerged from Poder's negative reputation.

Ms. Appaloosa was one of few teachers at Poder throughout the continuous change. The data collection year was her 16th year teaching. She was also the director for the Angela Davis Law and Service Academy. During her interview, she elaborated on what was lost as a result of the reconfiguration of the small-schools back into the big comprehensive high school. Specifically, she explained,

We lost a lot when the small schools were forced to be big schools again. It takes about five years for a reform to really get its roots and then take off, and we weren't quite given enough time for the small schools to do what they needed to do to be successful on a couple [of] levels. We lost that when [the Superintendent] forced us back together again. We kept a lot of what we had built through the small schools, so it was a different school.

It was forced back into being this comprehensive, huge school (Ms. Appaloosa, Teacher Interview, March 24, 2016).

With a tone filled with disappointment, Ms. Appaloosa shared feeling forced back into one big high school, which she explained did not solidify the small school reform. The strides the Angela Davis Law and Service small school made came to a sudden halt with the reconfiguration, which Ms. Appaloosa believed did not allow it to reach its potential. Although the motives of the superintendent were not known, Ms. Appaloosa conveyed how, what seemed to be rushed reform efforts diminished the hard work that went into the creation of the small schools. She also unveiled the minimal power and or influence of teachers, students and families that composed the Poder community to shape the school's trajectory. Given that at numerous levels of MCUSD's Central office, Poder was assumed to have a negative reputation, it is unclear how what was conveyed as rushed reform efforts were prompted by these negative perceptions and assumptions.

Ms. Heo also explored the challenges connected to when the school was reconfigures as one big comprehensive high school. She shared,

That meant that for the first time, we were now having our meetings as a full staff. That was tough because I was on this campus, but I didn't know anyone in the other building. All the people I knew were up in this hill section [gesturing to show the southeastern part of campus]. Whereas other people in the other schools were people I just never had to interact with because we never shared students. All of a sudden, we're in this space of, all of us are being thrown into the same community, and we're being told we need to work together. So that transition was rough because we all had our identities as separate schools. Then to kind of keep our identity as a full school was what made it hard for a lot

of people, wanting to keep certain things a certain way. Then being forced to kind of rethink everything because we were being told we needed to recombine (Ms. Heo, Teacher Interview, April 28, 2016).

On the surface, a reconfiguration seemed simple and understood as going from three administrations to one; however, teacher participants explained it was not. It was a struggle to find middle ground, given that all three small schools had their own autonomous identity, a philosophy, and a vision. The abrupt shift did not allow for community building or easing into the reconfiguration. With little support, the staff and teachers had to figure out how to come together. In the space of ten years, this one school engaged in the massive undertaking of breaking down the comprehensive high school it once was into small schools, only to find themselves directed by new district leadership to return to their original organizational structure—with no facilitation of the challenges involved in now melding several distinct school sub-communities into one.

Two years after Poder was reconfigured into a big comprehensive high school (during the 2014-15 school year), MCUSD announced that Poder was a “concentrated assistance school.”²⁷ Poder was one of the schools in the district that received this designation and stemmed from not meeting standards. These schools were required to be “redesigned.” Notably, Ms. Heo shared,

Then this past year was when we were being told that we need to reconstruct everything because we were now a [concentrated assistance school] because we are [pause]. I guess

²⁷ A district document highlights the meaning of the designation of a concentrated assistance school. In short, it is one uniform process—it does not refer to making schools larger or smaller, incorporating academies, changing them into traditional schools, charters or district-run. At the heart of this designation, the document details, is to create quality schools for all. The phases for the concentrated assistance schools include: 1) engaging the school community stakeholders to develop a proposal for a high-quality school program. 2) The district then evaluates and selects a proposal along with stakeholders. 3) There will be investment in a design team to work together for a year to detail the plan. 4) The following phase is implementation. The document highlights that each phase, requires the allocation of funding and resources. Moreover, the document specifies that this is an open call because it seeks to provide an equal playing field, to ensure the high quality of proposals.

it was a graduation rate [and] GPA type thing. Our scores were not high enough. There were a few schools that were told, “Okay, you’re gonna be a [concentrated assistance school], and you’re gonna be required to create a new design.” To kind of revamp essentially. And that’s what we’ve been in the middle of this past year. In the eight years I’ve been here, we’ve been reconfigured a couple [of] times. Just trying to see those changes through, I think, is the hard part (Ms. Heo, Teacher Interview, April 28, 2016).

After two-years of working hard to strengthen relationships, built trust and work collaboratively, according to Ms. Heo, Poder was asked to change once more. In a weary tone that came across as exhaustion, Ms. Heo explained that Poder was asked to completely revamp the school structure to better support student outcomes. For the teachers and staff members like Ms. Heo, who were committed to Poder, particularly to the students, it was exhausting. Ms. Heo described only some of the reconfigurations that took place between 2003-2015 time-frame, and while there was no sense of irritation in her tone, similar to Ms. Appaloosa, she revealed a sense of powerlessness and no say to shape Poder’s trajectory despite her long-time efforts.

Mr. Porter also reflected on Poder designation as a “concentrated assistance school,” with suspicion. Even though MCUSD did not publicly announce a plan to turn Poder into a charter school, Poder teachers learned from informal sources that the central office engaged in backdoor negotiations regarding school buildings with charters. Along with Ms. Bracho, Ms. Jimenez, Ms. Segundo, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Appaloosa, Ms. de los Reyes, among others, Mr. Porter believed that the MCUSD was not only interested, but supportive of signing Poder over to one or multiple charter schools. According to Mr. Porter, once the concentrated assistance school announcement was made, members of the district visited Poder to have a discussion about the planned redesign. Notably, he explained,

They had us sit in these little groups and have a very structured discussion about writing our questions down. Color-coded, whether it was a question or a suggestion, or this or that, and it was all part of putting them into this document. Meanwhile, the district people walked around with these iPads in their hands, just putting things into the iPad as they watched us discuss and stuff. It was funny because we were so *obedient*, and we just had our little quiet discussion. *Nobody* had the courage to stand up and be like, “This is garbage. You should support us, not come in and tear our school up and give us more instability. Blah, blah, blah,” and it was the students who actually were the ones who did what we should’ve done in our meeting. I think that thing they did that day was so powerful that it reverberated all throughout this whole school year (Mr. Porter, Teacher Interview, April 21, 2016).

Mr. Porter described what seemed like MCUSD efforts to manage and contain potential opposition to the planned redesign. The discussion facilitated by district leadership focused on gathering information, not answering questions. Mr. Porter conveyed no genuine effort from the district to understand the worries and concerns that emerged for Poder teachers and staff with the planned redesign. Using a tone steeped in regret, that curiously he described as humorous, he shared that “nobody had the courage to stand up.” The inaction and obedience of Poder teachers and staff, that Mr. Porter described, conveyed not only the longstanding top-down approaches used to implement schooling reforms in Poder, but also the assumptions and expectation that the Poder community would comply with orders. Mr. Porter’s overall sense that the MCUSD created instability and engaged in efforts to tear Poder apart revealed the hierarchal power relations that shaped the Poder community as unvaluable and unworthy. Moreover, it was the multi-generational racialization of Poder that drove MCUSD to assume unconditional authority to

shuffle Poder to the district's whim. Although the district allowed Poder teachers and staff to submit a redesign proposal, there was no guarantee the Poder proposal would be successful.

According to Mr. Porter, Poder faculty and staff revealed up to that point, there was no visible opposition to the MCUSD, however, on multiple levels felt unsupported and undermined. Students and their families were also part of these processes and, as described by Mr. Porter, took a vociferous stance against the proposed redesign. Data analysis revealed that the designation as a concentrated assistance school, the possibility that Poder would become a charter school, and feeling like the MCUSD did not include the community to plan Poder's future became the catalyst for student led grassroots organizing.

Mr. Porter referred to a video recorded during the January 2015 community meeting—that is publicly available and is an hour and a half in length. During the community meeting Poder students voiced multiple concerns that included student, teacher, broadly, Poder's mistrust of MCUSD top-down processes that students argued were not transparent. The students framed their bold response as logical given the various district decisions resulted in the destabilization of Poder. The students asked for community meetings that engage in honest conversations and did not become hour-long speeches that provided no answers. Poder students detailed it was necessary to halt plans where outsiders came in to propose how their school should run. The students argued that the district was not considering the views of the Poder community because they believe the district already had a plan. Students shared that improving schools is not about business but about "community power."

Teacher and student interviews estimated the community meeting's attendance between 500-700 people. Vanessa a Poder sophomore and Chicana student leader reflected on her

experience participating in the grassroots organizing to challenge the district redesign. When asked what was something she enjoyed or appreciated from Poder, Vanessa shared,

Something I enjoy from Poder when it comes to my freshman year, we were going through a process from the district. So, we were told that our school was going to be taken over [by] a charter school. There was going to be all these dramatic changes. So, our community heard that, and we managed to get up to 700 community members, both including students, parents, teachers, staff, community members from Poder, and alumni coming here together saying, “You cannot change our school.” So, seeing that, how united our school is and how we are when it comes to a situation like that (Vanessa, Student Interview, June 7, 2016).

The massive turnout for the district-organized community meeting, Vanessa believed, demonstrated that the Poder community did not trust MCUSD. Although the concentrate assistance school designation was framed as offering targeted support and a collaborative effort between the district and Poder, students and teacher disagreed and argued there were no genuine efforts to include the Poder community in decision-making. Even though the community meeting was established with the purpose of discussing the planned redesign, the overwhelming sense among students was that MCUSD had already decided that Poder would become a charter. Vanessa revealed that despite these hierarchal and oppressive processes, the Poder community came together to not only oppose and halt these efforts, but also, to make demands from the MCUSD to be accountable to the community.

Teacher interviews detailed that the district did not expect a vociferous response from Poder students and the community. It was the student led grassroots organizing, they believed, that drove the central office to support Poder’s redesign proposal. Even though the MCUSD did

not turn Poder into a charter school, the uncertainty and instability remained with the removal of Principal Gomez, a Poder alumnus, and what Ms. Segundo described as an imposed interim administration. At Poder, the colonial schooling culture emerged as continued changes and instability that resulted from multiple reform efforts in thirteen-year time-period. Although not included here, there were other examples that contributed to an overall sense of turmoil, continued changes and instability. Notably, high teacher and administrator turnaround, that prevented continuity on multiple levels. The following section explores how continues changes and instability contributed to what was described by teacher and student participants as a divisive climate.

Divisive Climate

Data analysis revealed that a divisive climate emerged during the study year. Seemingly discouraged, Ms. Segundo shared that the new administration for the 2015-16 school felt like an “imposition.”

They told us in May [2015] that *we* were going to have to select a new principal, right, and then, they really didn’t bring anyone around for interviews. They [MCUSD] hired someone during the two-week period that we had [a] vacation, because we were teaching summer school, right? We were here the whole summer, and the two weeks that we were off and we all took vacations, that’s when the administration downtown decided to hire (Ms. Segundo, Teacher Interview, April 12, 2016).

Even though the student led effort during the January 2015 community meeting was a resounding success because Poder was not scheduled to become a charter school, in different ways MCUSD’s harsh treatment of Poder continued. For example, Ms. Segundo offered the course of events that culminated in the imposition of an interim administration. Ms. Segundo

conveyed limited participation by the MCUSD to hire a replacement administration that was not finalized until the two-week break before the 2015-16 school year was scheduled to begin. It was the imposition of an interim administration along with the new administration's top-down leadership that utilized punitive approaches that teacher participants argued set the tone for the school year.

Mr. Washington, an African American teacher and Monte Caoba alumnus who taught Drama, explained that a robocall email went out the night before school started between 9:30 and 10 p.m. announcing there would be a new administration team. When prompted who received the email, Mr. Washington explained,

The students and their families and staff were copied on it too. You had students coming to school the first day wondering where the previous admin team [was] [pause]. Where were they? Immediately, they [the students] didn't like that. I said, "This would be the opportunity for them [the administration] to try and flip it around," Okay, I know but, that didn't happen. What ended up happening was, they had an assembly; it was like a welcome assembly, all different grades. I stuck my head in a couple of those assemblies. Backlash [they] got backlash. People [students] were booing; people were chanting. At one point, I reminded someone of this the other day; he was a student, he forgot about this was that at one point, the principal had told I think it was the junior assembly, "All right, fine. You can keep talking, all right, fine. I'll suspend everyone in this room." I was like, "Okay, that's not going to go over well." What happens? There was one girl, she got up with her phone. "You ain't suspending nothing. I'm going," and she stormed out already on the phone with the mom. They already had established this culture of fear and this culture of, "If you don't do what we tell you to do, then we're going to enforce

consequences,” and that’s kind of the underlying culture here, and that’s actually something that’s been applied to students, but I feel like it’s been applied to teachers more than the students (Ms. Washington, Teacher Interview, April 21, 2016).

Mr. Washington revealed that the students and their families were officially informed of the new administration by receiving a robocall email from the MCUSD the night before the first day of school that also copied Poder faculty. Mr. Washington conveyed that it was difficult for students, teachers and other members of the Poder community to learn about the new administration in that fashion given that one of the concerns voiced by students included the district’s lack of transparency with the community. In other words, there were no meaningful efforts that the MCUSD engaged in to genuinely address this community concern. Although the interim administration, was an impartial entity that Mr. Washington argued could have turned the circumstances around to create trust and rapport with the community, that did not happen.

According to Mr. Washington, during the welcome assemblies organized by the new administration, Principal Jones threatened to suspend all juniors for talking. The confrontations that Mr. Washington described between Poder students and the new administration offered early indications of the style of leadership that would be implement. More explicitly, Mr. Washington, argued that the new administration established a culture of fear, mandatory compliance, and enforcing consequences applied not only to students but also to teachers. The culture of fear that Mr. Washington described manifested as punitive disciplinary approaches that was not only applied to students, but he argues more acutely experienced by teachers. To highlight some of the punitive disciplinary approaches, Mr. Washington shared,

They closed the hallways during lunch. We found that out when the students found out. Like, I’m going into Ms. Appaloosa’s room, and they’re [students] like, “The doors are

locked.” “The doors are locked?” “Yeah, they locked the doors.” Then we found out, oh yeah, no one’s allowed in the hallways. “Not even to use the bathroom?” “Not even to use the bathroom. Use the bathroom in the cafeteria.” A student actually did some research and broke down how many bathroom stalls per student are required by law. Those two bathrooms in the cafeteria aren’t enough, so they had to readjust that (Mr. Washington, Teacher Interview, April 21, 2016).

As discussed earlier, a coloniality lens emphasize dimensions of race, gender, and class to uncover a violent structure that recognizes some groups as human and others as nonhuman (Grosfoguel, 2016). The underlying purpose of these policies was not to enhance the schooling experience of Poder students but instead to control and discipline. Further, a process of dehumanization informed the assumptions that two bathrooms, one for girls and another for boys, would be enough for more than 800 students to use during their lunch period. Beyond the purpose and impact of the above policies, the administration did not communicate the new policies to Poder faculty, which created confusion and skepticism about these top-down mandates.

The administration approached student discipline but also generally interacted with Poder faculty in an authoritative and divisive manner. When asked to elaborate on Poder’s school culture and how she experienced it, Ms. Fields explained,

I mean, I feel like I wasn’t exaggerating when I said that the administration, I do not feel like has given me positive support. That also has just shown up; I’ve never had them observe my teaching or talked to me about anything that’s happening in my classroom. I feel like there’s not a lot of emphasis on learning happening. At the start of the year, with all the changes that happened, a lot of students remarked that the school felt like a prison

to them. I think there's been some changes there like they've relaxed some of the arbitrary restrictions they were making initially, but I also think that things have become normalized (Ms. Fields, Teacher Interview, April 18, 2016).

In a confounded manner, Ms. Fields, examined the multiple struggles she faced that year. Ms. Field's conveyed what she assumed to be school leader responsibilities that included working to create a positive school culture, planning student academic success, and working to support teachers; none of which were fulfilled that year. Individually, Ms. Fields explained that she did not feel supported as a teacher given that none of her classes were observed, which was representative of teacher participant accounts. Ms. Fields' overall sense was that academics and learning was not a central goal. Instead, what emerged as prominent was punitive discipline enforced via arbitrary policies, which she detailed manifested for students as feeling like they were in a prison. Although Ms. Fields explained that some of the arbitrary restrictions were relaxed, what teacher participants described was feeling like they were becoming accustomed to the hostile environment and poor treatment because they felt there was little, they could do.

When prompted to offer examples of the divisive and hostile climate, Ms. Fields explained,

We lost the feeling of community and family that had been a little more present before. There's been more of a division, or oppositional feeling between older teachers and the administration. Then there's the newer teachers who, I think, kind of came into this situation where it's like, "what's going on," and are just in survival mode as you are in your first-year teaching, but then are not getting sufficient support from either admin or veteran teachers. Veteran teachers because we're all exhausted, admin because they, I think, in general, came in with a deficit model of the school, and have not, I think, found a very positive way in general of lifting up what is going well and spreading that or

supporting the teachers. I've heard from a number of the new teachers that they have felt targeted or harassed by the administration. I overheard the term hostile work environment used. It's pretty bad. It's also pretty bad how you're used to it, I think. (Ms. Fields, Teacher Interview, April 18, 2016).

Ms. Fields identified a shift in how students and teachers experienced Poder. While previously, the culture was described as positive and familial, during the 2015-16 school year, the culture became divided and oppositional. Ms. Fields explained that the oppositional feelings existed primarily between veteran teachers and the administration, because veteran teachers carried with them not only their deep commitment to the Poder community, mainly students, but also held high admiration and esteem for colleagues who supported each other through ongoing and constant organizational changes. The hostile environment, Ms. Fields conveyed made it almost impossible for the veteran teachers to take on mentoring roles to support new teachers, which was unfortunate, because new teacher revealed feeling targeted and harassed by the administration. Moreover, Ms. Field's argued the administration came in with a deficit understanding about Poder that may have been informed by Poder's longstanding negative reputation and/or multi-generational racialization, which she conveyed fueled the harsh and punitive approaches that created the divisive and hostile climate.

The student participants also shared that the school year was challenging, and they felt like the administration did not care about them. For example, when asked whether this year was similar or different from previous years, Mario a Latino junior enrolled in the Multi-Media and Filmmaking Academy shared,

They [the students] felt like there was no one there to care about their education. For some of the teachers, the principal never comes to visit. She [the principal] would never

come to our assemblies. It would be really rare for her to come. It was very different here because of the new staff and them not knowing our culture. From previous years, there was more [pause]. From my freshman and sophomore years, there was more excitement. More assemblies and our principal would always come and talk to us, and everyone was friends with the principal. He knew everyone. [We] talked to him [and] respected him. From this year, what I've been seeing is that vibe was not here this year. It was a different atmosphere (Mario, Student Interview, June 16, 2016).

Mario detailed the minimal involvement of the principal in student events, particularly assemblies, which he explained drove students to feel like administrators did not care about them. Similar to Ms. Fields, Mario offered a comparative reflection about how he experienced Poder's culture in previous years. Mario assumed that 2015-16 was "very" different because the interim administration did not know Poder's culture. Mario recalled a familial school culture wherein the former Principal Gomez would involve himself in student assemblies and other activities. The former principal engaged in conversations with students, and students perceived him as a friend.

Representative of teacher interviews, Ms. Segundo also shared a similar perspective and discussed the 2015-16 school year was struggle. Mainly, she explained,

It's been a struggle. This year, I would say, has been the hardest year in my teaching career, and it's not because of the classroom; it's more about the adult decisions made at all levels. This year, we came into a very hostile environment with the new administration. Teachers were very disempowered since the beginning of the year. That really changed in terms of my previous experience with other administrators. It's been a

challenge to work under those conditions (Ms. Segundo, Teacher Interview, April 12, 2016).

Even though Poder's profile revealed a tumultuous history of continuous change and the implementation of multiple reforms that fostered feelings of uncertainty, Ms. Segundo distinguished the 2015-16 school year as the "hardest year in my teaching career." Ms. Segundo referenced adult decisions, indicative of the arbitrary disciplinary policies that were instituted but also the dehumanizing language and treatment that Poder teachers and students endured at the hands of the interim administration. The organizational methods to run Poder day-to-day, Ms. Segundo revealed created a hostile environment that drove teachers and students to feel disempowered. The study year was the first time wherein Ms. Segundo described a divisive climate that felt hostile and made it difficult to do what she loves.

Teacher and student uncovered the ways that they experienced divisive climate day-to-day, as tense and hostile relationships. Disciplinary policies were central the divisive and hostile climate that surfaced. Teachers and students articulated feeling uncared for, unappreciated and disrespected. Moreover, a reliance on racialized and deficit-oriented perceptions about Poder, revealed the creation and institutionalization of a colonial school culture.

Systemic Criminalization and Dehumanization of Poder Students

Coloniality brings to light how some groups are racialized as human and others as non-human (Fanon, 2004). Those who become racialized as inferior experience ongoing dispossession and violence (Grosfoguel, 2016). One aspect of the racialization of Poder students is dispossession. As explored already, Poder High school experienced long-term disinvestment, that is, material and human resources that include no library, music, dance, and building facilities in disrepair. A second aspect of the racialization Poder students experience manifested as

dehumanization and originated from perceptions of unworthiness. Assumptions that Poder students were dangerous, inferior and unworthy justified schooling efforts that were criminalizing and dehumanizing.

Cacho (2012) deconstructs criminalization to reveal the adoption of laws that cannot be followed. For example, Cacho (2012) centers on the experiences of those labeled as “gang members,” “illegal aliens,” and “suspects of terrorism” to argue that the issue at hand is not behavior but how the rule of law targets these three distinct racialized groups. Cacho’s (2012) frame is helpful to uncover the ways that Poder students experienced systemic criminalization.

During the 2015-16 school year, the interim administration established a culture of fear, mandatory compliance, and enforcing consequences in other words a colonial schooling culture. Central to establishing a colonial school culture, were deliberate efforts that criminalized Poder students. For example, during the first staff meeting, the administrators conducted a workshop on youth gangs and gang violence. Veteran teacher and student participants revealed that the Poder community was gang-impacted previously, in the 1990s and early 2000’s, however, that was no longer a significant concern. Nevertheless, this was an issue that the interim administration prioritized and discussed with the faculty at length. When elaborating on the challenges that he experienced as a teacher, Mr. Washington mentioned instability. Mainly, he shared,

It trickles down from just policies. We met in August with a new admin team to talk about student policy, and we didn’t know where to start. It actually turned into—to me, it felt like we were trying to reinvent the wheel. We spent a lot of time decoding gang situations. From what teachers that have been here for a long time have told me, it’s like, the gang thing is not really that big here. That’s actually calmed down. You may have a couple of students. “Okay, that’s such and such,” but it’s not like a big, big issue. We had

this handout that said, “Okay, look for this kind of shirt. Look for sweatshirts that say this. Look at the binders, if they writing this on it, or they’re writing that sign.” To me, it sounded like it was 1987 all over again. I’m like, “Does that really happen?” We spent time on that, which I thought was a waste of time.

Mr. Washington not only highlighted how the interim administration was out of touch with the Poder community, but also conveyed their disinterest in building rapport and learning about the community. Teacher narratives revealed that Principal Jones was a retired school leader in the MCUSD, however, her experience came primarily from middle school. The gang issue was probably a major issue at the middle school during her tenure as a school leader, however, Mr. Washington explained that was no longer the case at Poder. He relied on the experience of veteran Poder teachers that clarified Poder was gang impacted during the 1980s and 1990s, but not during the 2015-16 school year. Moreover, in the above example, Mr. Washington uncovered some of the ways that the interim administration operated under deficit-oriented and criminalizing assumptions of Poder students and teachers. Some of what teacher and student participants pieced together to make sense of the divisive and hostile culture included possible directives from the central office based on comments made by the interim administration that included, “we are here to clean this place up,” and “break up clicks.”

The disciplinary and dehumanizing aspects of colonial school culture emerged during an informal conversation with Ms. Martinez. She highlighted the ways the administration was punishing students for willful defiance²⁸ which violated a district moratorium on using that policy as grounds for suspension because it disproportionately punished Black and Latinx students. The following is a field note from our check-in that day.

²⁸ Education Code Section 48900 defines willful defiance as disrupting a classroom or other school activities, otherwise not following the authority of school personnel.

After asking how her day was going, Ms. Martinez shared, “It’s busy. Students are being suspended for willful defiance, something they [the administration] should not be doing because MCUSD has a policy against that. So, students are being suspended, and this is not being documented [pause].” She shared, “the vice principal is going about his position the wrong way because he is under the impression he was sent here to, “clean things up” (Field Note, October 16, 2015).

Ms. Martinez revealed that Mr. Johnson was not adhering to district policy—because he continued to use willful defiance as grounds for suspension. Ms. Martinez detailed that it was wrong that Mr. Johnson engaged in punitive efforts that readily suspended students. Moreover, Ms. Martinez conveyed that the administrative approaches (i.e. policies and implementation) were misplaced and informed by deficit-oriented and racialized perceptions about Poder. Ms. Martinez demonstrated her critical awareness of how the interim administration came to understand the Poder community negatively, given his comments and demeanor that revealed his purpose was to “clean things up.”

Data analysis revealed that Poder students and teachers experienced ongoing dehumanization not bound by the study year. For Poder students, dehumanization surfaced as physical assault by School Resource Officers (SRO’s) on multiple occasions. One of the incidences took place during the 2014-15 school year and involved a security officer placing a student on a chokehold. The incident became public when media outlets obtained the security camera footage of the incident. Numerous media outlets weighed in and concluded that it was an unprovoked attack on a Latinx high school student. The issue at hand was the rough treatment that involved a chokehold applied to the student. Assault on students by SROs becomes justified with zero-tolerance policies and ideologies. Zero-tolerance policies have racist origins (Carter,

Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017) that historically relied on the hyper-criminalization of young people of color (Annamma, 2017; Crenshaw, Ocen, Nanda, 2015; Feld, 2017; Morris, 2016; Rios, 2017).

During the 2015-16 school year a student went to the office to call his mother because he was not feeling well. Teacher and student participants explored what happened after, that involved the student, Mr. Johnson, the vice principal and an SRO. Mr. Washington described the incident not only as assault but also infringement of the student's rights. Specifically, Mr. Washington explained,

They spun the story as if he [the student] was under the influence and this and that, and it was 51-50. I said, "I don't know anything about 51-50, but I saw the video. There was nothing about that student that read 51-50." He was trying to leave on his own accord. Basically, what went down is, he just wanted to go home. That's why he was in the office. He was like, "Can you call my mom to come pick me up? I don't feel well." That got turned into, "Well, he was under the influence of drugs, and that's what he gets." I'm like, "It's not even about all that." Basically, what you're saying, is [that] if someone's under the influence of drugs, they deserve to get beaten up? They deserve to get treated like that? If anything, you want to make sure they're okay, and that's the last thing you'd want to do.

According to California law, 5150 "refers to a person, [that] as a result of mental health disorder, is a danger to others, or himself or herself, or gravely disabled" (California Legislative Information, 2019). To be designated 5150, an adequate assessment has to be conducted by a peace officer, licensed social worker, or a designated member of a mobile crisis team. Mr. Johnson nor the security officer were qualified to perform that type of assessment. Mr.

Washington detailed that after watching the office surveillance video, it was not his impression that the student was behaving in a manner signifying danger. On the contrary, Mr. Washington explained that the student attempted to leave to go home because he was not feeling well.

Assaulting the student, Mr. Washington argued, became justified because he was under the influence of drugs. Mr. Washington challenged the justification that a student deserves to be beaten up because he was under the influence. Local media coverage of the incident included video footage of the incident and photos of the student with bruises.

Although the second incident was connected to the authoritarian approaches of the interim administration, the dehumanization of Poder students extended beyond the study year. In both instances the adults involved were not placed on leave immediately. Harsh disciplinary policies that focus on order and compliance become justified by arguing that it is necessary to ensure positive academic outcomes. Conversations about academic success and improving academic outcomes for working-class Black and Latinx students can take drastic measures to reproduce colonial forces of control, punishment, and violence.

The above section examined the violent manifestation of colonial school culture that not only framed students as criminal but more than that physically harmed them. In both instances, no immediate steps were taken to place the SROs and vice principal on leave, which sends the message that it is not only acceptable and expected to physically punish students if they get out of line. The above examples represent the tip of the iceberg, what lies underneath include colonial forces that rely on deficit-oriented and racialized ideologies that classify Poder students as unworthy but that also justify their dehumanization. Poder's reputation became a method to ground the criminal perceptions and assumptions about Poder students and the entire community.

Reputation also functioned as a way in which worth is attributed. Mr. Washington offered a valuable perspective that centers students' right to an equitable and dignified education.

Decoloniality: Constructing Poder's Counter-Narrative

Decoloniality alters ways of being and allows for the transformation of subjects who have been illegitimate and marginal to become privileged actors (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). The above sections elaborate on how the participants described the prominent negative narratives about Monte Caoba, Zócalo, and Poder that were damaging, but also, how the participants actively challenged them. Particularly, the participants shared positive experiences in these spaces. For example, the following is an excerpt from my conversation with Martha, a Chicana junior who describes the Poder community,

Martha: I would describe it like we all are really united. I think we're ambitious.

Yanira: Can you please elaborate.

Martha: Because a lot of these kids, we struggle through poverty and stuff like that. We're trying to do good in school and this stuff so we can make it out. Give our families a better life and stuff like that. We're going to college, then pursuing really good career (Martha, Student Interview, June 3, 2016).

Without hesitation, Martha described her community as united and ambitious. When asked for further elaboration, Martha explained that there was a mutual understanding among Poder students, given that many struggled with poverty. According to Martha, experiencing poverty, allowed Poder students to have some common ground and feel connected. Moreover, Martha revealed that despite the struggles with poverty, her peers were "trying to do good." Martha presented her peers in a positive light and as such, deconstructed the negative perceptions held about Poder students. Although Martha detailed, that her peers worked to do well academically

to “make it out,” it was not to escape the community, but rather, she detailed the need to go away to gain the skills to be able to “give our families a better life.” Martha’s description centers her positive outlook of Poder students, but also a strong desire to uplift the family and surrounding community by being successful academically.

Ms. Fields taught for nine years at Poder. She taught AP World History, Modern World History, and AP U.S. History. Ms. Fields explained that Poder’s reputation is a concern for members of the community. Notably, she explained,

Oh definitely. I mean, there’s a broader perception problem for Poder, which is interesting because we have a lot of problems as a school. Not going to anyway deny that, but I think most people only have a *deficit* [emphasis added by Ms. Fields] mentality when it comes to the school, who aren’t actually involved with it. I think when they actually get involved with it, they see, “Oh, there are actually some good things happening here.” Yeah, I definitely think that’s a big problem, and that’s something that has come up in discussions about trying to move the school forward. If they should try to change the name to rebrand, but there is, with Alumni, there’s pride associated with it. Poder has such a bad reputation overall in the community that I think it is a barrier for us. (Ms. Fields, Teacher Interview, April 18, 2016).

Ms. Fields confidently agreed with other student and teacher participants that the prevalent narrative was that Poder was a problematic school. Although, she admitted that Poder faced problems, one of the challenges was that some community members had deficit perspectives about the school, which maybe did not spark their interest to become involved. The deficit assumptions, Ms. Fields explained, vanished once community members did become involved with Poder because they witnessed first-hand the positives. Moreover, Ms. Fields demonstrated

how impactful school reputation was for Poder, because she touched on the multiple faculty and staff discussions to problem-solve about the best way to move away from the negative reputation. Although, one of the ideas was to rename the school, it was not pursued because as Ms. Fields revealed, Poder alumni, made up teachers and staff described the pride associated with the name. The pride Ms. Fields described manifested as alumni who returned as teachers and staff; individuals who described a strong conviction to serve Poder and the surrounding community. Six of the teacher/staff participants grew up in Monte Caoba and were Poder alumni. A Security Resource Officer (SRO) and teacher aid not interviewed were also Poder alumni.

Emma, a sophomore, elucidated the strong conviction of alumni to serve Poder. Emma was born in Guatemala and immigrated to the San Bernardino Valley. Emma's family moved to Monte Caoba during 2014 to find support to obtain legalization. During the time of the study, Monte Caoba had a growing Guatemalan and Mam-speaking²⁹ community. For a class assignment in ninth grade, Emma interviewed Poder's former principal and alumnus. Emma shared some of what she remembered from that interview because it informed her perspective about her school and the community. In the following, Emma quoted former Principal Gomez. She shared,

“Poder is my family, and I admire you all [the students] so much. I know there are problems, but I am here to help in any way I can.” I was in 9th grade, and that is what I remember from Principal Gomez; he would talk to the students. “Hello, how are you?”

“Good morning, good afternoon.” “I hope you have a good day at school” “do your

²⁹ According to an NPR editorial, over the last forty years, an estimated 18,000 Mayan Mam-speaking people have immigrated from Guatemala—to flee poverty and violence and have made Monte Caoba and the surrounding cities home. Many Mam people do not speak English or Spanish, and also many do not read or write any language. At Poder, Ms. Segundo explained in her interview that as of April 2016 the NIDO program made up a third of the school population or 230 students, which increased significantly between 2014-16 as a result of the unaccompanied minors fleeing Central American. During that two-year period the program, she explained, doubled.

work.” Even the students that were in the hallways, he would tell them, “You should study so you can be whomever you want to be.” Although there are fights once in a while, I don’t care because my principal and teachers made me feel protected. The teachers also make the time to sit down with you and listen to your problems as a way to help (Emma, Student Interview, June 16, 2016).

Emma detailed deliberate efforts by former Principal Gomez—a Poder alumnus—that created a familial culture. The practices that Principal implemented that Emma detailed, wherein he greeted and conversed with students. These efforts Emma explained, highlighted the former Principal’s interest in student wellbeing and academics. Emma’s tone was filled with admiration when she described a principal who was courteous and committed to create a familial culture. Based on her observations, Emma explained that familial culture was to developed by reprimanding students. Instead, she explained that Principal Gomez talked to students about how class attendance was one step toward students reaching their academic goals. Although Emma mentioned that fights happened at Poder, she explained that the familial culture built by Principal Gomez and her teachers allowed her to feel welcome, cared for, and protected.

Emma elucidated the asset-based and humanizing approaches implemented by former Principal Gomez, but also an alumnus, somebody committed to supporting the development of Poder students. Ms. Bracho, shared the philosophy that informed her efforts an educator who was a Poder alumna. Particularly, she explained,

I feel morally obligated to have a different feeling at this place. There’s a lot of potential, and a lot of people say that. We have, really, dedicated teachers. We have some pretty great programs that students can really benefit from to really develop a career. There’s just so much hope, and at the same time, I feel like we haven’t gotten to a place where

students really feel known and where students really take advantage of all the opportunities. We have a lot of resources, but our students are not always aware of them, or we don't do a good job with our parents. I think there's an opportunity because there's a wealth of resources to push them out more so that our students have more access. It's my school regardless of whether I work here or not; I care about this school serving this neighborhood. I live really close by, and I feel like we have the opportunity to help the neighborhood feel safer and also for our kids to be able to want to come here, so if they are neighbors, they should be walking to school (Ms. Bracho, Staff Interview, June 28, 2016).

Ms. Bracho detailed being anchored in her experience as a former student, former teacher, community member, and community manager. The moral obligation that Ms. Bracho highlighted emerged partly from her role as a former student, but also that she was committed to serving the needs of the surrounding community that included making it feel safer. Ms. Bracho approached her efforts using an asset-based approach that highlighted the potential, given Poder's dedicated teachers who worked tirelessly to support students, and established the infrastructure for successful programs that included three academies: the 1) Angela Davis Law and Service Academy, 2) Multi-Media and Filmmaking, 3) Design and Architecture, and the 4) New Immigrant Directed Opportunities (NIDO) program for Newcomer students. These programs focused on college access and offered students possible career prospects. Although, Ms. Bracho highlighted the positives, the caveat was that students did not feel recognized for their efforts or accomplishments as part of Poder. Moreover, Ms. Bracho outlined the need to prioritize organizational efforts that promoted student knowledge and access to the programs Poder offered.

This section examined how the participants were critical and actively decolonized negative perceptions and assumptions about Poder that included students, teachers, staff and overall programs. Martha and Emma, Latinx young women and first in their family who planned to attend college demonstrated agency to challenge negative perceptions about Poder and further provided a counter narrative. The following section provides a systematic exploration of the different challenges Poder students faced.

Decolonizing Practices that Mitigate Colonial Conditions

Martha and many other students involved themselves in other available opportunities despite the limitations connected to course offerings. For example, her enrollment in The Angela Davis Law and Service Academy offered Martha the opportunity to take advantage of an internship at a law firm in a neighboring city. Martha described this opportunity as giving her insight into what it means to pursue a law career. The Angela Davis Law and Service Academy faculty are engaged in multiple efforts that include developing partnerships with community organizations and employers to offer students meaningful experiences that allow them to build their skills. In her interview, Ms. Appaloosa describes the efforts of The Angela Davis Law and Service Academy as successful. Mainly, she detailed,

There's a couple of things that really have worked out. I think this academy was a good idea because there's a lot of people out there who have businesses and jobs who want to support the schools. Since we have the academy, we can say yes to them. We can get them internships in the summer. That has really turned around a small number of our students but really turned them around. I see them being those kinds of parents that I'm talking about now because they experienced that. "I'm really smart, and I belong here, and I belong in a really good job, and I'm going to insist that I get one. If I don't get one,

I'm gonna make sure my kids get it." I can see that transformation happening because of the jobs we've been able to bring them to.

Beyond experiencing up close what it means to work as an attorney in a law firm, as Martha details, Ms. Appaloosa refers to more profound benefits from participating in the internships. These experiences, she explained, have turned students around. Ms. Appaloosa elucidated how students have acquired another level of awareness that helped them see that they have so much to offer, "I'm really smart...". The students learned that not only do they belong in that employment setting and can be successful there, but they also learned what a good job provides, which includes benefits and security. Moreover, Ms. Appaloosa identified how these structured opportunities offered by The Angela Davis Law and Service Academy facilitated student skill development but also knowledge production. The opportunities built into the Academy, Ms. Appaloosa argues, worked to support student confidence to aid their individual success, but also she foresaw the acquired level of awareness benefited future student children and entire families.

Similarly, Mr. Pham, the director for the Design and Architecture Academy, a Poder alumnus who grew up in Monte Caoba, intentionally provided students opportunities to develop their college and career skills. He recalled leaving for college to study architecture, inspired by how architecture could help his community. After college, he worked in the industry and returned to visit Poder. He shared,

When I went into the industry, I really loved the design world. I really liked it. I came back to visit Poder High School, and I just saw the condition [that] I kind of left, which means it's not a very good picture. The way I would paint that picture now. We are in an architecture class, [with] no rulers, no supplies. We have computers that have been around for maybe ten years—viruses on there. [The] Internet only works for students to

use Facebook. People were just hanging out essentially. The architecture teacher at that time was physically ill, and he wasn't teaching. He wasn't there for many, many months. There was substitute after substitute in the classes. I saw my experience growing up. I saw the same experience the students were going through. That was what I felt. I was one of those individuals who knew what they wanted to do, which was to become an architect when I was much younger. That's why I actually went into this program [The Design and Architecture Academy]. Hopefully [to] gain some knowledge base behind architecture, how to become an architect.

After he graduated from college and worked in the architecture industry, Mr. Pham went to visit Poder. During his visit, he witnessed the disinvestment of material and human resources. Mr. Pham highlighted no adequate equipment and an architecture teacher who was unavailable due to health issues, which meant that students had revolving substitutes. This moment allowed Mr. Pham to remember his dream of becoming an architect and enrolling in the academy to obtain the support he needed to make that dream a reality. Moreover, during his visit, Mr. Pham was shocked to witness his own experience as a Poder student. Inadvertently, Mr. Pham unearthed the multi-generational disinvestment that Poder faced. It was this experience that not only propelled Mr. Pham to return, but also informed his approach as teacher and director for the Design and Architecture Academy. Moreover, he elaborated on his goals to offer the opportunities that he did not have as a student. Something that Mr. Pham identified as a success was the ability to expose students to different careers.

In my role, I'm responsible to reach out to industry partners to do career exploration visits. These visits are not just like, "Oh, let's go on a field trip." It's more like we are deliberate about what students learn. We are deliberate about what to ask from the host

site. There are specific [learning] targets for our students. Our visits, every year we visit many architecture firms and construction sites. We expose our students to so many different careers. Exposure, once again, is something I hope and strive for. Our students are now exposed to many careers under the umbrella of architecture, construction, engineering. That's a success story.

Both Ms. Appaloosa and Mr. Pham created the infrastructure, that is, sequence of themed curricula that integrate career and technical educational courses and worked-based learning opportunities. Mr. Pham explained that the fieldtrips that the Design and Architecture Academy organizes with industry partners are career exploration visits. To support student development, Ms. Pham described specific learning targets that guide the visit but also the takeaways. Moreover, host sites were asked to engage students in a way that allowed them to see themselves in the employment settings they visit.

Ms. Appaloosa, and all of the teacher and staff participants who are Poder alumni, including Mr. Pham, Ms. Bracho, Ms. Segundo, Ms. Jimenez, Ms. Martinez, and Coach Younger represented key human resources, who took heroic measures to do the impossible even within the context of disinvestment. As a collective, alumni teachers who were all teachers of color brought a strong commitment to Poder, but also to the community, which countered deficit-oriented and racialized discourses about students and the community. Alumni teachers saw themselves in the students and did not dismiss them as “unmotivated,” or “unwilling to learn.” They knew that their parents did not come to the school, not because they did not care, but because they worked to ensure they could make ends meet. This experiential knowledge elevated the understanding and consciousness of the entire teaching body. As a collective—but particularly alumni and veteran—teachers were in it for the long haul and worked toward

creating a school that could truly support the needs of students and the community. These humanizing philosophies, informed the teaching pedagogies and practices, but also the efforts to build organizational structures that included the academies and the NIDO program, to foster opportunities for students to expand their knowledge base, develop skills, and have career exposure.

Interrupting Colonial Schooling: Student Activism

Poder students and teachers actively challenge the prominent colonial conditions at Poder. At the individual level, Poder student participants demonstrated time after time that they understood Poder, not the way outside entities and other stakeholders did. For the student participants, Poder was a place where they felt safe and where the teachers cared and were invested in student academic success. Sandoval (2000) examines Third Worlds notions of love that refer to breaking through controls to find understanding and community. Maldonado-Torres (2016) builds on Sandoval (2000) and Anzaldua's *Coatlicue* state or the "rupturing, of one's everyday world that permits crossing over to another" (p. 139) to unearth a process of decolonization. Unlike Anzaldua's *Coatlicue* state, decolonization is a collective process that makes visible what has become invisible (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Poder students engaged in decolonization processes to break through colonial schooling conditions but also to find understanding and affirm their humanity.

During the 2015-16 school year, the criminalizing and dehumanizing practices climaxed after the students returned from the winter break when a student was assaulted by an SRO and the vice principal. A few weeks after this incident, Poder students organized a walkout to demand a change in the system. On the day of the protest, Vanessa, a sophomore and Chicana youth leader enrolled in the Angela Davis Law and Service Academy offered an overview of

what was happening. She explored the catalyst that sparked this walkout and what they wanted to come out of these efforts. In this short overview, Vanessa demonstrated a firm grounding by affirming her right (and that of her peers) to speak up and challenge dehumanization. In this context, dehumanization surfaced as demeaning school practices that inflicted emotional and physical harm on young people.

Primarily, the reason for this protest is with the intention to change the system. There are already rumors talking about how they are calling the superintendent, and he is on his way to get every student to their class, right. But they can't do that because this is our First Amendment right. We have the right to protest, and we are here protesting because a) we want all of this to change. We want the system to change. It can't continue like this. Two or three weeks ago, there was a Newcomer student, he got called down to the office, and he went. He had some dialogue with someone in the office, right. In the video, there is no audio, and it looked like he had some dialogue. It looked like he was trying to walk away from the situation. That's when one of the SROs aggravates him. He [the SRO] pushes him [the student], and then that's when you can see Carter [head SRO] goes in there, and then you can't see much because they go behind the wall by the corner, and all you can see are elbows going back and forth. We [Poder students] are like, "this isn't gonna happen again." To the point that this student went to the hospital, they were picked up by the paramedic. And yes, it was later known that the student was intoxicated. But that gives them no right or no reason whatsoever to act in such a way. That is what we want to change because if we can't have that [a change in the system], then one of the alternatives that we [student leaders] have been talking about is having mandatory training for all the personnel (Field Notes, January 27, 2016).

The overarching message that emerged from the Poder student walkout was that they wanted “the system to change.” Vanessa clearly articulated that what drove the students to walk out and protest was the physical assault that her peer sustained at the hands of an SRO. During the walkout, Principal Jones asked student through the loud speaker to return to their classes. Although, not mentioned in the loud speaker, students were told that the Superintendent was on his way to make students returned to class. Vanessa stood firm and explained that it was her right and the right of her peers to protest. Vanessa conveyed that the assault on the Poder student was the last draw that propelled them into action. In a weary tone, Vanessa explained that, “this isn’t going to happen again,” which highlighted that this was not the first time that a student was assaulted on the Poder campus. Vanessa not only conveyed that it was wrong that the student was assaulted, but that it was much worse that this was not the first time this happened. Moreover, she elaborated on the degree of the assault by explaining, that the student was picked up by the paramedic and taken to the hospital. These violent and dehumanizing actions revealed the punitive approaches implemented by Poder staff in charge of discipline which then influenced their practices. Vanessa highlighted the punitive approaches that justified the violent assault because the student was intoxicated, and placed blame on the system that created these dehumanizing and colonial conditions. Figures 9, 10 and 11 are photographs of the student led walk out.

Figure 9: Grayscale photograph of images during Poder Student Walk Out.



Figure 10: Grayscale photograph of images during Poder Student Walk Out.



Figure 11: Grayscale photograph of images during Poder Student Walk Out.



After a chaotic year of what teachers and students described as horrible treatment from school leadership, the students demanded “a change in the system.” The overarching statement referred not only to a change in leadership both at the school and district level, but also referring to the resources and support provided to Poder. The students explained that they did not have many interesting courses and knew that other schools in the district offered more courses. Students argued that the limited courses and almost no enrichment opportunities that included sports were inequitable conditions. The underlying hope of the student protest and demands to change the system was to obtain more support for Poder, in other words, humanizing approaches.

The grassroots organizing that Poder students engaged in to prepare for the January 2015, community meeting along with the student walkout and protest in January 2016 motivated by the SRO’s assault on the student provides evidence as described by Ms. Martinez, that “Poder students organize well.” Even though student activism did not prevent the colonial schooling conditions that Poder students faced during the study year and in previous years, the protest

interrupted authoritarian and dehumanizing leadership approaches. The vice principal and the SRO were first placed on administrative leave and subsequently reassigned to another site. Organizing the student walkout and protest was not only a way for students to affirm their voice but also to demand humanizing treatment and access to an equitable education.

Conclusion and Discussion

Multiple factors influenced Poder's reputation that included stereotypes and deficit-oriented perceptions connected to violent crime in the neighborhood, along with pathologies connected to urban working-class neighborhoods composed largely of Black and Latinx residents. The media emerged as a central force that sensationalized the negative views about both Monte Caoba and Poder High. Poder's reputation was found to be longstanding and stemmed from historical memory composed of individual concerns for safety connected to fights. Moreover, staff from the central office reproduced Poder's negative reputation by discouraging student from enrolling and deterring teachers from joining the Poder team. Despite the power and reach of Poder's negative reputation, student and teacher participants decolonized the "bad" community and school images by detailing the ways that Poder provided a welcome context. Particularly, the participants identify a familial culture that was fostered through building relationships and showcasing care.

The overarching culture that surfaced was a colonial school culture that referred to multi-generational disinvestment of material and human resources and the racialization of students, teachers and the community. Colonial school culture also emerged as top-down decisions both from the central office and the administrative team during the 2015-16 school year. The hierarchal decisions made by the central office were not transparent and did not prioritize community input. Moreover, colonial school culture was identified as continuous organizational

changes that created instability and uncertainty. During the 2015-16 school year, the colonial schooling conditions became exacerbated with the interim administration which instituted multiple arbitrary and punitive policies that created a hostile environment. The interim administration came in with deficit perspectives about Poder students and teachers, which cemented an authoritarian leadership approach that criminalized and dehumanized students.

Colonial schooling conditions extended beyond the study year. Poder students and teachers detailed a mistrusting relationship between the MCUSD central office and Poder. Veteran teachers, notably, explored how the district mandates were implemented in a hierarchal fashion which created instability. Moreover, participants detailed that the uncertainty of the planned redesign that resulted from the designation as a “concentrated assistance school” drove Poder students to engage in grassroots organizing. Even though the central office did not publicly announce a plan to turn Poder into a charter school, Poder teachers learned from informal sources that the central office engaged in backdoor negotiations regarding school buildings with charters. Teacher participants revealed that the district did not expect a vociferous response from Poder students and the community, with over five hundred in attendance during the January 2015 community meeting. This response drove the central office to support the redesign plan put forth by Poder teachers.

This study utilized a decoloniality frame and attended to how those who experienced marginality become privileged actors who create their own story and their own path. The participants identified Poder’s dominant reputation as negative, however, actively challenged this simplistic profile. Poder students detailed positive experiences and feeling supported. A familial climate was identified wherein students felt welcome, cared for, and protected.

Although a negative reputation was connected to the Poder name, there was also pride associated with the name for alumni teachers. It was the alumni pride and a sense of moral obligation that informed their efforts to return as teachers/staff to serve Poder students but also the surrounding community. Teacher participants discussed their efforts to establish organizations that worked to support student success and included the: 1) Angela Davis Law and Service Academy, 2) Multi-Media and Filmmaking, 3) Design and Architecture, and the 4) New Immigrant Directed Opportunities (NIDO) program for Newcomer students. Alumni teachers worked to provide opportunities they believed they did not have utilizing asset and humanizing approaches.

The asset and humanizing approaches were confronted with a demoralizing interim administration that established a culture of fear and consequences. The administrative authoritarian policies and practices resulted in the assault of student by an SRO and the vice principal. It was this incident that drove students to take action to demand a change in the system. Poder students organized and walked out to protest the violent assault on their peer but also the demoralizing administration. Student efforts were successful because the two individuals involved were placed on leave and did not return for the rest of the year.

The findings in Chapter Six align with McWilliams (2017), particularly, on how the reality of the market-driven school choice exacerbates the stigma connected to a school. Students explained that Poder was “choice number six,” because of the negative reputation and drove eight graders in the process of choosing a high school to make it their last choice. Their own experience as Poder students, made them realize that it was a place where they wanted to be given the familial culture and caring teachers. Similar to McWilliams (2017) and Jenkins (2020), this study found Poder students could not only identify the dominant negative reputation, but

also the participants challenged those deficit-oriented portrayals. Although Mc Williams (2017) explained that students experienced a climate of shame and not belonging, the opposite was true for Poder students wherein they engaged in grassroots organizing to combat a charter takeover. Connected to the McWilliams (2017) finding about worth, wherein young people believed it would negatively influence their access to college, Poder students specified that the disinvestment in material and human resources conveyed a loud message from the district, that they were not worthy of obtaining a good education. Nevertheless, these colonial conditions fueled their desire to resist Poder's negative reputation but also the implications that resulted from that negative reputation.

Jenkins (2020) found that the prominent racial stereotypes that existed about the community drove the school to distance itself from the neighborhood. For Poder the opposite was true because it was the strong connection to the neighborhood and community organizations that enabled Poder students, teachers, and the community to put pressure on the MCUSD during the January 2015 community meeting to not sign the campus over to charter schools. The Poder case contributes to the literature by offering a temporal analysis of school reputation to highlight the colonial schooling conditions that vulnerable students endure that inhibits their educational success. Poder's case was not damaged centered research (Tuck, 2009) because it demonstrated the multiple ways in which students, teachers, and the community resisted and worked to transform these colonial conditions.

Jenkins (2020) described school reputation as socially constructed wherein images and perceptions are negotiated on an ongoing basis. The Poder case contributes and extends this conceptualization by revealing that the social construction of school reputation is not a uniform process. In other words, the perceptions that certain stakeholders have about a particular school

have more weight. Although students and teachers challenged Poder's negative school reputation, what seemed to carry more weight was the representation of the media, outside stakeholders, and the MCUSD's central office. These entities contributed to a multi-generational racialization of Poder students, teachers, and the entire school.

Chapter Seven: Summary, Implications, and Conclusion

Chapter Seven revisits the study by reviewing the research questions and the aims of the study. The findings explored in Chapter Five and Chapter Six will be briefly summarized with attention to the role of coloniality and decoloniality as the primary theoretical framework in this dissertation. Further, Chapter Seven examines the implications for methodology and theory. Lastly, Chapter Seven offers practical and policy recommendations, given the findings of the study.

Revisiting Study

The present study examined school reputation comparatively at two traditional urban high schools. I define school reputation as ideas continuously made and remade about schools dependent on perceptions and experiences of an insider but also an outsider—individuals with no connection or distant connection to the site—stakeholders. The study sought to examine the relationships between school reputation and the culture that the students, teachers, and staff experienced at each site. More explicitly, the study sought to understand how school reputation shaped school culture and the worth attributed to students and teachers at each school. By positioning the participants as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 1998), this comparative ethnographic study attended to how the participants made sense of the main ideas deployed by insiders and outsiders about each school but also about the young people, teachers, and staff connected to each site.

The theoretical framework combines coloniality, school culture, and decoloniality. First, this dissertation utilized coloniality to historicize by accounting for contemporary social arrangements that align with white supremacy, and that racializes certain populations as problems. Specifically, it interrogated temporal and spatial forces that shaped school reputation

and the prevalent conditions at each school site that function to privilege and/or harm young people. Second, school culture attends to the underlying social meaning of shared beliefs, values, and basic assumptions that exist unconsciously at each study site (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Schein, 1985). Moreover, decoloniality accounts for the agency, critical consciousness, and power of young people, families, and teachers who experience compounding marginalization yet resist at multiple levels (Fanon, 2004; Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

The Research Question at the heart of this study was, how does the reputation at two contrasting high schools shape the school culture and the worth attributed to students, teachers, and the overall school? This dissertation was further guided by the following research sub-questions that included Research Question One: How do the reputations of two contrasting high schools shape the culture at each site? Research Question Two: What is the worth attributed to students and the implications for school resource allocation? And finally, Research Question Three: How do youth and teachers mediate colonial schooling conditions?

Chapter Three detailed the use of critical ethnography and Chicana feminist epistemology as the methodology, shaped by ethics, love, and functions to recover neglected voices (Elenes, 2011). Chapter Three also provides a detailed historical overview of the research setting, Monte Caoba, and the school district that primarily serves students of color. The pilot study, conducted during the 2014-15 school year, informed the early stages of research design, data collection, and preliminary data analysis. Both research sites were explored and included Logro High, part of the Blossom Hill neighborhood that was made up primarily of White residents, and Poder High, which is part of the Zócalo neighborhood that was made up primarily of Latinx residents. The multiple data techniques included interviews, participant observations, and photographs.

Data collection for this study consisted of one academic school year of comparative ethnographic research, including 77 formal interviews across sites, document analysis, and over 200 hours of observations per site. There were two stages of analysis that included a within-case that explored each case as a comprehensive unit (Merriam, 2009). Once the analysis of each case was complete, the second stage of cross-case analysis began (Merriam, 2009). The first stage of analysis utilized a combination of inductive and deductive approaches (Maxwell, 2013). The second stage of cross-analysis used solely inductive approaches.

Study Aims

First, this study aimed to provide comparative ethnographic knowledge of how young people and teachers experience urban schooling at two schools with contrasting reputations. Second, the dissertation offered a medium to understand how young people of color and teacher allies resist colonial schooling conditions. Moreover, the study aimed to contribute to a growing body of empirical work that maps the types of experiences of working-class and young people of color in urban schools that emphasize their agency to demand schooling that is responsive to their needs, desires, and strengths.

This dissertation contributes to a growing body of research that explores how market-driven schooling reform creates difficult conditions, particularly for students and families of color facing compounding oppressions (Fine, 2005; Gooden et al., 2016; Orfield & Ayscue, 2018; Pattillo, 2015). In addition, this study adds to the developing empirical knowledge regarding processes related to gentrification and schools, particularly the drawbacks that include displacement in both housing and schooling (Cucchiara & Hovart, 2009; Goertz, 2011; Jackson, 2014; Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2016). Additionally, this study adds to the ample body of research on school discipline by highlighting how racializing discourses of students and

schools justify implementing punitive discipline policies (Mallett, 2016; Welsh & Little, 2018). Furthermore, this study addresses the dearth of empirical knowledge squarely focused on school reputation, how it can shape the emergent school culture, and the worth attributed to students, teachers, and the overall school (Jenkins, 2020). Finally, this study contributes to growing empirical work that maps the experiences of working-class and young people of color. More specifically, their agency and resolve to demand schooling that is responsive to their needs, desires, and strengths (de los Rios, López, Morrell, 2015; Fernández, 2018; Rogers & Terriquez, 2016).

Summary of Chapter Five Findings

Although Logro's dominant reputation emerged as a transformed school, this study found that the prestigious and rigorous programs were longstanding and used exclusivist enrollment practices, which meant that student makeup did not reflect the overall school demographics. Logro's transformation was argued as the product of socio-economic forces that included the 2008 financial crisis, the housing market influenced by a tech boom, and a contemporary iteration of gentrification that resulted in city-wide and school-wide changes. Overlooked from the transformation narrative was that during the early 2000s, Logro served primarily African-American students (65 percent) and that by 2015-16, that student population decreased drastically (31 percent). The decrease of African American students was accompanied by an increase of White students that hovered at five percent in the early 2000s but that by the 2015-16 school year was 24 percent. Hanna-Jones (2016) examines what makes schools desirable to White parents beyond academics, which she describes as a small percentage of students of color. Although multiple factors shape enrollment trends, it is difficult to ignore the dramatic enrollment shifts and displacement of African American students from one of the very few

schools districtwide that offered good resources and opportunities. The MCUSD used open enrollment; however, a central priority was the neighborhood of residence that functioned to reproduce housing inequity because Logro was located in an exclusive Monte Caoba neighborhood.

Logro's school reputation during the 2015-16 academic year shaped the culture. The culture was described as racially and socio-economically divided and represented a physical and symbolic separation of students in the prestigious programs and those in regular college preparation courses. Assumptions connected to the divide included that the students in college preparation courses were not only not intelligent, but inferior. The divide revealed patterns of racialization wherein "the haves" were positioned as superior, more intelligent, and worthy. While the "have nots" were positioned as inferior, lacking, and unworthy. Although the participants identified these racialized and unequal dynamics, these were not openly discussed. Logro's organizational structure supported and protected the prestigious programs, even though they only served a small fraction of the student population.

Moreover, student of color participants demonstrated their awareness of the unequal conditions, including racialized tracking and teachers' implicit bias, along with their efforts to resist at multiple levels. Individually, students challenged racializing discourses: humiliation from peers in the prestigious programs connected to enrollment in college preparation courses. This dynamic highlighted that they knew the students enrolled in the prestigious programs were not better than them. As a collective, students created safe and healing spaces like *Stir Up* designated only for students of color to talk openly about the negative experiences connected to the Philomath program and the Building and Architecture Academy. Moreover, students utilized performance as part of the Latinx student assembly to bring visibility to Latinx students at Logro.

Summary of Chapter Six Findings

Multiple forces influenced Poder's longstanding negative reputation, including racialization and deficit-oriented perceptions connected to violent crime and concerns for safety both inside Poder and in the surrounding Zócalo neighborhood. In addition, Poder's negative reputation was propagated by multiple entities that included insiders, outsiders, the media, and the MCUSD's central office. Specifically, district staff discouraged students from enrolling and deterred teachers from joining the Poder team.

Poder's longstanding negative reputation resulted in colonial conditions. In other words, Poder faced multi-generational disinvestment of material and human resources along with deficit portrayals of students, teachers, and the community. Additionally, colonial conditions represented the central office's hierarchal decisions that were not transparent and deprioritized community input. Colonial conditions also surfaced as reform effort that resulted in continuous organizational changes that created instability and uncertainty. For example, the planned redesign that resulted from the designation as a "concentrated assistance school" created a great deal of uncertainty for Poder students and teachers because they believed the district intended to convert Poder into a charter. During the 2015-16 school year, a colonial school culture was documented, emerged from the interim administration's deficit perceptions about Poder students and teachers, and was instituted with multiple arbitrary and punitive policies that created a hostile environment.

The dehumanization resulted from the colonial conditions prevalent at Poder that propelled students to engage in activism and grassroots organizing, not merely to curb these oppressive contexts but to transform them. On a large scale, Poder participants revealed that the district did not expect a vociferous response from Poder students and the community, with over

five hundred in attendance during the January 2015 community meeting. This response drove the central office to support the redesign plan put forth by Poder teachers. On a smaller scale, the participants demonstrated their awareness of Poder's negative reputation but actively challenged it and provided counter-narratives that portrayed Poder as a *familia* or family that was welcoming and caring. Although a negative reputation was associated with Poder, for alumni teachers there was also pride associated with the name. This pride fueled a sense of moral obligation for some alumni to return to their alma mater to serve Poder students and the surrounding community and create opportunities that many of them did not have when they were students.

Methodological Implications

As a native ethnographer who works within and writes about my community, I argue it is crucial to implement humanizing approaches to build relationships of dignity and care (Paris & Winn, 2014). A humanizing process confronts the dehumanization and violence of coloniality and enacts decoloniality. Specifically, I embraced affect by committing to listen truly, *con el corazón*, with the heart (Bakhtin, 1990; Bartolome, 1994; Schultz, 2009). By combining critical ethnography and Chicana feminist epistemology, this study was intentional about examining systems of power that create oppressive and unequal conditions. Further, this methodological approach enabled me to utilize my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) from personal experiences as an immigrant, Emergent Bilingual, Monte Caoba resident, and student who attended MCUSD schools. Moreover, I used my cultural intuition of my professional experiences as a case manager and community worker with multiple youth-centered community organizations. My research design can inform the work of researchers of color working in communities that mirror their home community. More explicitly, it offers an approach that goes

beyond traditional research that builds on experiential knowledge and examines axes of power and oppression.

Student participants were interested because I was a Monte Caoba resident who also attended and graduated from MCUSD schools. I engaged in casual conversations about their goals after high school. These conversations allowed students to share what they were looking forward to, and some shared fears and hesitations. My experience as a case manager facilitated creating rapport that allowed me to share concrete information about accessing social services alongside information that could support a college pathway. I navigated these multiple positionalities, wherein some student participants considered me a mentor. In those moments, my interactions were not limited to collecting data to analyze but became genuine interactions guided by reciprocity. It was my pleasure to offer guidance, which I experienced as a sense of responsibility. I was present and available in those moments to provide the information and guidance that the youth participants were seeking.

Theoretical Implications

During the racial reckoning summer of 2020, over twenty million people participated in demonstrations in response to the extrajudicial killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many Black named and unnamed persons (Roberts, 2021). The Black Lives Matter movement—an ideological and political intervention—is at the center of this conscientization and calls to end the dehumanization and killing of Black people. The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, brought to light the multiplicity of crises that identified the prominence of systemic racism that perpetuates racial disparities in health, access to health care, housing, education, but also racialized policing. This moment popularized the constructs of antiracist and antiracism, meaning equity and justice for all (Roberts, 2021).

Institutions nationwide have committed to fighting racism at all levels; however, to fulfill the promise of antiracism, it is necessary to reorient our understanding of history and contemporary systems that privilege and oppress.

A coloniality and decoloniality frame offers avenues to achieve antiracism. These are critical frames born from Ethnic Studies but are not often used in education. Critical race theory is a crucial frame used extensively in education; however, it largely focuses on a U.S. context. Coloniality unearths racialization as a hegemonic structure composed of ideologies and systems. Coloniality does not exist in a vacuum but alongside decoloniality, a movement that rehumanizes and legitimizes the experiences of systematically oppressed group histories, experiences, and power. Intertwined, coloniality and decoloniality embody antiracism by having a firm historical grounding. In education, coloniality makes explicit how racist ideologies are embedded in the social fabric of schooling that harms Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other young people of color. A decoloniality frame reveals how self-reflection, consciousness, and resistance offer avenues for young people who experience marginality to take charge of disrupting oppressive policies, practices, and discourses.

Previous research examines the deficit-oriented portrayals of schools that enroll students of color and surface primarily as stigma (Jenkins, 2020; McWilliams, 2017). The present study identifies the deficit-oriented depictions of working-class students of color as racialization, which framed vulnerable student populations at both sites as unworthy. At Logro, the students with the most need could not access the privileges and resources available to those enrolled in the prestigious programs. At Poder, racialization emerged as multi-generational disinvestment that hindered material and human resources wherein students did not have access to a library, music, dance, or any enrichment opportunities. Despite these colonial conditions, working-class

students of color and teachers allies across sites resisted and revealed what DuBois (1903) described as double consciousness, that is, understanding oneself through the eyes of those who construct them as problem people (Gordon, 2007). Yet, they resisted at multiple levels to demand humanizing, relevant, and transformative education.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Student and teacher participants elaborated on how colonial schooling conditions were present and manifested as racialized discourses and implicit bias. These realities highlight the importance of racial literacy in school contexts. Scholars of racial literacy examine the need to open and sustain dialogues connected to race and racism in schools, home communities, and broadly society (Sealey-Ruiz, 2012, 2013; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011; Skerrett, 2011; Rogers & Mosley, 2006). Racial literacy aims to move an individual or a collective toward constructive dialogue concerning race and to implement antiracist action (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). Racial literacy examines race(ism), not at the individual level but at the institutional and systemic levels, to understand how schooling conditions disproportionately harm students of color (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). Educators who develop racial literacy can identify the negative influences of racism and work against labeling students in a deficit light, opting instead to approach their work with students through an asset lens (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021).

The implementation of racial literacy happens at the individual level. It refers to a process wherein educators take inventory of experiences, expand their historical grounding and engage in deep self-reflection. Specifically, Sealey-Ruiz (2020) conceptualized racial literacy development as six components: 1) Critical love, that is, a deep and ethical commitment to care and serve communities of color. 2) Critical humility, that is, understand that our worldviews and ideologies have limits, so it is necessary to stay open. 3) Critical reflection is awareness of our multiple

identities and how personal realities of privilege and marginalization shape how we engage in the work. 4) Historical literacy, or expanding our repertoire that includes depth and breadth of historical forces that shape communities and society as a whole. 5) Archeology of self, that is, inner work of self-discovery of ideas, beliefs, and biases that shape how and why we engage in the work. Finally, 6) Interruption, that is, intervene and halt racism and inequality at the interpersonal and institutional, and systemic levels. In combination, these components can support classroom spaces to be culturally responsive and culturally sustaining (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014; Sealey-Ruiz, 2021).

At Logro, there was an overarching sense among teacher participants that topics of race were not openly discussed. Particularly connected to enrollment and access to the prestigious Philomath and Building and Architecture Academy, the issue of race was avoided. Additionally, it was difficult for teacher participants, except Ms. Yang, to examine race with other axes that included socio-economics and gender. What emerged was limited knowledge and understanding about how axes of race, class, and gender were compounding forces of oppression. Teacher participants opted to highlight the ways that socio-economics stratified the school. Some did acknowledge the racialized dynamics; however, it seemed they did not know how to engage in conversations concerning race. These modes of concealment created a racially and socio-economically divided culture.

At Poder, teachers' racial literacy was more developed, particularly for alumni and veteran teachers. Poder educators demonstrated their critical love, critical reflection, and historical literacy of the community. Moreover, Poder students and teachers actively interrupted racism at the individual and institutional levels by challenging the deficit portrayals of Poder students and the community and through grassroots organizing. There are aspects of racial

literacy that would benefit Poder's teacher's pedagogy and staff approaches. Specifically, school leaders must reflect on the motivations to take a leadership position and whether they are ready to support teachers to create safe, welcoming, and intellectually stimulating environments, which should also be the case when leaders serve in their roles on an interim basis.

Market-driven schooling reforms in working-class urban communities of color reproduce social and educational inequities (James, 2014; Lipman, 2011; Wilson; 2016). In these contexts, schools have been constructed as under-performing and undesirable due to high stakes accountability (Lipman, 2004). The present dissertation finds that the racialization of students and communities was central to whether a school was perceived positively or negatively. For Poder, a longstanding negative reputation influenced decades of disinvestment, but also the approaches used by the central office to implement reforms created instability. In light of the findings, it is essential to consider how MCUSD works to mitigate these inequitable conditions, given that its express mission centers on eliminating inequity.

The goals of district leadership might revolve around improving outcomes for students, which might result in the implementation of policy to ensure that happens. The findings in this dissertation reveal that reflection is necessary and crucial when the goal is to eliminate inequity. In other words, school district leadership should reflect on the reputation attributed to certain schools. District leadership and staff should examine whether school reputation shapes their understanding of students and teachers at that site. Moreover, it is important to be reflective if school reputation shapes when and how policy is implemented and consider how ongoing policy interventions might create organizational instability.

Material and human resources that refer to funding were recurring themes for both sites. For Logro, the funding priorities privileged the prestigious programs that only served a fraction

of the student population. For Poder, multi-generational disinvestment influenced the courses available, no library, minimal sports, and no enrichment activities. In Monte Caoba, there have been multiple successful ballot measures focused on supporting education. For example, Measure T focused on improving facilities and authorized the school district to borrow \$475 million, passed in 2012.³⁰ Subsequently, Measure Z, a parcel tax for more than one-hundred dollars per parcel for ten years, focused on supporting college and career pathways for all students and was passed in 2014 and created over \$800 per student in revenue. In other words, MCUSD schools are receiving funding from multiple means. Therefore, it is essential to consider whether an equity lens is used to guide decisions at the district and school levels to prioritize what the funding will support. Moreover, it is crucial to understand how schools are engaging in efforts to help all students, not only those excelling, and providing adequate assistance and resources to those students who need the most support.

Conclusion

From the initial design stages until I conducted this dissertation study, I centered my passion for educational equity and justice while incorporating my experiential and academic knowledge about market-driven educational reform and school discipline. By using temporal, spatial, and economic lenses, this study clarified how young people and educators experienced school culture in light of school reputation at contrasting high schools. Further, this study documented how school reputation shaped the resources and the type of support available at each site. Moreover, despite colonial conditions at both sites, young people of color enacted their agency and challenged their school's dominant narrative, shared counter-narratives, and actively resisted oppressive contexts.

³⁰ Pseudonyms were used instead of actual ballot measures.

Two individuals who facilitated my entry included Ms. Bracho, the community manager at Poder, and Mr. Esteva, the vice principal at Logro. Their support made this study possible. I am deeply grateful for their trust. The willingness of young people, teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff to participate in my study enabled me to understand multiple perspectives connected to school reputation. Moreover, the participants' voices allowed me to understand their day-to-day experiences at Logro and Poder. Finally, I feel humbled by educators at both Poder and Logro. There were so many incredible educators committed to their students and serving the community. I am honored to have had the opportunity of spending a year among Logro and Poder students and educators.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol (Student Interview)

Community/Neighborhood

- 1) Where have you grown up?
- 2) If you had to describe your neighborhood or community to a new person, how would you describe it?
- 3) What do you believe are some of the challenges you experience in your community?
- 4) What do you enjoy or appreciate from your community?
- 5) Have you ever felt uneasy or worried about something going on in your community?
- 6) What are some of the perceptions that are held about your community?

School: Culture and Climate

- 1) How long have you attended Poder High/Logro High School?
- 2) What are some of the similarities and differences between your community and school?
- 3) What are the perceptions about the students that people (member of the community, and those not part of the community) have? Why do you think that is?
- 4) Can you please share some of your school memories from previous years?
- 5) If you had to describe your school to a new person, how would you describe it?
- 6) How would you describe the school-culture?
- 7) In what ways do you think your school offers support (or doesn't) to students?
- 8) When you struggle with school work who do you go to for help?
- 9) What are the types of relationships that you have with teachers and other school staff?
- 10) Do you believe teachers and other school staff are fair with students?
- 11) What are some of the things that get students in trouble at your school? Is that a big thing here at your school?
- 12) How do you believe your school compares with others in the district?
- 13) If you could change something about your school what would it be? Why?

Future Goals and Aspirations

- 1) Can you please talk about some of the goals you have for the future?
- 2) Who or what has helped you prepare to reach those goals?
- 3) Does your school offer the classes you need to meet your goals?
- 4) Did somebody talk to you about college during the school year?

Present School Year

- 1) Have your school experiences this year been challenging or rewarding and why?
- 2) Did this school year look similar or different from previous school years?
- 3) What or who has been your biggest source of support that has helped you this school year work toward your goals?
- 4) In what ways are you respected and supported as a student in your school? If not, why not?
- 5) What do you anticipate to be doing next school year? Are you looking forward to next school year?
- 6) What are the options available for students in your school after high school?
- 7) How do you feel about your school overall?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol (Teacher/ School Administrator)

- 1) Where did you grow up?
- 2) Why did you choose to be a teacher/educator?
- 3) How many years have you taught? At this school? Why this school?
- 4) What classes do you teach?
- 5) How would you describe the student population that is represented in this school?
- 6) Can you describe the community where this school is located?
- 7) What are some of the challenges the students face in their community?
- 8) In what ways is the community and school different and similar?
- 9) [As a teacher who has worked at this school for such a long time how has this school changed or stayed the same?]
- 10) What are some of the challenges that you face as a teacher?
- 11) What are some of the successes that you have experienced as a teacher?
- 12) Based on your experience, what do you expect students to do after graduating high school?
- 13) Why do you think that is?
- 14) What would you like for most of the graduates to do after high school?
- 15) What are the biggest barriers to graduating high school and college access?
- 16) How are these barriers removed?
- 17) In what ways do you provide support to your students?
- 18) Can you describe the school culture at Poder/Logro?
- 19) Are there any questions that I did not ask that you would have hoped that I ask? Or anything else you want to add?

Appendix C: Data-Intake Sheet—Participants

Please provide the following information if you are interested in participating in this research study. At the end, please provide your preferred contact method:

First Name	MI.	Last Name
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Street Address (optional)	Apt No.	ZIP
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Home Phone	Cell Phone
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E-mail

Please circle your preferred contact method:

Home Phone	Cell Phone	Text	E-mail
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