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CONFLICTS BASED ON RACE/ETHNICITY AMONG  
LATINA/O STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

by

Michael J. Martinez, M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2017

ABSTRACT  
CONFLICTS BASED ON RACE/ETHNICITY AMONG  
LATINA/O STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

Michael J. Martinez, M.A.

Marquette University, 2017

Conflicts based on race/ethnicity continue to occur today in a wide range of settings. Of particular interest are racial/ethnic conflicts that occur in schools due to the impact they can have on students' emotional well-being, academic achievement and the overall and racial school climate. Evidence exists that indicates the occurrence of racial/ethnic conflicts in schools but little attention has been specifically given to within-group or intra-racial/ethnic conflicts. Latina/o students are particularly fitting for such an examination given the clear within group diversity that exists within the population. This study sought to gain a better understanding of conflicts based on race/ethnicity among Latina/o students. Specific exploration was made regarding the sources of the conflict, participants' reactions to them and outcomes. Nine self-identified Latina/o high school students from a large city in California were interviewed regarding their experienced conflicts based on race/ethnicity. Data were analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research methodology (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997). Participants reported conflicts took several forms including verbal, social exclusion and physical. Primary reasons for conflicts included a denial or rejection of participants' Latina/o identity and differences in values between participants and their peers. Participants reported numerous adverse consequences including experiencing difficult emotions and feeling a need to prove their Latina/o identity or apologize for not being Latina/o enough. Notably, participants also demonstrated perseverance in the face of these conflicts, making positive personal changes, most evident in their report of continued academic success. Overwhelmingly, participants chose not to involve school staff in the conflict incidents. Limitations, practical implications and future research are also discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Michael J. Martinez, M.A.

As I finally complete this dissertation, it excites and humbles me to be able to share the accomplishment with those who have helped me along the way. This research project is a culmination not only of my doctoral program but also of my lifelong educational journey. Though it took work, courage and humility on my part, it was an accomplishment that would have been impossible without the many supports I've been so fortunate to have in my life. These supports at various times challenged, carried, motivated and inspired me.

To my advisor and Dissertation Chair, Dr. Alan Burkard: I cannot say thank you enough for the mentorship and support you have provided me – both while at Marquette and in my time away while working on my dissertation. You advocated for me and believed in me during times when I didn't believe in myself. Your gentle but genuine guidance and encouragement were invaluable to me. I promise to stop saying thank you some time in the future but even then know that I will be forever grateful for the multiple opportunities you gave me.

There are many others at Marquette I also want to recognize. I want to thank Dr. Lisa Edwards not only for your willingness to stay on my committee all these years but for doing so with nothing but kind, encouraging and hope-filled messages along the way. I have a huge gratitude for Dr. Jennifer Cook who agreed to join my dissertation committee in the very late stages and also provided me with valuable feedback. I appreciate and am grateful for the work Dr. Sarah Knox did in coordinating practicum and internship placements as I feel I received quality training that well prepared me for internship. To the Counseling Psychology Department as a whole, I express warm thanks for approving my requests for time extensions to complete the program. And of course I cannot think of the Counseling Psych program without acknowledging Coreen Bukowski as well who was amazingly helpful and reliable – and always showed an interest in not just me but my family. The Counseling Psych program at Marquette University truly changed my life and me as a person. I came out of the program wiser, more confident and with an increased self and social awareness. The people and training truly prepared me for a career in helping others.

A special thank you to my two research team members: Marcy Ramirez and Meagan Mckenna. I appreciate your efficiency and the rate at which we were able to get the last stages of analysis complete. Thank you for being easy to work with and for having careful eyes.

I also want to thank the entire University of San Diego Wellness Area for their part in my education and training. I was thrilled to have matched to USD for internship and feel beyond lucky to have been able to keep working with you all for the last several

years. Too many to mention all by name, but I am happy to have worked with so many talented and compassionate providers. In particular, I thank Dr. Karen Lese-Fowler for providing an internship training experience that matched everything I was looking for. To Dr. Steve Sprinkle, who I have learned so much from, who kept me going at my “diss” and who kept me connected with the USD Counseling Center prior to my getting full time employment. Thank you to Dr. Moises Baron who took a risk on hiring me (but then left two weeks later!) Special thanks to Dr. Melissa Halter who saw me through to the end. Your flexibility and compassion were so key to the final product getting complete, and I hope you know I am grateful.

As important as the above figures have been, I would not have even had the opportunity to meet them had it not been for my family. I feel blessed to have parents who highly valued education. You worked extremely hard for the ability to send us to the best schools we could attend. Thank you for giving me the many opportunities and privileges I had while growing up. Thank you for believing in me. To my mom, Veronica, you inspired by example by getting your degrees and doing so in such a typically efficient and determined way. To my dad, Jim, thank you for being a role model for me. You taught me about life, how to be a dad and how to take care of other people. I need you to know that I am fully aware that, degree or no degree, there are some things you will always know better or more than me. I am also happy to share this degree with my grandparents. To complete this degree took at least a little bit from each of them: from Grandpa Martinez: your love of celebrating and learning about cultures, from Grandma Martinez: your ability to empathize and prioritize other peoples’ needs; from Grandpa Terhaar: your extremely hard work ethic; and from Grandma Terhaar: a reminder to stay balanced and prioritize self-care. I have special thanks for Monsignor Roger who mentored me during an important time. Thank you for pushing me out of my comfort zone and daring me to be great. I also want to acknowledge Jack Jacobs for introducing me to Gonzaga and the value of a Jesuit education. Finally, I give thanks for my sisters who no matter what degrees I earn will never hesitate to knock me down a peg if I get too full of myself!

My most sincere thankfulness goes to you Sarah. You have been with me from the start of this doctoral degree and every part of me wishes I could split it in two and share it with you. The truth is you earned it just as much as I did. I remember sitting in the car and chickening out prior to the doctoral interviews at Marquette. You pep talked me, told me I could do it. And you were right. I remember after the interviews finding you back in the hotel room and explaining how I had bombed the interview and it was a waste of time to go out there. You told me it would be ok, and that it wasn’t as bad as I thought. And you were right. Thank you for encouraging me to chase and accomplish my goals. Thank you so much for your patience and love. Your sacrifices for our family are a big part of what makes our family so great. Words can’t describe how thankful I am for you.

And finally: thank you to Sami, Khalil and Laiyla. You taught me that it’s ok to ask for help. And you also taught me that you can be the ones to help me. You were such help and support during the home stretch of this dissertation. Know that you are

privileged individuals. With that privilege you can set and reach whatever goal you want if you are willing to work for it.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Statement of Problem**

In the United States, most youth spend large portions of their days in school. At its best, the educational experience can reap great rewards for students and their families. School can be a place of learning where students gain knowledge and are encouraged to improve their thinking and problem-solving skills. Schools employ staff who educate and care for students by not only building academic skills but also preparing students for careers after school and developing social/emotional intelligence. For students, ample opportunities also exist to practice relationships and build friendships with peers.

Though potential benefits, both academic and social, of the school experience abound, there are times when students or their goals clash with one another. If one thinks of school as a microcosm of society, it is not surprising that students often witness or personally experience conflicts in their schools. Research on bullying in schools provides ample evidence that student conflict, both overt and covert, occurs on a regular and consistent basis (Barton, 2006). Conflicts between students may stem from or be based on a number of different issues. One type of conflict that occurs with some regularity and leads to negative consequences are conflicts based on race or ethnicity (CBRE) - those rooted in racial, ethnic, and/or cultural variables.

#### **CBRE prevalence**

Prevalence rates of CBREs are difficult to accurately estimate. Challenges in obtaining precise numbers relate to a likely under-reporting of incidents and lack of agreement or understanding on what constitutes a CBRE (Fiske, 2002). However, what

evidence does exist indicates CBREs likely occur on a regular and consistent basis. For instance, abundant examples of discrimination and prejudice based on race or ethnicity continue to exist in contemporary society (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2007). As a result, examples of race- and ethnicity-based conflicts are easy to find in both academic and popular media (Blume & Garrison, 2008; Granberry, 1995; Hutchinson, 2007; Maxwell & Zehr, 2007; Munzer, 2008; “Racial and ethnic conflicts,” 2014). The United States Department of Justice reported that in 2015 there were 5,818 single-bias incident hate crimes and 59% of them were motivated by race/ethnicity/ancestry bias (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). These alarming numbers also indicate that many of the perpetrators and victims of said hate crimes are youth. Specifically, at least 496 of those cases (not all cases included age data reported) involved a juvenile as victim of the hate crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). The above data corroborates other reports that indicate that as much as 64% of school-based hate crimes are motivated by race or national origin (United States Department of Justice, 2007).

The prevalence of racial/ethnic conflict in schools appears to be recognized by many school stakeholders including administration, teachers, and students themselves. In one survey, 53% of principals acknowledged the presence of occasional racial tension in their schools (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2004). Another study found similar opinions of teachers, 20% of whom felt racial conflicts were moderate or serious problems in their schools (Goldsmith, 2004). Finally, results show that 7.5% of students have indicated being a victim of a racially or ethnically motivated attack (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). More recent evidence from the U.S. Department of

Justice (2016) indicated that 7.9% of reported hate crimes occurred on school or university campuses.

### **Consequences of CBRE**

That CBRE occur in schools, and apparently with some frequency, may be enough to show that the topic warrants examination. However, this need is further supported after reviewing potential consequences resulting from CBRE. Exposure to racial harassment and hate crimes may cause serious harm to a victim's development in the areas of physical/emotional well-being, academic achievement, and violent tendencies (Office of Community Relations, 1999). The presence of racial tension can not only lead to negative consequences on an individual level, but can also exacerbate levels of inter-group competition and segregation which may legitimize violence across groups (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Salamé, 2004). CBRE may also have a negative impact on the school's overall climate, creating an unsafe environment, especially for, but not limited to, those students involved in the conflict (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Racial conflicts can even result in the creation of new or exacerbation of existing racial tensions in the community (CRS, 2001), an idea clearly illustrated by the conflict in Jena, Louisiana (Maxwell & Zehr, 2007). In sum, CBRE place entire communities at risk for a number of short and long term consequences such as depreciating property values, damage to community/school reputation, and being forced to expend valuable local resources (i.e. police, fire, medical personnel) in intervention efforts (CRS, 2001; OCR, 1999).

### **Intra-group CBRE**

Much of the literature on CBRE focuses on inter-group interactions. However, there is reason to believe that intra-racial/ethnic conflicts occur as well. For instance, Rosenbloom & Way (2004) recently discovered that intra-racial/ethnic differences such as recentness of immigration, language preference, nationality, degree of acculturation, and attitudes toward consumerism contributed to intra-racial/ethnic group conflicts. These researchers also found that students of color often feel that it is important for their individual differences, even from those within the same racial or ethnic group, to be acknowledged and valued (Rosenbloom and Way, 2004). Unfortunately, CBRE literature often does not differentiate whether instances of harassment or conflict were of the inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic type. As such, CBRE are nuanced phenomena with many unanswered questions and there is a need to understand these events more fully. In this sense, past studies may have treated CBRE as a little too simplistic. To narrow the focus of study, CBRE within one specific racial/ethnic group, Latina/os, will be investigated.

### **Latina/os and intra-group CBRE**

The Latina/o population is especially pertinent to a discussion on school-based intra-group conflicts for two major reasons. First, Latina/os are a diverse group in many facets. In 2000, The National Hispanic Psychological Association (now National Latina/o Psychological Association) identified understanding this heterogeneity as one of eight required skills for conducting research with Hispanics (Barona & Barona, 2000). Furthermore, Barona and Barona (2000) warn researchers of the “considerable variability in language use, cognitive ability, academic achievement, access to education,

socioeconomic status, temperament, personality, race, and level of acculturation” (p. 9). Not only do these within group differences exist, but preliminary evidence shows the differences may create tension or conflict as well (Agius & Lee, 2006; Gomez, 2008; Johnson, 1998; Romero, 2005). For example, in a recent study, Mexican-American high school students reported numerous times when they were insulted, made fun of, or attacked by either same-ethnic peers or family members for acculturation-related choices (Holleran & Jung, 2005). Specifically, those students indicated that others called them: “not a true Mexican,” “sell-out,” and “a poor excuse for a Mexican” (p. 114). Second, Latina/os in the United States currently face many challenges in the educational system (e.g., high drop-out rate, low standardized test scores, disproportionate degree attainment), thus making research factors or events that influence Latina/o students' especially necessary.

### **Rationale for Study**

This study intends to combine three elements (conflicts based on race/ethnicity, intra-Latina/o heterogeneity, and school-based incidents) that are more often studied individually than together. As such, examining intra-Latina/o CBREs that occur in schools will serve as the foundation of the study. Examples from the literature that explore CBREs often fail to differentiate between inter-racial and intra-racial types, and in some cases even fail to acknowledge within group conflict as a possibility (Henze et al., 2002; Maxwell & Zehr, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Of studies that do focus on intra-group conflicts, a majority of them appear to focus solely on African-American or Black participants (Hyra, 2006; Smith & Moore, 2000). There is some literature specifically describing Latina/os, very little is conducted via empirical

study, and typically takes the form of anecdotal evidence or theoretical writing (Fortes de Lef, 2002; Gomez, 2008; Romero, M., 2000; Romero, V., 2005). Finally, a more direct link between intra-Latina/o diversity, co-ethnic peer social relationships, and school outcomes (climate, academic performance) needs examination.

Necessary is research that allows Latina/o youth to contribute to the discourse and share their voices. Pizarro (1999) stated that studies addressing “the critical problems of Chicanas/os in the schools [do] not include the students’ perspectives to any substantial degree” (p.55). If the voices of Latina/o students are not heard, it implies that researchers are failing to capture a completely accurate representation of Latina/Latino education experience (Fernandez, 2002). Bernal (2002) also conceptualizes Latina/o students in U.S. schools as “holders and creators of knowledge” (p. 107). Attention and support must be provided to Latina/o students well before they begin college (Rodriguez, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2000), thus indicating the importance of including elementary, middle, and high school Latina/o students.

In order to “give a voice” to Latina/o students, there may be no better way than through qualitative research. Murguria and Telles (1996) make a call for qualitative research on the classroom experience to examine the mechanisms that create distinct schooling outcomes by categorical race and within-group phenotype or color differences” (p. 288). If students of color are allowed to tell their stories, it can both liberate students and improve their day-to-day educational experience while at the same time imparting knowledge on those who get to read their stories (Delgado, 1989; Yosso, 2005). Delgado (1989) explains how Latina/o students sharing their experiences can help everyone when he writes:

Stories humanize us. They emphasize our differences in ways that can ultimately bring us closer together. They allow us to see how the world looks from behind someone else's spectacles. They challenge us to wipe off our own lenses and ask, 'Could I have been overlooking something all along?' Telling stories invests text with feeling, gives voice to those who were taught to hide their emotions. Hearing stories invites hearers to participate, challenging their assumptions, jarring their complacency, lifting their spirits, lowering their defenses. (p. 2440)

A topic as multidimensional and intricate as Latina/o identity lends itself well to studies that seek out individual stories which are likely changing not only from group to group, but person to person (within such groups), and even within each story (Espinoza & Harris, 1997). Therefore, a Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997) study was proposed in which the principle investigator conducted semi-structured interviews with 8-10 Latina/o/Hispanic participants. Specifically, interview questions probed Latina/o participants to describe their experiences with CBRE in schools. Additionally, participants were asked to describe the meaning they make of their ethnic identity and how that identity may have impacted or been related to their conflict experiences with other Latina/os. Finally, potential influences that intra-Latina/o CBREs have on academic functioning were also investigated. A more thorough discussion of the data analysis and study methodology, including rationale and benefits, was included in chapter three.

### **Research Questions**

The central question of this study was: What is the nature of school-based intra-ethnic conflicts among Latina/o students? Exploration of the phenomenon included

describing what caused the conflicts, what reactions/feelings participants had towards the conflict, and outcomes of the conflict. Additionally, participants were asked to explain the conflict resolution, if any, how the resolution came about, and what role school staff played in the conflict and/or resolution. Based on conclusions from the literature review, two additional research questions, presented below, were relevant to the study's purpose addressed the already stated problem.

Second, much is written about the plight of Latina/o students in the U.S. educational system (Bernal, 2002; Lopez, 2009; Quiroz, 2001; Yosso, 2000). Current research is beginning to include examination of social variables on academic performance and educational attainment (Yosso and Garcia 2010). To add to this research base, a second central research question was: Do CBREs influence the academic achievement of Latina/o students?

Finally, because Latina/o students hold many defining characteristics that contribute to their overall identity, and because ethnic identity has been found to be an important variable for Latina/o youth, elements of participants' ethnic identity were also examined (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006). Within the framework of CBREs, a third research question was: What relationship exists between Latina/o ethnic identity and intra-ethnic conflicts? Specifically, interview questions examined participants' use of ethnic identifying terms, the meaning they place on those identifiers, and the importance level of those labels to their identity. Additionally, participants were asked to describe whether, and if so how, their ethnic identity affects their relationship with other Latina/o peers.

## **Definition of Terms**

Defining conflicts based on race/ethnicity is not an easy task, in part because there is no consensus on how to define conflicts in general. Definitions of conflict are either narrow, focused on overt and action-centered interactions (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972), or broad, including peripheral and potentially covert processes such as tensions and hostilities (Thomas, 1992). The Iceberg Model of Racial and Ethnic conflict (IMREC) (Henze et al., 2000) specifically describes different tiers of racial/ethnic conflicts that, in effect, provide a rationale for using the broad definition of conflict. In short, IMREC acknowledges that racial/ethnic conflicts manifest in many different forms including overt conflicts, underlying tensions, and even societal/historical causes. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, conflicts based on race/ethnicity (CBREs) were defined as events in which misunderstandings or targeted harassment/discrimination co-occur with or result in actual interpersonal altercations and/or emotional or physical distress to the targeted groups based on cultural variables, ethnic/racial background, or perceived ethnic/racial differences.

## **Contribution to Counseling Psychology**

As a field, counseling psychology is in the middle of a multicultural movement (Morrow, 2007). A part of this new focus is increasing understanding of populations historically and currently underserved or mistreated. Latina/os hold a long history of maltreatment, racism, and unequal provision of services perpetrated by the psychology and education fields. One glaring result is the presence of an educational achievement gap as evidenced by outcome variables such as testing scores, dropout rates, and

educational attainment statistics (American Community Survey, 2006; NAEP, 2007; PEW Hispanic Center, 2004). Though Latina/os are making academic gains including higher rates of four-year college attendance, recent rates still point to state test score gaps in reading proficiency and being grade levels behind their non-Latina/o peers (Camera, 2016). The current study's focus on Latina/o students' experience in schools attempted to strengthen understanding of the connection between Latina/os' social experiences in school and their academic outcomes.

An increase in understanding would mean little without a bridge to practical application. Counseling psychology is well poised to translate research to practice because of its commitment to the training of future counselors and psychologists. Results of this study are intended to help future counselors gain a better understanding of the Latina/o youth they serve. A better understanding of Latina/o youth will hopefully lead to increased competence in working with Latina/o students, and other students of color. Deciphering ways to improve provision of services to Latina/os in schools seems especially necessary based on evidence that Latina/o students feel misunderstood, not listened to, and treated poorly by school staff (Bernal, 2002; Quiroz, 2001).

To have this research conducted by a future counseling psychologist is a positive step towards forging a connection between counseling psychology and school counseling. Romano and Kachgal (2004) made a call for the two fields to work more closely together based on the fields' shared histories and values. In essence, the authors argue that creating a partnership would improve services offered to the K-12 population and lead to better educational results. Better provision of services would result from counseling psychologists and educators benefiting from each other's unique experiences and

wisdom. Combining respective expertise will also serve as a model for collaboration and multidisciplinary consultation between psychology and education, and encourage similar activities in the future.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Overview**

A comprehensive, critical literature review was conducted to investigate the phenomenon of intra-Latina/o conflicts, based on race/ethnicity, occurring in schools (CBREs). First, an overview of racial/ethnic conflicts provides context for a more specified discussion on school-based occurrences. Information, including prevalence rates and negative consequences of CBREs provide a rationale for study of this topic. Next, information is presented that argues why Latina/os, students specifically, are worthy of study and how they are particularly relevant to a discussion on intra-group CBREs. Latina/o diversity is recognized with special emphasis placed on examining ethnic identity, phenotype, acculturation, and immigration status and how those constructs impact or relate to intra-Latina/o CBREs. Empirical evidence of school-based occurrences is included as well. A discussion is presented on intra-cultural coalition building and potential benefits from conflict. Finally, a concluding section contains major criticisms of the literature base, research gaps, future research needs, and ethical/legal considerations.

### **Conflicts Based on Race and Ethnicity (CBREs)**

#### **Definition: What is considered a CBRE?**

Simply defining a CBRE is a complicated task, in large part because of the lack of scholarly consensus on what experiences the phenomenon of conflict includes. Tjosvold (1997) defines conflict as occurring when someone interferes with the behavior of

another. However, others recognize the difficulty with constructing a definition when they describe it as having no common definition (Thomas, 1992), being difficult to define (Nicotera, 1995), and “a nebulous area at best” (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972, p. 368). Major contributing factors to the complexity of defining conflict are the many related terms often used (e.g. tensions, violence, disputes, competition) and the dilemma of how broadly (or narrowly) to conceptualize the phenomenon (Fink, 1968).

Narrow definitions of conflict (e.g., Coser, 1956; Mack & Snyder, 1957) are characterized by a focus on overt, action-centered interactions between parties (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972) such as physical altercations or verbal arguments. However, to *include* only action-centered interactions as conflict situations may simultaneously *exclude* other relevant phenomena and related variables that have been characterized as important to the nature of conflicts (Fink, 1968).

Alternatively, then, broad conceptions of conflict (e.g., Dahrendorf, 1957; Fink, 1968) include a wider range of experiences such as events that may occur early in the conflict process like perceptions, hostilities, competition, and tensions (Thomas, 1992). Including more covert, psychological aspects (i.e. perceptions) seems to describe conflict as more of a process with many distinct but related components that each contributes to the experiences of the persons involved in the conflict.

The task then becomes to select whether the broad or narrow definition is most appropriate for a study of racial and ethnic conflicts. Considering research on racial microaggressions may help distinguish which option fits best. Racial microaggressions have been described as “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (Sue et al., 2007). A key

element of racial microaggressions is that they can occur unintentionally and unconsciously (Solorzano et al., 2000). For example, Sue et al (2007) characterized all microaggressions as fitting into one of three categories: micro-assaults, micro-insults, or micro-invalidations. While micro-assaults are explicitly intentional attacks, micro-insults are often *unintentional* but take the form of “subtle snubs” or “hidden insulting messages” (p. 274). At an even more deeply rooted level, they describe micro-invalidations as “communications that exclude, negate, or nullify” the “experiential reality” of a person of color (p. 274). Thus, an argument to use a broad definition of racial conflict begins to emerge. Other recent research, outside of the racial micro-aggression literature, has similarly called for inclusive definitions that may better account for the diffuse types of conflict (isolation, indifference, avoidance) that are likely to occur when race is a motivating in addition to more explicit aggressions and fights (Salamé, 2004). Thus, it appears plausible that racial conflict may encompass acts beyond physical, overt aggression and from a victim’s perspective may occur when the aggressors involved did not intend to harm or do not perceive harm. CBREs, then, may manifest in a multitude of ways including: vandalism, physical violence, verbal threats, racial/ethnic jokes, graffiti, or intimidation (Adler, 1996; Community Relations Service [CRS], 2001; Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 1999).

A specific example of what a broad conceptualization of racial conflict in schools looks like is represented by The Iceberg Model of Racial or Ethnic Conflict (IMREC) (Henze et al., 2002). This model defines racial conflict or tension as existing in three different tiers. The first tier includes overt conflicts such as racial slurs or physical violence based on race/ethnicity. These conflicts reside at the top of the iceberg model

because of the ease with which they are detected. Slightly less perceptible is the second tier, underlying tensions/conflicts, which consists of examples like group avoidance, group exclusion, and unequal treatment across groups (i.e. based on cultural, ethnic, or language differences/factors). Those affected by or who witness such tensions may feel hurt or uncomfortable by such experiences but at the same time may or may not recognize them as a form of racial bias or tension. Finally, the base of the iceberg model encompasses the root causes of racial or ethnic conflicts and include segregation (development and maintenance of stereotypes), racism (institutionalized and individual), socialization (the conscious or unconscious transfer of destructive beliefs from generation to generation), and inequality (unequal distribution of resources) (Kreisberg, 1998.)

Therefore, across all of the literature on social conflict and racial conflict, it appears that harm to a victim(s) is an essential element, whether the harm is overt or covert, physically or emotionally hurtful, contains actual harm or threatened harm, or verbal or bodily abuse. Furthermore, it appears these conflicts can arise out of intentional or unintentional actions, and nonverbal as well as verbal or physical actions. Therefore, CBREs are defined as events in which misunderstandings or targeted harassment or discrimination co-occur with or result in actual interpersonal altercations and/or emotional or physical distress to the targeted groups based on cultural variables, ethnic background, or perceived racial differences.

### **Characteristics of School-Based CBREs**

While racial conflicts may manifest in a number of ways in society, it seems clear that in schools they often occur publicly and include both students and adults (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). However, the term ‘school’ is broad and encompasses many

different types of settings that serve a wide developmental range of students. Throughout this review, ‘school’ refers to K-12 public and private schools, a decision made based on several reasons. First, some key resources do not explicitly distinguish between different school levels (e.g. Community Relations Service citing “hundreds of schools” utilize their mediation services). Second, in a topic area lacking adequate prevalence data, national data bases, such as the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), provide relevant data for students from grades K-12, thus making all of that data applicable. Third, achievement gaps show that there are significant differences in academic outcome measures in high school but also as early as when a child is nine years old (PEW Hispanic Center, 2004). Recent data show a gap, though that gap is closing, in U.S. high school graduation rates between Latina/os and their White peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Therefore, because covering the spectrum from K-12 already includes a wide developmental range, also including post-secondary experiences would have been too extensive. Therefore, conflicts experienced by college students were generally not considered for inclusion. However, there were rare instances when there was a dearth of examples from K-12 students and/or college examples were especially powerful that they were included. It should be noted that those times are exceptions and research is primarily presented within a K-12 context.

A review of school-based CBREs shows that the conflicts can be either interpersonal or institutional in nature. On one hand, interpersonal conflicts include prejudices, stereotypes, physical altercations (i.e. pushing, jumping, stealing from), verbal harassment (slurs, racial/ethnic jokes, making fun of), isolation/segregation, lack of respect for other cultures (i.e. not attempting to pronounce a name correctly), and riots

(Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Kiang, Lan & Sheehan, 1995; Phan, 2003; Pinderhughes, 1997; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Salamé, 2004; Wing, 2007). Additionally, those interpersonal offenses may be either unintentional or intentional. At one extreme of this range, there are times when, in order to be perceived as a full member of an ethnic group, negative attitudes towards other groups are necessary in that they “affirm allegiance to the community and authenticate their ethnic identity” (Pinderhughes, 1997, p. 155).

Institutional policies, on the other hand, deserve mention because of their role in promoting, either actively or passively, the above interpersonal conflict incidents. Specific examples of such policies include absence of ethnic minority groups from school curriculum and colorblind attitudes or administrations. Racist practices, ideologies, and conflict result from systems that fail to acknowledge and discuss race and racial differences (i.e. immigrant status, language proficiency, acculturation level) (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Salamé, 2004). Therefore, whether interpersonal or institutional in nature, it appears that school-based racial conflicts appear in a variety of ways and therefore could likely result in an assortment of potential outcomes.

### **Prevalence of CBREs**

That racially motivated conflicts occur in schools is an indisputable fact that becomes evident upon review of academic literature and popular media (Blume & Garrison, 2008; Brennan, 2016; Brundin, 2015; Maxwell & Zehr, 2007; Munzer, 2008; White, 2017). The above examples provide distressing examples that racial barriers are real and potentially dangerous for many students in this country. Still, reporting prevalence rates of these occurrences is challenging; in part because of a likely under-

reporting of racial and ethnic conflicts in schools. In order to present as inclusive a picture as possible, this section refers to prevalence rates on the wide continuum of racial conflict including discrimination, racial tensions, witnessed conflicts, experienced conflicts, and hate crimes. This section opens broadly with looks at race-related transgressions in the wider community (not school-based) and general violence incidence in schools before narrowing to a focus on the prevalence of racial conflicts in schools.

In 2016, there were over 30,000 cases received by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) garnering over \$79 million in benefits for victims of discrimination in said cases (<http://www.eeoc.gov/statistics/enforcement/race>). In 2015, the United States Department of Justice ([fbi.gov/news/stories/2015-hate-crime-statistics-released](http://fbi.gov/news/stories/2015-hate-crime-statistics-released)) reported 5,818 single-biased incidents occurred which involved 7,121 victims. Of those documented hate crimes, 59.2% were reportedly motivated by the victim's race, ethnicity or ancestry bias. Those data were retrieved from nearly 15,000 law enforcement agencies throughout the country. The preceding data begin to provide compelling evidence for the existence of racially motivated conflict in the greater society. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find that statistics paint a similar picture regarding students' experiences in their schools.

The incidence of interpersonal violence in schools and the changing demographics of the American student population provide context for the prevalence of racial conflict in schools. Generally, conflicts in schools occur frequently as evidenced, in part, by the fact that 21.5% of students in U.S. public schools reported being the victim of bullying (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Naturally, race becomes a tangible factor in many of these conflicts because American schools are rapidly becoming

increasingly more diverse. From 1972 to 2013, the percentage of public school students considered to be part of a minority group increased from 22% to 41% (Gutierrez 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Furthermore, in 1994, 31% of the nation's public schools were nearly all-White schools (95% of the school's student population), but in 2006, that number had decreased to just 18% of public schools (Pew Hispanic Center, 2007) indicating that White students, in particular, are becoming less isolated from their minority peers. More recent census data continues to support this trend as in the United States the number of counties where Whites are considered the minority racial population has doubled since 1980 and there has been a significant increase in the number of counties where there is no single majority racial group (Desilver, 2015). This demographic change means that many students are more likely to have classes and spend the school day with students who are racially or ethnically different from them. Given the increased contact between students of different ethnic-racial backgrounds, it seems reasonable to believe that there may also be an increase in the frequency of interpersonal conflicts between students who are ethnically or racially different.

An underlying, powerful theme evident in the research is the pervasiveness of racial conflicts in schools. Students cited examples of this pervasiveness in terms of both frequency and severity. Occurrence of racial conflict was described as increasingly evident (Salamé, 2004), and several authors noted the ease with which every student they interviewed could speak about racial conflicts they had experienced (Salamé, 2004; Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Pinderhughes, 1997). In response to witnessing several acts of race-related bullying, one fourth grade bilingual classroom teacher introduced a harassment log to her Vietnamese students and trained them to record the number of

physical and verbal harassments they either experienced or witnessed over the course of three months (Kiang, Lan, & Sheehan, 1995). In the end, the group of 26 had recorded 84 “to me” incidents, 26 “to classmates incidents”, and 67 “to others” incidents. In another study, teachers confirmed the presence of racial tension with 43% believing racial conflicts to be minor problems and 20% believing that racial conflicts were moderate or serious problems in their schools (Goldsmith, 2004). Students of majority and minority racial/ethnic background both seem aware of the presence of racial tension in their schools (Salamé, 2004), though most studies look at the experiences of students of color. CBREs in schools appear to not only exist, but also represent a significant part of all students’ everyday lives (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004).

Recent data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015) showed 5,818 single-bias incident hate crimes occurred annually and that 59% of them were motivated by race/ethnicity/ancestry bias (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). Furthermore, nearly 8% of those hate crimes occurred on a school or university campus. Other data indicate that as much as 64% of school-based hate crimes are motivated by race or ethnicity (United States Department of Justice, 2008). More recently, the 2015 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization survey indicated that 10.1%, astonishingly over 500,000 students, of students between the ages of 12-18 who endorsed being bullied indicated they there was a relationship between the bullying they experienced and their race (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Twenty-six percent of all surveyed students reported, whether bullied or not, reported seeing hate-related graffiti (words or symbols) written in bathrooms, classrooms, hallways, or on the outside of the school building (NCES, 2016). Furthermore, in an earlier version of the survey of

principals 2% of elementary, middle, and high school principals have reported that hate crimes occurred at their schools at least daily or once a week (NCES, 2004). Fifty-three percent of these principals identified racial tensions as being present at least “occasionally,” with another 5 % indicating racial tensions surfacing at least once a month. Finally, The Community Relations Service (CRS), a branch of the Department of Justice whose purpose is to prevent and resolve racial and ethnic conflict in the community, reports that along with police departments, schools are the institutions that most often (“hundreds of schools and colleges”) request intervention in reducing current and preventing future racial conflict, tension, and violent incidents.

### **Consequences of CBREs**

The presence of racial conflicts and/or racial tension in schools requires attention because they result in negative consequences for the individuals or groups involved as well as the greater community. Regarding individuals, it is possible that exposure to racial harassment and hate crimes could potentially cause serious harm to a victim’s development in the areas of physical/emotional well being, academic achievement, and violent tendencies (OCR, 1999). When racial and ethnic minority students and families feel discriminated against, the entire educational process breaks down for them, thus working against the goal to provide equal opportunity to all students (Adler, 1996; Croninger, 1996). When occurring within educational settings, racial conflicts, it seems, have the potential to portray an imbalanced power structure between different racial groups, therefore creating a feeling of victimization among students of color (Phan, 2003). For example, ethnic and racial minority university students who perceived a hostile environment or racial tension on their campus were less likely to feel a sense of

belonging to their campus (Hurtado & Faye-Carter, 1997), a variable commonly associated with academic persistence and success for minority students (Barquet, 1996; Gloria, Castellano, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005). In effect, racial conflicts have a negative impact on the school's overall climate, creating an unsafe environment, especially for, but not limited to, those students involved in the conflict (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004).

Racial conflicts also work to either create new or exacerbate existing racial tensions in the community (CRS, 2001), an idea clearly illustrated by the recent conflicts in Jena, LA (Maxwell & Zehr, 2007). These racial tensions, though they may initially be confined to a school can leak out into the community to trigger community wide conflicts or tension which could include civil disturbances and, in extreme cases, riots. In other words, rather than causing negative consequences for only those individuals immediately involved, racial conflicts place entire communities at risk for a number of short and long term consequences such as depreciating property values, damage to community/school reputation, and being forced to expend valuable local resources (i.e. police, fire, medical personnel) in intervention efforts (CRS, 2001; OCR, 1999).

Racial conflicts result in a variety of negative student beliefs and appear to lead to conflicts in the future. For example, when racial conflicts occur repeatedly on campuses, students come to believe that racism is condoned (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Furthermore, victims of racial conflicts come to expect violence and hostility on a daily basis. Living in that atmosphere creates a sense of marginalization, victimization, and powerlessness for those affected by racial discrimination (Kiang, Lan & Sheehan, 1995; Phan, 2003; Salamé, 2004). Such experiences can result in racial or ethnic minority students feeling marginalized and invisible in the eyes of the other students, staff, and

even the entire educational system (Wing, 2007). Additionally, when students of color or newly immigrated students witness racial inequities, it can cause internal conflict because they contradict the equal opportunity messages commonly portrayed about American society (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Students who are consistently victimized are also more inclined to develop feelings of anger or resistance towards those offending groups (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Kiang, Lan, & Sheehan, 1995; Wing, 2007), perhaps leading to further tension. Therefore, the presence of racial tension can not only lead to negative consequences on an individual level, but can also exacerbate levels of inter-group competition and segregation which may legitimize violence across groups (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Salamé, 2004).

Research also suggests that racial microaggressions, intentional or unintentional negative verbal, behavioral, or environmental messages to people of color (Franklin, 1999), are harmful to victims in part because they spend a great deal of time and energy processing these negative experiences (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Recently, micro-aggressions were found to fit in one of three categories: underestimation of personal ability, cultural/racial isolation, and second-class citizen status (Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). Furthermore, victims of these micro-aggressions were found to experience more stress and be more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms.

### **Adequacy of Staff Interventions**

A twofold reality regarding staff intervention further complicates the multitude of negative effects resulting from racial conflicts. First, students report that when the school acknowledges racial conflicts, intervention efforts are limited in both whom they reach and how impactful they are. A major component of this concern is the tendency for

school leaders to only involve the students directly involved in the conflict, thus ignoring the possibility and likelihood that other students and the school's racial climate in general have been affected as well (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Salamé 2004). In doing so, school leaders inaccurately focus on surface issues of behavior and thus fail to address underlying, root causes of racial tension within the school (Salamé, 2004).

Even more disturbing than non-comprehensive interventions is the alarming lack of any staff intervention at all. This lack of intervention is apparent in both implicit and explicit behaviors and attitudes among staff. Implicit examples include lack of awareness on part of the staff or the tendency to think that only overt, racially aggressive students hold and perpetuate racist beliefs, thus ignoring more covert forms of racial conflict (Salamé, 2004). Alternatively, explicit examples that bothered students include teachers telling students to "just forget it" (in response to a student informing staff of a racial conflict concern) and treating clearly race-based conflicts as general conflicts, thus ignoring the racial element (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994).

Still other students spoke of much harsher consequences to pointing out racial conflicts, citing they were not only ignored but also retaliated against (by teachers) in the form of lower grades and more severe consequences (e.g. not being allowed to go to the bathroom, inappropriate suspensions, being jailed for no reason) (Phan, 2003). In sum the interventions of school staff appear inadequate in multiple ways and therefore seem to both allow for and in some cases, encourage the occurrence of racial conflicts in schools (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994).

## **Benefits of Conflict**

Conflict and tension is absolutely a natural experience for people and, at the same time, one that many people choose and hope to avoid, in part because it is viewed as negative and many lack the skills to successfully resolve conflict (Uline, Tschannen-Moran, & Perez, 2003). However, it may be helpful to reframe the concept as a whole especially because it has been shown to be so inevitable and permeable. Just because conflict has a mostly negative connotation, does not mean that it has to be so. As Uline, Tschannen-Moran, & Perez (2003, p. 782) eloquently state, conflict can: “breathe life and energy into relationships...inform and advance our collective efforts...move us to think more deeply...act more prudently...Thus, conflict can become a necessary locus of energy, rather than a source of harm.” Taking this into consideration then, it may be more accurate to state that conflict itself is neither positive or negative, yet has the potential to be either depending on how it is dealt with (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000).

Baron’s (1991) review of the literature led to three conclusions regarding conflict as a positive. Conflict was viewed as bringing ignored problems out into the open, encouraging the consideration of innovation and change, and leading to increased loyalty. He followed up his review by assessing whether managers in the workplace perceived conflict as producing beneficial effects. Participants rated (7 point Likert scale) the degree to which they had experienced observed conflict to produce each of ten different effects. The effects were listed on a survey and were determined based on a review of the literature, with seven of the conflict effects being “negative” in nature (i.e. interferes with effective communication) and the other three being positive (i.e. encourages consideration of new approaches). These managers generally perceived negative effects

as being more likely to occur than positive effects. On the other hand, during the second, qualitative, portion of the study, 14 out of the 15 respondents were able to describe a time when a conflict situation did yield a positive outcome. These benefits generally fell into one of three categories: beneficial effects on productivity, positive interpersonal outcomes, or constructive organizational change. A weakness is that they thought because there were so few participants, analysis of the data was inappropriate. In general, the results seem to show that positive outcomes do occur, though they may not be as salient as negative ones.

The thought is raised then that if conflicts are inevitable, maybe effort should not only be put into preventing them but also into interventions and programming after they occur to maximize the potential for benefits. By rejecting the idea that conflict is inherently bad, school staff can open possibilities to look toward a future of solutions as opposed to being stuck in the past. It is not suggested that this would be an easy process, but merely suggested as an alternative viewpoint. As helpful as this reframe might be, the literature on conflicts as positives contained no examples of studies conducted in schools. While studies conducted in workplace settings are useful, they also do not contain youth as participants in any of the studies. Additionally, the reviewed studies looked at conflicts in general as opposed to CBREs. Therefore, it is unclear whether race-based conflicts also have the potential to open dialogue and create positive outcomes.

### **Summary and Critique of Literature about School-based CBREs**

Conflicts based on race and ethnicity occur in schools today on a regular basis. Available evidence indicates CBREs likely lead to negative consequences for both the individuals and institutions involved. While some research exists that investigate this

phenomenon, more is needed. In regard to research on CBREs, several concerns should be addressed in any subsequent investigations.

**Under reporting of prevalence.** A major criticism of this segment of the literature involves the method of identifying prevalence rates for CBREs. In short, no two studies cited in the prevalence section above used the same criteria and often times used different qualifying terms as well (i.e., racial conflict, hate crime, racial tension). This lack of uniform term usage makes it difficult to nearly impossible to get an accurate representation of prevalence. Therefore, although the preceding statistics are noticeably high, it is important to point out that these are only *reported* cases and may be an under representation of the total number of racial conflict incidents that *actually occur*. Part of this discrepancy may simply lie in the different interpretations people may have of the term ‘racial conflict.’ Indeed some may believe conflict to only refer to overtly hostile or violent incidents that may be less likely to occur than more covert incidents involving verbal harassment (Henze et al., 2000). In these cases, two people may witness the same event but only one of them interprets it as a ‘racial conflict.’ Beyond just a difference in how people define the term, the discrepancy might also provide an example of a much more disturbing trend: Lack of personal/social awareness and/or colorblindness (Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001).

Another contributing factor to the difficulty in counting CBREs is the cloudiness surrounding terminology and definition of the term. Racial conflict can mean many things to many people, as evidenced in part by the complexity of defining just the term ‘conflict’. It is surprising then to find that most authors in the studies reviewed do not include a definition of the term racial conflict. This makes comparability between studies

and replicability more difficult. With the many synonyms that exist (e.g., tension, hostility, conflict, race, culture) it is important for researchers to provide a rationale for why they chose specific terms. Unless researchers are clearer in their approach, the challenging issues of terminology will continue and consequently maintain confusion to the process of the CBRE study as well as to analysis and implications made by others in the field who may bring their own definitions to the table.

**Lack of awareness.** In a review of what the field of social psychology has learned about bias and intergroup conflict, Fiske (2002) concludes that as many as 80% of people in Western democratic societies may be unaware that they display subtle biases. Fiske describes this significant segment of the population as well-intentioned moderates, a group that wants to believe all of their biases are conscious and controllable even though many biases are automatic, unconscious, and hidden. Moderate biases can remain camouflaged to the individual who holds them (and possibly to the in-group/majority as a whole) because their impact does not visibly match the overt, violent biases of extremists (i.e. segregation, containment, and/or elimination of the out-group). Rather, the moderate bias manifests in an indirect manner and could include withholding basic liking, attributing positive characteristics to the in-group more rapidly, exclusion, and avoidance. In effect, each of these biases contributes to an unequal distribution of resources across several dimensions like housing, employment, education, and the justice system. However, biases such as these remain mostly subtle in part because they are in constant conflict with the message of tolerance for other cultures that is recommended as best practice in our society (Fiske, 2002).

This lack of awareness of the potency of race in everyday experiences likely contributes to a tendency for people to define racial conflict in an overly narrow way. When, as is the case in American society, many people in the community lack awareness and understanding of cultural groups different than their own, interracial tension becomes more likely (Gutierrez, 2005). It makes sense then that students who are the victims of racial harassment can experience it from teachers, administrators, community citizens, or other students who may not see themselves as perpetrators of a racial bias and are even encouraged by the school to avoid acknowledging cultural differences (OCR, 1999).

**Colorblind attitudes.** *Colorblindness* refers to denying or distorting the impact race has on people's lives and the existence of interpersonal and institutional racism (Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001). Many schools both implicitly and directly promote a colorblind ideology among their students and staff (Henze, 2002). In effect, this "blur[s] the clarity of the inequity [between Whites and non-Whites] and confound[s] public efforts to understand or address" that inequity (p. 104, Tarca, 2005). Adherence to this type of policy however, contrasts the finding that minority students often feel that it is important for their differences, even from those within the same racial or ethnic group, to be adequately acknowledged (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). What follows is a twofold problem. First, students and staff are discouraged from acknowledging and exploring racial differences making it impossible to recognize biases, improve on inequities, and celebrate diversity. Second, the establishment of a colorblind institution makes it difficult for victims of racial conflicts to come forward because in doing so, they would be breaking the colorblind code.

One example of how damaging a colorblind institution can be is found in the results from interviews with members of a rural town that portrayed many of the characteristics of colorblind racism; including a general attitude that race is an unmentionable and inappropriate topic in discussions (Tarca, 2005). In this community, residents' adoption of a colorblind ideology led to a rejection of racial differences during decision making and the creation of uninformed and racist programs and policies. A clear illustration of one such policy was the establishment of a "classy living" class in the local high school. The class was designed to provide "identity and values clarification" to female students in the high school. However, only African-American females were enrolled in the group and the overall message to the students was that they needed training to change their unacceptable cultural customs, which they had often acquired from "nonlocal" family and friends. A colorblind or difference-blind ideology, through institutional decisions, worked to intensify the racism that Black students experienced and established a racist atmosphere into the school community.

In sum, three factors contribute to a likely underreporting of the prevalence of racial conflicts. Each student and school staff member brings their unique interpretations as to what constitutes a racial conflict. Many, especially those from the majority/in-group, use descriptions that are more narrowly inclusive. In doing so, they simultaneously exclude from their conceptualization other closely related and therefore relevant interactions. Lack of awareness of personal, subtle biases is common among many Americans and may inhibit individuals from recognizing the harmful behaviors or attitudes of themselves or others. Additionally, colorblind attitudes, which may result from lack of awareness or be a conscious choice, fail to recognize the inherent challenges

faced by students and people of color. The preceding factors may make it difficult to recognize the presence of racial conflicts in a school and also work to create an unsafe atmosphere where victims feel they cannot seek help. In reviewing the literature, it was evident that most if not all researchers had a difficult time accurately portraying prevalence rates and in many cases, did not even try.

### **New Directions for CBRE Research**

Though many arguments are made for the negative impact CBREs have on individuals and communities, this evidence is lacking support from empirical studies specifically looking at this area. Much of the literature used for this portion of the review simply states what consequences will occur without providing support. The arguments are intuitive and logical, yet again it is surprising that no one has focused their research on finding out in a more detailed way how CBREs impact those involved. What empirical studies do mention outcomes of CBREs focus mainly on the impact they have on the individual students involved and only in some cases the school community.

Nowhere in the literature was found a direct link between microaggressions and K-12 CBREs. However, several examples of different types of covert conflicts and tension found in schools, in particular with school staff as perpetrators, provide support for the need to make that connection. These examples include school staff ineffectively intervening in CBREs, electing not to intervene in CBREs, or advocating for a colorblind ideology. This literature search yielded no studies that primarily focused on how school staff become involved in CBREs and if so to what extent. Additionally, minimal attention has been given to school or district policies on CBREs. Future research will benefit the

field by more explicitly linking the growing body of microaggression research with school-based CBREs.

Finally, the literature does not clearly differentiate between inter- and intra-racial conflicts. Because inter-racial conflicts are much more widely referred to when CBREs are discussed, in both academic and colloquial settings, it is assumed that much of the above findings were initially conceptualized and analyzed in terms of thinking about conflict between people of different races. However, Rosenbloom & Way (2004) recently discovered in one high school that intra-racial/ethnic differences such as recentness of immigration, language preference, nationality, degree of acculturation, and attitudes toward consumerism contributed to intra-racial/ethnic group conflicts. Literature that fails to recognize this distinction is helpful as it establishes a context from which to view intra-racial CBREs, but without specific differentiation it is near impossible to determine potential differences (in experience, prevalence, outcomes, reactions) between the two types of CBREs. Also, are consequences and staff interventions the same for intra- and inter-racial CBREs or are there important differences? For example, are staff and students more aware of one type and therefore not aware of the other type? Or, are overt CBREs handled or perceived differently than covert CBREs. In sum, CBREs are complicated phenomena with many unanswered questions and there is a need to break these events down piece by piece while in past studies they have been treated as a little too simplistic. The current literature and dissertation study proposal attempts to focus on intra-racial/ethnic conflicts based in schools. Students of Latina/o descent appear to be one ethnic group that is potentially vulnerable to such conflicts.

## **Latina/o Students**

### **Population Numbers**

The Latina/o population requires increased attention in research. In 2003, a U.S. Census report announced that for the first time ever the Hispanic population had become the largest “minority” group in the United States when their numbers topped 37 million, or 13% of the American population. Those numbers were an increase from the U.S. Census 2000, when there were 35.3 million Latinos, accounting for 12.5% of the total population (Census 2000 Brief). As of 2015, the Hispanic population in the U.S. had increased to 56.6 million, now accounting for 15.4% of the population (U.S. Census, 2016).

Additionally, from 1990 to 2000, while the total American population increased by 13.2%, the Hispanic population increased by 57.9%, making it the fastest growing group in the United States (Census 2000 Brief). Staggering data reveal this Hispanic/Latino population accounted for half of the nation’s overall population growth over a six-year period, a growth rate that was almost four times that of the total population (24.3% vs. 6.1%). Projections predict the trend to continue with the Hispanic population increasing to 102.6 million by 2050, thus increasing their proportion of the total American population to 24.4% (US Census Bureau, Ethnicity and Ancestry Branch, 2004).

Further dissecting Latina/o population numbers emphasizes the importance of studying Latina/o youth. For example, it may seem likely and logical that the increase in the Latino population would lead to a congruent rise in Latino students in American

schools. However, the youth of the Hispanic Latino population (35% under the age of 18 compared with 27% of the general population) actually makes the proportion of Latino students even greater than in the general population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). For example, 17% of the nation's high school students and 20% of the nation's elementary students are Hispanic (Bureau of the Census, 2005). The preceding data leave little doubt that there is now and will continue to be many Latina/o students in this country. Though that may be cause enough to warrant research on this community, additional evidence on the barriers they face in educational settings provides further rationale.

### **Latina/os and the Education System**

Even a cursory look at the Latina/os and education literature quickly provides evidence that Latina/o students face many challenges at school. Schooling and the educational process has been shown to be a difficult and painful process for many Latina/o students (Quiroz, 2001). Academic attainment and outcome data indicate the presence of significant educational gaps between Latina/os and other populations, and thus highlight the need for research. For example, Hispanics and African Americans have significantly lower math scores, reading scores, and grade point averages (GPA) than White and Asian American students (NAEP, 2007). This gap manifests early with research showing that Latina/o children are already academically two years behind White children by the time they are nine years old (PEW Hispanic Center, 2004). Twenty-two percent of Hispanic young adults are labeled dropout status meaning they have not earned their high school diploma and are currently not enrolled in school (Kewal-Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). These dropout rates are significantly higher than those of Blacks (10.4%), Whites (6%), Asians/Pacific Islanders (2.9%), and American

Indian/Alaska Natives (14%). Similarly, 24.5% of Hispanic males and 23.3% of females report having a ninth-grade education or less, as compared to 6.7% and 6.3% of the total population of males and females respectively (2006 American Community Survey).

These figures lead to disproportionate amounts of Latina/os navigating their way through higher education. While 34% of the young adult American population attends college, only 14% of Hispanics do (Census 2000) making them by far the least represented group attending college. Also, only 3% of doctoral degrees were earned by Latinos in 2004 (NCES, Digest of Education Statistics, 2005, Table 267). The above figures are especially deflating considering 48% of Latina/o young adults plan to get a college degree and 89% believe that a college degree is an important component of success in life (Lopez, 2009).

If post secondary education is believed to be important by both young Latina/os as well as the entire Latina/o population, what factors contribute to lower educational attainment statistics? There likely are many possible methods to attempt finding potential answers, but none may be more efficient than the PEW center's approach of directly asking Latinos themselves. Latina/os in the survey indicated four explanations that may contribute to Latino's lower performance in school: parents not playing an active role in their child's education, different cultural backgrounds of students and their teachers, limited English skills of Hispanic students, and Hispanic students not working as hard as other students (Lopez, 2009). These four factors capture many issues found in the Latina/o Education literature and therefore serve as a framework for further describing the experience of being a Latina/o student in the U.S. school system.

### **Addressing the ‘Lack of Effort’ Argument**

There is much to consider when discussing Latina/os effort in succeeding in schools. What could appear as lack of effort may instead be more of a reaction to the existing school system, school staff expectations, messages from greater society, and even identity formation choices. Where do Latina/o students learn what it means to be a Latina/o student? The answer may be multidimensional, but unfortunately, that may not be the case for the rest of society. Popular media such as news shows and movies often portray Latina/o students in a one-dimensional, stereotyped way. Yosso and Garcia (2010) analyzed how Hollywood filmmakers used derogatory racial stereotypes to characterize Latina/os in school-based movies. Latina/o high-school students noted how movies affect how they look at themselves and are also windows into the perspectives that others have of them. One student, in commenting about movies that portray Latina/o students, stated, “...that’s how other people feel about us...they see us and they see, ‘Oh, that’s how a Mexican is in school,’ that’s why we’re like that, that’s why we don’t progress or develop or grow as a people.” (Yosso, 2000, p. 140).

Negative messages about Latina/os are undoubtedly received by teachers (and other school staff), most often not Latina/o themselves, about Latina/o students. Especially concerning is the evidence that shows some Hispanic students feel that not only do school staff not always support them in accomplishing their school/career goals, but sometimes the staff even thwart their plans by having low expectations or not helping the students navigate the educational system (Quiroz, 2001). This sentiment was found in the autobiographies of Latina/o middle school students. Though these accounts contained valuable evaluations of their educational experiences that highlighted the school system’s

shortcomings, they went largely ignored except being referred to during disciplinary cases. The author concluded that the students' voices were silenced and they were not empowered to have an impact on how they were educated. These findings coincide with Bernal's (2002) statement that often times Latina/o students' feel the cultural aspects of their identities are devalued, misinterpreted, or even altogether omitted. In cases like these where the school system is not providing what Latina/o students need, advocates must not only identify these injustices, but simultaneously demand that they be fixed (Gonzales & Portillos, 2007).

In other cases, school leaders may be inadequately trained or not fully competent in addressing the specific needs of Hispanic students. This case has been shown in how Hispanic students perceived the services offered by their high school staff. For instance, these students reported that their high school counselors gave them inadequate attention and treated them differently than non-Latina/o students (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). One example of this differential treatment is when a counselor did not encourage a Latina student in the top 5% of her class to apply to competitive, and/or Ivy League schools, even though he/she did give that support and guidance to non-Hispanic students ranked below her. Taking into account these examples of limited support outside of the family, it is no wonder that in some situations Hispanic students scale back on the goals they initially created for themselves.

The above examples (media portraying/perpetuating negative stereotypes, lowered teacher expectations, silenced voices, devaluing cultural background, inadequate services provided), though not specifically labeled as such, are prime examples of how the phenomenon of institutional racial microaggressions, described earlier, uniquely

manifests in the experiences of Latina/o students. These and other types of microaggressions were found to have such negative effects as making Latina/os feel like intruders and causing high amounts of stress (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009). Furthermore, the same authors argue that the cumulative effects of experiencing racial microaggressions may act in much the same way that stereotype threat (Aronson & Steele, 1995) does, thus facilitating underperformance in academic settings. Therefore, directly contrasting the idea that Latina/o students are outperformed by other ethnic peers because of a lack of effort, this new research shows that microaggressions experienced may actively contribute to lower academic achievement. Therefore, giving up future aspirations may be related to the stresses and alienating experiences that come along with being a Latina/o student and is clearly about more than just lack of effort.

### **Language and English Language Learners (ELLs)**

Sixty-five per cent of the Hispanic student population comes from a home that speaks a language other than English. First, 8% (4 million) of all American public school students received ELL services in the 2003-2004 school year (NCES, 2006). Research shows that English Language Learners (ELL) are at increased risk for a lack of social support networks, racial labeling, anxiety, feeling disconnected or isolated from the rest of the school, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (Williams & Butler, 2003; Spomer & Cowen; Clemente & Collison, 2000). ELL students are also more likely to attend schools that yield low standardized test scores among other groups (not just ELL) as well (Fry, 2008). These schools tend to have high teacher-student ratios, levels of student enrollment, and numbers of students living in poverty. In fact, 22.6% of all Hispanics are living in poverty (PEW Hispanic Center, 2005). Findings such as these indicate that at

least a part of the gap can be explained as a function of the schools they attend as opposed to simply their achievement/ability level, a finding further supported by results that show ELLs in schools with a critical threshold of White students have a narrower gap (Fry, 2008).

The discussion of ELL students brings up another important topic to be aware of: unequal distribution of resources. Lack of textbooks, lack of instructional supplies, poor facilities, and high teacher turnover are some disadvantages of the schools that ELLs attend (Harris, 2004). Unfortunately, conditions such as these are not limited to ELL students, but are in fact realities at many of the schools that Latina/o students attend. Inequitable funding and inadequate school conditions are yet another possible explanation for current educational attainment numbers for Latina/os (Quijada & Alvarez, 2006).

### **Latina/o Culture and Family: Incongruent with U.S. Schools?**

Federal policies such as No Child Left Behind send the message to Latina/os that their cultural knowledge is insignificant and even, in the case of Spanish-speaking Latinas/os, at times considered a deficit (Gonzales & Portillos, 2007). Latina/os and their families have consistently been blamed for their lack of educational achievement (Fuentes, 2006). Differences in teaching style may be one way that Latina/o tradition differs from U.S. schools. For example, in one study Mexican American parents showed that they were more likely to use observation and practice as teaching techniques (Wong-Fillmore, 1988). In these families, verbal explanations and questions were not given as much, rather patience and learning by doing was more highly valued.

Yosso (2005) challenges the existing, common interpretation that students of color are *disadvantaged* because they enter school with less access to and background in the majority's cultural knowledge. This perspective, as illustrated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), holds that knowledge is social capital and members outside the majority group (i.e. Latina/os and other persons of color) can gain access to this knowledge as capital through formal schooling. In her challenge, Yosso (2005) boldly disputes the current, in-group favoring tradition. She argues that communities of color should instead be seen as places withholding multiple strengths and wisdoms that in concert can be thought of as cultural wealth. In other words, as researchers conceptualize new projects, they should be cautious that they do not blindly follow the current paradigm that paints Latina/os as not having anything to offer society and only valuing the types of skills that are mastered and accessible in middle to upper class communities. Rather, research should look to identify specific types of cultural wealth that can be found in the Latina/o community. These strengths include: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. Working with this cultural wealth model includes continued research and a focus on education in schools on the topics of social and race-related justice. If important parts of their identity are ignored by the school system, it is no wonder then that educational attainment numbers for Latina/os are not progressing as rapidly as the population is (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006).

### **Summary**

The above information indicates several points. First, Latina/os are the fastest growing ethnic population in the U.S. and Latina/o youth are growing at an even faster

rate. Because the school system does not entirely value the cultural capital that Latina/o students come to school with, they encounter barriers to educational attainment. This line of thought provides clear evidence that new research must clarify Latina/o school experiences. While there are many aspects of schooling that could be investigated, conflicts based on race/ethnicity (CBREs) are an important place to start. How is a discussion focusing on interpersonal conflicts related to the educational attainment barriers previously described? Actually, there is a segment of literature that shows social relations and academic outcomes are related. For instance, one study showed a very clear relationship between friendships, school belongingness, and academic success (Vaquera & Kao, 2008). In this study, those high school students who reported more reciprocal friendships felt like a part of the school and were happier there. In turn, the more these students felt like they belonged in the school, the higher their grade point averages were. Also, students who felt isolated or that they did not have meaningful social relationships at school underperformed academically. Attention now turns toward a more in-depth investigation of the relationship between Latina/o students, their identities, and intra-group conflict.

### **Latina/o Identity and Intra-Latina/o CBREs**

#### **Within Group Heterogeneity**

Before explicitly discussing intra-Latina/o CBREs, it is important to note the considerable diversity that exists within the Latino/Hispanic population, a truth often overlooked by past and current research. One place to find evidence of this Latina/o diversity is the U.S. Census which includes such nationality identification options as

Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Other Hispanics. Of these choices, “Other Hispanics” was the second (to Mexican) most selected option representing a significant portion (28%) of all self identified Latinos/Hispanics. The diversity within this population is further pronounced by the fact that “Other Hispanics” were comprised of 18 distinct self-identified descriptions. Each of these descriptions was placed into four broader categories: Dominican, Central American (excluding Mexican), South American, and Spaniard.

In 2000, The National Hispanic Psychological Association (now National Latina/o Psychological Association) identified understanding this heterogeneity as one of eight required skills for conducting research with Hispanics (Guidelines for research in ethnic minority communities, 2000). In this document, Baron and Baron warn researchers of the “considerable variability in language use, cognitive ability, academic achievement, access to education, socioeconomic status, temperament, personality, race, and level of acculturation” (p.7). Likewise, others argue that there is no such thing as a universal Latina/o, and that explaining differences and similarities within ethnic groups provides opportunities to link research to practical, relevant social service programming while at the same time clarifying “misinformed stereotypes” (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2003, p. 294). Unfortunately, there is much research that mirrors the majority, societal belief that ignores or is unaware of this great heterogeneity.

This within group diversity (and even within sub-group diversity) means that Latina/os have multifaceted identities and can belong to several different groups or subgroups depending on their background, life experiences, or current situation. This

diversity sometimes creates obstacles to uniting for common goals and can even result in tension or conflict among Latina/os.

### **Intra-Latina/o CBREs**

Tension among and between various Latino groups at times run high (Johnson, 1998). These tensions can result in or from overt or covert conflicts between groups and contribute to a phenomenon where people of color, in this case Latinos, not only act in ambivalence towards other Latino subgroups, but actually work against them in the form of negative racial, ethnic, or cultural stereotypes (Romero, V., 2000). Divisions within the U.S. Latino population are further exacerbated then as each group individually strives for “their piece of the proverbial pie” (Romero, 2005, p.823). Gomez (2008) refers to the within group racism present among Latina/os as being rooted in “a legacy of colonization” and warns that Latina/os as a community must recognize and acknowledge this reality. Conflicts occurring across ethnic or even nationality lines are powerfully illustrated in the words of this folk tale:

“A young child asks a fisherman why he didn’t put a lid on a basket of crabs. The fisherman says, 'Because the basket contains Mexican crabs. As soon as one of them gets near the top the others drag him back down. They are so busy fighting among themselves that I don’t have to worry about any of them reaching the top and getting out.’” (Romero, M., 2000 p. 1602)

Therefore, while it is convenient for researchers, social organizations, and government institutions to use a pan-ethnic identifying strategy with umbrella terms such as Latina/o or Hispanic, this mindset is often not endorsed, and sometimes plain rejected by members of the group themselves (Kao & Joyner, 2001) and is even described as

“culturally demeaning and conceptually indefensible” by some researchers (de la Garza, Desipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1992 p. 7).

It is no surprise then to see that Latina/os often times view themselves not as one group but as being made up of many smaller communities (Romero, V., 2000). In one study of Mexican-American adolescents, the label Mexican was identified as most important to the group as a way of representing cultural traits, family loyalty, or familial origins (Malott, Alessandria, Kirkpatrick, & Carandang, 2009). This label for the most part was preferred to the pan-ethnic term Hispanic, as it was important for respondents, who were proud of their heritage, not to be confused for a different Hispanic nationality (i.e. Puerto Rican instead of Mexican). Data collected from the National Latino Political Survey (NLPS) further reflect Latina/o views on this matter. The NLPS is a survey intended to collect information regarding Latina/o views on politics, values, attitudes, and behaviors. It distinguishes between Mexican-, Puerto Rican-, and Cuban-origin populations in the United States (de la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1992). Results indicated that none of the groups believed they had similar political concerns as each other. Also, Cuban, Mexican, and Puerto Rican noncitizens were more likely to say that Latina/os were dissimilar than similar to each other. Therefore, scholars who study this group with the intent of reducing Latino/a subordination are therefore cautious of representing varied experiences as a single “Latino” or “Hispanic” experience (Gomez, 1998).

Clearly, evidence exists that affirms the presence and importance of within-group Latina/o conflict based on racial/ethnic/cultural. Specifically, intra-Latina/o conflicts appear to be influenced by at least four major factors: ethnic identity, phenotype,

acculturation, and immigration. Evidence exists that each of those factors contributes to intra-Latina/o conflict in general and for students in schools as well. In an attempt to mirror search procedures from the broader literature search on CBREs, every effort was made to focus the following subsections on the more specific intra-Latina/o school-based CBREs on the experiences of late middle- and high-school students. The information presented above regarding Latina/o high school students (achievement gap, discrimination, expectations [of self and of others], quality of schools, language differences, cultural differences) provide further support for studying that particular sub-population.

### **Factors Influencing Intra-Latina/o CBREs**

**Ethnic Identity.** Selecting racial and ethnic labels is one element of Latina/o ethnic identity, and one that is potentially complex and ambiguous. According to the U.S. government Latina/os and Hispanics are not officially a race, but rather are considered an ethnicity. Yet this designation does not make answering the process any easier for Latina/os. For instance, according to the 2000 Census, 17 million people claimed that they are members of a Latina/o race (Lopez, 2004). Additionally, some argue that Latina/os in this country have in effect been racialized, meaning that though they technically are not their own race, they are perceived by the majority as being just that (Ochoa, 2000). In addition to deciphering whether Latina/o refers to ethnicity or race, Latina/os also have other identifying characteristics that simultaneously describe them such as nation of origin, current nation of residence, and immigration status. Consequently, when describing their racial or ethnic background, Latina/os may feel there is not one term that is accurate all of the time.

Recognizing there are individual (a particular individual and/or their family) and collective (particular subgroup and/or Latina/os as a whole) experiences in determining *how* Latina/os choose to identify, leads us to the equally important notion of what that identity, regardless of descriptive term, *means* to them. Therefore, the question now shifts from ‘how do Latina/os identify?’ to ‘what does it mean to be Latina/o?’ As clean and convenient it would be to be able to give a precise explanation that describes everyone, it is much more realistic to state that what it means to be Latina/o depends on the person you are asking, their experiences, and their interpretations of experienced life events. An important conclusion here may be to allow this flexibility and not force “Latina/o-ness” inside the box of the current paradigm of racial/ethnic classification. After all, maybe it makes sense that the dilemma of identifying Latina/o as meaning race or ethnicity leads to ambiguous results. After all, Latina/os as a people “have hybridity as the foundation of their identity” as they encompass “people from an entire continent, subcontinent, several large islands, with diverse racial, national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic aspects to their identity”(Martin-Alcoff, 2006, p. 291).

The characterization of Latina/o identity as elusive is not new, and in fact, as alluded to earlier, is rooted in historical context. One place to look for a telling example of this is the Chicano Studies literature. As the largest Latina/o group in the U.S. it is important to see where Mexican-heritage individuals fit into the conversation as that will give important clues to how other Latina/o subgroups think about their identity. An important term to mention is *mestizo*, referring to mixed Spanish and Indian descent, which is what most Mexican-Americans are. For example, even as early as the 1800s, questions surrounding the mestizo identity of Mexicans were already being asked by

themselves. These questions, such as ‘Who did Mexicans identify with?’; ‘Who were they?’, and ‘What was their character?’ were direct results of their mixed affiliations with the European monarchy on one hand and their indigenous backgrounds on the other (Diaz-Loving, 2006). These are questions asked not only by themselves of themselves, but also by others of themselves. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mexican thinkers and philosophers continued to struggle and quarrel over these questions of roots and identities that seemed to be complicated by their mestizo heritage (Diaz-Loving, 2006).

Though ethnic identity formation can be an elusive and exhausting process, empirical evidence links it with several positive outcome variables. In one study consisting of Mexican students (in U.S. high schools), results showed ninth graders who had positive feelings about their ethnic group were happier, less anxious, and were better equipped to cope with daily stressful demands (Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006). Having strong ties to one’s ethnic identity has also been shown to be a protective factor for academic achievement in high school. Specifically, second generation Mexican-Americans who rated high levels of ethnic affirmation earned higher grades, performed better in schoolwork, and exhibited more cooperation (as reported by their teachers) (Supple, Chazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006). In addition to benefits while in high school, a strong sense of ethnic identity has also been linked to maintenance of better grades across the middle to high school transition indicating it may serve as a buffer to normal declines during this transition period (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006).

Though strong ethnic identity has been identified as a protective factor, it may also be related to intra-ethnic tension and conflict. Intra-ethnic boundaries are strong

enough to even influence how Latina/os choose their friends. Kao and Joyner (2001) specifically questioned whether Hispanic youth (both middle and high school students) prefer same-ethnic, different-ethnic (all within Hispanic “race”), or different-race friends. They found that Latina/o students (along with Asian students) clearly showed a disproportionate (greater than expected) preference for choosing same-ethnic friends. The trend was stronger among some groups, with the following rates of same-ethnic friend choice occurring: Puerto Ricans: 25%, Central/South Americans: 34%, Cubans: 60%, and Mexicans: 63%. Results indicated that Mexicans are 9 times as likely, Cubans 52 times as likely, Puerto Ricans 17 times as likely, and Central/South Americans 12 times as likely to nominate a same-ethnic best friend than by chance alone. Ultimately, the authors concluded that Latina/o youth do not incorporate into their lives a panethnic sentiment, or a solidarity across all diverse Hispanic ethnicities. These findings are even more compelling because of the robustness of the data, sampling, and analysis procedures. The nationally representative sample includes data from over 35,000 participants, and variables such as racial/ethnic ratios are taken into consideration during analysis.

While the above study indicates Latina/o students are more likely to have friends of similar nationality background, other results provide a more direct link between ethnic identity and intra-Latina/o CBREs. A recent study shows that Latina/o students today still have difficulty wrestling with identity questions (Malott, Alessandria, Kirkpatrick, & Carandang, 2009). Researchers examined how Latina/o high school students choose to identify themselves ethnically, and additionally *what these terms mean to them*. Using the phenomenological method, researchers used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to capture the ethnic labeling experiences of twenty Mexican-American high school

students. Sixty percent of the participants assumed more than one ethnic label. Highlighting the complexity of identifying terms already discussed earlier, the twenty participants selected eleven different self-identifying terms. The most popular terms reported were Mexican/Mexicana/Mexicano ( $n=18$ ), Hispanic ( $n=6$ ), and Mexican-American ( $n=3$ ). Especially germane is the common theme among participants that term usage usually began around middle school at the same time that ethnic identity became a topic of conversation among peers, with groups forming based on identifying term preferences. Many participants described this process of ethnic identity formation and division of groups based on like-ethnicity to be negative and stressful. In almost all cases the younger participants (14) matched older participants (18) in length and thoughtfulness of answers indicating that the process of identity formation is salient and requires thought even for early adolescents. This study showed that ethnic label selection is a fluid, dynamic, and continuous process that can be affected by experiences and major life events (e.g. moving to a different country, acquiring a language, available peer groups). Finally, results showed that the ways in which Latina/o high school students choose to identify themselves can have impact on the social groups to which they do and don't belong.

Ethnic identity can also cause conflict within groups based on a student's academic performance in school. For example, Urrieta (2005) discusses the delicate tightrope Latina/os face in choosing whether or not to acculturate to the dominant culture values of schools. Latina/o (Chicana/os as written about by Urrieta) identity means constantly feeling out the grey area between "playing the game" (being aware of injustices towards a group but navigating through the current system strategically in order

to make advances for that group) or “selling out” (betraying one’s loyalties to the group for individual gain or because of a loss of awareness of the group’s cause/ideas) (Urrieta, 2005, p. 173). Noguera (2003) notes a similar phenomenon in Black children, males specifically, who may view academic success as not only not a part of their identity but even “out of bounds” and having negative social implications (p. 445).

Identity formation and selection can vary considerably among Latina/os. Lack of clarity around identifying terms such as race and ethnicity leads to differences of opinion, sometimes with peers, sometimes between researchers, and other times even with the government. Though Latina/o is not designated a race by the U.S. Census, many Latina/os view themselves as such. Additionally, as a people they have been racialized by members of the majority society. Within group heterogeneity within Latina/os and even within Latina/o subgroups, such as nationality, contribute to potential for anti-pan-ethnic sentiment. This feeling can manifest in negative attitudes towards co-ethnics and intra-group racism. Several critiques of this segment of the literature are discussed below. It becomes clear that how one identifies, how they make meaning of their identity, and how they act in society each interact to create the whole of Latina/o identity. In turn, ethnic identity formation, labels, or meaning may affect social relationships with other Latina/os and possibly contribute to conflict.

**Phenotype.** Phenotype refers to physical features such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features. Once a byproduct of evolutionary selection, skin color is now a sociological variable. While it may be common knowledge that skin color is used as a discriminating factor between individuals of different groups, it is important to note this bias also occurs within groups as well. In fact, light skin is so desirable that in Mexico, a

cosmetic product called “White Secret” is advertised to guarantee lighter skin (Gomez, 2008). Because Latina/os come in all shades of colors every individual will be uniquely impacted by this characteristic (Hall, 1994). Lopez (2008) specifically reviews the Puerto Rican phenotype and characterizes it historically as a tool used to dole out privilege to some, deny rights to others, and leave a contemporary scar on many today. Historically, in Mexico for example, skin color has been an important social marker since the time of the Spanish Conquest with “white” or “blonde” (both referring to skin color) being associated with power, high social class, and privilege; with dark skin alternatively linked to inferiority, submission, and Indian origin (Fortes De Leff, 2002). Phenotypic traits resembling European ancestors became favored which led to discrimination against darker-skinned people throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Degler, 1971; Morner, 1967; Smedley, 1999). This system afforded the most privilege to Spaniards and the least to the “Indios” (indigenous people) with persons of mixed blood lying somewhere in the middle. These roots were so strong that they still have a hold on the people of Mexico today and are manifest in racism, discrimination, and segregation based on race and skin color (Fortes De Leff, 2002).

Phenotype discrimination is linked to but not limited to the past. Contemporary examples of skin color preference can be found in empirical studies as well as anecdotal evidence. Fortes De Leff (2002) is a therapist who published an article with case study examples illustrating just this point. She speaks of parents who beam about their “blonde” (referring to light skin) child and simultaneously experience conflict with their darker skinned child. Additionally, she recounts arguments between clients where an offensive remark to another is, “Don't be an Indian,” implying not only dark skin but the inferiority,

naivety, and lack of intelligence that comes along with it. Though Mestizo refers to the most common identity of Mexicans, that of mixed European and indigenous descent, a common practice is to attempt to hide Indian traits in order to appear whiter, and therefore more 'powerful'. There is no clear methodology as her publication is more of a reflection than a study, and in the future, she should consider conceptualizing a more rigorous study based on her clinical experience. However, the strength of De Leff's (2002) comments resides in her clinical experience and the powerful impact some of the quotes from her clients have on the reader.

It is not uncommon to hear statements from those in Latin American countries advocating for a race-blind stance in which nationalism trumps race (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008). In other words, the fact that two individuals are Puerto Rican or Mexican, or Cuban, should be unifying enough a factor to avoid conflict. However, Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2008) argue that, like in the United States, not only do differences within individuals from Latin-American nations exist, but so does racism, though in a uniquely Latina/o way. Racism in the U.S. is often seen as a binary system with Black and White as the opposing forces. Conversely, the racism evident in Latin America may be better described as dwelling in a tri-racial system (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008), as rooted in the historical miscegenation, or mixing of racial groups through sexual relations and cohabitation (Novkov, 2002), that took place in these countries after the Spanish conquest. The result of this mixing was a middle group known as mestizos, browns, or triguenos who could never achieve White status but enjoyed a higher place in the social hierarchy than Indians or Blacks.

*Phenotype and School-based CBREs.* If having dark skin limits Latina/os in their employment options and earned wages, it makes sense that it would also be a barrier in educational attainment. Murguria and Telles (1996) examined the effect that skin color and physical features (phenotype) had on schooling attainment among Mexican Americans. The authors hypothesized that appearing (physically) Mexican was a variable that existed on a continuum from darker (more Mexican looking) to lighter (more Anglo looking). This Mexican identity would be perceived by the majority of society as more or less acceptable depending on where a Mexican was on this phenotype continuum. Researchers interviewed 539 persons of Mexican ancestry who were born in or migrated to the U.S. before age 12. Participants identified themselves as belonging to one of three categories: light, medium, or dark. Seven percent of light skinned individuals were in the lowest educational attainment group (0-4 years), while 19% and 18% of “medium” and “dark” individuals. In other words, even when controlling for such variables as parental education level, year of birth, and sex, the results demonstrated large differences between “light” and “non-light” persons alluding to the cost of being Mexican, and more specifically a dark-skinned Mexican student. Authors of that study posited that their findings may signify discrimination by teachers in the form of lower expectations of students with darker skin.

Additional results confirm the relationship between skin color and school achievement, and even show that darker skinned individuals in the same family may be at a disadvantage. Rangel (2007) investigated how beliefs about skin color played out in mixed-race families through parenting practices. Mixed race families were defined as either a) those that were the product of a marriage between two individuals of different

skin-color or b) simply the existence of siblings with differing skin colors, with no regard for the parents' characteristics. Skin color, along with other relevant demographic data, were rated by a head figure of the household and included options corresponding with Brazil's categories or race/color: white, black, indigenous, yellow, and brown.

Researchers used data from the 1991 Brazilian Census of Population. These data indicate that 10.7% of the White children in the survey have a non-White sibling, and 12.3% of the non-White children have a White sibling. Results showed that in mixed race families, White children are 7.5 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in school than non-White children. Framing these results from an economic perspective, Rangel (2007) hypothesized that because lighter skinned individuals make more money in the labor market, it benefits parents more to encourage their educational persistence over their darker skinned siblings. These findings from Brazil are similar to trends in the U.S. where data show that light skinned Latina/os may have between three and four years of additional education attainment (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008).

Literature and anecdotal evidence indicate the significance that phenotype holds in the lives of Latina/os. Research provides evidence that light skin color is prized while dark skin color is a marker of inferiority. That a magnification of the importance of skin color and phenotype takes place is unsurprising. Real and significant social consequences result from skin color and phenotype. These consequences include wage earnings, employment decisions, mental health, and educational attainment. Additionally, a long-standing power/status differential appears to exist within Latina/os based on skin color. These attitudes, rooted in history, have been passed down from generation to generation. Though empirical studies investigating phenotype and CBREs are limited, it seems

logical that attitudes and beliefs about skin color, whether conscious or not, have been passed down to Latina/o youth as well. Therefore, it is likely that differences in phenotype have the potential to result in or have some connection to CBREs in schools. After all, it is understood that skin color is the cause of conflict in the general society so one would expect nothing different from those inside schools.

**Acculturation.** Acculturation has been defined as the processes and outcomes that occur as a result of intercultural contact (Berry, 1997). Early assumptions of assimilation and acculturation viewed the processes as inevitable and being comprised of: a permanent move from one place to the next, an inherent motivation to join the mainstream culture of the new country, and a clear progression from good to better as the individual gave up their old cultural practices for newer, better ones (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). However, the realities surrounding contemporary immigration into the United States no longer fit with this “clean break” (from the country of origin) mindset (p. 9). Today, immigrants are more likely to maintain direct ties (economic, cultural) to their country of origin and compare themselves to fellow co-ethnics (as opposed to the mainstream population). Additionally, the old idea of automatic rewards for assimilating is less accurate now and more difficult to obtain because it is complicated by whether the immigrant (and their family) has certain social capital such as legal status, health, financial resources, and language (Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

As would be expected, acculturation is a major factor for Latina/os. *Malinchismo* refers to denying one’s own roots in favor of a foreign power (Paz, 1969). It represents a process of affective and symbolic subjugation to a powerful other and can be visibly seen in such behaviors as giving children “American” names or speaking Spanish laced with

English terms as a means of demonstrating “higher class” (Fortes De Leff, 2002). It has been found that more “anglicized” Mexicans - as measured in one study by religion (Protestant vs. Catholic), language preference (English vs. Spanish), and a higher education level – can adopt the attitudes of the White mainstream even when those viewpoints oppose fellow Latina/o viewpoints during community debates (Benibo, Meyer & Villareal, 1999). This was evidenced in the question of whether/how to memorialize Selena, a Mexican heritage pop star, a movement that was favored by Mexicans – but not Whites – in her home community. Those who did not show support were seen as crossovers in the sense that they “abandoned their ethnic group” (Benibo, Meyer & Villareal, 1999).

An in-depth review of the process of acculturation revealed that when individuals new to a culture do not make attempts at understanding and adapting to mainstream core values they are likely to irritate existing members of society and therefore stimulate social conflict (Berry, 1997). Additionally, research indicates that when people feel rejected based on cultural characteristics they result in potential serious psychological costs at the individual level. This phenomenon, often described as acculturative stress, refers not only to psychological but also social and somatic difficulties a person experiencing as a result of navigating in multiple cultures (Berry, 1998). This has been shown to hold true even in culturally pluralistic societies, like the U.S., because there is a clear majority set of expectations. Acculturation conflicts were found to be significant predictors of increased depression and lower self-esteem (Dennis, Basanez, & Farahmand, 2010). Holleran and Jung (2005) eloquently link the idea of acculturative stress to Latina/os: “They are confronted with tensions that arise from moving between

family and Americanized peers, between English and Spanish languages, and between traditional values and those connected with popular American youth culture. In such a situation, the primary tasks of many Mexican-American youth are to adapt themselves to the dominant culture and to maintain a sense of ethnic identity at the same time.”

One of the most interesting ways that acculturative stress may manifest is in family conflicts as a result of acculturation gaps between children/adolescents and their parents. Phinney, Ong, and Madden (2000) examined differences in values between parents and their adolescent children, and they found mixed results for the Latina/os in the study. The sample of 701 families consisted of three immigrant groups and two non-immigrant groups from five different ethnicities: Armenian, Vietnamese, Mexican/Mexican American, African American, and European American. Important to note is that this study only consisted of adolescents who had been in the country and educational system for at least four years *and* rated themselves as able to read English quite well or very well. Value differences were measured in terms of their feelings of obligations to family (e.g., importance of obeying parents, not talking back to parents, parents know best, cultural gender roles). Results showed that across all groups, parents rated family obligations as more important than adolescents did. In generally comparing immigrant families (adolescent foreign born) to non-immigrant families (adolescent native born) there was a higher discrepancy in values between parent-adolescent family values in families that had a native-born adolescent. When examined by ethnic group, several ethnicities reported this same finding, but it did not hold true for the Mexican group. The authors hypothesized this difference was because of close proximity to the U.S. (Mexicans were possibly already exposed to aspects of the culture) and because

there are more Mexicans in the area, meaning they could live in ethnic niches, as compared to the other groups who are significant minorities.

Research shows that when Latina/o adolescents experience cultural conflicts with their parents, negative outcomes can result. For instance, one study found that foreign-born Latina/o high school students who endorsed cultural conflicts with their parents also displayed higher levels of aggressive behavior in general (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2009). Because of this finding and because of the longitudinal finding that as general aggression went down so did family cultural conflict go down, it was necessary to make sure they are different. Examination of the methodology indicates they are likely separate. Aggression was measured through the Child Behavior Checklist (arguing, destroying things, gets in fights). Acculturation conflicts were measured with four distinct items measuring preference of American customs, wanting to be more American, conflict over American ways and discomfort with ethnic loyalty.

Higher levels of acculturative stress (family acculturation conflict, conflicted ethnic loyalty, ethnic awareness of prejudice, and language-related conflict) in Latina/os have also been linked to more tolerant attitudes for and higher perpetration of dating violence (Hodoka et al., 2007). More specifically, family acculturation conflict was significantly positively correlated with more tolerant attitudes towards male-perpetrated psychological/physical/sexual abuse and female-perpetrated psychological abuse. Reports of family conflict about acculturation was also positively correlated with self-reports of physical abuse, threatening behaviors, sexual abuse, and relational aggression.

It would appear that in Latina/o families, there frequently exists an acculturation gap between parents and their children (Pasch et al., 2006) and that gap has detrimental

impact on family relationships and child/adolescent development. Though studies have shown that ethnic conflict within families may have negative psychological effects on the acculturating individuals (Lee & Liu, 2001), it should be noted that results supporting this theory are mixed (Schofield, 2008). A systematic literature review was conducted by Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Stroupe (2009) to gain insight into the relationship between acculturation and several outcome variables including youth violence. They found mixed results in the literature and cited only a slight positive association between acculturation and youth violence.

Schofield (2008) set out to add to this research base by examining how acculturation gaps were linked to outcomes (parent-child conflict and child adjustment) for Mexican-American children. Data indicated significant effects for father-child relationships, but not for mother-child relationships. Specifically, father-child acculturation gaps in the child's fifth grade year were associated with greater father-child conflict interactions in their seventh-grade year. This relationship was moderated by parent relationship quality with the association only being evident in families where low father-child relationship quality was indicated. Therefore, strong relationships between parents and children may help fight against the acculturative stress that may be present. Results concluded with another study that had mixed findings.

Though not the focus of this literature review, two studies conducted with Latina/o college students are included because they yielded such pertinent findings to the question of whether negative outcomes occur as a result of cultural conflicts. In one study, results showed that the students' cultural background may expose them to academic and social stressors above and beyond what the general population of college

students faces (Rodriguez, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2000). Some examples of endorsed stressors identified included difficulty communicating with others and feeling self-conscious over their accent. However, of all the stressors listed, intra-familial conflict was the most important predictor of psychological distress and well-being. Within group tensions also became evident for Latina/os outside of their family. In particular, though not addressed in the study's research questions, informal conversations with Latina/o students revealed that not speaking Spanish or understanding traditional Latina/o customs caused distress during interactions. This observation is important because it acknowledges that highly acculturated Latina/os can experience acculturative stress as well, though in a different way than those newer to U.S. society.

In another example from the Latina/o college-going population, Castillo et al. (2009) investigated the impact of family conflict and intragroup marginalization on the acculturative stress of Latino college students. The study consisted of 194 Latina/o college students who filled out surveys measuring intragroup marginalization, acculturation, acculturative stress, and family conflict. In a regression model, family intragroup marginalization accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in acculturation stress even after controlling for the effects of demographic variables, acculturation level, and amount of family conflict. Participants revealed that living as bicultural individuals led to culture-related conflict within their families. Analyses also showed distinction between family conflict and intragroup marginalization with each uniquely contributing to acculturative stress.

It is important to note that not all studies examining acculturation gaps between Latina/o families find these same results. Pasch et al. (2006) found families displaying an

acculturation gap between parent-child were not more likely to endorse parent-child conflict or child adjustment problems. This study confirms other research where discrepancies in parent-child acculturation level (to both the host and heritage culture) are found to be unrelated to increased conflict or youth problems (Lau et al., 2007).

*Acculturation and School-based CBREs.* One recent ethnographic study confirmed the presence of acculturation based CBREs in schools by examining Mexican-American high school student experiences (Holleran & Jung, 2005). Respondents, recruited from community centers and a high school, shared numerous times when they were insulted, made fun of, or attacked by either same-ethnic peers or family members for acculturation-related choices. Specifically, this study's participants experienced conflict because they were viewed as being overly assimilated. They were called "not a true Mexican", "sell-out", and "a poor excuse for a Mexican" (p. 114). Receiving negative criticism for becoming Americanized consequently leads to the general sentiment that achieving success "beyond the ethnic group" is equated to betrayal and "trying to act White" (p. 114-115). These findings provide evidence for an idea in Latina/o culture that is anecdotally written and spoken about: "brown on the outside, white on the inside" (Castillo et al., 2009).

Hsiang (2005), as an 18-year-old college student, reflected on a class assignment asking other first year college students to discuss their lived experiences of racism and discrimination. The common theme across the class examples was not "White vs. minority" as the author expected, but rather from negative interactions within racial/ethnic groups. Speaking specifically of instances from Asian American students, Hsiang describes witnessing a dichotomy among her co-ethnic peers that happens around

adolescence in which they feel pressured to either fully assimilate or embrace their parent's native heritage. No matter which side they choose, they can expect to be the recipient of "Asian slurs" such as "F.O.B" (standing for "Fresh off the boat" and signifying those who immigrate and do not assimilate) or "Twinkie" (hinting that those who assimilate are "yellow on the outside but white on the inside"). An intensity of emotion is evident in this student's voice when she laments not being able to "fully embody one culture while living in the other." It is unlikely that her sentiments are a lone voice, yet empirical studies following methodological guidelines are needed to help raise awareness and increase understanding of these phenomena.

**Immigration.** The following quote is taken from a Mexican American when asked his/her opinion about immigrants to the United States: "[Mexican immigrants] come here, impose their language on us, and impose their attitudes. They don't keep it within their home. They spread them around so that you can't walk into a store and make a purchase without being spoken to in Spanish...[T]hey should clean up their act and mainstream and be more this country than their own because they're not in their own" (Ochoa, 2000 p. 91). That sentiment provides support for the fact that immigration status can be a major source of intra-Latina/o tension. Large numbers of immigrants continue to enter the United States every year in what is now described as a persistent flow as compared to previously experienced waves (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). The sentiment of the general U.S. public towards immigrants has been described as follows: "we love immigrants at a safe, historical distance but are much more ambivalent about those joining us now" (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2000). The following are rates of agreement with the statement that there are too many immigrants in the U.S.: Mexican:

75.2%, Puerto Rican: 79.4%, Cuban: 65.5%, Anglo: 73.8% (De la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon). Thus it appears that the idea of opportunity also has the idea of competition embedded in it (Espinoza & Harris, 1997).

The mistreatment of or negative attitudes towards immigrants to the United States are not new ideas, but the rapid increase in the Latina/o population has brought with it an increased fervor to anti-immigrant sentiment. Intense convictions held by many native-born in the U.S. are born out into social programming and institutional policies that seek to maintain the status quo and, consequently, negatively impact immigrants. Examples of such political movements are especially salient in California, where Latina/s are increasingly “taking over,” and include “English Only” campaigns, elimination of bilingual education in schools, Proposition 187, increasing militarization of the Mexico-U.S. border, and the debate over affirmative action programs (Ochoa, 2000). At first glance, it might be easy to assume that non-Latina/os are responsible for this negative perception, however a closer examination reveals within-Latina/o group bias is evident as well.

A recent example of how powerful, among Latinos, an issue immigration can be occurred during the vote of Proposition 187 in California. The initiative, which denied public services to undocumented immigrants, was passed by voters in part due to significant support from Latino voters, twenty-five percent of whom voted in favor of the proposition (Johnson, 1998). This example serves as evidence of Johnson's (1998) assertion that in some cases Mexican-Americans, especially those who have been in the United States for some time and are more distinctly removed from their native country, act and think negatively towards new immigrants from Mexico. Johnson logically

concludes by hypothetically questioning if Mexicans can remain ambivalent towards or even actively work against other Mexicans, how likely is it to expect to be able to build bridges with other Latinos, and even other groups of color?

Political beliefs and outcomes as described above begin to speak to how important and dividing immigration and immigrant status can be among Latinos. Examining educational attainment and aspirations among the Latino population demonstrates one of these differences. Specifically, when young Latinos (age 18-25) were asked whether they planned to graduate college, 60% of native borns said they did compared to only 29% of Latino immigrants (Lopez, 2009). Young Latino immigrants appear to have financial commitments that limit their educational attainment (Lopez, 2009). These commitments include helping to support their families, sending remittances to family in their country of origin (Lopez, Livingston, and Kochhar, 2009), and higher (when compared to native born Latina/os) young motherhood rates (Fry, 2009). Another divide between the groups is how important a topic or problem immigration policy is for the U.S. For example, 20% of foreign born Hispanics rated immigration as the country's top problem compared to only 6% of U.S.-born Hispanics (Suro & Escobar, 2007). Additionally, immigration is rated as decreasingly important by first-, second-, and third-generation Latina/os. Foreign born Latina/os are nearly unanimous (89% vs. 5%) in believing that immigrants help strengthen the U.S. based on their work ethic and unique skills while only 65% of native-borns feel that way (Suro, 2005). Alternatively, 28% of native-borns feel immigrants are a burden to society.

Anti-immigrant sentiment may be witnessed in intra-Latina/o and even intra-national interactions. In one study, qualitative data was collected from twenty-three in

depth, semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Fifty-two percent of the participants indicated they held negative beliefs or had tension-filled interactions with Mexican immigrants – based mostly on language, values and cultural practices. Ochoa concluded that the relationship between Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants in this Los Angeles community could best be described as multidimensional, with evidence of simultaneous cooperation and conflict. This study contributes much to the knowledge in intra-ethnic conflict as much other literature focuses on work and economic conflict, as opposed to this study's examination of everyday interactions in social institutions (i.e. schools, neighborhoods, churches). Though the interviews themselves appeared to be quite extensive and diligent, more information on the method of analyzing the data is necessary. As is, the author simply states data were "analyzed for themes."

The author is to be commended for being flexible enough with the findings to allow for a multidimensional, non-static, and situation-specific conceptualization of the conclusions. In other words, at times participants noted real or perceived cultural differences which led to conflict while at other times there was enough "shared identity" to allow them to unite. A good indicator of the fluidity of these perceptions is that 78% of Mexican-American participants reported that cultural factors like the Spanish language could be a source of tension (negative perception of immigrants who do not speak English) *or* a source of connection (symbolic, cultural tie) between the two groups. Language appears to be a large separating factor, often times because it represents differences in beliefs about assimilation as well. When anti-Mexican or anti-Spanish (language) sentiment exists, the groups seem to be able to create a bond likely because of the shared experiences and history of discrimination.

*Immigration and School-based CBREs.* Examination of autobiographical accounts of Mexican and Puerto Rican middle and high school students show similar trends of U.S. native having a bias against immigrants (Quiroz, 2001). These records evaluated the Latina/o students' views of family, school, ethnicity, and future plans. U.S.-born Latina/os looked down on Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants at school. They referred to these students as "los inmigrantes" and noted that they were isolated both socially and physically from the rest of the school and student body. Far from separate but equal, the self-contained status, often in the form of bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms came with unequal access to resources and existed within the context of a status hierarchy which placed students newer to the country on the lowest rung (Quiroz, 2001). This ethnographic study compared qualitative autobiographical accounts of 27 students who completed the assignment twice, once in their eighth grade year and once in their junior year of high school. In future, similar studies the author may consider analyzing qualitative data with the assistance of an additional researcher or team to assure quality and lack of bias in finding results. Nevertheless, the findings in this study have been confirmed by recent work that shows native-born adolescents, compared to first generation students, have friendships marked by more reciprocity (Vaquera & Kao, 2008).

Holleran and Jung (2005) found similar results in their ethnographic study of Latino high school students. Through observation and semi-structured interviews of Mexican-American adolescents, they concluded that the native born Mexican-American youth view Mexican immigrants through an Americanized lens, thus comparing them to the dominant culture. Qualitative data capture powerful, negative attitudes held by

Mexican-American (native born) adolescents towards foreign born youth. Slurs, such as “wetback”, to describe newly arrived Mexicans are used commonly. These terms come with the connotation of laziness, dirtiness, and uncouthness. In many cases the descriptions come across as so abhorrent, that it is no wonder that a theme of segregation became evident across the interviews.

### **Summary and Critique**

Noticeably absent from literature on phenotype discrimination are research studies focused on how it manifests in schools. There are studies in this section that are school-related, namely focusing on how skin color impacts educational attainment and school enrollment rates. However, nothing was found that looked at how skin color or phenotype impacted social relationships in schools. For example, does phenotype come into play with friendship selection, is it the root of peer conflicts, or perhaps both? There are examples of studies investigating ethnicity and nationality in these types of questions, so phenotype researchers should follow their lead.

Another area of concern in the phenotype literature is the way phenotype is measured. Little evidence was found of reliability studies for the different methods researchers used. In many cases, skin color seems to be measured by one observer, sometimes the participant and sometimes the researcher. It would seem that in cases where the researcher is making these judgments, it would improve the measure’s reliability to have at least one additional team member make observations as well. Conversely, when participants rate their own rating, it may be necessary to explicitly state that the construct being measured is “self perception” of skin color as opposed to actual skin color. This could be an important self distinction as no evidence was found in

any of the phenotype studies to show that participants were accurate presenters of their skin color. Their responses may be impacted by a number of different variables including personal experiences, self-confidence, racial/ethnic identity, racism experiences, or simply the people they are with most frequently. In some studies, options seemed somewhat limited. For instance, having to rate oneself one of three categories: light, medium, or dark seems simultaneously difficult and over simplistic.

Little is known about the finding that indicates Latina/os may under report their personal experiences of discrimination and racism based on phenotype. The findings suggest that Latina/os may internalize these experiences and thus feel as if the encounters were their fault or that they deserved the mistreatment. Closer examination of how Latina/os view inter- and intra-racism experiences is necessary.

The most obvious critique of the Latina/o acculturation literature is the mixed results found by those researchers' acculturation gaps and intra-familial conflicts. While some results show strong links between acculturation gaps or acculturative stress and negative outcomes, others find no significant relationship. However, rather than be considered a weakness to the current literature, it should be noted that it may just be a bit early to draw solid conclusions. Many studies on acculturation in Latina/o families have been recently and are being currently conducted. Because most of these studies are quantitative in nature, and because establishing consistent results has been so challenging, it is likely that qualitative studies may be an important piece to clarifying the process of acculturation in families.

In studies researching acculturation, authors should consider using multidimensional scales, as compared to the one-dimensional ones that are so commonly

used. In fact, many studies appear to use only language use/preference as a variable measuring acculturation level. In terms of who these studies should focus on, careful consideration should be given to Latina/os along the entire continuum of acculturation. Current studies focus heavily on acculturative stress and the process of learning a different culture. However, recent research also shows that even highly acculturated individuals experience acculturative stress and therefore should be studied as well. It also seems important not to forget those who may be in the middle of the continuum. These nuances will be easier to detect with the previously recommended multidimensional acculturation scales.

Studies that specifically focus on the K-12 Latina/o students' experiences of acculturation are greatly needed. The literature on families is very important, but most Latina/o youth spend most of their week at school and therefore with their peers. Based on the dearth of literature in this specific area, relevant and powerful research from the college-going population was included as a supplement. Based on college student experiences, it seems very likely that conflicts based on acculturation are common in K-12 schools as well, and continued study of them should attempt to describe these conflicts while simultaneously attempting to identify their prevalence and intensity. On the other hand, because there is so much focus on the stress an individual or family goes through in acculturating, it may also be helpful to consider whether there may be any benefits accrued as a result of the process.

Results from the school-specific CBREs in this section come from qualitative studies and yield powerful examples of intra-Latina/o conflict. However, a look at the methodology of these studies illustrates a problem with most of the qualitative studies

cited throughout this review. Namely, key components to the methodology such as data analysis are not explained. Rather, researchers simply state that they analyzed data for themes. While this method is acceptable and will produce good results, it is also necessary to add to the research base with more standardized types of qualitative research such as Consensual Qualitative Research or Grounded Theory which are increasing in use. These methodologies add to the equation certain such as multiple team members, non-team member auditors, and a regulated data analysis procedure.

The current literature clearly shows an anti-immigrant sentiment exists, but could more clearly define this attitude and support it with empirical studies. It seems necessary to continue asking Latina/os how they feel about Latina/o immigrants to the U.S. Somewhat ignored by the current research is where these attitudes come from or how they developed. For instance, it would be useful to know how parents, peers, and society each impacted an individual's feelings towards immigrants. Once again, there is too little research that focuses on this immigration issues and how they impact the lives of Latina/o students in schools. Especially with some of the experiences described about ESL students above, they seem to be a group in much need of advocacy.

### **Intra-cultural Coalition Building**

Clearly, Latina/os are potentially vulnerable to within-group conflicts among co-ethnics. Within group tension and conflict obstructs the one truly necessary ingredient for creating much needed change across social groups: coalition building within and between Latina/os. While it is apparent that some dislike use of the term 'Hispanic' or 'Latina/o,' recent events show promise that when faced with adversity, Latina/os may be able to not only avoid intra-group conflict but even unite to form intra-ethnic alliances. Intra-cultural

coalition building occurs when within group differences are put aside and similarities and shared histories are emphasized so that diverse Latina/os can work together towards common goals (Espinoza & Harris, 1997).

An example of coalition building coming to life occurred in the aftermath of pro-immigrant marches that occurred in several cities throughout the U.S. in 2006. During Spring of that year, “masses of humanity lined up for miles in [pro-immigrant] marches” (Johnson & Ong Hing, 2007, p. 99). Not long after these marches, results from the National Survey of Latinos, conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, indicated that 54% of Latinos surveyed believed the current debate over immigration increased the discrimination they faced. More importantly, 58% of Hispanics said they believed all Hispanics were now working together to achieve common goals (Suro & Escobar, 2006). Noting future implications, 63% thought the marches were a sign that a social movement, as opposed to a one-time event, was underway indicating mindsets focused on long-term unity. Additional data, though somewhat dated, also provide support to the idea that coalition building among Latina/os is a possibility. According to this survey, 73% of Puerto Ricans, 71% of Mexicans, and 55% of Cubans surveyed believed they have an obligation to help individuals of their same ethnicity (NLPS, 1992). A majority of each of these groups also believed that they personally benefited when co-ethnics improved their status.

The idea of cultural coalition building is not new and elements of the concept can be located even as far back as the ideas of Jose Vasconcelos. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century Mexican politician used the term “synergistic race” and pointed out that within-group differences do not necessarily need to lead to tension and may instead be viewed as a

strength of the group as a whole (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). He proposed a new way of thinking, one that was not a quarrel for choosing which part of their heritage to identify with, but rather one that drew strength from this new “synthesis of races” that they had become. In sum, even though conflict and tension exist, similarities in race, class position, and shared unequal treatment can create a pan-ethnic group identity that could lead to intra-ethnic activism in communities (Ochoa, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

#### **Major Critiques of the Literature and Future Research Recommendations**

As researchers conduct future work, several issues require their consideration. Examination of intra-Latina/o CBREs required combing through literature from a variety of fields including psychology, sociology, education, law, and anthropology. The topic turned out to be both immensely broad and particularly narrow at the same time. Thus, the unique nature of this phenomenon presents a dilemma for reviewers: To capture all pertinent information while simultaneously remaining specific to the topic of interest. Adding to this challenge is the already consistently mentioned nebulous nature of terminology available on the topic. The presence of many closely related terms and the absence of any single line of research mean that it would not be difficult to miss major contributions if one was looking in the wrong place or using slightly different terms.

The above critique makes it all the more alarming that researchers studying CBREs frequently fail to include a definition of the experiences they study. Lack of commonly used definitions makes it difficult to capture the true essence of CBREs. Perhaps researchers need to be more candid and acknowledge that defining CBREs is still

in an exploratory stage. In this regard, future studies would have as their main objective to more clearly define these events. This line of research could explore how different stakeholders in schools (students, families of students, teachers, counselors, school administrators, community members) experience and conceptualize CBREs and, specifically, intra-Latina/o conflicts. In addition to clarifying the definition, current research is limited in documenting consequences of CBREs generally and especially when they occur among Latina/os.

Any comprehensive review of the Latina/o population will inevitably encounter the already described dilemmas of identifying terms. A specific way this becomes a problem in a review like this is that studies vary in who they study and how they identify them. For example, within a single subtopic of a paper (i.e. “phenotype”) a reviewer is likely to encounter literature focusing on “Latina/os,” “Hispanics,” “Mexicans,” “Mexican-Americans,” “Puerto Ricans,” “Mestizos,” “Chicanos,” “Dominicans,” etc. Therefore, when comparing studies researchers must use caution. Further complicating the matter is that some studies are conducted in the U.S. while other studies are conducted in other parts of the Americas.

More empirical studies examining school-based intra-Latina/o CBREs are needed. Increased research will improve understanding of Latina/o students’ social interactions at school and the unique characteristics that influence or result from those interactions. Little of the content in this review specifically address all three aspects: the CBRE component, the intra-Latina/o component, and the school-based component. Therefore, following the rationale in this review, studies that combine each of these elements more

explicitly will fill an important void. Increasing knowledge about these events including prevalence, negative consequences, and their roots are important areas to probe.

Of all the topics addressed throughout this review, perhaps none seem more crucial to the advancement of understanding intra-Latina/o CBREs than the notion of pan-ethnic identity. In particular, discovering more about Latina/os perspectives on and attitudes towards pan-ethnic identity can provide important context to the intra-race conflicts. It will be important to question what factors go into the acceptance or rejection of pan-ethnicity. In asking these questions, researchers should keep in mind that Latina/o identity formation is likely a continuous and fluid process. Of special importance is gaining understanding in how Latina/o adolescents view pan-ethnicity and how these perceptions influence their relationships and interactions with their peers in school. Learning more about what influences Latina/o youth's acceptance of belonging to a unified Latina/o or Hispanic group may then lead towards suggestions of how to create and sustain intra-cultural coalitions that advocate for the Latina/o needs in the educational system. Additionally, research could answer the call to frame intra-Latina/o relations in a positive light and focus on experiences of successful coalition building and determining what were the positive outcomes and deciphering what factors contributed to those positive outcomes. In studies where conflict is a focus, researchers should be careful not to assume outcomes will always be negative, but rather be open to negative or positive outcomes, or even specifically seek out the benefits obtained from these intra-cultural conflicts.

Significantly ignored in this area of research is the role that schools and school staff play in CBREs. It will be necessary to gain insight into what staff perceives to be

their role in preventing and responding to CBREs. In addition, research should assess the awareness and competence levels of relevant school staff, such as teachers and professional school counselors, in working with Latina/o populations.

Finally, future research in schools must value the experience of Latina/o students and acknowledge their struggles and triumphs. One such study focused on the story of a Latino college student who shared the story of his educational experience in a Chicago public high school (Fernandez, 2002). In this study, the author analyzed the student's narrative to discover how the student perceived both his and his peers' journey through school and interaction with the system. Fernandez also followed the goal of respecting participant storytelling which gave an empowered voice to a marginalized Latino student who was allowed, via participation in this study, an opportunity to challenge the story presented by the dominant paradigm (counter-storying), or as Delgado (1989) puts it: "to subvert that in-group reality" (p. 2413). The storytelling methodology was intended to raise the participants and reader's consciousness around the presented topics as well as be a stimulant for social action and change (Fernandez, 2002). Additionally, the previously described study is an example of needed research that places race, racialization, and racism at the center of data analysis, rather than as peripheral constructs (Bernal, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

Conflicts in schools frequently occur and a growing body of evidence is showing that many of these interactions are based on race and/or ethnicity. Though much attention has focused on inter-racial conflicts in schools, it seems clear that intra-racial discrimination, racism, and conflicts occur as well. Because Latina/os are such a diverse group, they are especially likely to experience conflicts with other Latina/os based on

racial, ethnic, or cultural variables. Essential to understanding these intra-Latina/o conflicts is gaining insight into the many factors that make up a Latina/o identity. Specifically, acculturation level, immigration status, phenotype, and skin color appear to significantly impact intra-Latina/o relations. The current literature review shows support that these types of conflicts exist, but much more focused research is needed to increase understanding of the phenomenon.

In order to help fill this gap and further focus research in the CBRE literature, the principle investigator proposed a qualitative study investigating the nature of intra-Latina/o CBREs that occur in school. Based on conclusions from the current comprehensive literature review, aspects of Latina/o participants' ethnic identity, acculturation status, and academic achievement were also explored. The researcher elected to use a qualitative methodology for several reasons. First, a wealth of recent literature has called for the use of qualitative research with Latina/o students especially in order to give them a voice and share their wisdom of their educational experience (Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Pizarro, 1999). Second, in the field of counseling psychology, use of qualitative methods has been identified as establishing a more diversified approach to science that could have profound positive effects on multicultural research (Morrow, 2007). A detailed description of the proposed study is outlined in the following chapter.

## Chapter 3: Method

### Participants

Potential participants were eligible for inclusion in the study if they self-identified as Latina/o/Hispanic, were between 15-18 years old and endorsed having been directly involved in an intra-Latina/o CBRE in a secondary school context. For the purposes of this study, Latina/o and Hispanic were used interchangeably, as common in other research (Haney-Lopez, 2005; Long & Veroff, 2003; Lopez, 2009). The primary investigator conducted semi-structured interviews with nine participants that matched inclusion criteria for study. This sample size was consistent with the guidelines of Hill et al. (2005) who recommend 8-15 participants for studies using individual qualitative interviews. Hill et al.'s (2005) review of consensual qualitative research studies indicated that when small sample sizes are used, more in-depth information is collected per participant.

All nine participants met the identified inclusion criteria. The nine participants attended six different high schools (three participants attended the same school and two other participants attended the same school). When recording demographic information, an open-ended option was provided for racial/ethnic identification. While all nine participants identified as either Hispanic or Latina/o, four preferred 'Hispanic,' three preferred 'Latina/o,' and two preferred both/either. In addition to the broader Hispanic/Latina/o descriptor, all nine participants added at least one more ethnic identifier. Three participants identified as 'Mexican,' four participants identified as 'Mexican-American,' three identified as racially mixed (Vietnamese-Mexican, Mexican-

Philipino and Mexican-Spanish), and one participant identified as Chicana (numbers add up to more than nine due to multiple identifiers for some participants).

The sample consisted of three female and six male participants. Three participants were 15 years old, four participants were 16 years old, one participant was 17 years old and one participant was 18 years old; for a mean age of 16 years old. Regarding Spanish language fluency: four participants indicated full proficiency, three participants reported partial fluency, and two participants were not Spanish fluent. Five participants reported they were most comfortable speaking English in their everyday lives while four participants indicated they were equally comfortable with Spanish and English. Eight of the nine participants were born in the United States, with one participant being born in Mexico. Regarding year in high school: there was one first-year student, four sophomores, three juniors, and one senior. Participants also reported their parents' highest level of education: two participants reported some high school experience, three participants reported high school diplomas, three participants reported some college experience, and one participant reported having a parent who is a college graduate.

### **Research Team**

The data analysis team was comprised of three members and an auditor. The primary investigator was a counseling psychology Ph.D. candidate who identified as multi-ethnic, including White, Latino and Philipino family backgrounds. The second team member was a third-year clinical psychology Psy.D. student who identified as Mexican-American. The third team member was a second-year clinical psychology Psy.D. student who identified as Caucasian/Italian. The dissertation chair audited the data analysis. The auditor is a faculty member who has experience conducting research on

racial conflicts in schools and is extensively familiar with Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997).

### **Biases**

Per CQR guidelines, prior to analysis the primary team identified and discussed individual biases held by each member. Open acknowledgement of biases allowed the team to determine ways to keep biases from interfering with data interpretation.

The primary investigator acknowledged several contributing factors to the biases that may influence him during the study including clinical, research and professional layers. Clinically, he served as a teacher and counselor with many Latina/o students and had heard and seen examples of within group differences, tension and conflict. These experiences showed him what a range of reactions racial/ethnic conflicts could have on those involved. With regard to research, he had been a team member of a racial conflict study that used CQR as the methodology. Personally, the primary investigator identified as mixed-ethnicity (parts White, Latino/Mexican and Philipino) and had thus experienced a range of incidents and relationships where his differences between other Latina/os had led to tension or conflict. All of the above combined led primary investigator to the belief that these types of conflicts are much more prevalent than discussed in professional venues, have the potential to be quite impactful for the individuals involved, and particularly for youth who are in formative stages of their personal and racial/ethnic identity development.

The second team member also noted her biases were shaped by both clinical and personal experiences. Clinically, she had served as a counselor with many Latino/a students from K-12 education level and heard several stories of within group

problems/difficulties. She also witnessed several reactions and consequences that are a result of the within group conflict. Personally, this team member identified as a Mexican-American and grew up in a predominately Latino/a community. In her personal life, she has both experienced and witnessed within Latino/a group tension and conflict. As such, team member two believed that within group difficulties among Latino/as are common. In her experience, she came to believe that those involved in intra-ethnic conflicts are affected or the conflict affected others because it occurs during the important developmental years of growth.

The third team member acknowledged a variety of experiences that contributed to her biases. This member has been a clinician for several years, and in that time, she has had experience working with diverse populations, spending a majority of her time working with Hispanic male youth in outpatient and residential settings. She recalled hearing client experiences of within group racial conflict and within the residential setting was often exposed to witnessing youth experiencing conflict with peers regarding racial differences. Personally, the third team member identified as Caucasian and reports having a racially diverse core peer group in high school. Additionally, one of her closest friends identified as Mexican-American and this team member witnessed a variety of incidents that led to tension with her and other students who identified as Hispanic or Latino based on differences within the peer group. Similarly, to the primary investigator, these experiences led this team member to believe that conflict based on within group differences is more prevalent than acknowledged and has significant impacts on youth and their functioning.

## Measures

As is characteristic of qualitative research, there was no intent to recruit a sample that will yield generalizable results. However, demographic forms tracked important characteristics that were used as context during data analysis. Measures created for the study included a demographic form, the interview protocol and consent forms.

**Demographic form.** The demographic form collected contextual participant data such as: preferred racial/ethnic term identifications, age, and sex. Additionally, the demographic questionnaire contained questions on acculturation, education, and family variables. Acculturation-related questions queried participants about their language proficiency and preference, country of birth, and number of years living in the United States. Education-related questions asked participants to report whether they are enrolled in school, in what year of school they were enrolled, and number of years since participants graduated school (though this did not apply to any of the current participants). Family-related questions asked participants to report the highest education attained by either of their parents, if known by participants (See Appendix A for form).

**Assent, consent and permission forms.** A minor assent and parent permission form were both created for participants and their parents to review applicable study details. An adult consent form was also created and used by the one adult participant. Each of these forms included: study purpose, study procedures, risks/benefits of participation, confidentiality, and compensation for participation. The assent/permission forms also identified the participants' voluntary status and highlighted their ability to discontinue participation at any point in the study. Signed parental permission was

acquired for eight of the nine participants but one participant was 18 years old (See Appendices B, C and D for forms).

**Recruitment letters.** The primary investigator created two versions of a recruitment letter, one for potential individual participants and another for agencies (e.g., schools, youth groups) that could yield potential participants. Recruitment letters included basic information about the study and compensation (See Appendices E and F for letters).

**Interview Protocol.** The study's primary investigator conducted a comprehensive, critical review of the literature that helped inform development of a semi-structured interview protocol. Before the primary investigator conducted interviews with participants, the primary investigator's dissertation committee reviewed a protocol first draft. The dissertation committee consisted of three licensed psychologists and faculty members at an APA-accredited university, each with experience in conducting qualitative research. Feedback from the committee provided the primary investigator with insight and suggestions for minor changes to the protocol. Suggested edits to the protocol included question wording, question order and addition/subtraction of specific protocol items.

The interview protocol consisted of three parts: opening questions, questions specific to an intra-ethnic conflict event, and a few closing questions. Opening questions were intended to elicit information about the nature of the participants' school context and their ethnic identity. Closing questions were open-ended and provided both an opportunity to speak directly about CBREs and a reflection on participating in the interview process.

The primary investigator decided to include closing questions at the end of the initial interview instead of contacting participants for closing questions two to three days following the initial interview. This was decided due to challenges that arose in the scheduling process that led the primary investigator to believe that successfully contacting participants for this follow-up portion might have been difficult. While asking closing questions as part of the initial interview did not give participants much time to consider reactions to the process, it avoided a potential problem of having incomplete data in case some participants could not be reached for the follow-up at a later date. Additionally, this allowed for in-person administration of closing questions. In total, the interview protocol contained fourteen formal questions (not including the many probing, clarifying, and follow-up queries) probing participants' views on their ethnic identity, views/experiences towards intra-Latina/o relations, and their experience with an intra-Latina/o conflict in school. See Appendix G to review this document.

### **Procedures for Collecting Data**

**Recruiting participants.** Three primary methods were used to recruit and identify potential participants: in-person contacts, email, and word of mouth requests among personal and professional contacts. Personal recruitment announcements were made at four different settings: a public-school psychology class, a charter school homeroom class, a church youth group, and an after-school community-based college prep program. Each in-person presentation included introduction of the primary investigator, statement of the primary investigator's credentials, description of study, purpose of study, inclusion criteria, participant compensation, parental consent requirements, and answering clarifying questions. Across all four in-person presentations,

approximately 115 potential participants were present. After the recruitment presentation, interested individuals were invited to sign up with their contact information and were provided with permission/assent forms.

Email solicitations for recruits were made through the following contacts: a school district's school counseling program, a community college faculty member, a principal at a local private school and a neighborhood community newspaper. The primary investigator provided each of the above with recruitment flyer, description of study, and offer to discuss study more in-depth either in person or via phone. Each of the above agreed to advertise either directly with specific individuals or more generally (posting flyers, forwarding flyer email) with a larger pool of potential participants. It was not possible to determine how many potential participants learned about or viewed the study flyer through this recruitment method.

Finally, the primary investigator also informed personal and professional contacts of the study and freely passed along study flyer and requested help with participant recruitment. As with the email method above, it is unknown how many potential participants were informed of this study via this word-of-mouth method.

For potential participants who did not hear recruitment information in person, they had the option of contacting the primary researcher through email or phone. Once the potential participant made contact to express interest in participation, the (electronic) demographic and informed consent forms were sent to the participants immediately. A follow-up email or phone call (potential participant's preferred method of being contacted) was then made if informed consent, parental consent and demographic forms were not received after one week. Once the paperwork was received from participants (or

arrangements were made to collect documents at time of in-person interview), an interview time was arranged.

Ultimately, each of the recruitment methods identified multiple study participants: personal/professional contacts yielded two participants, two participants were identified through email solicitations, and in-person presentations helped recruit five participants. Once an individual acknowledged interest in the study, the primary investigator provided them and their family with a recruitment letter. Also, other research materials (i.e., parental consent form, recruitment flyer, demographic forms) were provided to these potential participants, formally inviting them to participate in the interview process. While nine individuals eventually participated in the study (interview completion), recruitment methods yielded a list of an additional twenty individuals that were present for in-person recruitment presentation, wrote down their name on an interest list but ultimately were either unreachable, did not secure parental consent, provided incomplete contact information, or simply did not respond to follow up contact attempts.

**Interviews and transcriptions.** The primary investigator conducted all participant interviews. The interviews were conducted in-person, and in one session. The range of completion time range for the interviews was 40 – 80 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded.

Interviews were semi-structured containing mostly open-ended questions. The primary investigator asked clarifying, probing, and follow-up questions to participant responses. Face-to-face interviews were used instead of phone interviews based on research that describes traditional Latina/o values such as *personalismo* (Gloria, 2004). The value of *personalismo* is evident in people and interactions that are well-meaning,

objective, caring, and respectful (Corona, 2010). Interactions infused with *personalismo* can lead to higher levels of trust between the involved parties (Corona, 2010).

Conducting in-person interviews were expected to tap into this traditional cultural value and simultaneously lead to a stronger rapport between researcher and participant.

The location of interview administration varied by participant, in an attempt to eliminate travel and time barriers for participants and their families. The interviewer met students in their own neighborhood at locations determined together during pre-interview phone call. Interview locations ultimately included: School classrooms, public library study rooms, rooms on a church campus, lunch tables on a school campus, and even a park/playground bench area. In all cases, there was adequate privacy for student to indicate comfort in speaking about personal events, yet still public in the sense that others were present or nearby.

At the outset of each interview, a participant induction was implemented which included (Levers, 2006) an explanation of the framework for the study, specific purposes of the study, potential risks to the study participants, benefits of the study for participants, voluntary status and ability to withdraw at any time, an explanation of informed consent, answering any participant questions about the above, an explanation on how their confidentiality will be maintained, and review of the informed consent forms. Interviews were recorded via digital audio recorder and all cases were transcribed by the primary investigator.

The primary investigator transcribed all interviews verbatim, with the exception of superfluous encouraging statements or nonverbal sounds. At this point, the primary investigator deleted any identifying information (names, locations) from the transcription.

Each transcription was assigned a code. The audio recordings were stored on a password secured external drive as a backup of the written transcriptions.

### **Procedures for Analyzing Data**

**Consensual qualitative research methodology.** The principle investigator used Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997), a methodology that uses open-ended questions during semi-structured interviews. Keys to CQR include the meticulous procedures of data analysis that rely on research team members discussing and coming to agreement on the meaning of participant data (Hill et al., 2005). Team consensus, discussion of biases, and auditor reviews are each important parts of the data analysis process, and each contributed to conclusions reached that are objective as possible. The open question format that CQR utilizes (Hill et al., 2005) allowed for in depth and rich descriptions of the participants' inner experiences. Selecting a methodology explicitly used in studies investigating participants' inner experiences was especially beneficial for a topic like intra-racial conflicts, which the principle investigator anticipated could potentially yield complex themes and evoke strong emotions. CQR has also been found to be particularly effective in examining events that “are hidden from public view” or “have not been previously studied” (Hill et al., 2005, p. 18). Thus, CQR was a good fit for examination of a phenomenon that has the potential to be covert, can result in internal emotional reactions, and is not always openly processed.

Important to note is the fact that the primary investigator has conducted an extensive literature review on the topic. Therefore, it was necessary for to “forget” the literature in order to truly let participant data present itself (Hill et al., 1997). Though other team members did not have the same research experience, they were made aware of

the primary researcher's potential biases and encouraged to attend to those biases throughout the analysis.

According to CQR guidelines (Hill et al, 2005), the primary investigator created a team that could work well together. A vital component of CQR is the team's willingness to collaborate during the analysis stage in a manner that is respectful while at the same time ensuring that all members feel comfortable enough to share their perspectives. It was important that each team member felt the analysis setting was safe because at times disagreements arose about the meaning of participant data (Hill et al., 1997). Central to effective CQR analysis is the team's willingness to discuss these differences, listen to others' opinions, and remain open-minded and flexible to finding the true meaning of interviewees' words. The CQR data analysis was an interpersonal process, and as such attention was given to group dynamics and potential power struggles – though none arose. Therefore, the primary investigator acknowledged potential for disagreements early on and encouraged each team member to be open to others' viewpoints while advocating for their own perspective as well. During analysis, moments occurred when team members disagreed with each other and in all instances these disagreements were handled with respectful dialogue and discussed until consensus was reached.

**Domaining the transcripts.** The first stage of analysis was to group all participant data into appropriate domains (Hill et al., 1997). Initial domains were created based on the interview protocol. Team members showed patience and flexibility with the domain list as it, especially in the beginning of the analysis process, was fluid. Once the domain list was finalized, the principle investigator took the lead on domaining transcripts independently. At research meetings, the primary investigator led the review

through the transcript and the team discussed which data fit in which domain. Team members were provided with the domain data prior to meeting so they had a chance to closely examine the data. There were instances where disagreement occurred, but the process of coming to consensus, a central tenet of CQR, was followed. At times, data fit into multiple categories simultaneously.

**Developing core ideas.** During the next phase, the team used data to construct “core ideas” (Hill et al, 2005). Constructing a core idea is “boiling” the data down to their main ideas (Hill et al., 1997). Core ideas described the participant’s explicit meaning in their words. In this phase of the process it was important for team members to consider the context of each individual participant. As in the domaining process, initially the principle investigator independently developed cores, and then the whole team reviewed the core ideas until consensus was reached.

Once core ideas for each case were completed and in order to add a new perspective to the data analysis process, an outside auditor, not affiliated with the consensus process, reviewed the cores developed by the team. As outlined by Hill (1997), the auditor’s responsibilities were to make sure data fit in the identified domains, all important data in the domain are reflected in the core ideas, and the core ideas accurately and concisely described the domains. The auditor then made suggestions for revisions of the team’s domaining and coring decisions. The team considered auditor feedback and decided together whether to accept or reject the auditor’s recommendations.

**Cross-analysis.** Finally, during the cross-analysis phase, a broader, higher level interpretation of the data was performed (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). At this point, core ideas from individual cases were compared to each other to find common

themes across cases. Core ideas that fit together were placed into a category. Hill described the process as “creative” while at the same time cautioning that decisions about categories must be grounded in the data.

In this stage, domains were divided amongst the team with each team member taking the lead in developing categories for a particular domain. The primary investigator developed categories for seven domains while each team member wrote categories for three domains. Draft categories were then reviewed and discussed by the entire team until consensus was reached regarding the draft category title. At this stage, the categories and domains were sent to the auditor for review. When the team received these audit suggestions, the team discussed the proposed revisions and whether to accept, reject or further revise the auditor suggestions and again through a team consensus process.

## Chapter 4: Results

Eleven domains and sixty-four categories emerged from the data analysis. These findings are presented organized by interview section: a) personal and school context, b) specific conflict incident and c) closing thoughts. Within each section, categories are presented within each of the eleven domains. According to CQR guidelines (Hill, 1997), frequencies for each category were identified as occurring either *generally*, *typically* or *variantly*. Categories containing core ideas from eight or nine cases were labeled *general*. *Typical* categories consisted of core ideas from five to seven cases. Finally, categories represented by two to four cases were identified as *variant*. Stand-alone ideas (those only identified in one case), however compelling, were not captured in categories. Particularly representative, powerful or poignant participant quotes have been integrated into the following presented findings to ensure readers experience participants' voices. Core ideas have also been incorporated into the presentation of findings. Readers are encouraged to review the narrative of findings and Tables 1, 2 and 3 congruently since the tables will provide a structured guide of the findings. Following a review of categories identified, a typical pathway representing all general and typical categories is presented. This section concludes with a detailed description of one particular case chosen to be an illustrative example of the phenomenon due to the many typical and general categories it represents.

### Personal and School Context Findings

The five opening questions were intended to: a) provide contextual data for participants' lives/experiences, b) prime participants to begin thinking about their own ethnicity, c) explore participants' ethnic identity and d) build rapport between participant-

Table 1. Domains, Categories, and Frequencies of Contextual Findings

<u>Domain</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Frequency*</u>
1. Personal meaning of Latina/o identity	P is proud to be Latina/o	Typical
	Cultural traditions and celebrations (holidays, music, food, history) are important	Typical
	P recognizes he/she is perceived negatively or stereotyped	Typical
	Associated with strength, capability and hard work	Typical
	Closeness and connection to family	Typical
	P needs to blend multiple cultures together	Typical
	Religion/church/faith is valued	Variant
	Being connected to a larger cultural community	Variant
	Spanish language fluency is important	Variant
	P must manage his/her own negative views about their cultural identity	Variant
2. Family lessons about Latina/o identity	Have pride in cultural traditions and family	Typical
	Spanish language fluency is encouraged	Variant
	Don't react negatively to others talking about you	Variant
	It is important to stand up for yourself	Variant
	Respect your elders	Variant
	Hispanic women are strong role models	Variant
3. Nature of high school friendship networks	Religion is important	Variant
	P's friendship network is culturally diverse	General
	P's school is ethnically diverse	Typical
	Students use stereotypical ideas in the forms of jokes and slurs	Variant
	P's friend group is respectful of culture, both accepting and non-judgmental	Variant
4. School in-group and out-group interactions	P is comfortable with Latina/o friend groups	Variant
	P experiences stereotypes or racism from people at school	Typical
	P feels sense of belonging at school due to common ethnic identity with others	Typical

Note. P = Participant

\* Nine total cases. General = 8-9, Typical = 5-7, Variant = 2-4

interviewer prior to discussing the main conflict event. Four domains emerged out of these opening questions, and they are represented in Table 1.

### **Personal meaning of Latina/o identity**

Typically, participants reported they were proud of their Latina/o identity. For example, Participant 6 stated, "...for me you're Mexican if you have pride and you're not gonna let anyone bring you down because of who you are..." Participant 1 said that being Latino "defines pride" and that he takes it "like a privilege." Participants' pride in being Latina/o meant it was important to them that others identified their ethnicity accurately. Participant 4 noted, "And if I let them pick who I really am, then what really am I? So, I gotta stand firm with what I am." Participant 5 spoke about how much it bothers him when others mistake that he's not Latina/o: "sometimes it like pisses me off and irritates me."

Participants also typically stated that cultural traditions and celebrations (e.g., holidays, music, food, history) are an important part of their ethnic identity. Participant 7 shared, "I actually like it because I like that I know a lot about where I come from – my Mexican culture and the music and the food and the holidays." Similarly, Participant 9 noted, "I like the culture like the dances and the food is just exciting." For participants, the Latina/o identity was also typically associated with strength, capability and hard work. This positive association was evident when Participant 2 spoke about the meaning of Mexican sports teams' success:

Well, mostly people think Mexicans are bad but we prove them wrong by showing them how [successful] we do in our sports...we decide no we're gonna

prove them wrong, train really hard and keep at it and then tell them look you were calling us this and look at us Mexicans showing you off.

The sentiment is shared by Participant 9 who stated, “I find that very interesting how Mexicans can just pick themselves up from whatever situation.” Another typical finding is that participants associated their Latina/o identity with a closeness and connection to family. Nowhere was this clearer than when Participant 5 stated, “Family is important because it makes us Mexicans get together, but it’s hard because they live in Mexico and we live here. But we’re constantly calling each other and keeping in touch because we’re a family.” When asked what it means to be Hispanic, Participant 4 responded, “What it really means to me is that I have a family from my mom’s side, and since she’s Mexican I know that there’s family that I know will always have my back – will always love me.” Participants also typically reported a need to blend their Latina/o identity with at least one other cultural identity as well. Participant 2 spoke about this in a positive light noting that coming from two different backgrounds “brings more culture into my family.” Participants 9 and 6 also spoke about this blending of cultures positively, describing the process as “cool and nice” and that the cultures “mix well together.” However, Participant 4 had a different perspective and noted that “being bi-racial” can be “sometimes hard” and “challenging.”

A final typical finding was that participants recognized that at times they are perceived negatively or stereotyped. Participant 3 shared, “Sometimes I don’t really like – it’s bad to be Mexican at sometimes because people accuse you of stuff and they just think that you’re a bad person or something.” Similarly, when Participant 8 was asked what it means to be Mexican, he responded in part, “to be labeled” and “to have that used

against me.” Participant 1 shared his belief that Latina/o gang culture, at least in part, contributes to a perception that Latina/os are aggressive, not responsible and [having] no manners.” A related, variantly reported category was that participants indicated a need to manage his/her own negative views about their own cultural identity. For instance, Participant 2 spoke about having mixed reactions to his ethnic identity that included being ashamed, particularly that he and others associate being Latina/o with drugs and violence. Participant 8 directly stated his “negative connotations of being Hispanic” which include “characteristics stubborn, ignorant, judgmental, criticism.”

This domain also yielded four other variantly reported categories. First, participants indicated that religion/church/faith is valued. Participant 6 reported that her family “raised her to always have faith” and that “belief in and celebration of God and church are important.” Participant 2 noted that going to church helps him and his family; while Participant 3 shared that “it’s good to go to a Spanish-speaking church because of the culture and language issues in the family.” Second, participants identified Spanish language proficiency as being important. Participant 3 even looks at his Spanish language as a gift, describing speaking Spanish as a strength that he can use in social situations. Third, participants variantly noted that part of what made being Hispanic important is being connected to a larger cultural community. Participant 8 made it clear that being Hispanic leads to feelings of comfort with and from other Hispanics. He shared, “I can be widely accepted,” “Mexican culture is really dominant here” and “other Hispanics can be comfortable around me just because of that one detail.” Participant 3 explained it is important to be connected with the Mexican community because it can be like an extension of his family. Finally, participants variantly linked being Hispanic with valuing

respect towards others. Participant 9 and 3 both noted how manners and respect are important parts of the Latina/o culture.

### **Family lessons about Latina/o identity**

Typically, participants reported that family lessons included having pride in cultural traditions and family. Participant 9 spoke about her mom teaching her pride through example: “My mom’s Mexican and she’s always talking to me about how proud she is and how for example how her mom is like just a strong woman.” Participant 1 explained that observing the success of some family members helps him helps him think stereotypes about Latina/os aren’t true. He said:

Everything has gone his way and I think that he telling me others think Latinos are lazy, I don’t see it that way because of him. Because he has accomplished so much and with such little education. For me it’s very valuable what he has done and what he has taught me.

Participants also reported five variant categories in this domain. First, participants stated that family encourages Spanish language fluency. Participant 8 even spoke about family expecting Spanish usage and that his family “uses it against” him when he doesn’t speak Spanish. Participants 2, 4 and 6 also pointed out that speaking Spanish helps them to communicate with family members. The importance of religion emerged as a second variant category. When asked whether he perceived a link between ethnicity and religion, Participant 8 answered, “Well, I’d like to say so because religion is a lot of influence...they are linked...” In a third variant category, participants also reported family taught them the importance of respecting elders. Participant 7 highlighted just how important this lesson is when she said:

Respect my elders...that's the number one thing that I've learned from the Mexican culture that I have to learn how to understand and respect other people - that not everybody is the same you know? That's like the number one thing I've learned is respect.

Participants 4 and 9 also specifically pointed out respecting elders being taught to them by family. A fourth variant category emerged with participants pointing out learning that Hispanic women are strong role models. Participant 1 said, "She [Participant's mother] works two jobs, doesn't get paid much but yet she gets money to feed us and gives us a roof, and I think that's very strong. I see Latinas and Hispanic women like a very strong role model for me whether or not they are a mother. They are here, and they give it their best." Participant 9 spoke about similar perception of Latina women: "I think it's special because us females are the ones who keep the house strong and we give birth to children it's like we're the world. We're awesome. Like when my mom talked about Frida something, that one Mexican chick you know?" Finally, participants variably reported learning from family the importance to stand up for oneself. This idea was especially clear when Participant 7 described her defensive mindset as, "Like if somebody tells you something you need to stick up for yourself. If somebody hits you, you hit them. It's more like an 'eye for an eye' type of thing."

### **Nature of high school friendship networks**

Participants generally described having an ethnically diverse friendship network. Participant 3 said that he's "friends with all races" and that it's quite typical that people mix in different racial and ethnic groups for friendships at his school. Similarly, Participant 4 reported, "Mines [*sic*] pretty broad: White, Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic,

branches of other whites, Asians and that pretty much wraps up the whole group.” Two other participants spoke about specifically choosing an ethnically diverse friendship network due to those groups being “accepting” and having “no judging.” Having diverse friends is possibly facilitated given that participants also typically reported attending ethnically diverse schools. For instance, Participant 8 noted his school “is not really populated with Hispanics. It’s really Whites and other ones [ethnicities].” Participant 3 spoke about four races being represented and that “all of the groups are pretty equal in number.”

Three additional variant categories emerged in this domain. First, students use stereotypical ideas in jokes or slurs. Participant 9 notes, especially with students outside of her friend group, that racist jokes are common. She recalls hearing, “*‘oh you’re just fresh out of the border’ or ‘you’re a beaner.’*” While this participant indicated not liking the presence of these racist jokes, two other participants noted they are accustomed to them in their social group and they are not bothersome, perhaps even functional. For instance, Participant 4 was clear that the “inappropriate stereotype jokes” are “not personal, just for fun” and “like football, back and forth.” Also, Participant 1 described how using a term like “*nigga*” when speaking with his Hispanic friends is not offensive to he or his friends because they are “accustomed to using that word” and are “very comfortable” with it as a way of “imitating the way they [Black students at school] talk.” Another variant finding is that P’s friend groups are respectful of culture, being both accepting and non-judgmental. Participant 5 shared that “everybody just gets along” and “there’s really no judging I guess.” Similarly, Participant 9 described her friends as “more accepting” and not racist against anybody. Finally, participants variantly indicated

also being comfortable in Latina/o-only friend groups. Participant 8 talked about feeling “comfortable by default with Hispanics because of the quick easy connection” he has with them. Participant 7 noted intentionally spending time with other Mexicans she calls “the ‘*Paisa*’ side” describing them as “more into their culture,” speak Spanish, like the music/culture and are “truly Mexican.” Still another participant spoke of the comfort he feels in same ethnic group friend groups due to conflicts occurring between ethnic groups at his school.

### **School in-group and out-group interactions**

Regarding what it’s like being Latina/o at participants’ schools, two typical categories emerged. First, participants described feeling a sense of belonging due to common ethnic identity with others. For instance, Participant 1 reported that being around so many other Latina/os “gives me the comfort of being here and being able to collaborate with other students.” Similarly, Participant 3 shared that he thinks “it’s cool because I can bond with all the Mexicans.” Participant 8 spoke to “instantly being liked” and acceptance for anyone who’s able to speak Spanish. A second typical finding is that participants reported they experience stereotypes or racism at school. Participant 9 spoke about experiencing transgressions from teachers and students who “associate Asians with being smart and Mexicans with being dumb/stupid.” Participant 3 also shared experiences where school staff had a “negative attitude” towards him because he is Mexican and reports feeling he is “treated unfairly.” In particular, he recalled being “picked on” by the teacher and told he wasn’t allowed to speak Spanish at school which felt “like she’s trying to take away something that was given to me.”

### **Specific Conflict Incident Findings**

Five semi-structured protocol questions were administered with the intent of gaining a detailed, in-depth description of the participants' experiences of a specific conflict event. First, participants were simply asked to describe the conflict incident. Next, participants explained what they believe caused the conflict. Third, participants were asked to share their internal experiences throughout the conflict, including feelings and thought reactions. Participants then described the resolution or outcome, if any, of the conflict event. The next question was whether or how school staff or other adults were involved in the conflict or resolution of conflict. Finally, the interviewer asked whether or not the conflict had any impact on their academic performance. From these five questions, six domains and two subdomains emerged and are presented below. The first domain, Conflict Details, is divided into two sub-domains: description of reasons for conflict event and actual conflict actions.

#### **Conflict Event: Description of ethnicity/culture-based reasons for conflict**

Participants typically reported that a reason for the conflict event was that peers denied or rejected their Latina/o identity. Participant 1 described one such instance: "Like when they call me White and they're not my friends it pisses me off 'cause I know I'm Mexican and they keep coming at me like I'm not and it gets to me." Participant 6 has similar experiences, and she recalled peers telling her, "You're just some little white girl who thinks she's Mexican. You're not even Mexican." Both participants 8 and 9 spoke about others not believing that they are Latina/o, even though they are. Within this category, five sub-categories also emerged. The first sub-category, typically reported, was denial of Latina/o identity based on lack of Spanish speaking fluency. Participant 4

Table 2. Domains, Categories, and Frequencies of Findings Regarding Conflict Event

<u>Domain</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Frequency*</u>
1. Conflict event description		
a. Description of ethnicity/ culture-based reasons for conflict	Peers denied or rejected P's Latina/o identity Based on lack of Spanish speaking fluency Based on skin color Based on physical features (e.g. hair, eyes, general ethnic appearance Based on style of clothing Based on mixed ethnicity There were value differences between P and other students	Typical Typical Typical Typical Variant Variant Typical
b. Conflict actions	Verbal confrontation by name-calling or ethnic slurs Social exclusion P is excluded by peers P excludes other peers Physical intimidation was used	Typical Typical Variant Variant Variant
2. P's feelings/reactions to conflict	Sad/hurt Anger/hate Guilty, not good enough, a need to prove ethnic identity or apologize for not being Latina/o 'enough' Excluded by others Helpless to change the conflict Coped by distancing self from the conflict Questioned self in response to conflict	General Typical Typical Typical Variant Variant Variant
3. Conflict Resolution/Outcome	P changed his/her friendship network P made a personally positive change P focused more intently on their education P realized the importance of their ethnicity The conflict remains unresolved Apologies were made and relationship was repaired P ignores the conflict Someone else intervened and helped P	Typical Typical Variant Variant Variant Variant Variant Variant
4. Role of school staff or other adults in conflict	P did not involve or inform school staff of conflict P views staff as ineffective in their ability to resolve the conflict P anticipates and seeks to avoid punitive consequences P feels he/she can solve conflict by self P felt supported by some adults	Typical Variant Variant Variant Variant
5. Conflict effect on academic performance	Had no effect on academic performance P was able to persevere and succeed in meeting goals Adversely influenced school attendance or effort	General Typical Variant

Note. P = Participant

\* Nine total cases. General = 8-9, Typical = 5-7, Variant = 2-4

explained that sometimes others will “categorize you because you don’t know the language or the language is foreign to you or because you don’t know the language very good.” Participant 5 has experienced similar messages when peers tell him “Damn, you sound so White!” and they “start clowning on it.” In a second typical sub-category, participants reported peers used skin color as a way of rejecting their Latina/o identity. Participant 5 shared that because “my skin’s White I can’t do nothing about it” his friends call him *‘guero.’* Participant 8 described interactions where peers “see me differently” and “say that my skin looks white,” using that as evidence that he isn’t really Latina/o. Several participants discussed examples of a third typically reported sub-category where peers point out other physical features to deny participants’ identity. Three participants spoke about hair type or color being at least one source of the conflict. Other physical features or general ethnic appearance were also discussed. Specifically, Participant 8 explained that a “bump on my nose” that he says is biologically similar to his grandmother who is “like an Indian, native Mexican” contributes to him “being discriminated from other Mexicans.” A fourth sub-category variantly reported is based on style of clothing. Participant 7 was called “whitewashed” and that she “looks and dresses White,” while Participant 6 reports “a lot of the Mexican girls...eyed me up and down” based on her clothes. Participant 1 also pointed out that differences in clothing are obvious indicators of larger differences, some that have the potential to lead to conflicts. A final sub-category, variantly reported was the idea that simply being mixed ethnicity can contribute to these ethnic conflicts. Participant 4, who identifies as half-Mexican and half-Vietnamese, reported that the “pure” Mexican group “categorizes” him as “not Mexican” and, in fact, as being “only Vietnamese/Asian.” Participant 9 echoed this

experience when she described one peer's decision to "leave me just because I'm mixed...for another fully Mexican friend she had."

A second category that typically emerged as a reason for the conflict was that there were value differences between the participants and other students. Multiple participants spoke about their choice to not engage in drug use, alcohol consumption or similar "partying" and the judgment this received from other Latina/o peers who made different choices. Participant 7 reported that when friends go to Mexico to "party" and she does not join them, tells them "I'm not into that" her Mexican peers have said, "*she's Mexican I don't know why she's acting like she's White.*" Translation: why's she acting stupid she knows she's Mexican." Prioritization of academics was also a source of value difference and conflict for several participants. Participants 1, 2 and 6 all talked about choosing a path towards success that focused on succeeding in school, a choice in direct conflict with other Latina/o peers who seemed to point out that was not a Latina/o thing to do.

### **Conflict Actions**

Conflict events were found to occur in three ways: verbal confrontation with name-calling or ethnic slurs (typically reported), social exclusion (typically reported) or physical intimidation (variably reported). Seven participants shared examples of name-calling or ethnic slurs. Participant 3 reported being called "*border hopper*" and "*beaner*" – both of which he takes as offensive. Participant 5 reports being called '*guero*' in part due to his "blonde-ish arm hair" and "white skin." Participant 7 shared that in response to someone intentionally, inaccurately being labeled White, she remarked on that person's dark skin. She reported calling the other girl "*India*," "*bajado del cerro*," and asking her

“you’re so *India* like, where’d you leave your donkey?” to “mess with her” and “be rude to her because she was really dark skinned.” Social exclusion was another form typically taken by these ethnic conflicts. Within this category, two sub-categories also emerged with participants variably reporting they both engaged in and were the victim of this social exclusion. In one instance, Participant 9 spoke about being told “don’t associate with me, you’re not my friend,” because the participant identifies as mixed ethnicity. Participant 8 also stated he feels “discriminated against” and “not accepted” by others who feel he “isn’t Hispanic.” Alternatively, Participant 2 spoke about actively keeping himself away from another group of Mexican-Americans specifically to separate himself from the negative stereotypes (drug use) they might be eliciting from others. Variably, the final type of conflict was that of physical intimidation. One participant indicated a weapon was involved in the conflict: “they pulled a shank on me” and also “threatened to beat my ass.” Participants 3 and 7 also described that conflicts, in addition to a verbal component, also led to physical altercations including “pushing” and “hitting.”

### **Participants’ feelings/reactions to conflict**

Generally, participants reported feeling sad or hurt as a result of experiencing the conflict. Participant 3 shared, “...when he says something like that I feel like crap basically. I feel he’s calling me dirt. I feel like he’s calling me trash. Especially when he says, ‘those people’ as referring to Mexicans.” Participant 9 reported feeling “upset because I was at the point of crying” and even that she’s “...had suicidal thoughts to be honest. It’s like, why am I living if I’m not being accepted for who I am?” Additionally, Participant 4 agreed that when others question his ethnicity it’s hurtful because “it’s like forgetting a person’s name...it shouldn’t be like that” because “it’s like not

acknowledging you.” Others typically reported feeling angry or hate in response.

Participant 5 said, “sometimes it pisses me off” and that, “I’ll *butt hurt* I guess – you know like get maddish...” Also, Participant 9 talked about wanting to “sock them in the face!” Another typical finding was participants feeling guilty, not good enough and a need to prove their ethnic identity or even apologize for not being Hispanic “enough.” Participant 8 recounted “weird looks perhaps like you have to prove what you are to them” and then questioning, “if I do prove it, what will happen? What will it do, does it even matter? Does that mean I’m just accepted or something?” Participant 7 expressed the guilt she feels sometimes:

It makes me feel bad. Sometimes I’ll think to myself dang, I should speak more Spanish and then again I feel like I should ask for permission to go to TJ [referring to Tijuana, Mexico] even though I don’t want to you know just to prove that I *am* Mexican. Or [I’ll think] oh I should speak more Spanish or ask more questions about their culture.

Participant 9 added, “And I constantly apologize like I’m sorry or maybe there’s one word I don’t understand and I’m like I’m sorry I don’t know this word, I’m sorry I’m not full Mexican. And I’m tired of apologizing.” The last typical finding in this domain is that participants reported feeling excluded by others. Participant 9 noted times when others are playing a Spanish game “and they don’t include me, they’re like oh no you probably don’t know all these words. And I’m just like I want to play, I want to be a part of this but sometimes I have to sit out.” Similarly, Participant 8 stated he feels “socially hurt” at some of the “dirty looks” and “gossip” that he experiences.

In addition to the three above categories, three variant categories also emerged in this feelings/reactions domain. First, participants reported feeling helpless to change the conflict. Participant 2 shared feeling like his hands are tied “and I’m trying to get out and the rope burns hurting too much so I just stopped.” Participant 5 also mentioned that when faced with teasing and name-calling he feels he can’t really do anything about it. A second variant category is that participants tried to not let the conflict bother them. This was evident in cases like Participant 4’s who indicated choosing to ignore others, “not care” and “let it go.” Finally, some participants variantly ended up questioning themselves in response to the conflict. Participant 8 spoke about feeling “a sense of doubt or having an identity problem, not being able to identify yourself clearly.” Participant 6 even questioned her status in her family, “There was a time when I was thinking well maybe I *am* adopted. Maybe my mom *is* White or something.”

### **Conflict Resolution/Outcome**

Regarding conflict outcomes, two typical categories emerged, with the second typical category also yielding two sub-categories. The first typical category was that participants reported changing their friendship network. Participant 1 spoke about a decision to “make more friends in gangs” to “bring me to a comfort of knowing they’ve got my back.” Participant 2 decided to spend more time with peers outside of his school, particularly those in his church youth group who are similar to him and don’t want to take part in what he thinks are unhealthy behaviors. Participants also spoke typically of making a personally positive change with variant sub-categories including focusing more intently on their education and realizing the importance of their ethnicity. In support of the first sub-category, Participants 1 and 4 described choosing to do their best in school

and choose the path of education as opposed to other more negative options. As for the second sub-category, realizing the importance of their ethnicity, Participant 9 reported, “And I was like wow, I really didn’t realize that being diverse is important and it doesn’t matter it’s America for god sakes there are so many different types of people just because you’re not fully a race doesn’t mean you can’t be friends with other people.”

Additionally, participants variantly reported the conflict largely remained unresolved. Participant 4 explained, “most of it just ends with us going back to work and doing what we were doing, the conversation just goes silent.” Participant 5 agreed that the conflicts he experiences are not resolved and are “pretty much a continuing thing.” Similarly, the second category showed that participants variantly tried to ignore the conflict. Participants 4 and 5 both spoke about the idea that comments and judgments from others are going to occur no matter what so sometimes they simply stay quiet and do nothing in response, even though it is bothersome. Participant 6 also pointed out that even when she changed behaviors in response to others’ judgments, people still doubted her so she decided to simply “ignore them, I didn’t listen to what they said anymore. I just went my own way.” A third variant category showed that participants reported apologies were made and relationships were repaired in some cases. Participant 3 said that he received an apology “for being racist and saying dumb stuff” and that “things are good between us now.” Participant 1 had a similar experience where the other person apologized to him, he accepted the apology and they went and ate a meal together that day. The final variant category was that participants reported someone else intervened and helped P. Participant 1 received help from a bystander off campus who drove him to safety while Participant 9 had a friend at school confront another group on her behalf.

### **Role of school staff or other adults in conflict**

Generally, participants reported that they did not involve or inform school staff of the conflict they experienced. Participant 6 noted that staff were not involved and “did not even know about” the conflict occurring. Lack of awareness by staff was also present for multiple other participants. Participant 9 even shared that at least one staff member had a suspicion that all was not well but when confronted, she told the staff that everything was “perfectly fine.” As for why school staff was not involved or uninformed, participants typically perceived school staff as ineffective in their ability to resolve the conflict. Participant 8 anticipated that if asked for help, school staff would just “give more of their personal opinion” on the matter. Participant 5 thought that staff simply “wouldn’t understand,” and Participant 4 similarly expected staff would not help but rather “make it awkward.” Another sub-category and reason P didn’t involve school staff is that they typically anticipated and sought to avoid punitive consequences. Participant 9 disclosed not wanting to tell “for purposes of not wanting to get into trouble.” Participant 5 spoke about not wanting to get others in trouble when he asked, “why get other people in trouble when you messed up? I take responsibility for my actions so I don’t really try to get other people in trouble for it.” He elaborated that he believes it possible school staff would classify the conflict as a “hate crime” which would mean the “school would get involved and then the school could get in trouble; so they know that you can’t talk like that.” A final sub-category emerged that variantly participants felt they could solve the conflict by themselves. Four participants all similarly felt that they would be able to more effectively solve the problem independently and not having a need or desire for

school staff assistance. Finally, and variantly, some participants at least felt supported by some adults at some point in the conflict experience. Participant 2 found support in a youth pastor who reinforced his choices to separate from a peer group at school. Participant 6 noted finding at least minimal support from a teacher who gave her advice to ignore peers' comments/judgments.

### **Conflict effect on academic performance**

Generally, participants reported that the conflict did not have an effect on their academic performance. Participants reported no impact on their academics because they didn't let the conflict stop their strong performance. Three participants (6, 7 and 8) described an ability to compartmentalize or separate out the reactions they have to the conflict from their functioning at school. Typically, participants described an ability to persevere and succeed in meeting school goals. Participant 1 was clear that "nothing can change" his academic performance because he "has my mind set on what I have to do." Participant 4 similarly stated:

I don't let it have an impact on my grades. Of course, there's gonna be some people where it impacts their grades...but for me if I just avoid that, and do what I'm doing, the real answer is that the reason I have this grade is because of my work.

Additionally, Participants 2 and 7 both mentioned that their participation as athletes helped them persevere with strong academic performance in the face of these conflicts. Despite the general finding that academics were not impacted, follow-up questions did reveal a variant finding that participants' attendance or effort were adversely influenced. Though highly valuing education, a difference between her and many of her Mexican-

American peers, Participant 6 shared: “I really want all A’s but some part of my brain thinks if I get all A’s I’m gonna get judged...so I don’t try as much in most classes...I hold myself back a little bit.” Also, Participants 9 and 3 both told stories about not attending class due to trying to avoid further conflict and, as one participant stated, “...if I don’t go to class, I won’t pass. But if I do go then I’m not happy.”

### **Closing Thoughts**

#### **Impact of interview on participant**

Participants typically reported feeling better or a sense of relief as a result of participating in the study. Participant 2 said he felt “a lot better, like I actually had someone to talk to so I could get it all off.” Participant 3 said that he felt “happy now” and “like I don’t have to worry about it no more, like I just got it out of my chest and I feel good now.” Participant 4 felt that now he knows “I’m not the only one thinking about” or experiencing racial conflicts which validates his experiences. Participant 9 noted that participating was “relieving because I don’t talk to too many people about race.” Participants also typically indicated they simply enjoyed sharing their experiences with the interviewer. Participant 3 found the experience “exciting” since he met someone new and was able to share about his life. Participant 7 felt “glad” to participate in the study because she’s “never really heard of a type of thing were people are talking about their race with people of their race...in schools like assemblies where we talk about other races but never in between our race there’s never that one thing.” Variantly, some participants noted feeling uncomfortable or sad as a result of participating, as if they were re-living the experiences. Participant 8 answered, “It was kind of like re-living some

Table 3. Domains, Categories, and Frequencies of Closing Thoughts

<u>Domain</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Frequency*</u>
1. Impact of interview on P	P felt better and relief	Typical
	P enjoyed sharing their experience with interviewer	Typical
	P felt uncomfortable and/or sad re-living experiences	Variant
2. What P wants others to know	Adults can be a positive influence on students	Typical
	Understand the diversity within the Latina/o community	Variant

\* Nine total cases. General = 8-9, Typical = 5-7, Variant = 2-4

*Note.* P = Participant

emotions, views, memories that I had in the past that I had to come back to. Not really much of a positive feeling. More like a negative one.” Participant 6 explained that even though the interview process was positive overall, “I wanted to cry remembering how I felt back then” because “it was hurtful and very sad because I was remembering what they said the way they said it how I felt after they said it.”

### **What Participants want others to know**

Participants were specifically asked what messages they would like to pass on to readers of this study. Typically, participants reported wanting others to know that adults can be a positive influence on students. Participant 1 noted that “even a few little words” can encourage Hispanic students about their education. Participant 7 wants teachers to attempt to “fill in the gaps” of cultural information that students might not be aware of. Participant 4 was clear in suggesting that parents be aware of their children’s lives and specifically that they “should know that’s how their child is really acting in school.” Variantly, participants reported wanting others to understand the diversity within the Latina/o community. Participant 2 emphasized wishing that teachers knew that “we’re not all the same...we all have different personalities, different values and we all think differently.” Participant 7 spoke about each Latina/o having varying levels of knowledge about their own culture and feeling teachers have a responsibility to promote questions, not embarrassing students.

### **Typical Pathway**

Presented next is, as Hill suggests, a distinct pathway that emerged for participants. Per CQR guidelines, only those categories generally and typically reported

are included in the pathway. Participants reported two main ethnicity/culture-based reasons for the conflict occurring. First, they noted that peers denied or rejected participants' Latina/o identity. Specifically, participants identified this denial was made based on multiple characteristics including lack of Spanish speaking fluency, skin color and physical features (hair, eyes, general ethnic appearance.) Second, participants reported the conflict event occurred because of differences in values between them and other students. Participants shared that conflicts took two different forms: verbal confrontation by name-calling or ethnic slurs and social exclusion. Participants reported four internal reactions to the conflict experience. First, they felt sad or hurt. Second, they felt anger or hate. Third, participants described a feeling of guilt, not being good enough and a need to prove their Latina/o identity or apologize for not being Latina/o enough. Fourth, participants felt excluded by other students. Regarding the outcome of conflict, participants noted they changed their friendship network and made personally positive changes as a result of the experience. School staff were not informed of or asked to help with the conflict because participants viewed school staff as ineffective in their ability to resolve the conflict and also anticipated and sought to avoid punitive consequences. The conflict did not impact participants' academic performance because P was able to persevere and succeed in meeting their school goals.

### **Illustrative Example**

In this section, one participant's experiences are presented in fuller detail. This single case was chosen as an illustrative example due to the many typical and general findings it contains. To protect the participant's identity, she is referred to as pseudonym "Lila." Lila is a 15-year-old female who attends a public school in a southern California

city. She simultaneously uses multiple ethnic identifiers including Mexican, Chicana, Mexican-American, Latina and Hispanic. Lila reports partial Spanish fluency and that she is most comfortable speaking both Spanish and English. At the time of interview, she was a sophomore in high school and reported that the highest level of education by her parents was a high school degree with a few community college courses.

Lila described experiencing a conflict that mainly occurred because peers denied her Latina identity. Specifically, Lila recalled others questioning her, “You speak Spanish?” When she indicated, she did, they responded, “You are *not* Mexican. You’re like some rich little White girl because you don’t look Mexican.” Though she spoke about the above incident in detail, which happened on the first day of high school, she was clear that she receives similar messages from multiple peers and on an ongoing basis. She shared her Latina identity is questioned for a variety of reasons but that those based on physical appearance “hurt the most.” For instance, she says peers tell her “you don’t look Mexican enough, you’re too light skinned.” Also, Lila pointed out that she has “light brown hair” and “colored eyes” which causes others to question if she is really Mexican or Mexican “enough.” Besides physical appearance, Lila frequently hears comments about her Spanish fluency like she “doesn’t sound like Mexican” but is “trying to act Mexican, that’s how your Spanish sounds like.” Peers also hold it against her that she started speaking Spanish when she was in third grade when they tell her, “if you’re a true Mexican you would have learned Spanish your whole life.” Another contributing factor to the conflict is significant differences between values of Lila and her Latina/o peers. She explained that her choice not to drink, do drugs and party has led others to say, “if you were Mexican than you wouldn’t care.” Regarding her academics, Lila reported

feeling like she “cares too much about my grades,” “studying” and “studying abroad and or leaving [home city] studying across the country.” Latina/o peers directly tell her she “cares too much about school.” She even described that Latina/o peers point out her school choice (an inter baccalaureate program) is evidence that she is a “snobby little White kid” though Lila herself just believes she is “serious about” her education and wants “to go above and beyond in the world.”

Conflicts experienced took the form of both verbal confrontation (name-calling or slurs) and social exclusion. Examples of verbal confrontations included being called “White girl” and “snobby” in addition to simply being told “you’re not Mexican!” Social exclusion has occurred in that when Latina/o peers find out what academic program she is enrolled in “half the population” of another school don’t want to be her friend and “just walk away.”

In response to the ongoing conflict, Lila described feeling sad/hurt, anger/hate and excluded. She shared she “started to cry every time somebody told me *‘you’re not Mexican.’*” Lila also said towards those other peers she feels “hate for what they made me go through.” As for feeling excluded, she noted part of the hurt she felt was due to being “judged by others without even knowing me.” Finally, Lila spoke plainly about a sense of feeling guilty and a need to prove her ethnic identity for not being Latina enough. She shared: “I try to prove them but in a way, I was trying to prove it to myself that I was Mexican.” What Lila pointed out then was that others questioning her identity even led to her questioning her own identity too. This was clear when she said, “There was a time when I was thinking well maybe I *am* adopted. Maybe my mom *is* White or

something, like I'm not good enough to be Mexican because according to these people I'm not Mexican enough."

As a result of this conflict Lila ended up making changes to her friendship network. Initially, this took the form of her trying to be friends with only "pure Mexican" peers. Ultimately though, she realized that this choice was still not helpful in how others perceived her identity and was actually her trying to "change who I was." When this changing of peer networks did not work out, Lila ended up making a personally positive change for herself by returning to her ethnically diverse friend group. She realized that she doesn't have to "have pure Mexican friends to be Mexican" herself. She pointed out realizing that she can "wear whatever I want" and that "just because I don't look Mexican doesn't mean I'm not Mexican."

Lila tried informing a teacher about the conflict she was experiencing but found his initial advice not helpful. She stated, "he doesn't really know me" or "the pain I'm going through." At a previous time, she also shared that her Spanish teacher embarrassed her in front of the entire class questioning why she needed Spanish classes still, an event that made her leave the classroom "to cry." These experiences begin to describe her feeling that school staff was not helpful in resolving or supporting students during these conflicts. Still, Lila reported that she "didn't let what people were saying...affect my education because I kind of separated it out."

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study sought to examine within group conflicts based on race/ethnicity that occurred among Latina/o students during high school. School-based racial conflicts are important phenomena to explore since they have been linked to feelings of victimization among students (Phan, 2003), a decreased sense of belonging within a school community (Hurtado & Faye-Carter, 1997), and a negative impact on a school's perceived climate and safety (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). A focus on Latina/o students' experiences of these conflicts is particularly useful given the great diversity within the population (Martin-Alcoff, 2006) and the call for research that hears the voices of Latina/o students (Pizarro, 1999; Fernandez, 2002; Murguria & Telles, 1996). The findings from this study indicate that intra-ethnic conflicts were indeed quite powerful events, which students often addressed with little help or support from school personnel. In the following discussion, the initial findings related to personal and school context will be addressed. Second, students' specific conflict events will be discussed. Third, findings from the closing questions are discussed. The final sections will present limitations of this study, implications for school personnel policy and suggested future research directions.

### **Personal and School Contextual Findings**

The overall personal and school contextual findings of the study suggest participants are aware of and highly value their Latina/o identity. As a group, the participants associated their Latina/o identity with multiple positive values or characteristics. In particular, it was clear that many of the participants are proud to be

Latina/o. Furthermore, participants largely associated their Latina/o identity with desirable and beneficial values like strength, capability and hard work.

Given the positive association with the Latina/o identity as a whole, the overwhelming pride in their ethnic identities is unsurprising. It also makes sense that as a group, they spoke favorably and about the importance of cultural traditions and celebrations, which suggests a strong sense, or internalization of ethnic identity for these participants (Carter et. al, 2017). These cultural events may be special to participants in part because they are visible, tangible expressions of the identity that has such positive value to them. Additionally, often those events have a social component to them in that they are experienced with other Latina/os. This communal element could add to the significance of the formation of their positive identity since the current study's findings also suggest part of being Latina/o is being closely connected with family and feeling a connection to the larger cultural community. It seems likely that the cultural traditions, celebrations may also simultaneously reinforce and contribute to the sense of belonging to a larger cultural community. Perhaps these strong feelings of identification and connection to others results in further benefits such as strengthening their self-esteem (Umana-Taylor, 2004) or giving them confidence or support when facing challenges (Umana-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007).

Despite the pride and positives associated with their identity, participants are well aware, based on observations and personal experiences, that they as Latina/os also face negative stereotypes, particularly in their schools. Consistent with prior research, Latina/o students experience lower expectations from teachers simply because of their ethnicity (Quiroz, 2001; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). More than just the target of lower academic

expectations, several participants spoke about overtly racist or insensitive interactions they experienced from members of faculty or other school staff. Interestingly, though findings show much more positive than negative perceptions about Latina/o identity, some evidence indicates that a few participants must contend with their own internal, negative views about their own ethnicity. Since participants did not appear to note having learned these lessons from their family, it is reasonable to believe that their experiences in school at least partially contribute to acquiring negative perceptions of what it means to be Latina/o. It is somewhat troubling then, the actions or attitudes of school staff may lead to feelings of being marginalized or invisible by the school system by students (Wing, 2007), and potentially inhibiting academic achievement found to be supported by a strong sense of ethnic identity (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006).

Some literature (Kao & Joyner, 2001) indicates that Latina/o high school students show a preference for choosing same-ethnic friends. However, while participants in this study did indicate comfort and a sense of belonging with same-ethnic peers, they more frequently spoke about having an ethnically diverse friendship network. In fact, only a small portion of the sample indicated specifically keeping solely same-ethnic friends. Given that nearly all of the participants spoke about attending an ethnically diverse school, as opposed to schools comprised of mostly Latino/s, one could theorize that perhaps with greater diversity in the school population, they might be more likely to have a heterogeneous friend groups as well. This notion is inconsistent with past research, for diverse student populations appear to lead to more segregated friendship groups (Jacoby & Porter, 2015; Moody, 2001). Some unique features of the sample for this study might explain this discrepancy. First, prior research has shown that those individuals with

strong ties to their ethnic identity, a feature of the current participants, foster more positive and empathic feelings towards individuals of different ethnicities (Rivera, 2014). The participants in this study, then, may be more open to developing friendships with cross-ethnic peers. Seemingly providing support for this idea is another finding among participants that they were seeking out friends that are respectful, accepting and non-judgmental. Perhaps this group in particular was so solidly connected to their own Latina/o identity that the ethnicities of their friends, whether same or different, were less important criteria than simply selecting other friends they perceived as similarly empathic and accepting. A second consideration is that participant inclusion criteria guaranteed that every single participant had experienced at least one (nearly all reported multiple or ongoing) intra-ethnic conflict with Latina/o peers at school. Perhaps, students were seeking cross-ethnic relationships with the hope that these friendships will be less tension-filled. Finally, the fact that several participants noted feeling a need or desire to blend multiple cultures together, that having multi-ethnic friendships helped them feel a stronger sense of belonging with multiple groups in school.

The overall racial/ethnic climate of the school might be related to participants' friendship choices. For instance, most of the students shared examples of experiencing stereotypes of racism from others, both students and school staff. Interestingly, in addition to these negative experiences, many participants also felt that being Latina/o and sharing that common ethnic identity with others leads to an overall sense of belonging at school. Latina/o students then appear to have to navigate a complex and contradictory world where their Latina/o identity is important to them yet for which they receive simultaneously both a sense of community *and* mistreatment. It is no wonder many in the

sample reported the importance of acceptance and non-judgment in the friends they choose. It would also not be surprising if the common ethnicity and sense of community helped to offset whatever negative consequences to school racial climate occurred as a result of some of the discriminatory experiences.

### **Specific Conflict Event**

In the following, a discussion of participants' specific conflict events will begin with attention on the conflict details, primarily addressing the ethnicity/culture-based reasons for the conflicts. Next, the focus will shift to the more specific conflict actions including the form of the conflicts (verbal, social, physical). This section will conclude with attention to participant reactions, event outcomes, school staff interventions, and the effects on participants' academic performance.

### **Ethnicity/culture-based reasons for conflict**

Findings suggest two major reasons for racial/ethnic conflicts occurring: denial/rejection of Latina/o identity and values differences. Given how important their ethnic identity is to this particular group of participants, it is especially poignant that participants reported conflicts were frequently based in Latina/o peers questioning or rejecting participants' Latina/o identity. Perhaps more than any other ethnic group, it is not uncommon for Latina/os' individual selection of race/ethnicity to not match the social classification given to them by others (Darity, Dietrich & Hamilton, 2005). That participants confirmed Latina/o within group conflicts occur, in part based on those classifications from others, was an expected finding (Romero, 2005; Gomez, 2008), and the emergence of a theme of rejection of Latina/o identity also aligned with past literature

(Holleran & Jung, 2005.) As noted in the literature review, it is particularly unsurprising that these conflicts would occur among Latina/os as a people given the “hybridity” of the group “with diverse racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic aspects to their identity (Martin-Alcoff, 2006, p. 291).” Lack of or flawed Spanish language fluency was overwhelmingly highlighted as a characteristic that peers used to question participants’ Latina/o identity. It seems that peers informally evaluated participants’ Spanish fluency and then constructed appraisals of participants’ Latina/o identity – including both not being Latina/o “enough” and outright dismissals of their Latina/o identity. Interestingly, these findings appear to contradict recent research from the Pew Research Center that indicate 71% of Hispanics say that speaking Spanish is not a necessary skill or trait to be considered Hispanic (Lopez, 2016). Perhaps we can make sense of this difference by attending to other research though that indicates, while not exactly *necessary to being Hispanic*, speaking Spanish is definitely considered important for future generations to speak (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez & Velasco, 2012.)

Besides Spanish language, participants’ physical appearance (skin color, physical features, clothing style) were also used by peers to reject or question their Latina/o identity. Similar to how peers used Spanish language fluency, participants appeared to feel that being light-skinned, blonde or simply not dark enough was used as evidence that participants were not Latina/o or Mexican. While some past research has found that Latina/os may in part choose how they identify racially/ethnically based on their own skin color (Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008), the current study provides evidence that Latina/o peers may make similar judgments about each other’s ethnic identities as well. One explanation could stem from the reality that darker-skinned Latina/os report more

experiences of discrimination than lighter skinned Latina/os (Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008; Ortiz & Tellez, 2012). It seems possible that darker skinned Latina/os are aware they face or have the potential to face more negative stigma from others, realize that lighter-skinned Latina/os do not face the same level of discrimination, and therefore conclude that these lighter-skinned peers or not Latina/o, or at least not Latina/o to the same degree. This line of thought does appear to fit with another finding in the current study in that participants noted that part of being Latina/o is experiencing racism or discrimination from others. It is possible that Latina/os perceive experiencing discrimination as a necessary requirement of being Latina/o and therefore darker skinned Latina/os view themselves as more Latina/o than others. Perhaps they view lighter skinned Latinos as not bearing enough of the costs of being Latina/o to receive the benefits of being able to identify fully as such. That phenotype can have an impact on students' experiences in schools in the form of expectations, educational attainment or different treatment has been documented by past research as well (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008; Lopez, 2008; Rangel, 2007.)

Racial/ethnic conflicts also occurred based on value differences between participants and their peers. More specifically, this study's participants identified being judged negatively or as less Latina/o for choosing to prioritize academic achievement, avoiding drugs and not engaging in a partying lifestyle. Though the current participants typically did not agree that having educational aspirations should in some way cancel out their Latina/o identity, their peers' attitudes may be at least partially supported by objective data. For instance, Golash-Boza & Darity (2008) found that Latina/os with higher income and education levels were more likely to self-identify as White compared

to Latina/os with lower income/education levels. Current participants' experiences are not new, other research has also found that higher-educated Mexican Americans experience more discrimination than less-educated Mexican Americans (Ortiz & Telles, 2012). Ortiz and Telles posit that the higher educated Mexican Americans are in more contact with White individuals, are therefore are exposed to more situations in which they are not a member of the in-group, and thus have greater likelihood of being discriminated against by White or non-Latina/o individuals. While that explanation is plausible, the current study extends those findings and suggests that well educated Mexican-Americans may receive discrimination even from members within their own ethnic group.

Alternatively, perhaps this discrepancy in educational values is evidence of an internalization of racism occurring amongst at least some Latina/os. Internalized racism, the "inculcation of the racist stereotypes, values, images, and ideologies perpetuated by the White dominant society about one's racial group" (Pyke, 2010), could lead to acceptance of sub-standard conditions and expectations in the educational experience (Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006). Even some of the current participants who placed a higher value on education still identified instances in their schools where teachers or staff demonstrated lower expectations or substandard teaching simply because the students were Latina/o. It appears those participants persisted, either with high achievement or at least high standards, not *because* of the educators in their schools but *despite* them, at least in some cases. It seems some Latina/os were not only taking on some of the more stereotyped qualities of Latina/os and Mexicans but also then using them to bully or denigrate those within their group who differed from them. In this sense, oppressive

stereotypes may be contributing to and simultaneously maintained by intra-racial/ethnic class conflicts (Pyke, 2010).

Taken together, the above sources of racial/ethnic within group conflicts appear to extend recent findings that indicate Mexican-American students position themselves on a continuum from less to more Mexican (O'Connor, 2016). It is possible then that Latina/o adolescents, depending on their own Latina/o identity, can differ in what characteristics they perceive are most important to defining one's Latina/o-ness. It appears that participants in the current study were much more aligned with the idea of Latina/o or Mexican identity being equated with success and achievement. This appears to differ from their peers who seemed to place more significant value on superficial features (e.g., skin color, phenotype, clothes) and other lifestyle choices (e.g., partying).

The racial/ethnic conflicts described by participants took three distinct forms; use of verbal (e.g. name calling, ethnic slurs), social exclusion, and physical intimidation. Verbal conflicts, including name-calling and slurs, were by far the most identified forms of conflicts. Verbal conflicts are frequently the most common type of interaction in general, not specific to race or ethnicity, bullying incidents (Williams & Guerra, 2007) as well. The above findings help to clarify what racial conflicts look like but do not quite explain why they occur. To understand the source of these conflicts, we need to return to the previous section that discusses the reasons for the conflicts occurring. To clarify the relationship between these two ideas, the *reasons for* and *forms of* the conflicts, one can recall the Iceberg Model of Racial or Ethnic Conflict (IMREC) (Henze et al, 2002) as previously discussed in the literature review. The forms of conflicts identified in the current study appear to fit within the IMREC structure that distinguishes three tiers of

conflicts: overt, underlying tension and deeper roots. Overt conflicts are easy to detect by ability to see or hear them. Those conflicts in the underlying tier are more difficult to observe from the outside and to those not involved may not even appear to be conflicts or be racial/ethnic in nature. The current findings of verbal, relational and physical conflicts fit into these upper two tiers of the IMREC. However, to answer why these types of conflicts occur, a deeper look must be made. The third and deepest tier of IMREC attempts to identify the stories behind or sources of these conflicts that can include stereotypes, prejudices and inequality. This final tier appears to consist of findings from the previous section then, the reasons for the conflicts that included stereotyped judgments based on values, skin color, appearance and others. What this might tell us about the racial/ethnic conflicts the current participants experienced is that their schools have not paid close enough attention to the underlying factors (third tier) that lead to racial/ethnic conflicts occurring (Henze et al., 2002). In other words, if the more historical or even subtle causes are not noticed, there may be greater likelihood they will turn into underlying (tier two) and then overt (tier one) racial or ethnic conflicts. One could infer then that the staff at these schools might be much more reactive than proactive in their responses to student incidents, or at least that is what the participants perceive. Additionally, students may not feel comfortable or safe enough in their school environment to address these third-tier themes with staff or each other.

### **Reactions to Conflicts**

It is important to recall that identifying as Latina/o was important for participants, so having values conflicts or their identity denied appeared to have very profound adverse effects. For the most part, the overall experience seemed to be one of

internalizing their reactions to the events. In some cases, this manifested as challenging emotional experiences while others attempted to deflect or ignore the events. More specifically, many participants experienced difficult emotions of anger, sadness and felt excluded while some also felt helpless and a sense of questioning themselves. Prior research has already documented the potential for racial conflicts to lead to stress and depressive symptoms (Torres, Driscoll & Burrow, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solorzano, 2009). Moreover, other research suggests that if racial encounters, such as the incidents shared by participants in this study, are painful, sudden and out of the individual's control, they could lead to a PTSD-like experience called race-based traumatic stress (Carter, 2007). Race-based traumatic stress is an emotional/psychological response to racism that includes depressive symptoms, anxious symptoms and elements of intrusion, avoidance or arousal. Specific to this current study, recent research has suggested that race-based traumatic stress can occur as a result of within-group racial encounters (Carter et al., 2017) as well. Additionally, experiencing racist incidents can evoke responses similar to individuals who have experienced rape or domestic violence (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). Also, when individuals perceive the racial climate of a campus to include discrimination, as endorsed by several participants in the current study, those experiences contribute to an increase in trauma-related symptoms in students of color (Pieterse, et al., 2010). Furthermore, the trauma response may not occur immediately but possibly have a delayed presentation if post-incident memories evoke threat-related content (Helms, Guerda & Green, 2010). If participants had this traumatic reaction to these intra-group conflicts, it could perhaps make them less likely to address their peers or engage in any type of conflict resolution since they may be inclined to

avoid contact with persons or triggers having to do with the conflict. Symptom arousal could also influence their overall effectiveness in relating socially or even with achieving their maximum academic potential. In part, this could help explain some participants' tendency to ignore, instead of confronting, the conflict and others' reports that the conflict impacted their class/school attendance. As similar to other traumatic incidents however, for healing to take place individuals must address and acknowledge the racist incidents occurrence (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005).

One especially notable finding is the helplessness felt by some participants. With many of the sources of conflict based on physical characteristics or core values, one possible explanation is that participants were resigned to the fact that they would be dealing with these racial conflicts in perpetuity since those are traits that are impossible or that they are unwilling to change. Another possibility is that students may simply have not yet developed the interpersonal skills needed to manage situations as complex as racial conflicts. For instance, as children develop into adolescence they make incremental advances in conflict resolution styles, notably including a decreased likelihood to use disengagement as a problem-solving strategy (Laursen, Finkelstein & Betts, 2001). The helpless feeling could signify that students are feeling alone in trying to handle the conflicts.

Many of the participants also noted a feeling of having to prove their ethnicity, not surprising given that many noted they felt their identity was challenged or rejected based on their skin color, phenotype or values. This notion has been described as "race work" by King-O'riain (2006), the process one uses (e.g. language, appearance, behaviors) to make claims to a particular race. She argued that mixed-race individuals in

particular had to engage in more of these “race work” than individuals with two parents of the same race. The multi-racial participants in this study spoke of this experience but it was noted by others due to lighter skin tone, phenotype or lack of Spanish fluency as well. Renteria (2016) also interviewed students and found that students who thought their Latina/o identity was “lacking” in those ways engaged in more race work than other Latina/os. Interestingly, Renteria also found that Latina/os who were able to pass as White were actually more invested in highlighting the Latina/o part of their background. This provides a possible additional explanation for the current participants’ strong connection to their Latina/o identity, perhaps as a group they can pass more than their Latina/o peers with whom they had conflicts.

### **Outcomes**

In response to the conflict, participants made both social and personal changes. First, most ended up making actual changes to their friendship network. These changes included opening up to being friends with students ethnically different from themselves, ending friendships with those they were in conflict with or seeking out close friends at different settings other than their school. The outcome of simply changing friend groups may be linked to other current findings that suggest often times the conflicts remained unresolved and sometimes participants responded by simply ignoring the conflict. While one could interpret this finding as students protecting themselves from conflict scenarios, it could also be viewed as an avoidance or even lack of skill at conflict resolution. For instance, Wied, Branje & Meeus (2007) found that adolescents that rated higher in affective empathy were better able to assertively solve conflicts and thus negotiate a continuation of relationships compared to those who simply withdrew from the

relationship or situation. Participants' level of affective empathy is unknown, but perhaps their level of empathy influenced their ability to navigate a different solution.

Alternatively, perhaps the relationships with peers with whom participants experienced these conflicts simply weren't important enough to participants to attempt other means of conflict resolution. For instance, some research has shown that Mexican-American adolescents were more likely to engage in solution-oriented and conflict resolution strategies, as opposed to avoidance, with their close or best friends (Thayer, Updegraff & Delgado, 2008). There were some instances in the sample, though not as frequent, where an apology or resolution was identified. Perhaps in these cases the relationship held more significance, as noted above in past research. Alternatively, perhaps the higher level of unreconciled relationships is a reflection of how complicated and difficult it might be to independently navigate a resolution to conflicts specifically based in racial/ethnic sources. Racial and ethnic identity development and values are unique and complicated processes so when individuals experience conflicts based on such characteristics it might be expected that adolescents would find these to be complex to work through. For example, an intra-ethnic conflict could still involve individuals with very different personal discrimination experiences, family socialization to ethnic identities and beliefs about characteristics most salient to their ethnic identities. Therefore, when in conflict these individuals would likely discover finding a common ground to work from could be challenging.

Second, most participants noted making a personally positive change in response to the conflict event. For some, this change took shape in a realization of the importance of their ethnicity. Researchers have found that the degree of ethnic identification is

positively related to self-esteem (Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002). For this study, then, one possibility is current participants had a particularly high level of self-esteem, thus allowing them to lean on that self-worth and ultimately then acknowledge the importance of their own ethnic identity. A strong self-esteem surely would have served as a protective factor and helped allow the students to continue to recognize the importance of their own ethnicity even in the face of peers questioning it. For others, the positive change they made was to focus more intently on their education. This particular positive change provides further support that adolescents who positively regard their ethnic identity may have more positive academic attitudes and increased academic motivation than others (Fulgini, Witkow & Garcia, 2005).

In addition to the two primary outcomes above, some participants also noted other positive experiences occurring as a result of the conflicts such as making new friendships, making healthy choices regarding drugs/alcohol, apologizing/mending relationship and even gaining a better understanding of their own ethnic identity. The current study then could provide an extension and more recent support for the idea in past research (Baron, 1991; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000; Uline, Tschannen-Moran & Perez, 2003) that conflict does not have to be a solely negative or difficult event but, rather, can actually also provide potential opportunity for growth and positive choices. For instance, though conflict incidents did lead to some challenges for participants, the findings also suggest that most of them had an ability to persevere despite the emotional toll and social consequences they experienced. Perhaps their strong ethnic identity, their academic motivation or their self-esteem each contributed to their perseverance. While not intending to portray an overly optimistic view of these racial/ethnic conflicts as many of

them appeared to have no clear resolution and were ongoing in nature, it is nevertheless important to note conflicts can present opportunities as well, for both students and staff.

### **Effect on Academic Performance**

Students' academic achievement can be negatively impacted when they experience racial conflicts (Adler, 1996; Croninger, 1996). However, only a small portion of the current study's participants acknowledged that effect. On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of participants shared their ability to overcome or compartmentalize the conflict experiences so that it did not affect their academic performance. In fact, some went even further, seeming to indicate that the racial/ethnic conflict experiences actually bolstered their academic goals, which allowed them to maintain strong performance. For some, the steadfast connection to high academic goals persisted even in the face of the same educational values being questioned by or even mocked by Latina/o peers at their school, a phenomenon also previously identified by others (Norguera, 2003).

### **Role of school staff in conflict**

An interesting result of this study was participants' lack of willingness to involve school staff, or other adults outside of school, during or after the conflict. Rather than viewing staff as a resource that could assist in conflict resolution, students expected that staff would be ineffective or merely dole out punishments to those involved in the incident. It is possible that participants had actually observed these outcomes occurring in their schools, maybe as their peers attempted to engage staff under similar circumstances. Indeed, students tend to believe that only those individuals involved in the conflict will

be involved in the staff intervention as well (Salame', 2004). Perhaps school staff did not do enough to set expectations or avenues for students to seek help in these types of conflicts. Another possibility is that students might be less likely to point out racial conflicts if staff have not established a school climate where it is acceptable and safe to talk about racial, cultural issues, including conflicts and differences. One would think that a student may be more likely to approach staff if they feel comfortable. As such, one may wonder whether staff had done enough to build relationships with the participants in this study. It is possible that students are concerned that any type of staff intervention might not be impactful enough. In other words, since there is likely some risk or vulnerability in alerting school staff to conflict incidents, there would need to be a perceived potential benefit to outweigh those risks. Perhaps students view interventions as too small scale since they only affect a small group of students, as opposed to addressing deeper sources of underlying tension or racism of the conflicts such as those in the deepest tier of the IMREC discussed earlier. Perhaps on some level students are aware that the conflict incidents either affect or are a result of broader dynamics within the school. For instance, prior research suggests the presence of racial conflicts in schools can have an impact on the school's climate, and even lead those involved in the conflict to believe that racism is condoned within the school (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Participants in the current study may especially feel racism is condoned since some reported experiencing discrimination by school staff. Without a doubt, these experiences would appear to further deter students from reaching out for help. Unfortunately, one consequence may be a situation where staff, who may be tolerating or simply ignorant of racial conflicts occurrence, are now less likely to become aware because students do not feel comfortable coming forward.

Consequently, this may lead to students' development or reinforcement of a sentiment of being marginalized or invisible to the school could occur (Wing, 2007).

### **Closing Findings**

In the protocol's closing questions, participants had the opportunity to provide commentary on what they would like others to know about racial/ethnic conflicts and reflect on their experience of participating in the interview. Findings suggest that participants feel adults have the potential to be a positive influence on students who experience racial/ethnic conflicts. Interestingly, this appears to conflict with the participants' reports of not engaging school staff or other adults in the conflict event. In schools where students perceive they are supported by teachers and other school staff, students are more likely to endorse positive attitudes towards help seeking when experiencing bullying or threats (Eliot, Cornel, Gregory & Fan, 2010). These findings again then point to the possibility that the current participants may not have felt comfortable or supported by the particular staff/teachers in their school. They are clearly stating that some adults can influence students positively but apparently do not feel that way about the staff at their school.

For participants, taking part in the interview was an enjoyable experience and even resulted in them feeling better and a sense of relief related to their racial conflict experience. Likewise, interpersonal talk therapy, compared to wait list control, has been shown to decrease adolescents' depressed symptoms, increase self-esteem and increase social adaptability (Rossello & Bernal, 1999). While participants in this study were not assessed for mental health diagnoses and the interview was not a therapy session, there is still similarity since most spoke about being sad, hurt, angry and/or guilty and there was a

re-living through re-telling of certain painful emotions, as could occur in a therapeutic setting. Therefore, current findings suggest an extension of that literature: perhaps adolescents who deal with a difficult situation can improve not just from formal therapy but from a brief, supportive intervention with an interested and empathetic helper. In fact, brief helping interventions, including this interview, may even be more likely than a therapy session to result in positive feelings. The participants in this study all participated voluntarily and knew they could discontinue whenever they wanted. Participation may also have stroked their ego since the interviewer highlighted the importance of the topic and their contribution to the literature. It could be that by sharing their experiences with a safe, non-judgmental support person validates the students' experiences and gives them a chance to process, rather than avoid, their reactions.

### **Limitations**

The current study will fill a gap in the literature on Latina/os and intra-group relations, and thus potentially benefit Latina/o students and those professionals who work with them. However, several limitations to the proposed study must also be acknowledged. First, participants were asked to elaborate on their experience of a racial/ethnic conflicts they have experienced in the past. Therefore, participants relied on their memory of the experienced event, an event that may not have happened recently. To address this issue, participants older than 18 or no longer enrolled in high school were not eligible to participate in the study. Even with these built-in parameters, it is important to consider that as time passes after an event, a reporter potentially chooses how they remember an event (Hill, et al., 1997).

A second limitation is that the principle investigator is not proficient in Spanish. Because the principle investigator conducted all interviews, participants were limited to those that are comfortable with their English proficiency, at least enough to participate in the study. To address this limitation, the interviewer made efforts to assure the participant that if there were Spanish words or phrases they wanted to use within the interview, they were encouraged to do so. The principle investigator does have some Spanish knowledge and one of the research team members was fluent in Spanish, which aided the data analysis process since some participants did use Spanish words or phrases at times.

A third limitation relates to the language used to describe potential participants (Hispanic/Latina/o). While some researchers and individuals use the terms interchangeably, it is also likely that others more strongly identify with one label over the other as an accurate descriptor. In an attempt to be as inclusive as possible, most recruitment materials included both 'Latina/o' and 'Hispanic' as identifying terms. Though the rationale of this decision is to broaden the sample, it is unknown how this decision will affect the interest level of those who view recruitment materials. Also, language used in the study's protocol and, most importantly, recruitment announcements may actually be recruiting only Latina/os and Hispanics who endorse a pan-ethnic identifying term and therefore may discourage participation from those who prefer other identifying terms (e.g. Puerto Rican, Mexican, Mexican-American, Guatemalan, etc.).

The historical context differences between when the data were collected and when the data were analyzed need also be noted. There was approximately a two-year gap between data collection and finalizing the results and discussion sections. In that time, significant social and political changes in the United States occurred that could feasibly

have profound impact on much of the ideas being examined in this current study. Of particular interest, the topic of Latina/o immigration status, also reviewed comprehensively in chapter two of this manuscript, is likely a much more prevalent and discussed topic now than it even was just a few years ago when data were initially collected. Immigration is not just more present in political, news media, and everyday conversations but also another source for potential conflict among Latina/os. Latina/os as a group appear to be heavily divided on the issue with 54% saying they are still confident about but approximately 40% saying they have serious concerns about their place in America (Pew Research Center, 2017). The same report showed another significant change in the past few years. From 2013 to 2017, there was a more than doubling (15% to 32%) of the amount of Latina/os that considered their position in the U.S. to be overall worsening. Of special interest are differences in attitudes or opinions between Latina/os who are and are not U.S. citizens. For instance, overall about half of Latina/os are worried about the deportation of someone they know however there are differences in those rates with those Latina/os who are U.S. born tend to worry less about the topic. Overall, the current political and social climate undoubtedly spark new conversations and opinions on matters relevant to intra-Latina/o relations and conflicts.

Another limitation is that the sample ended up being comprised entirely of Latina/o students of Mexican descent. This was not an intentional recruitment strategy but rather likely a consequence of the geographic location of the city in which recruitment and interviews were conducted. How this affected the data is unknown.

Age and developmental stage of participants should also be noted as a potential limitation. Boyle (2007) identified several challenges that can potentially influence an

educational psychologist's interview of an adolescent. While his study considered these factors in a clinical context, there are nevertheless similarities between the interviewer's goals since there conflict incidents and ethnic identity are deeply personal topics and there were efforts at understanding their unique emotional experiences. Boyle especially notes areas of self-concept, anxiety and low emotional competence as typically having an impact on ability to connect with adolescents during personal interviews. While the interviewer made attempts to be as relatable as possible including conducting interviews in-person, meeting at participant-preferred locations, active listening, empathetic joining statements; it remains unclear whether any other factors (no prior relationship developed, one-time interview, interviewer's ethnic/physical characteristics) could have contributed to participant openness or lack thereof.

Also, regarding participants' age, the sample included nine individuals of varying ages in high school. Research has showed though that there are changes to Latina/o adolescents' ethnic identity as they develop throughout high school (Umana-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen & Guimond, 2009). It is unknown how including both younger and older high school students in this study may have influenced the study's results. The sample was also not equally mixed by sex, as it included six males and three females. While nine participants is an adequate sample size according to CQR guidelines, a larger sample could have allowed an interesting extra level of data analysis if it was possible to compare male and female experiences. Additionally, more participants could have allowed for a stability case during the data analysis phase.

Finally, it should be noted that some have cautioned against using a pan-ethnic identifying paradigm during research due to inappropriateness (de la Garza, Desipio,

Garcia, Garcia & Falcon, 1992) or lack of usage among Latina/o youth (Kao & Joyner, 2001). Interestingly, all participants in this study were given an open-ended response option for ethnicity, and several identified at least one pan-ethnic self-identifying term giving at least some support to studying the group in this way. Consistent with the literature review, participants used both “Hispanic” and “Latina/o” to describe themselves, some preferring one of the terms to the other, and some preferring either term. Additionally, every single participant identified multiple identifying terms, a practice that has been noted in other research with Latina/o youth (Malott, Alessandria, Kirkpatrick & Carandang, 2009). A willingness to identify, without prompt, pan-ethnically could be another sign of this participant group’s particularly strong sense of ethnic identity. Their significant, positive regard for their Latina/o and Mexican identities were integral to the results and discussion session but should also be noted as a potential limitation. It is likely that the unique ethnic identity of these participants shaped the current results and therefore another group with different perspectives on their Latina/o identity could potentially yield much different results.

### **Implications**

The above discussion leads to multiple implications for both school staff and students. The findings should provide encouragement to Latina/o students who have experienced school-based racial/ethnic conflicts with their peers. First, this study should validate the experiences of Latina/os with similar experiences, especially those who think their story is unique or uncommon. Also, many of the students in this study were able to persevere despite difficult experiences thus giving hope to students and reminding staff to be alert for students’ resilience and protective factors. Finally, Latina/o students should

recognize the potential protective nature that a strong ethnic identity can have when faced with within-group racial/ethnic conflicts.

In response to racial/ethnic conflict occurrence, schools should likewise encourage and facilitate Latina/o students' ethnic identity development due to its likely protective nature. Implementing culturally sensitive curriculum into the educational experience can be one way to incorporate racial, ethnic and other cultural beliefs into the classroom and promote a message of acceptance and equality (Chan, 2007). Additionally, campus and community activities that encourage exploration of various ethnicities can encourage learning about ancestral history, gaining understanding of particular racial/ethnic groups struggles (Rivera, 2014). Events such as multicultural festivals, cultural heritage nights, ethnic/cultural potlucks and cultural "show and tell" opportunities are just a few types of events that could be sponsored by schools to emphasize the importance of integrating culture into the academic experience.

Other research indicates adolescents' past positive experiences with help seeking have been shown to be a predictor for their willingness to seek help again in the future (Gulliver, Griffiths & Christensen, 2010). Therefore, schools are encouraged to make a concerted effort at recognizing and reaching out to students in need. If staff prove to be helpful and empathetic, it seems likely then that they will have additional opportunities to help again in the future. Staff should seek to be helpful and build relationships proactively and not just in response to conflicts. If a relational foundation is built from genuine staff-student encounters, it seems more likely that students will reach out when conflicts do occur.

Several participants shared a sentiment of surprise to know that intra-ethnic/racial conflicts occur for others as well, these specific types of conflicts occur. Therefore, school staff is encouraged to emphasize normalizing, validating and supporting the student experiencing racial/ethnic conflicts. It is important for students to understand racial/ethnic conflicts do occur and they are not the only ones experiencing these issues. Simultaneously, when staff is aware of student racial/ethnic conflicts, attention to individual student needs should be prioritized. For instance, intervention does not necessarily mean action or behavioral consequences will occur. In fact, sometimes students may avoid involving staff precisely because they don't want additional action or punishments to occur. Simply empathizing and supporting students at times will be sufficient. Of course, this will need to be balanced with times when behavioral consequences need to be implemented due to school or district policies regarding hate or harassment incidents. In some cases, students may benefit from simply receiving psychoeducation or being invited to engage in dialogues about race or racism. Conversations like those often do not occur at all in classrooms (Huber, Johnson & Kohli, 2006). School counselors have unique training in areas of diversity, multicultural competence, racial microaggressions and could be leaders in facilitating such conversations. In some cases, the school counselors may need to advocate to school or district administration for the importance of such interventions.

Though schools are recommended to be proactive by developing policies and programs to prevent and intervene in racial conflicts, students themselves, are often unwilling to engage the school staff. A school staff might ask themselves how they can help if students don't bring the problems to awareness. One suggestion is for teachers and

counselors to be mindful that racial/ethnic conflicts occur verbally and relationally, with physical bullying and harassment being less frequent. Typically, school counselors are actually least likely to intervene when conflicts are relational in nature (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007). Though verbal and relational conflicts may be less visible, staff may be better able to catch them occurring if they are intentionally watching for them. Another possible approach to help address the dilemma of students not informing staff of conflicts may be for schools to utilize what is perhaps their most valuable resource: the students themselves. One recent campus intervention not only showed success in reducing overall conflict and disciplinary reports but that the highly-connected students were the most effective at influencing social norms and behaviors at the school climate level (Paluck, Shepherd & Aronow, 2016). For instance, at the end of the school year, students who had made contact with one of the previously identified socially connected “seed” students were more likely to have heard or observed a friend talking about conflict resolution. This new research offers support for schools identifying student leaders who will buy in to participation in conflict prevention/intervention programming. If students are a part of the planning process, they may feel more invested and less likely to feel that teachers/staff are ineffective. Perhaps the staff investment in this process will also help break the climate of silence on these issues.

Schools should work to be fully aware of the racial climate on their campus. Actively seeking out this awareness shows willingness to accept the reality that racial/ethnic conflicts or tension do exist and occur on a regular basis. As such, racial conflicts may be best viewed as challenges as opposed to threats (Coleman & Stevenson, 2014). Boston Public Schools (BPS) recently conducted an audit of the racial climate on

one school in particular within their district (Pinderhughes & Cole, 2016). From this audit, which collected data by means of observations, interviews and workshops, BPS was able to identify specific recommendations for improving the racial climate in that school. Notably, this audit was conducted reactively, in response to significant concerns about inappropriate race-based incidents. In contrast, it would be advantageous if audits like these were done proactively, not simply waiting for complaints to occur.

Of course, awareness of school climate is likely not enough. Actual training and professional development in not only conflict resolution but in racial climate, cultural discussions and privilege should also be a part of the staff's regular plan. Professional development could occur in a number of ways including researching best practices, seeking out pertinent conferences or hiring outside agencies to provide formal training. One example of best practice guidelines can be found in the National Education Association's "Diversity Toolkit" meant to foster cultural competence for educators (NEA, 2015). The toolkit recommendations include, among others, staff exploring their own racial identity, taking responsibility for their own learning, avoiding blame/judgments and learning more about the social construction of race and racism in the United States. Another example of best practice guidelines involves a school improving its "racial literacy" by (among other recommendations) keeping a log of racial conflicts, developing mission statements and resolving your own stress during racial conflicts (Coleman & Stevenson, 2014). The same authors point out the importance of being able to acknowledge when outside experts are needed for additional intervention or training. The Community Relations Service, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, exists to resolve and prevent racial and ethnic conflicts and violence. Part of its

services is the running of the Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (SPIRIT) program. SPIRIT brings all school stakeholders together and uses mediation and problem solving to identify issues, develop solutions and take action against racial conflicts. Additionally, school counselors may be particularly well positioned to be leaders in this area on their campuses as they have been identified as potential catalysts for change and leaders in overseeing and coordinating programming to create a school climate that demonstrates care for all (Hernandez & Seem, 2004).

Several participants spoke of the protective and beneficial nature of belonging to clubs or groups outside of the academic school experience, in particular churches, religious youth groups and sports teams. Religious youth groups can reflect on how their programming can acknowledge and raise awareness of racial/ethnic identity and relations. In particular, reflection activities that encourage personal awareness and development could facilitate racial identity development. Additionally, youth groups can promote dialogue about cultural and ethnic values that are present within families, homes or the religious community. Leaders of religious youth groups could also look to identify service projects that expose members to diversity, whether that be in the forms of visiting different parts of town or serving or interacting with individuals of other races/ethnicities. Participants' strong feelings about churches and religious youth organizations speak to the potential importance that the neighborhood or community as a whole, not just churches, can have in being a positive influence on youth. Community involvement and programming for families and youth can serve as a primary prevention which can provide opportunities for relationship building, cohesion and senses of ownership and pride in the individuals and other resources the community has to offer. Additionally, schools should

be looking to build partnerships with community organizations to facilitate each other's missions and goals (Epstein, 2008). For instance, schools may be able to open their facilities, or vice versa, to allow physical space for communities to gather and organize. Such an overlap would be beneficial for students and families. Finally, schools should follow the model of other community programming and involve and communicate with families for a variety of proactive reasons, not just when students have made a mistake.

### **Future Research**

This study provides a foundation for a number of potential related research directions. It seems likely that intra-ethnic/racial conflicts occur at all levels within the educational system. Studies similar to this one could be conducted at each of those levels (elementary, middle and higher education) to determine similarities and differences across age or developmental phase of students. It might also be interesting to attend more closely to the racial/ethnic demographics of the school when selecting participants. For instance, it would be interesting to compare similar conflicts between students who attend a predominantly Latina/o school versus those who are in the minority of the school population. Similarly, a larger sample size that more directly compares the experiences of female versus male experiences may also yield informative results. While the current study consisted entirely of Latina/o students that reported Mexican descent, other studies might include Latina/o students that identify with a different nationality background. Of course, within group conflicts are not limited to only Latina/o students. Future research can also expand on this study's findings by examining intra-racial/ethnic conflicts that occur within other racial/ethnic groups.

Some participants hinted at culture-based conflicts that occurred within their family, either with parents or siblings. Further exploration of these conflicts might give insight into the acculturative stress students might experience on a daily basis. A deeper understanding of family conflicts could provide useful information about how adolescents deal with conflicts in the home setting. For instance, it would be interesting to assess whether students have the similar emotional reactions and outcome responses when dealing with family members compared to peers.

While the current sample overwhelmingly did not involve school staff for help with handling the conflict incident, there are likely some instances where it does occur. It would be beneficial to specifically identify students who opted to involve staff for help with an experienced conflict. Perhaps the effectiveness of their intervention could be evaluated as well for instance looking at both helpful and not helpful staff interventions. Another approach at studying intra-racial/ethnic conflicts is to examine the phenomenon from school staff perspective. It would be helpful to identify intra-ethnic conflicts observed by staff such as school counselors. Research could attempt to identify when and how school counselors choose to intervene in such conflicts and whether their interventions are successful. Additionally, school or district anti-hate or harassment policies and programs could be evaluated for effectiveness.

Much of the above potential research could be implemented with qualitative methods similar to that implemented in this study. However, larger-scale quantitative studies should also be considered supplement qualitative, ethnographic and narrative findings already existing in the literature to capture a better sense of frequency of these occurrences as well as more generalizable results.

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## Appendix A: Participant Demographic Information Form

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Racial/Ethnic Identifying terms used:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Acculturation Questions

Spanish Language Proficiency: full proficiency, partial proficiency, no proficiency

Most comfortable speaking: English, Spanish, English and Spanish, Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years living in the United States: \_\_\_\_\_

## Education Questions

Have you earned a high school diploma or equivalent?      Yes    No

Are you currently enrolled as a student?                      Yes    No

If so, in what year of school are you?

\_\_\_\_\_

How many years since you stopped attending school?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Family Questions

Highest School Year Completed by either parent:

\_\_\_\_\_

Occupation(s) of parent:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Consent Form for Legal Adult Participants

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS  
*Conflicts Based on Race/Ethnicity among Latina/o/Hispanic Students*

Principle Investigator: Michael J. Martinez  
Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. You can decide if you want to be in the study or not. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this research study is to find out more about conflicts that happen among Hispanic/Latina/o students. You will be one of approximately 10 participants in this research study.

**PROCEDURES:** You can be in this study if you want to. If you want to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in two interviews, one in-person and one on telephone. The first interview (in-person) will take approximately 45-50 minutes. One to three days later, the second interview (telephone) will take approximately 10 minutes. You will be audio recorded during the interview portion of the study. The recordings will be destroyed after 3 years beyond the completion of the study. We won't record your name.

**DURATION:** Your participation will take less than 90 minutes

**RISKS:** If you are in this study, you could get uncomfortable talking about conflicts or your identity. These risks are no more than might happen in everyday life.

**BENEFITS:** The benefits for participating in this study include helping to increase the understanding of Hispanic/Latina/o conflicts.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** When we are done with the study, we will write a report about what we found out. We won't use your name in the report. All the information you provide will be kept private. No one except the research team will know that you are in the study unless you or your parents decide to tell them. Recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office. The recordings will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files three years after the completion of the study. Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**COMPENSATION:** When you complete both interviews, you will earn \$10 cash.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:** Even if your parent/guardian agrees to your participation in this study, it is still your decision whether or not to be in the study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to. You can say "no" and nothing bad will happen. If you say "yes" now, but you want to stop later, that's okay too. If

something about the study bothers you, you can stop being in the study. All you have to do is tell the researcher you want to stop. If there is anything you don't like about being in the study, you should tell us and if we can, we will try to change it for you.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Michael Martinez by email ([Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu](mailto:Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu)). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Compliance at Marquette University (414) 288-7570

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

---

Participant's Signature     **[SIGN]**

---

Date

---

Participant's Name     **[PRINT]**

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix C: Parent Permission Form

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
PARENT PERMISSION FORM  
*Conflicts Based on Race/Ethnicity among Latina/o/Hispanic Students*  
Principle Investigator: Michael J. Martinez  
Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Your child has been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to allow your child to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to give permission for your child to participate.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this research study is to find out more about conflicts that happen among Hispanic/Latina/o students. Your child will be one of approximately 10 participants in this research study.

**PROCEDURES:** Your child will take part in two interviews, one in-person and one on telephone. The first interview (in-person) will take approximately 45-60 minutes. One to three days later, the second interview (telephone) will take approximately 10 minutes. Your child will be audio taped during the interview portion of the study to ensure accuracy. The tapes will later be transcribed and destroyed after 3 years beyond the completion of the study. For confidentiality purposes, your child's name will not be recorded.

**DURATION:** Your child's participation will take less than 90 minutes.

**RISKS:** No study is without risk. Possible risks are no more than your child would encounter in everyday life. These risks are: discomfort talking about conflicts and vulnerability in talking about their identity.

**BENEFITS:** The benefits associated with participation in this study include helping to increase the understanding of Hispanic/Latina/o conflicts.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All information your child reveals in this study will be kept confidential. All of your child's data will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using your child's name or other information that could identify your child as an individual. When the results of the study are published, your child will not be identified by name. Recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office. The data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files three years after the completion of the study. Your child's research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**COMPENSATION:** All participants who complete the interview will earn \$10 cash.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:** Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary and your child may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled. If they wish to withdraw, they can tell the interviewer and their data will not be used.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Michael Martinez by email ([Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu](mailto:Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu)). You are welcome to look at the interview questions if you want to. If you have questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Compliance at Marquette University (414) 288-7570.

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS PARENT PERMISSION FORM,  
ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO  
GIVE MY PERMISSION FOR MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

---

Parent's Signature(s) **[SIGN]**

---

Date

---

Parent's Name(s) **[PRINT]**

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix D: Assent Form for Minor Participants

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
ASSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS  
*Conflicts Based on Race/Ethnicity among Latina/o/Hispanic Students*  
Principle Investigator: Michael J. Martinez  
Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. You can decide if you want to be in the study or not. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this research study is to find out more about conflicts that happen among Hispanic/Latina/o students. You will be one of approximately 10 participants in this research study.

**PROCEDURES:** You can be in this study if you want to. If you want to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in two interviews, one in-person and one on telephone. The first interview (in-person) will take approximately 45-50 minutes. One to three days later, the second interview (telephone) will take approximately 10 minutes. You will be audio recorded during the interview portion of the study. The recordings will be destroyed after 3 years beyond the completion of the study. We won't record your name.

**DURATION:** Your participation will take less than 90 minutes

**RISKS:** If you are in this study, you could get uncomfortable talking about conflicts or your identity. These risks are no more than might happen in everyday life.

**BENEFITS:** The benefits for participating in this study include helping to increase the understanding of Hispanic/Latina/o conflicts.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** When we are done with the study, we will write a report about what we found out. We won't use your name in the report. All the information you provide will be kept private. No one except the research team will know that you are in the study unless you or your parents decide to tell them. Recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office. The recordings will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files three years after the completion of the study. Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**COMPENSATION:** When you complete both interviews, you will earn \$10 cash.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:** Even if your parent/guardian agrees to your participation in this study, it is still your decision whether or not to be in the study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to. You can say "no" and nothing bad will happen. If you say "yes" now, but you want to stop later, that's okay too. If

something about the study bothers you, you can stop being in the study. All you have to do is tell the researcher you want to stop. If there is anything you don't like about being in the study, you should tell us and if we can, we will try to change it for you.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Michael Martinez by email ([Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu](mailto:Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu)). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Compliance at Marquette University (414) 288-7570

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS ASSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

_____ Participant's Signature <b>[SIGN]</b>	_____ Date
_____ Participant's Name <b>[PRINT]</b>	
_____ Researcher's Signature	_____ Date

## Appendix E: Participant Recruitment Letter

### Recruitment Letter: Participant

Greetings!

We invite you to participate in an important voluntary research study titled, "Conflicts Based on Race/Ethnicity among Hispanic or Latina/o Students." Your participation in this study will increase the understanding of Hispanic or Latina/o students and their experiences in school. Also, you will **earn \$10 cash** for completing the study! See details below to find out if you are eligible to take part in this one of a kind opportunity.

To participate in this study and **earn \$10 cash**, you must fulfill ***all*** of the following requirements:

- Identify as Latina/o or Hispanic
- Between 15-18 years old
- Have experienced a conflict *with another Latina/o or Hispanic student in High School*
  - o **The above conflict was about differences or tension regarding your race, ethnicity, or culture**
- Be willing and able to participate in a 45-60 minute interview

If you qualify for the study and are interested in learning more about participating and earning \$10 cash, contact Michael Martinez via email ([Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu](mailto:Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu)) or phone (619-379-4960). We will only be interviewing 8-10 people, so respond quickly to reserve your spot today.

Sincerely,

Michael Martinez

## Appendix F: Agency Recruitment Letter

### Recruitment Letter: Agency

Attention (*name of agency leader*):

My name is Michael Martinez, and I am a doctoral candidate in counseling psychology at Marquette University. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of an opportunity I would like to extend to (*insert name of agency*). I am currently conducting a research study examining the experiences of Hispanic/Latina/o students during their High School years. Specifically, I am looking for adolescents or young adults who are either in high school or have been out of high school for no more than one year and are willing to take part in a 45-55 minute interview. Individuals who are selected and complete the interview will be compensated with \$10 cash for their time.

I would like to request whether you would consider providing this information to potential participants at your agency. If interested, you could post the enclosed flyers in areas where they would be visible to many individuals. Second, you could distribute the information via other modes of communication your site uses (i.e. newsletter, announcements, word of mouth). Finally, I would also be willing to come to your site and make a brief recruitment presentation if you think that might be beneficial.

In order to qualify for participation in the study and earn \$10 cash, individuals must fulfill all of the following criteria:

- Identify as Hispanic or Latina/o
- Be between ages 15-18
- Have experienced a conflict with another Hispanic or Latina/o student while in high school
  - o ***The conflict was about racial/ethnic/cultural differences between the students***
- Be willing to participate in a 45-55 minute interview

Further information about this unique research study will be made available upon request. I will be happy to answer any questions or clarify any points. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email: [Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu](mailto:Michael.j.martinez@marquette.edu) or telephone: 619-379-4960. I hope you are excited to be able to provide your students with a firsthand opportunity to contribute to scholarly research by having their stories heard. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martinez, M.A.

## Appendix G: CQR Interview Protocol

*Thank you for participating in our study on conflicts based on race/ethnicity (CBREs) among Latinas/os. For the purpose of this study, CBREs are defined as events in which misunderstandings or targeted harassment/discrimination co-occur with or result in actual interpersonal altercations and/or emotional or physical distress to the targeted groups based on cultural variables, ethnic/racial background, or perceived ethnic/racial differences.*

### **I. Initial Interview Questions**

#### *Opening Questions*

1. What does it mean to you to be Hispanic/Latina/o?
2. What parts of being Latina/o are important to you?
3. What lessons did your family or other important people teach you about attitudes towards other Latina/os/Hispanics?
4. Tell me about your friendship networks in your high school.
5. What is it like being Latina/o at your school (climate)?

#### *CBRE Questions*

5. Please describe a time that you experienced a CBRE in school with another Latina/o student.
6. What do you believe caused the conflict?
7. What were your reactions to the conflict?
8. How were you affected by the conflict?
9. How was the conflict resolved (if at all)?
10. What, if any role did teachers or staff have in the conflict and/or the resolution of the conflict?
11. In what way did this conflict affect your academic experience or performance?

#### *Closing Question*

12. Now that the interview is over, what was it like talking about these topics/experiences?

### **II. Follow-up Interview Questions**

*(Note to Interviewer: Begin follow-up interview with a brief summary of main ideas from first interview. Verify accuracy.)*

1. After the last interview, have any new thoughts or feelings came up for you that you didn't get to share last time?
2. Based on your experiences, what do you want others (school officials, students, parents, etc.) to know about intra-Latina/o CBREs?