THESIS

"PLAYING SCHOOL": LATINOS AND ROLE PERFORMANCE AS STUDENTS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

"PLAYING SCHOOL": LATINOS AND ROLE PERFORMANCE AS STUDENTS

This thesis explores the educational experiences of Latino high school students at South Carmen High School. The research presented in this thesis contributes to the large body of literature that attempts to explain why Latino high school students graduate at much lower rates than their white counterparts and other immigrant groups. Specifically, this study examines how Latino students, administrators, and their teachers interact, how these interactions are perceived, and what happens when these interactions fail. Data from this thesis are drawn from an ethnographic case study of the educational community of South Carmen High School. Data was collected using a combination of participant and non-participant observations and 28 in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted with administrators (n = 5; including one counselor), Latino students (n = 7), parents of those students (n = 8), and teachers (n=8).

The data from this study indicate that educators and Latino students and their families at South Carmen High held sharply contrasting interpretations of their interactions with one another. The educators interviewed in this study indicated a key reason that many Latino students are less successful than their white counterparts and other immigrant groups is because Latino students are unable or unwilling to "play

school" according to a standard script adopted by educators. However, the Latino students that were interviewed expressed that they knew how to play school and had attempted to perform their role, but were often unsuccessful. The inability or unwillingness to play school was often perceived by educators as a lack of cultural capital on the part of Latino students and their families. This thesis examines how educators' conception of cultural capital differs from that of sociologists' by comparing and contrasting the work of Ruby Payne and Pierre Bourdieu.

Drawing on Bourdieu, I argue in this thesis that the concept of cultural capital in the field of Education, which is heavily influenced by the work of Ruby Payne, lacks a sufficient discussion of power, leaving unexplored more foundational issues of how the rules by which we "play school" get defined and who gets to define them. The work of Bourdieu is drawn on because it helps us understand the relationships of power between different agents (e.g. Latino students and educators), but it does not help us explore the interactions between agents whose relationship is characterized by power. The work of Erving Goffman is drawn on to fill this gap and explore the interaction order at South Carmen High. Drawing on Goffman, I argue in this thesis that Latino student-teacher interactions often fail because the obligations and expectations that govern these interactions are not met.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Understanding racial, ethnic, and immigrant variation in educational achievement and attainment is more important than ever as the U.S. population becomes increasingly diverse" (Kao and Thompson 2003: 417).

Latinos are the fastest growing population in the U.S. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Latinos currently comprise roughly 15.4% of the general U.S. population, and 20% of the K-12 student population (2008). Academic achievement among the Latino population has been the subject of recent scholarly interest, with most research attempting to explain why Latino students graduate at much lower rates than their white counterparts and other immigrant groups. Unfortunately, much of this research tends to be too one-sided, focusing on either the school or the students for explanation. This can often lead to placing blame on one party or entity, be it school administration, teachers, or minority students themselves. This study takes a different approach to understanding the educational experiences of Latino students and seeks to offer a more multi-dimensional analysis of this complex issue. Data from thesis are drawn from an ethnographic case study of the entire educational community at South Carmen High School.[1] Specifically, this study examines how Latino students, administrators, and their teachers at South Carmen High interact, how these interactions

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[1] In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the school, its location, and the participants themselves have all been assigned pseudonyms.

are perceived, and what happens when these interactions fail. My objectives for this introductory chapter are three-fold. First, I briefly frame the issue of Latino student high school attrition and why it is important. I then introduce the site of the study, followed by a discussion of the existing literature.

According to a 2007 report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Latino students are much more likely to drop out of high school and less likely to graduate than any other racial, ethnic, or immigrant group (Laird, KewalRamani, and Chapman 2009).[2] The national graduation rate for Latinos is 72% compared with 93.5% for non-Hispanic whites, 93.1% for Asians/Pacific Islanders, and 88.8% for African Americans (Laird et al. 2009). Among Latinos, males are faring worse in U.S. schools with a 68.1% graduation rate compared to 77.6% for females (Laird et al. 2009).[3] Given the well-documented link between educational attainment and life chances, and the rapidly growing Latino population, understanding the educational experiences of Latino students is of critical importance.

South Carmen High School

South Carmen High is one of three comprehensive high schools in the Carmen City School District. It is the largest high school in Carmen City with 1,464 students. Carmen City is an agricultural community located in a Western state that has a long history of immigration from Latin America, primarily from Mexico. Mirroring national trends, the past twenty years have been marked by drastic demographic shifts in this state and a significant boom in the Latino population. According to the state's department of

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[2] There is little consensus regarding whether Latinos can be considered a racial group or an ethnic group, and this is not an issue I address in this thesis. However, there is less disagreement regarding the categorization of Latinos as a minority group.

[3] Among all racial/ethnic categories, variation in graduation rates by gender is highest among Latinos.

education, the state-wide Latino student population grew by 162.63% from 1989 to 2009.[4] In Carmen City Latino students comprise 52.4% of the student population, making Latinos the numerical majority. Unfortunately, the graduation rate among Latinos in this state is dismally low, falling considerably below the national rate of 72% (Census 2008). Latino students in this state graduate at a rate of 57.8% compared to 82.3% for non-Hispanic white students.[5] The graduation rates for the Carmen City School District are comparable with Latino students in the state with a graduation rate of 58.9% compared to 79.5% for white students. Just as the national numbers indicate that Latino males are faring worse, the same is true in Carmen City. The graduation rate for Latino males in Carmen City is 55.5% compared to 62.5% for Latina females. The graduation rate for Latino males in the state is 54.0%, compared to 61.6% for Latina females. Nationally, the graduation rate for Latino males is 68.1%, compared to 77.6% for Latina females (Census 2008).

According to educators at South Carmen High, Carmen City schools have had difficulties adjusting to rapid demographic shifts and the influx of Latino students. These difficulties have led to many reform efforts over the past few years directed at addressing Latino student attrition and the rising prevalence of Latino gang activity in the schools. Among these efforts was the contracting of outside administrators who have experience at schools with high percentages of minority students. Derrick Britt was contracted in 2008 by Carmen City School District to be the principal at South Carmen High. Mr. Britt was the first African-American principal in school history and was there at the time this

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[4] All figures regarding student demographics, graduation rates, and suspensions/expulsions are from the state's department of education. I do not cite the source of this information for purposes of anonymity.
[5] It is important to note that the graduation rate for white students in the state is also considerably below the national rate.

study was conducted. According to Mr. Britt, the district brought him in to "make true change." This change included raising the Latino graduation rate and changing the perception that South Carmen High was not a safe school. Mr. Britt and other educators at South Carmen High reported that Latino gang activity had increased at the school in recent years. Part of the change that Mr. Britt was contracted to implement involved reducing the presence of gangs in the school and reducing the suspension and expulsion rates of Latino students. In 2009 Latino students in Carmen City were 2.8 times more likely than white students to be suspended out-of-school with 1,779 male and female Latino students suspended out-of-school compared with 620 male and female white students. Latino students were also 4.4 times more likely to be expelled with 44 male and female Latino students expelled compared with 10 male white students.[6]

When Mr. Britt arrived in the fall of 2008 his objectives were to raise the graduation rate among Latino students at South Carmen High, reduce gang activity, and reduce the suspension and expulsion rates of Latino students. According to Mr. Britt, this could be achieved by fostering an environment of mutual respect. In the many discussions I had with Mr. Britt during field work, he consistently referenced "The Respect Law" which was posted throughout South Carmen High in English and Spanish. The Law reads, *"Respect is earned, not just given, but common courtesy is demanded of everyone."* Mr. Britt stressed that the first step in addressing Latino student attrition and lack of success was to gain the respect of students which was achieved by treating students with respect. According Mr. Britt, when he arrived at South Carmen High his first objective was to establish a positive rapport with the Latino student population.

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[6] Among the 44 Latino students expelled, 41 were male, and no white females were expelled.

In the beginning of the 2008 school year Mr. Britt held a controversial assembly exclusively for Latino students. According to Mr. Britt the objectives of this assembly were to make the rules of the school explicitly clear (e.g. no gang colors would be permitted, no violence, etcetera) and to motivate students. Mr. Britt expressed the belief that many minority students are often unsuccessful in the education system because they believe they do not have the capacity to succeed. One of the objectives of this assembly was to dispel this potential belief among Latino students at South Carmen High. According to Mr. Britt and other educators at the school, this assembly was controversial for a number of reasons. For instance, according to some teachers at South Carmen High, this assembly was viewed as *singling-out* Latino students, and it was the first assembly that was exclusively directed at a particular racial or ethnic minority group in school history.

While this assembly was controversial and opposed by some faculty members, there were many teachers at South Carmen High who supported this move. Although teachers' responses to their new principal varied greatly, many of these teachers expressed that the district and the school needed to openly address Latino student attrition and lack of success. There was a general sense of dissatisfaction among teachers at South Carmen High regarding the direction the current district administration was taking, however. Many teachers expressed that they had experienced an increasing loss of autonomy in the classroom and had been excluded from the decision-making process regarding the reforms the district was implementing.

It is important to note that the year this study was conducted was a tumultuous year for the teachers at South Carmen High and the entire Carmen City School District.

Not only was the district undergoing substantial changes in personnel (e.g. new school administrators from outside the district), they were also in the midst of a budget crisis and a labor dispute between the Carmen City Teachers' Union and district administration. One educator who had been at South Carmen High for seven years commented,

> *"I think this is the year probably with the lowest staff morale that I've seen. This is only year seven for me, but I would say that the staff feels taxed. They are very tired. They are asked to do more with less every day with a smile on their faces. And they grin and bear it, but at the end of the day I think they are looking for different jobs."*

The challenges facing Carmen City School District were similar to those faced by school districts nation-wide. Teachers' salaries, lack of resources, and fatigue among educators are common issues that plague school districts across the United States.[7] Moreover, racial and ethnic variation in educational attainment and achievement is also common in many school districts. For this reason, further scholarly work that explores this variation is necessary.

Explanations of Ethnic and Racial Variation in Educational Experiences

Much of the research regarding the educational experiences of Latino students in U.S. schools tends to focus on the school. Prior studies focus on how Latino (and other minority) students' experiences in the education system are often shaped by the institutional structure of the schools (Ansalone 2001; Kao and Thompson 2003; Stanton-Salazar 2004; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995; Warren 1996). Many scholars contend that minority students graduate less and are less successful in schools because they may experience institutional discrimination from institutional agents (e.g.

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[7] I discuss these challenges and why they are relevant to this study further in Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion.

administrators, teachers, counselors, etc.). For example, Warren (1996) and Kao and

Thompson (2003) argue that there may be an institutional bias against students of

Mexican-origin due to Limited-English-Proficiency. They suggest that Mexican-origin

students may be unfairly channeled into lower curricular tracks because they have yet to

master the English language (Kao and Thompson 2003; Warren 1996). One explanation

for why this tracking occurs is because many teachers interpret a lack of English as a

learning disability (Kao and Thompson 2003). Warren (1996: 144) writes that one of the

major consequences of this institutional bias is that many otherwise talented and capable

adolescents are placed in "remedial or vocational tracks." Related research suggests that

this tracking may negatively impact the grades these students receive. Ansalone (2001)

argues that in general, teachers may expect less out of students in lower curricular tracks

and are thus more likely to issue those students lower grades; which may negatively

affect their integration into the educational community.

In their network-analytic study of academic achievement among Mexican-origin

students in the San Francisco - San Jose area, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995)

found that success of these students in the educational system depends on their access to

social capital.[8] Their findings suggest that while social capital with peers is important,

social capital with institutional agents such as teachers, counselors, administrators,

etcetera, is the *most* vital for success. They argue that "supportive ties with institutional

agents represent a necessary condition for engagement in the educational system and,

ultimately, for success in the occupational structure" (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch

1995: 117). It is these institutional agents, they maintain, who teach students how to

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[8] They use Bourdieu's concept of social capital which I address in Chapter 3: "Playing School"

succeed in education, not only in their current school environment, but also after high school by providing students with knowledge about how to apply to college, loans and scholarships, and transmitting career-related information (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995).

Whether or not access to this social capital with institutional agent is achieved, they argue, is largely dependent upon the institutional agents themselves (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). Their study found that grades and language are two major factors that influence Mexican-origin students' access to social capital, with students who receive higher grades and demonstrate more English proficiency enjoying more access (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). They argue that "institutional agents use this information to decide which low-status students are attractive and worthy candidates for institutional mentorship and promotion" (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995: 117-118). While Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) place most of the emphasis on the institutional agents' willingness to invest in Mexican-origin students, they do concede that students' perceptions can also influence their educational experiences, observing that "when lack of access to institutional funds of knowledge is *combined* with perceptions of discrimination, self-elimination is a likely result" (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995: 118 emphasis added).

Other research places far greater emphasis on those students' perceptions. The most influential research that addresses how minority students' perceptions influence their educational experiences was conducted by anthropologists John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1987). Ogbu's central argument is that certain minority groups in the United States fail academically because they develop *oppositional*

identities, counter to that of dominant whites (1987). While Ogbu (1987) concedes that the structure of the school system which operates "according to the norms of American society" (p. 319) is partially responsible for the academic problems of minorities; Ogbu argues that minorities are ultimately responsible for their situation. Ogbu writes, "School performance is due not only to what is done to or for minorities; it is also due to the fact that the nature of the minorities' interpretations and responses makes them more or less accomplices to their own school success or failure" (1987: 317).

Ogbu separates minorities into three groups - autonomous, immigrant, and involuntary (Ogbu 1987). For the purposes of this study, I will limit this discussion to the distinction between immigrant and involuntary minorities. According to Ogbu (1987), immigrant minorities are those groups who have migrated to the United States in search of opportunities and overall economic well-being. Involuntary minority groups are those who were brought to the United States "through slavery, conquest, or colonization" (Ogbu 1987: 321).[9]

With respect to immigrant groups, Ogbu argues that despite initial cultural and linguistic barriers, they are able to negotiate the educational system and be successful because of folk theories regarding the open opportunity structure in the United States (1987). In other words, immigrant minorities do not develop oppositional identities and

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[9] I argue that Ogbu's distinction between immigrant and involuntary minority groups is suspect, particularly with respect to immigrants from Latin America. In the book *Harvest of Empire,* Gonzalez Gonzalez, J. 2001. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*: Penguin Group USA. argues that massive immigration from Latin American countries is a result of centuries of exploitative U.S. policy toward the entire region. Gonzalez —. 2001. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*: Penguin Group USA. writes, "If Latin America had not been raped and pillaged by U.S. capital since its independence, millions of desperate workers would not now be coming here in such numbers to reclaim a share of that wealth" —. 2001. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*: Penguin Group USA. It is also important to note that Ogbu's observations took place in the 1980s, a period in which fears about immigration, and, arguably, discrimination towards immigrants, were less salient.

are eventually able to successfully "assimilate." With respect to involuntary minority groups, such as African-Americans or Native-Americans, Ogbu argues that members of these groups tend to fail in U.S. educational institutions because they are more likely to develop oppositional identities to that of the white dominant group, essentially associating academic success with being white and not appropriate behavior for members of their "group" (1987). Ogbu (1987) asserts that involuntary minorities develop oppositional identities because they perceive institutional discrimination from whites and develop a "distrust of white people and public schools" (p. 332). According to Ogbu, this distrust influences how minorities approach educational institutions, and results in minority parents "unconsciously teaching children ambivalent attitudes about education and success in life" (1987: 332).

Annette Lareau (2003) makes a similar argument to Ogbu with respect to distrust and fear of school authorities, but makes no claims about oppositional identities. In *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Lareau analyzes how parenting strategies differ among white and black middle-class and working-class families (2003). Lareau found that how parents approach institutional authorities such as teachers, varied more by class than race (2003). With regard to dominant institutions such as schools, Lareau (2003) notes that these institutions are almost exclusively run by middle-class professionals. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital,[10] Lareau argues that success in these institutions is largely dependent upon possession of middle-class culture and values (2003). Lareau found that middle-class children tend to be more successful in institutions such as schools because they possess this *legitimate* cultural capital and they

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[10] Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is discussed in Chapter 3: "Playing School."

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are taught "the rules of the game" that govern interactions with institutional representatives" (2003: 6). In contrast, the working-class and poor children in Lareau's study were less successful in institutions such as schools because they lacked the cultural capital valued in those institutions (Lareau 2003). Lareau writes, "When working-class and poor children confronted institutions, they generally were unable to make the rules work in their favor nor did they obtain the capital for adulthood" (Lareau 2003).

The "rules" that Lareau (2003) refers to have received increasing attention in the field of education. Among the education scholars whose work deals specifically with these rules is Ruby Payne. Similar to Lareau, Payne argues that students living in poverty and minority students are often unsuccessful in schools because they do not know the "hidden rules of the middle-class" (2001). Payne contends that in order to improve the educational experiences of poor and minority students, these students need to be taught the hidden rules (2001). However, Payne is clear that it is ultimately the choice of the individual students whether or not they will play by the rules (2001).[11]

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that much of the research that attempts to explain why minority students are less successful in educational institutions tends focus on *either* the school or the students. While both of these approaches have their strengths, I argue that a more well-rounded analysis is necessary. For instance, the research that focuses primarily on the school, and the institutional agents at the school, equips us with the analytical tools to explore power dynamics within the schools which

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[11] It is important to note that while the work of Lareau and Payne is similar, there are significant differences in the arguments these scholars make, and the implications of these arguments. The most notable differences in their work are found in their conceptions of cultural capital. In Chapter 3 I address Payne's work in greater detail, and discuss the differences between the concept of cultural capital in the fields of Education and Sociology.

may help explain low graduation rates among Latino students. However, these approaches tend to be too reductionist, limiting their explanations to patterns of institutional discrimination against minority students. On the other hand, the research that focuses primarily on the students provides the analytical tools to explore how students perceive and negotiate their interactions with institutional agents. These approaches are also too reductionist, as they limit their explanations to student perceptions and failing to sufficiently address power structures within the schools themselves.

This study takes a different approach to understanding the educational experiences of Latino students and seeks to offer a more multi-dimensional analysis of this complex issue. Instead of focusing exclusively on the school or Latino students, this study provides an ethnographic account of the entire educational community at South Carmen High. In this study I explore the following research questions:

a) How do Latino students and teachers at South Carmen High interact?

b) What are the *rules of the game* that govern these interactions?

c) How do Latino students and teachers perceive these interactions?

d) What happens when these interactions fail

In this chapter I have explained the issue of Latino student high school attrition and why it is an important issue, not only in Carmen City, but at the national level as well. I also introduced the site of the study and discussed how this study contributes to the existing literature on the topic. In the following chapter I will discuss the research design process.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I discuss the different stages of the research design process and the

methods used to collect data for this thesis. Specifically, I explain how South Carmen

High School was selected as the site of the study, how I was able to gain access to the

site, and the relationship that was built with the school. I also discuss the different

ethnographic techniques of participant and non-participant observations and in-depth

interviews that were used to collect data for this thesis. I specifically address how

respondents were selected and recruited, how the interviews were conducted, and how the

data was analyzed.

The Initial Stages

When this research project began it was exploratory in nature. I wanted to

explore the educational experiences of Latino high school students and ask why Latinos

graduate at such low rates. Given that this research was exploratory in nature, I decided

that qualitative methods were most appropriate. Lofland et al. (2006: 15) note that

qualitative data ideally "enable you to grasp the meanings associated with the actions of

those you are studying and to understand the contexts in which those actions are

embedded."

As I discussed in Chapter 1, much of the literature that addresses the educational

experiences of minority students tends to be too one-sided. After reviewing the literature

I decided to conduct an ethnographic case study of an entire educational community. I justified this decision in hopes that conducting ethnography within an entire educational community as opposed to one group or enclave within this community would help elucidate the complexity of the issue. Moreover, approaching *all* members of this educational community such as students, parents, teachers, and administrators as social actors would offer a more multi-faceted, multi-dimensional analysis of the situation. Creswell (2007: 208) writes that triangulation "involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective." My objective with this study was to gather data from multiple sources, using different methods in order to triangulate my findings. I ultimately decided to use a combination of participant and non-participant observations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore how these different actors (primarily teachers and students) in the educational community at South Carmen High interact, how they perceive these interactions, and what aspects of these interactions may contribute to low graduation rates among Latino students.

Once I had a methodological game plan, the next challenge was to select a site to conduct this ethnographic case study. Carmen City School District was selected as the site of the study due to the large representation of Latino students in the district and the disparate graduation rates between Latino students and their white peers. Once Carmen City was selected, the next step was to select a site within the district to conduct fieldwork. I initially considered doing a comparative study of all three comprehensive high schools in Carmen City, but later decided that doing an in-depth case study of one school would better serve my research interests. I decided that trying conduct ethnography at three schools would make it difficult to fully analyze any of them. On the

other hand, by focusing on one school, I could dedicate all of my time and energy in one place and thus provide a more robust analysis. The decision to conduct this study at South Carmen High was ultimately made because I had contacts at the school. South Carmen High was an ideal setting for this case study because **a.** it is the largest of the three comprehensive high schools in the district; **b.** the demographic makeup of the school and the graduation statistics were comparable to that of the district as a whole; and **c.** I had contacts at the school which helped facilitate access.

Gaining Entrée and Building a Relationship with the School

In the fall of 2008 I was in the initial stages of the research design process. I had decided that Carmen City would be the site of the study and that I would focus on one school; but I had yet to select a school. In October of that year I discovered that Joy Corseau, a friend of mine, was a teacher at South Carmen High. I spoke with Joy about the research project I was working on and she suggested that South Carmen High would be an ideal school to explore the educational experiences of Latino students. Joy told me about the controversial assembly (discussed in Chapter 1) that was held exclusively for Latino students. She suggested that South Carmen High would be a good place to conduct this study because the new principal there would possibly be supportive of the project.

When attempting to conduct research at an institution such as a school, gaining entrée can often be difficult. This is particularly true when the research deals with any type of disparity between peoples of different races, classes, genders, etcetera. These issues have a tendency to evoke strong emotions from stakeholders – sometimes rightfully so, as these stakeholders often may stand to lose something (e.g. power,

prestige, public favor, reputation, etc.). As a result, researchers can potentially be met with skepticism and fear by the gatekeepers of these institutions. This skepticism and fear are exacerbated by the fact that much of the research and most of the public discourse regarding disparities in public education is very one—sided, and often leads to placing blame on administrators, teachers, parents, or the students themselves. These were all issues that I took into consideration when deciding where to conduct this research. When Joy expressed that Derrick Britt might be supportive of the project, I decided that I would pursue South Carmen High as the site of the study. The next step was to meet with Derrick, request permission to conduct this research at South Carmen High, and then proceed to build a relationship with the school.

In the summer of 2009 I was awaiting approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Colorado State University to conduct research at South Carmen High. An integral part of gaining IRB approval involved gaining institutional support from South Carmen High. I had called the school several times to schedule a meeting with Derrick, but no one had answered. In July of 2009 I visited the school and found out that Derrick would be out of the office until July fifteenth. While I was unable to schedule a formal meeting, I was told by an administrative assistant to return on the fifteenth and try to get an audience with Mr. Britt.

When I arrived on the morning of the fifteenth, there was a lot of movement and bustle at the school. There were renovations taking place and staff members were preparing for the quickly approaching new school year. When I entered the office I saw the administrative assistant I had spoken with before and he told me to have a seat and wait for Mr. Britt to get off the phone. Around thirty minutes later I was told that Mr.

Britt was ready to see me and I entered his office. We shook hands, exchanged pleasantries, and he asked me why I was there. When I told him I wanted to conduct research at South Carmen High, he was very skeptical and questioned me about my motives. Despite this initial skepticism, we scheduled another meeting to further discuss the research project.

On August 12, 2009 we had our second meeting. During this meeting Mr. Britt expressed concern that the research I wanted to conduct could potentially cause certain members of the educational community harm. He was particularly concerned that students could get hurt.[12] I assured him that it was not my intention to harm anyone, and that my objective was to establish a reciprocal relationship with the school. I made it clear that while data from this research would be used to write a thesis, it was not my intention to be an extractive academic. On the contrary, my objective was to offer a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional analysis that would be of use to South Carmen High. In exchange for allowing me to conduct research at South Carmen High, I would write a policy paper for the school and present the findings to the faculty. By the end of this second meeting Derrick agreed to support this research project and grant me permission to conduct fieldwork at South Carmen High. The next few weeks were spent finishing the IRB process at CSU and petitioning for formal permission from the Carmen City School District to conduct research. On August 26, 2009 I received permission from all interested institutional bodies and could begin fieldwork.

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[12] He was fearful that this research may lead to placing blame on the students.

Methods

Fieldwork for this study was conducted over a period of six months, from August of 2009 to February of 2010. I relied on two primary data-gathering techniques: participant and non-participant observations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. I was able to use these two techniques to triangulate my findings and develop a multi-dimensional portrait of the educational community at South Carmen High. Throughout the six months of fieldwork, I conducted 150 hours of observations and 28 in-depth interviews: 5 with administrators, 7 with Latino students, 8 with parents of those students, and 8 with teachers at South Carmen High.

Participant and Non-Participant Observations

From August of 2009 to February of 2010 I relocated in order to live closer to Carmen City and I would visit the school twice a week. On Mondays and Wednesdays I would arrive at the school at 9:00am and leave at 2:00pm. During this period I conducted 150 hours of observations in classrooms, the school cafeteria, and other extra-curricular, school-related activities; including one basketball game, three district-sponsored meetings for migrant parents, two parent-teacher conferences, one assembly, and two faculty meetings. In some of these instances I took on the role of participant in the form of a school volunteer. This occurred on four occasions; twice at district-sponsored meetings for migrant parents, and twice at parent-teacher conferences. On all of these occasions I participated as a Spanish interpreter. Apart from these four occasions, I was a non-participant observer.

I kept track of the information gained in these observations by systematically documenting my observations in a notebook using standard field note techniques

(Emerson et al. 1995). During most of these observations I was able to take notes the entire time because I was a non-participant and everyone knew my role as a researcher. Those times when I was unable to take notes the entire time due to my participation, I would immediately go to a space in the school, or my car, and write down as much as I could remember from what I had observed.

By observing the school cafeteria and other extra-curricular, school-related events, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of how students interact with each other and how they interact with teachers and administrators outside the classroom setting. While all of these observations produced rich, qualitative data, classroom observations were most critical for this study. As a result, it was very important that I build a relationship with the faculty at South Carmen High. Although I had negotiated access to the school, I still had to have teachers' permission to observe their classrooms.

After I received permission from Colorado State University, Carmen City School District, and the principal of South Carmen High, I asked Derrick if I could have ten minutes at a faculty meeting to introduce myself to the teachers at South Carmen High. My objective for this introduction was to explain what I was doing there, thank them for allowing me into their work space, and inform the faculty that I may request to observe their classroom or ask them to do an interview.[13]

This meeting proved to be a fruitful one. Throughout the entire data collection process, the faculty at South Carmen High was supportive of this research and welcoming to me as an outsider who was there to study them. In total, I observed eight teachers' classrooms multiple times. Three of these teachers expressed their support for this

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[13] I made it clear in this meeting and throughout the data collection process that participation was completely voluntary.

research project and invited me to come observe. The other four teachers that were

observed were mentioned in interviews with students, administrators, or parents; or they

were mentioned in conversations with their colleagues.[14]

Prior to actual observations, I would contact the teachers to explain that their

participation in this study was voluntary, and ask their permission to observe their

classroom.[15] I would always show up early for the classes I was to observe. After the

bell would ring and the students would take their seats, the teacher would typically

introduce me, and give me one minute to tell the students who I was and what I was

doing at South Carmen High. I would then take a seat, typically near the back of the

room and take notes the entire time. Throughout the course of the study I was able to

observe classrooms of various levels (e.g. International Baccalaureate, Advanced

Placement, Remedial classes, etc) and various sizes. By observing these classrooms, I

was able to gain a better understanding of how students and teachers interact, and how

students interact with each other during actual instructional time.

Overall, through these observations I was able to analyze the patterned, recurrent

behaviors of different actors in the educational community at South Carmen High. I then

used this information to inform some of the questions asked in the in-depth, semi-

structured, interviews with different members of the educational community.

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[14] These references were positive and negative. For instance, if a student complained about a certain teacher, I would ask to observe that teacher's classroom. Similarly, if a teacher received praise from a student, parent, administrator, or one of their colleagues; I would also ask to observe that teachers' classroom.

[15] Throughout the six months of fieldwork, no teacher at South Carmen High refused to let me observe their classroom.

Interviews

Throughout the six months of fieldwork I conducted 28 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with different members of the educational community at South Carmen High. I conducted interviews with administrators (n = 5; including one counselor), Latino students (n = 7), parents of those students (n = 8), and teachers (n=8). The primary goal of these interviews was to elucidate the complexity of Latino student attrition and lack of success by examining the issue from the perspective of multiple social actors within the educational community at South Carmen High. I was interested in learning how these different actors define the problem of Latino student attrition, who or what did they think was responsible, and what needed to be done to improve the educational experiences of Latino students.

By interviewing administrators and teachers, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of how they define the situation. Moreover I was able to explore how administrators and teachers perceive their interactions with members of the Latino student population and their families. By interviewing parents of Latino students, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of the concerns they have regarding their children's education, and how they interpret their interactions with the institutional agents at South Carmen High. Finally, by interviewing Latino students, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of how they perceive their interactions with faculty and staff at South Carmen High, and what they perceive to be the biggest impediments to successful graduation.

Sample Population and Recruiting Strategies

With respect to the administrators, sampling and recruitment was not an issue because *all* of the administrators at South Carmen High were interviewed.[16] I also included an interview with a counselor in the administrator category. With respect to the teachers and students, however, I was concerned about obtaining information from a variety of teachers and students with diverse experiences.

Included in my sample of teachers were 4 male teachers and 4 female teachers. All but one of the teacher respondents was Anglo and one was Latina. All but two teacher respondents had been teaching at South Carmen High for more than five years and were from Carmen City. I was able to find these teachers by one of three ways. Three of the teacher respondents I met in the halls of South Carmen High and they expressed interest in participating in this study. Two other teachers were then recommended by one of these initial three respondents. I specifically sought out the remaining three teacher respondents because they were referenced in an interview with a Latino student. These three teachers were said to have had some type of problem with at least one, and sometimes more, of the Latino student respondents, and I wanted to hear these teachers' perspectives. I would contact the teacher either in person or via email, explain the project, and ask if they would be willing to conduct an interview. If they agreed, we would then schedule an interview. All of the interviews with teachers and administrators were conducted at South Carmen High.

Recruiting a diverse sample of Latino students proved to be one of the biggest challenges I had while conducting this research. Included in the sample of Latino

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[16] All of the administrators at South Carmen High are male.

students were 3 females, and 5 males.[17] There were 2 seniors, 5 juniors, and 1

sophomore. Among these respondents, there were students who were faring very well at

South Carmen High and most likely going to graduate, and there were students who were

not faring well and likely to drop out before finishing. I was able to find these students

by one of three ways. Five of the student respondents were introduced to me by key

informants at South Carmen High. I would tell these key informants the characteristics I

was looking for in student respondents and they would introduce me to students who met

these criteria. Another student respondent was recommended by one of these initial

respondents, and I met one of the respondents at a meeting of South Carmen High's

chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).

All of the Latino parents interviewed were parents of these student respondents. I

would meet these students at South Carmen High, ask them if they wanted to participate

in the study, and ask them for their parents' phone number. I would then call their

parents, explain the project and ask them if they wanted to participate. If they agreed, we

would schedule the interview. All of the interviews with Latino students and their

parents were conducted in their homes. I would travel to their homes in the evenings or

on a weekend day to accommodate for work schedules. All of the interviews except one

with Latino parents were conducted in Spanish. Three of the interviews with Latino

students were conducted in Spanish and the others were in English.

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[17]One of the seven interviews with Latino students included two respondents who were brothers and both attending South Carmen High.

Data Analysis

With the permission of respondents, all of the interviews were recorded using a

digital recorder. After each interview, I would upload the digital files to my computer

that is password protected. I would then transcribe the interviews word-for-word, making

notes of pauses and inflections.[18] By transcribing the interviews myself, I was able to see

the themes and patterns that were beginning to emerge and which themes and ideas

required further exploration. I would then alter my interview schedules accordingly in

order to flesh out the themes that were most prevalent. Another advantage of me

transcribing the interviews was that it allowed me to evaluate my competence as an

interviewer and pinpoint areas where I could improve. Once all of the interviews were

transcribed, I began the first phase of coding.

With respect to qualitative data analysis, Lofland et al (2006: 200) note that

coding is the process of sorting data into various categories that organize it and render it

meaningful." It is important to note that there are various strategies for coding qualitative

data. For instance, while some scholars prefer to code data by hand, others prefer to use

qualitative data analysis computer software such as ATLAS or Nvivo. I chose the former

to analyze the data from this research. I chose to code by hand because I conducted and

transcribed the interviews, and unlike a computer program, would be able to discern

context. I agree with Lofland et al (2006: 204) who argue that data analysis software

may "expedite and expand data organization, storage, and retrieval possibilities, but they

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[18] When transcribing interviews that were conducted in Spanish I would translate them to English
instantaneously. All participant responses in this thesis are presented in English and all translations were
done by me.

cannot do the hard work of data analysis, which requires certain intellectual and creative skills that, to date, only the analyst can bring to the enterprise."

I coded the data from the interviews in two phases. First I looked for general themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews. This process is often referred to as open coding (Lofland et al. 2006). I first did this open coding by group. For instance I looked for general themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews with administrators, Latino students, their parents, and teachers. I then looked for patterns in these themes or themes that were consistent in the interviews with *all* of the respondents.

After this initial phase I narrowed the focus to the most common or recurrent themes in the data. In this phase, often referred to as focused coding, these more common or recurrent themes "begin to assume the status of overarching ideas and propositions that will occupy a prominent place in the analysis "(Lofland et al. 2006: 201). After this phase I was able to organize the overarching patterns and themes from the data and begin constructing a thematic framework.

In this chapter I discussed the research design process. I explained how the site of the study was selected, how I was able to gain access and build a reciprocal relationship with the school, and the process of data collection and analysis. In the following chapter I will discuss the findings from this study

CHAPTER THREE

"PLAYING SCHOOL"

Throughout the interviews with school officials the most salient and recurrent theme regarding Latino students' educational experiences was the concept of *playing school*. Latino student attrition and lack of success was often explained either in terms of students' inability or unwillingness to "play school" defined by a preferred or "appropriate" script. The inability or unwillingness to perform this script was generally perceived by teachers and administrators as resulting from a lack of appropriate and/or necessary knowledge, hereafter referred to as 'cultural capital', on the part of the students and their families. My objectives in this chapter are to examine different conceptions of cultural capital among teachers, students and their families, and administrators and to address the perceived lack of cultural capital among students who, according to school personnel, did not know how to play school "appropriately." I will also analyze in greater detail the rules of conduct that govern interaction between students and teachers at South Carmen High that define how school should be played. The concept of playing school was introduced in the very first interview I conducted at the school with Jack Narron, an administrator. When asked about discipline problems at the school he responded,

Here the thing that has been a constant has been in some cases the inability to play school…There are kids who are coming up here [referring to his office for discipline problems] either because they are simply choosing not to do that [play school], or don't know how to do that…We have a lot of kids who don't know how-to play school, and we have a lot of teachers who all they want their kids to do is play school [pause] it's not going to be a successful situation."

The context in which the concept of *playing school* was first introduced by Mr. Narron is relevant for a number of reasons. First, the concept of playing school, or the inability to do so, was defined as a problem meriting disciplinary action. It is also important to note that in introducing the concept of playing school, Mr. Narron suggests that interactions between teachers and Latino students are often unsuccessful because teachers expect Latino students to play school by a certain script and those students are perceived to either choose not to play school or do not know how. When probed further on what he meant by playing school Mr. Narron responded,

"The idea behind knowing how to play school is that you do the things that most of us who grew up from the seventies through the eighties in our school kind of took for granted…The things that we're going to take for granted from our particular generation…um, those requisite social skills of talking to adults…not being able to talk to adults in that respectful manner…the reasoning behind kind of our hierarchy within the school system."

Playing school as a taken-for-granted form of knowledge was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. Teachers and administrators regularly expressed a clear conception of what it means to play school. This is to say that teachers and administrators expressed, unequivocally, that there is a preferred script that the student must perform in order to be perceived as playing school successfully. One teacher remarked, "*They don't know. I feel like they just don't know some of those basic social*

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skills that they need" (Magdalena Ochoa, Teacher).[19] Another teacher commented, *"These strategies* [the rules of how to play school] *will make you more successful in school. It does, but I knew how to do that. I don't know how, but I just knew. I just showed up at school and I sat right in the front"* (Michael Walston, Teacher). Many Latino students were perceived to not know how to perform the role. If students did not perform this role successfully they were often perceived to be lacking *"requisite social skills."*   Moreover, if students were perceived by teachers to not possess those social skills it was often viewed as a lack of cultural capital.

Perceived Lack of Cultural Capital

> *"I don't know if some of these people value, just value education like*
>
> *maybe we did"* (Arthur Knight, Administrator)

The above quote is demonstrative of the perception among educators that Hispanic families and their children do not value education and were in many ways different. Among school officials there was a recurrent othering[20] of Latino students and their families – the "*these people*" in the above quote referring to Hispanics and the "*we*" referring to non-Hispanic or arguably whites. It is important to mention that as a white, male, relatively middle-class researcher, I was often included in school officials' conception of "we."[21] This othering of Latino students and their families, and the strong

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[19] Ms. Ochoa was the only teacher of Latin American origin that was interviewed. It is important to note that while Ms. Ochoa recognized that there was a right way to play school, she reported trying to help Latino students negotiate the rules and still be successful without having to conform to something that they are not.

[20] Othering is a term that has gained prominence in the social sciences and refers to the construction and maintenance of boundaries between "Us" and "them".

[21] One teacher remarked, *"When I was in high school, there was never a thought about me dropping out, and I'm sure you were the same way more or less. We knew we were going forward, we just knew it."*

perception of difference on the part of educators are relevant because they were often reinforced by very strong beliefs about cultural differences. School officials' perceptions of Latino families and their children's lack of cultural capital were often manifested in ideas about not valuing education, and not knowing how to play school. Another example of this is provided by the comments of Carl Pate, who had been teaching at South Carmen High for ten years. While referencing the structural economic changes that Carmen City has experienced over the past decade and the subsequent demographic changes (i.e. influx of Hispanics), Mr. Pate remarked, *"And so you know they are…It's a family thing. It's how families view education. And Carmen City has, if you look at the demographics here in Carmen City, we have gotten more families in here that value education a lot less than we did maybe, ten, fifteen, twenty years ago."* He went on to comment, *"You know a lot of kids come to us and they have no idea how to be or how to act in a culture in an appropriate manner."* Another teacher similarly remarked, *"Well I think some kids just don't want to be here. I mean really and truly they don't see the value in school."*   In order to more fully understand the perspective among educators that Latinos do not value education it is important to understand how education practitioners conceive of cultural capital.

Concept of Cultural Capital in the Field of Education

Much of the discussion regarding cultural capital in the field of education is informed by Dr. Ruby K. Payne's (2001) work, "A Framework for Understanding Poverty." The impact and influence of Payne's work on educators' conceptions of poverty and cultural capital is far-reaching. According to the website www.ahaprocess.com, Payne's organization, Aha! Process, conducts seminars,

workshops, and trainings, nation-wide and abroad that "provide an understanding of the mindsets of different economic classes and a multitude of strategies for working with children from poverty, middle class, and wealth (2010). When the first edition of "A Framework for Understanding Poverty" was published in 1996, it was widely and uncritically accepted by education practitioners (Osei-Kofi 2005). I argue that Payne's work has influenced how many educators at South Carmen High conceptualize cultural capital. Therefore, an analysis of this philosophy is necessary

Payne is widely considered to be an expert on poverty and dealing with children and families in poverty. Payne defines poverty as "the extent to which an individual does without resources" (Payne 2001: 16). Among the resources that Payne lists, the most relevant for this discussion and the most important to her work is "The Knowledge of the Hidden Rules" (Payne 2001: 16). Payne defines the *hidden rules* as, "Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group" (2001: 16). According to Payne, "Hidden rules are about the salient, unspoken understandings that cue the members of a group that this individual does or does not fit" (2001: 17).

Payne's central thesis is that there are hidden middle-class rules that children living in poverty and minority children do not know (Payne 2001). Lack of knowledge of these hidden rules (or how to play school) Payne argues, is what hinders "minority students and poor students" from being successful in our educational institutions, and ultimately in the work force (2001: 43). Payne's work is often referred to as the "culture of poverty" thesis because of this dichotomization of the so-called hidden rules of the middle-class with those of individuals and groups living in poverty. Payne contends that knowledge of the "hidden rules govern much our immediate assessment of an individual

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and his/her capabilities" (Payne 2001: 61). In other words, if a student does not know these hidden rules (or how to play school), that student may be perceived as less capable than a student who does know the script and performs it well and thus perceived to "not fit" in the school (Payne 2001:17).

Payne's prescription for educators is, "Students need to be taught the hidden rules of the middle class" (Payne 2001:61). Payne calls on educators to teach poor students and students of color to play school according to the appropriate script, but emphasizes that the decision to perform the script is ultimately the choice of the individual student. In "Structure and Choice," Payne (2003) writes, "The program must clearly delineate the expected behaviors and the probable consequences of not choosing those behaviors. The program must also emphasize that the individual always has a choice – to follow or not to follow the expected behaviors" (Pg. 101).

Throughout my interviews with educators at South Carmen High School, and even more so during the coding process, it became clear that the work of Ruby Payne has had a profound impact on educators. Moreover it was clear that the concept of *playing school* was very much informed by Payne's work. Many of the educators that I interviewed used Payne's language to describe their students' experiences. For example, when discussing the Latino graduation rate, one teacher remarked,

> *"Who was it? Was it Ruby Payne that talked about the…culture of poverty, and this idea that the teaching…teaching the hidden rules of the curriculum…that's a hidden thing…there is no understanding of those rules anymore because maybe their parents weren't A, from this country and didn't have that understanding, and B, were dropouts themselves, so they didn't buy in"* (Michael Walston, Teacher).

Later in the interview when asked about playing school and specifically what playing school looks like, the same teacher responded,

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"Teachers want their kids to sit down, shut up, and do their work. Well that's not what an impoverished house looks like. They don't sit around and do their work. They talk and they talk loud. They are fighting for attention all the time...um clearly I've read that "Framework for Understanding Poverty" too much, but then that carries over to class and you see it...It's like, 'alright let's reel that in...you know middle-class values say you talk in your indoor voice. Do you know what that means?' And that's a hidden rule that we don't explicitly teach kids, and where are they going to get that?"

The teacher quoted above, reflects the direct and indirect references to Payne's work that were common throughout the interviews with teachers and administrators. Moreover, the need to teach students – particularly Latino students – the hidden rules (or how to play school) was often proffered as the best strategy to raise the Latino graduation rate – *"We just take the assumption that they know* [how to play school]*, but some of these kids aren't from our country. They haven't been here very long. They don't know. We've got to teach them"* (Arthur Knight, Administrator).

Ruby Payne's work is problematic for a number of reasons, and I am not alone in my critique of her work.[22] Payne's work promotes a narrow and ethnocentric conception of cultural capital. By dichotomizing the so-called "culture of poverty" versus "middle-class culture", her work promotes and reifies a hierarchy of culture. Her philosophy represents a not-so-subtle reinforcement of the idea that students living in poverty, and students of color, possess an inadequate culture for successfully navigating school success. By reifying a hierarchy of culture, Payne's work fosters a "we" versus "them" atmosphere, as reflected in the othering of Latino students and their families that many educators at South Carmen High expressed.

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[22] For other critical reviews of Payne's work see Bomer, R., J. Dworin, L. May, and P. Semingson. 2008. "Miseducating Teachers About the Poor: A Critical Analysis of Ruby Payne's Claims About Poverty." *The Teachers College Record* 110:2497-2531, Osei-Kofi, N. 2005. "Pathologizing the Poor: A Framework for Understanding Ruby Payne's Work." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 38:367..

A second issue is that Payne's work promotes a framework that individualizes student success and failure. Student success is often attributed to the individual student's possession of some inherently valuable characteristics. When discussing the concept of playing school, for example, one administrator remarked, *"Playing school is hard. Some people are wired to do it, because the way that we play school, for the most part, is for the kids that are intrinsically motivated."* It follows that the kids who are not successful must not be intrinsically motivated. This philosophy successfully displaces responsibility from the institutional structure of the school back onto the individual student.[23] Latino student attrition and lack of success is often explained in terms of the individual student's inability or unwillingness to *play school*.

From a sociological perspective, what is desperately lacking from this conception of cultural capital, and Payne's work in general, is a discussion of power. Not once in "A Framework for Understanding Poverty" does Payne mention power differentials in defining the hidden rules. This failure to recognize power differentials is evidenced in part, by the "colorblindness" of many of the white teachers that were interviewed.[24] Consider the following exchange between Steve Winstead, a teacher at South Carmen High, and myself:

> **ND**: *"I've heard that one of the reasons that Latino students are not successful here is that they don't know how to play school. What do you think about that?"*
> **Steve Winstead**: *"I don't think you can say it's based on ethnic background. I think anybody who is not successful in school doesn't know how to play school. And it's not brown, white, purple, green, yellow. You [pause] No matter what your culture is you need to fit within the society*

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[23] This is issue merits further discussion which is addressed in the discussion chapter.
[24] Outside the world of race scholarship, "colorblindness" is often viewed as a good thing and possible evidence of a *post-racial* society. Many race scholars, however, contend that "colorblindness" masks power differentials along racial lines and serves to perpetuate racial inequality.

that you are currently working or living in. And some people are very, very good at picking up the cues necessary to be successful. Other people are very, very poor."

While it is not my purpose here to discuss colorblind racism (see Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2006), it is notable that this denial of racial or ethnic differences is followed by a reference to a student's need to "fit" and pick up the cues of the dominant culture. Furthermore, Mr. Winstead expresses an assumed consensus regarding the appropriate script by which one plays school successfully underscoring the taken-for-grantedness regarding "requisite social skills" discussed above. It was evident throughout many of the interviews that despite attempts to negate racial or ethnic differences, Latino students were perceived to be less competent at picking up the correct cues than other students. This was often referred to as consequences of Hispanic/Latino heritage, despite Payne's emphasis on the individual determinants of success - *"I believe they are good people. They are honest people. They are hard-working people. I just don't think they have the skills, like I've said to do it"* (Steve Winstead).

As the above discussion demonstrates, the ideas regarding cultural capital held by the educators interviewed at South Carmen high are very much informed by the work of Ruby Payne. This framework, I argue, promotes a hierarchical conception of cultural capital. Following the logic of this conception of cultural capital, some forms of culture are considered 'legitimate' and others 'illegitimate.' In the case of South Carmen High, it was evident that many Latino students and their families were perceived to lack 'legitimate' cultural capital (i.e. knowledge of the correct, albeit hidden rules of education). This leaves unexplored the more foundational issues of how these rules are defined and who gets to define them.

Concept of Cultural Capital in the Field of Sociology

Whereas the conception of cultural capital in the field of education is informed by the work of Ruby Payne; in the field of sociology, the concept is informed by the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. There are marked differences between Payne's and Bourdieu's conceptions of cultural capital that revolve largely around the concept of power. Implicit in Payne's work is the idea that there are certain forms of cultural capital (e.g. hidden rules of the middle-class) that are inherently more legitimate than others and academic success is contingent upon the possession of these forms of cultural capital. For Bourdieu, there are no objectively determined 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' forms of cultural capital; rather there are *legitimized* and *de-legitimized* forms of cultural capital.[25] Moreover, the forms that are legitimized vary relative to the "field" in question; and are inextricably linked to symbolic power (Bourdieu 1989; Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In order to proceed, a brief explication of some of the key concepts in Bourdieu's theory is necessary.

Central to Bourdieu's work is his concept of the habitus. The habitus is a set of dispositions that inform agents' actions and perceptions. The habitus gives agents "a 'feel for the game', a sense of what is appropriate in the circumstances and what is not, a 'practical sense' (Thompson 1991: 13). This sense of what is appropriate and practical varies depending on the circumstances, or the *field* in which the habitus is operating. A field is defined as a site of competition in which groups compete in "symbolic struggles

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[25] This conception of cultural capital is recurrent throughout the vast array of work that Bourdieu produced over the course of his career. I do not attempt here to cite all instances where this concept, nor others that I discuss in this thesis, are referenced or explicated in Bourdieu's work. I cite, rather, only those works that I directly draw from. For an overview of Bourdieu's work see Wacquant, L. J. D. 1992. "Toward a Social Praxeology: The Structure and Logic of Bourdieu's Sociology." Pp. 1-59 in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

for the reproduction and imposition of the legitimate vision of the world" (Bourdieu 1991: 235). The capacity to impose or define what is 'legitimate' and thus 'illegitimate' requires symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991) – the enacted form of symbolic capital (i.e. prestige, reputation, authority) (1991: 230). A field for Bourdieu is structured according to the different forms of capital – economic (material resources), cultural (incorporated preferences, tastes, knowledge), and social (networks) – that are valued in that field (2001). For an agent to possess symbolic capital, and the capacity to wield symbolic power, he/she must possess the economic, cultural and social capital valued in a given field and know how to wield it. Bourdieu writes, "The kinds of capital, like trumps in a game of cards, are powers which define the chances of profit in a given field" (1991: 230). An agent accrues these different forms of capital primarily through family and school (i.e. the objective conditions in which one is raised). It is also in these contexts that agents learn how to 'play the game'. How one perceives the game, and distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate courses of action is informed by their habitus: "embodied history" (Bourdieu 1990: 280) of these objective conditions that shapes how agents perceive themselves and others in a field; and thus, how the game is to be played in that field (Bourdieu 1977). In other words, one's habitus is shaped by historical context (i.e. the economic, social, and cultural capital that one inherits through the family and life experiences.

While Bourdieu's theory involves different forms of capital (e.g. economic, social, and cultural), cultural capital is the most relevant to the present discussion because of its close association with the habitus. Just as Bourdieu argues that the habitus is "embodied history," he contends that cultural capital is embodied, manifest in bodily comportment

and action (Bourdieu 1991: 230). That is, how an agent decides the best way to play the game depends on the cultural capital they possess. On the surface, this argument does not sound too far removed from that of Ruby Payne and the educators at South Carmen High. What is lacking from that argument, however, is a discussion of power. Bourdieu makes clear that the forms of capital that are recognized and perceived as legitimate in a given field are *achieved* products of the symbolic power struggles. Bourdieu argues that those who possess symbolic capital "are in a position to impose the scale of values most favorable to their products – notably because, in our societies – they hold a *de facto* monopoly over institutions which, like the school system, officially determine and guarantee rank" (Bourdieu 1989: 21 emphasis in original).

Drawing on Bourdieu, I argue that Latino students do not lack cultural capital; rather they are *perceived* to lack the cultural capital that is *legitimized* within the institutional field of South Carmen High.[26] In order to understand this process of legitimization, an analysis of the relationships of power that structure this field and the symbolic struggles that take place in it is necessary. I will now turn to this analysis by briefly introducing the Latino students and their families that participated in the study and discussing their perspectives on education.

The Perspectives of Latino Families Regarding Education

The Latino students and their families that were interviewed were anything but homogeneous. There were male and female students who were faring very well at South Carmen High, very likely going to graduate and possibly go to college; and there were students who were not faring well and likely to drop out without finishing high school.

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[26] Lareau makes a similar argument in her work discussed in Chapter 1.

The parents' level of education ranged from some college to only completing the first grade. Although these students' and their families' experiences at South Carmen High varied greatly, they all expressed the importance of a formal education.

This expressed value of education first appeared in an interview with Daniela and Renán Sanchez, first-generation immigrants from Mexico[27] and parents of Sandra Sanchez. Sandra was a junior at South Carmen High and among the student respondents who was faring well. She was in upper-level classes, currently taking an upper-level algebra class, and was explicitly clear about her plans to continue to college after graduating from South Carmen High. Similar to other parents, Daniela and Renán expressed that despite having little education themselves, education was highly valued in their home. When asked if they felt that Sandra's experience at school was different from other students Daniela responded,

> *"I tell her. I always tell her, 'your studies first and boyfriends later.' It's because I don't want her to be like us. We didn't have an education. She focuses more on her studies. She wants to be successful. She wants to get scholarships for her education."*

For Sandra's parents, there was no question that Sandra was going to receive her high school diploma, although Daniela and Rodrigo did express fear about not being able to afford her post-high school education. Despite this concern they were fairly optimistic about Sandra's future. This was not the case for other families interviewed.

Luz and Rodrigo Campos were first-generation immigrants from Mexico and parents of Vicente Campos. Vicente referred to himself as a super-senior, which meant that he was a second-year senior who could not graduate because he lacked sufficient

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[27] The families that participated in this study originated from various parts of Mexico and other Latin American countries. Recognizing the cultural and linguistic variation between countries and regions within countries, I exclude them for purposes of anonymity.

credits. At the time of the interview Vicente was considering leaving South Carmen High and ultimately transferred to an alternative high school before field work was completed. The Campos family was unique compared to other respondents in that they were the only family that both the parents and the children were undocumented. Luz and Rodrigo were acutely aware of the political obstacles to their children's post-high school academic career and felt powerless to influence their children's opportunities. When asked about the biggest concerns they had regarding Vicente's education, Luz responded, *"What I want for my sons to see is that they can do it. What I am referring to is that I want a better education for them, a better option for them in the future."* This sense of powerlessness combined with the desire for their children to receive an education often resulted in expressed feelings of anger, frustration, and grief. This was not unique to Luz and Rodrigo or to undocumented parents.

Sara Mendez, a first-generation immigrant from Mexico, and mother of Rómulo and Fernando Marquina also expressed a sense of powerlessness and desperation. Both Rómulo, a junior at South Carmen High, and Fernando, a sophomore were not doing well in school at the time of the interview. They had both received low grades and were often in trouble with school administration for wearing colors that were prohibited by the school's dress code. According to Sara, the boys' father had been deported by immigration officials in 2000 and she had been struggling ever since to raise Rómulo, Fernando, and their older brother Oscar. She had remarried for awhile and had two other daughters with her second husband, but decided to leave him because his job was causing them to move too often. Sara made this decision because her sons were having trouble adapting to so many new schools and she wanted their living arrangements to be more

stable. Unfortunately, without the financial stability that her second husband provided, raising her five children had proven to be difficult.

The Mendez all lived in a two bedroom apartment in Carmen City and struggled to make ends meet. Rómulo and Fernando's older brother, Oscar, had dropped out of South Carmen High a year before the interview and was now working to provide for the family and his one year old son, who was now living with them as well. Sara desperately wanted her sons to graduate, but was overwhelmed in the struggle to provide them the means to do so. When asked if she thought they would graduate, she responded,

> *"Well that's what I hope. I try to motivate them. I tell them, 'My sons, you have to struggle. You can do it. What else do you need? You have everything you need. We have a place to live, thank God. You have clothes to wear and shoes to put on your feet. If you need to go to the school or the library I'll take you."*

There was a resonant tone of desperation and urgency in Sara's voice when she discussed her sons' education. However, Sara expressed that she valued that education.

A sense of urgency and desperation was also conveyed by Nelson and Elena Pacheco. Nelson and Elena were third-generation immigrants born and raised in Carmen City, and the aunt and uncle of Eduardo Flores. Among the student respondents, Eduardo was having the toughest time at South Carmen High. The day we met at the school he was suspended. According to Nelson and Elena, Eduardo was constantly "*singled out*" by teachers and administrators and had been suspended multiple times since he began attending South Carmen High. When asked why she thinks some students decide to drop out, Elena responded, "*I want Eduardo* [pause] *I will try my damndest you know to encourage him to stay in school. I tell him, "You don't want to make minimum wage or work your ass off like I do."*

Despite wanting him to graduate and make a better life for himself, Nelson and Elena were pessimistic about the possibility of him graduating from South Carmen High. Eduardo also felt this way and was already considering dropping out. It is important to note that while Eduardo was entertaining the idea of dropping out, he still expressed the same understanding of the value of education that other students had. When asked about the benefits to graduating high school, he responded, *"Well you are just smarter. You can understand things more like vocabulary and stuff. You just get better jobs and a better lifestyle."*

Veronica Funes, a first-generation immigrant from Mexico and mother of Irma Funes, also expressed a sense of powerlessness. Irma was a junior at South Carmen High and among those who was doing very well. Like Sandra, she was in upper-level classes, very involved in extra-curricular activities, and determined to be the first in her family to go to college.

Veronica clearly expressed that she valued education, but similar to Daniela and Rodrigo, was fearful of not being able to provide for Irma's post-high school expenses. While her fears were similar to those of Daniela and Rodrigo, Veronica expressed more uncertainty about the possibility of her daughter going to college. When asked about her biggest concern regarding Irma's education she responded, *"I tell her, 'Do your best so that you might get scholarships, because if not, I can't help you and you stay there'* [referring to Irma's career opportunities].*"* Veronica's assertion that without an education "*you stay there*" (i.e. the lower strata of the occupational workforce), reflects a clear understanding of the correlation between educational attainment and life chances. When asked about the benefits to graduating high school, Irma responded,

> *"Obviously going to college and I guess right now during hard times they are really being picky in who they pick for work. Now it's not just enough that you've worked here and there, you actually have to have an education. And not even those with an education are finding it easy to find a job, so I guess being prepared is the best."*

An understanding of the correlation between education and life chances was expressed by all of the families that were interviewed. Moreover, all of the parents interviewed had a keen awareness of their position in the occupational hierarchy, wanted their kids to move up, and understood that this was achieved primarily through education. A good example of this is provided by Teresa and Leonel Reyes, first-generation immigrants from Central America and the parents of Guillermo Reyes. The Reyes family moved to Colorado following political conflict in their country and was living in the US with work extended work visas. Guillermo was a senior who was excelling at South Carmen High. He was very involved in extra-curricular activities and certain that college was in his future.

Like Sandra and Irma, there was no question that he would graduate from high school. His parents were vehement that he goes farther in his education than they had gone. Teresa graduated from high school before moving to the U.S. and Leonel had to drop out in the ninth grade due to political conflict. When asked how Guillermo's experience was different from other students, Teresa responded, *"Every parent wants the best for their kids. I tell him, 'I want this straight road for you. You have to be a successful man in your future. If I didn't get past the twelfth grade, you have to go higher.' One wants the best for their kids."* When asked about the biggest concerns they had regarding Guillermo's education, Leonel responded,

> *"What worries us is that we have always said to him, 'We have always wanted the best for you – for you to graduate. We don't want you to be a*

person like us that comes here to sweep and mop. We want you to progress.' That's one of our biggest concerns."

A concern regarding their children's opportunities for upward mobility was also expressed by Patricia and Heber Gomez. Patricia and Heber were also first generation immigrants from different parts of Mexico. They met in Nebraska and moved to Carmen City when their daughter, Mirna, was in kindergarten. Mirna was now a junior at South Carmen High and among the student respondents who was not faring well. Like many students who drop out, Mirna lacked sufficient credits to graduate on time. According to Mirna, she began losing credits her freshman year because she was skipping class. The semester before we met, the court mandated Patricia to attend class with her for three days.[28] Patricia had received the most formal education of all the parent respondents and had attended college before moving to the US. Heber, on the other hand, had stopped attending school after the first grade before coming to the US. At the time of the interview they were both working on the floor of a local factory. Like all parent respondents, they were deeply invested in their daughter having more opportunities than they had. When asked how often she and Mirna discuss school, Patricia responded,

> *"Every day, almost every day it's an insistence that she has to study. More so now the minimum requirement for any job is to have a high school degree – for whatever, that's minimum. So if she wants to have a better life, work, and make decent money [pause] to have a good life you have to prepare yourself. I want her to have a degree and a career, whatever it is – not just high school."*

Patricia reported that she actually enjoyed attending class with Mirna, and they both expressed that the experience was a turning point for Mirna. At the time of the interview she was no longer skipping classes and was actively trying to recover the credits that she

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[28] According to officials at South Carmen High this was a new initiative by a local judge to curb truancy.

lacked to graduate on time. Like her mother, Mirna understood the link between

educational attainment and life chances. When asked about what benefits there are to

graduating high school, she responded,

> *"Well you can find a better job, or you can go to college, um be somebody* [pause] *be somebody more. I can't find the word, but be somebody more in life. There are some [that drop out] and yeah they do alright, but there are others that don't finish and they can't find work."*

The comments of these students and their parents contradict those of educators

who indicated that many Latinos students and their families do not value education. The

families interviewed articulated a strongly held belief in the value of education and an

understanding of the consequences of not receiving formal education. Another

incongruity emerged in perceptions about playing school. While educators contended

that Latino students do not know, or are unwilling to play school, Latino students

reported that they do know how to play school. Moreover, all student respondents

reported unsuccessful attempts to perform their role.

Student Knowledge of their Role and Attempts to Perform

> *"The buildup of how to play school is never engrained. Another way to put it is a lack of knowing that they don't know"* (Jack Narron, Administrator).

The predominant perception among educators at South Carmen High was that

many Latino students do not know how to play school and, as the above quote

demonstrates, may not even know that there is a script they should be performing. The

students interviewed, however, communicated not only an acknowledgement of this role,

but an understanding of what is required for its successful performance. When asked

how someone can be successful in school, *all* student respondents – regardless of their

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experiences at the school – expressed a basic understanding of the role that corroborated with what educators expected.

Educators at South Carmen High indicated that the fundamental elements of the script were attendance (physically presenting oneself), preparedness (bringing materials [e.g. notebooks, writing utensils, etc.], studying outside of class, completing work), self-advocacy (asking for help), and paying attention in class – all of which conveyed respectfulness (deference to the teacher as an adult and authority figure). These elements correspond to those emphasized by Payne who maintains that students must be taught these skills/rules in order to be successful in school. However, the Latino students interviewed expressed that they already knew these rules.

When asked about strategies to be successful in school, Eduardo, who was considering dropping out, responded, *"You have to go to school every day. Don't ditch. And to learn, ask questions."* Vicente, who left South Carmen during the study, responded,

> *"I say that you need to be prepared. If you don't know how to do it you have to tell the teacher, 'I didn't understand. I need your help.' One of the strategies is asking for help. If you don't ask for help, if you stay quiet; it's impossible for a teacher to know what's going on with you. If a student doesn't say anything…*[shakes his head].*"*

Sandra remarked, *"You have to study and stay after school to ask for help if you need it."*

Not only did student respondents indicate an awareness of the role or what was expected of them by teachers, they also conveyed a sense of responsibility on their part to perform in order to be successful in school. The above quote by Vicente is particularly notable because in it he acknowledges that an integral part of a student's performance is to establish open lines of communication with the teacher. Moreover, he recognizes that

a teacher cannot be expected to help a student with their particular needs if this part of the role is not performed. Vicente indicated that establishing lines of communication with the teacher involves demonstrating to the teacher that you have initiative and that you are enjoying the teacher's class. When asked to elaborate on strategies one can take to be successful, Vicente went on to comment,

> *"Have good communication with the teachers. If you have good chemistry with the teachers, then it already exists. You can always ask for help, but if you get along with the teacher and like you participate, then the teacher sees that you have initiative or that you are liking his class. So if you have a problem, he's more willing to help you and that's how it's gonna be."*

This recognition of student responsibility to communicate with teachers was also conveyed by Mirna. When asked about the strategies to be successful, she answered, *"I need to finish my work, go to school, and ask for help when I need it.* [Pause] *Um, try to get along with my teachers."* When asked how she would get along with her teachers, Mirna responded, *"By speaking to them well, or when they need help, helping them."*

Similar to Vicente, Mirna also emphasized the need to establish a positive rapport with teachers and act toward them in a deferential manner. For Mirna, this performance of deference included the manner in which she spoke to teachers; and also establishing a reciprocal relationship with teachers where she asks them for help, and she helps them when they need it. However, despite knowing the role of a good student, Mirna had not been very successful at South Carmen High. Like the other student respondents, Mirna knew the script, but reported attempts to perform the script that were unsuccessful.

These attempts to perform were typically described as failed efforts to self-advocate, or denied requests for help from teachers. Students' explanations for these denials varied from racial discrimination, to a preference for students who 'understand

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more', to being profiled. The perception of teacher preference for white students and those who were already doing well (i.e. white students) was common throughout the interviews with students *and* parents. Vicente remarked, *"There is more communication and chemistry with the teachers with them [other students] if they are white."* When asked how her experience at the school was different from other students, Sandra replied, *"Well sometimes they treat people that are from here better than they treat us. I have noticed that teachers help them more."* When asked to elaborate she responded,

> *"Yeah like during class if I need help because I didn't understand, they give preference to others or to those that understand more over those that don't understand. To those, or not especially to the race from here, from the United States, but in that class it's almost all people from the US."*

Irma described similar experiences in the upper-level classes she had taken. She commented, *"I have one teacher and he'll be like, 'anybody need help?' and he won't even wait for anybody to be like 'I need help.' It's like there is a preference like he decides to help some students more than others."*

The perception that these denied requests for help were racially motivated was stronger in some cases than in others. For instance, Mirna very clearly perceived such denials as racial discrimination. During the interview she expressed experiencing discrimination from her white peers.[29] When asked if she had experienced discrimination from teachers as well, she responded,

> *"Well now I have one teacher. She gives me ugly looks because of my color. I get along with her ok, but it's like if I ask her for something, or ask her for help, she like rolls her eyes."*

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[29] While interactions between peers merit further discussion, I do not address the subject in this thesis. My purpose here is to focus primarily on teacher/student interactions.

Eduardo cited asking teachers for help and being denied as his biggest dislike about South Carmen High. Referring to his experiences with one teacher, he commented,

> *I don't know when I ask, so I would raise my hand and the teacher would look and then she would skip me a couple of times and then I put it down and raise it again. Finally she'll come and run through it all quick, and then she'll go help somebody else and you know I didn't understand it still. And then sometimes she won't even come over and stuff.*

While Eduardo reported experiences of racial discrimination from teachers, he felt that the differential treatment he experienced was due more to a perception among teachers that he was a "troublemaker" and unwilling to try. Eduardo conceded that he had caused trouble in the past and had previously been involved in gangs, and he expressed that his reputation as a troublemaker and appearance caused teachers at South Carmen High to negatively perceive him. He commented, *"They can look up the backgrounds in the schools and shit. I was a troublemaker and they look at that too. And then my tattoos and the way I appear, I guess."* When probed about why he thought teachers did not help him, he responded,

> *"Because they probably look at me and are like, 'why is this fool asking? He don't care. He ain't gonna to try.'"*

I want to make clear that the purpose of this discussion is not to make claims about whether or not teachers at South Carmen High perceived Eduardo and others negatively and consequently denied them attention. The purpose of this discussion, rather, is to highlight the *perception* among Latino students that teachers do not care about them and are unwilling to invest. It was evident throughout the course of the study that the different agents operating within the institutional field at South Carmen High held sharply contrasting interpretations of their interactions with one another. When

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Latino students attempted to play school, these efforts were often not recognized by teachers or administrators. Why were these interpretations so different?

Applying Bourdieu, these different interpretations are a result of symbolic power struggles for legitimization between different agents in this field. Bourdieu's work suggests that because institutional agents at the school possess the economic, social, and cultural capital valued in that field, they are wielding their symbolic power to maintain the legitimacy of the forms of capital they possess; which would explain why the most common strategies offered to improve the experiences of Latino students usually involve teaching these students the hidden rules or inculcating them with the culture of the dominant group. The work of Bourdieu is germane here because it helps us understand the relationships of power between the agents (e.g. teachers and students) operating within *this* field, and the symbolic struggles in which they participate. However, while his work does offer a framework for understanding *why* symbolic struggles for legitimization take place, it does not necessarily help explain *how* agents whose relationship is characterized by power interact. Given the disparate interpretations held by teachers and students regarding their interactions in the classroom, I argue that a more in-depth analysis of these interactions is necessary.

Interaction Order at South Carmen High

Bourdieu is celebrated for developing his theory of symbolic power. However, his work is criticized by some for being overly-deterministic and neglecting "the constitutive role of interaction" (Hallett 2007: 149).[30] Goffman, on the other hand, is best known for his treatment of face-to-face interactions, but is often criticized for his

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[30] While I do not agree with this critique, I do not use this thesis as a venue for debating this critique.

"disinterest in power and hierarchy" (Scheff 2006: 3). While the work of Goffman may

seem theoretically distinct to that of Bourdieu; I argue that their work is

complementary.[31] Recognizing that there are other theoretical frameworks that may be

useful and other potential interpretations of this data, I argue that the work of Goffman

combined with that of Bourdieu, provides the analytical tools to explore how school gets

played. The work of Goffman is particularly appropriate *here* because it offers a

framework for analyzing the interactions between teachers and students – agents whose

relationship is characterized by power.

Much of Goffman's early work is primarily concerned with the dramaturgical

performances of the self. In developing his conception of the self, Goffman was

influenced by the work of Cooley and Mead; both of whom held that the self is

constructed through social interaction. Cooley, who equated the self to a looking glass,

held that our conception of self is a reflection of how others view us; writing that we live

"in the minds of others" (1922: 208). Mead conceptualized the self as the internalization

of the attitudes of others (Mead 1934). For Mead, the self is fully developed when this

internalization is complete and the individual has the capacity to take on the role of the

other (1934). Goffman's concept of self is similar to that of Cooley and Mead in that it is

socially constructed through interaction. Goffman's work is distinct, however, in that the

self does not exist *in* the individual, but exists in the social encounter itself. By shifting

the focus from the individual to the encounter, Goffman's self becomes a situational self

that is constituted (and re-constituted) through social interactions. This constitution

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[31] Other authors have combined the work of Goffman and Bourdieu, see Hallett, Tim. 2007. "Between
Deference and Distinction: Interaction Ritual through Symbolic Power in an Educational Institution."
Social Psychology Quarterly 70:148.

involves not only the actor's performance of self, but the audience's reception of that performance. In this sense, performances for Goffman are activities with a dual purpose. On the one hand, actors perform a role that is consistent with how they self-identify in a given social situation. On the other, the performance is intended to influence the audience so that they may see the actor as she sees herself, and treat her accordingly (Goffman 1959).

Goffman emphasizes that because the self exists in social interactions, we have multiple selves that vary depending on the social situation. As a result, the roles that actors perform, and the scripts corresponding to these roles, also vary. These scripts are guided by the 'rules of conduct' of a given social situation (Goffman 1967). Rules of conduct "impinge upon the individual in two general ways: directly, as *obligations*, establishing how he is morally constrained to conduct himself; (and) indirectly, as *expectations*, establishing how others are morally bound to act in regard to him" (Goffman 1967: 40 italics in original).

Goffman equated rules of conduct to the rules of a game and referred to them as the interaction order (Goffman 1983). Goffman argued that the interaction order, regardless of the rules that constitute it, is the fundamental aspect of social organization. If our performances are to be meaningful, there must be some 'agreement' between actors, albeit tacit, regarding the obligations and expectations of the social situation in which we are performing (Goffman 1959; 1983). He contends that "at the very center of interaction life is the cognitive relation we have with those present before us, without which relationship our activity, behavioral and verbal, could not be meaningfully organized" (Goffman 1983: 4). Because social interaction is organized around the rules of conduct

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that constitute the interaction order; Goffman argues that we become deeply invested in

maintaining that order because our very conceptions of self depend on it (1967; 1983).

As a result, any violation or breach of this order is likely to be perceived as an attack on

the self.

Data from the interviews and observations in this study suggest that when

teachers and Latino students at South Carmen High interacted, these interactions often

failed because obligations and expectations in the interaction order were not met. It is

important to clarify that in these interactions *all* actors are performing and thus invested

in those performances. Accordingly, it is in the best interest of all actors to uphold the

interaction order. Goffman asserts that when the interaction order is breached, or a rule

of conduct is broken,

"…we find that two individuals run the risk of becoming discredited; one with an
obligation, who should have governed himself by the rule; the other with an expectation,
who should have been treated in a particular way because of this governance. Both actor
and recipient are threatened" (1967: 51).

Considering the reciprocal nature of student-teacher interactions, I argue that in order to

further our understanding of these interactions, it is necessary to consider the

performances of both students *and* teachers. Goffman is drawn on here to explore the

obligations and expectations that constitute the interaction order at South Carmen High

and how students and teachers may be 'discredited' or 'threatened' when this order is

breached.

Goffman's most direct treatment of obligations and expectations is found in an

essay titled, "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor" (1967). Deference for Goffman is

any activity that serves to express appreciation or respect. "These acts of devotion

represent ways in which an actor celebrates and confirms his relationship to a recipient

(Goffman 1967: 56). He defines demeanor as "an individual's ceremonial behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress, and bearing, which serves to express to those in his immediate presence, that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities" (Goffman 1967: 77). For Goffman, deference and demeanor are the key components of the interaction order that guide actors' performances of the self. He writes, "As a means through which this self is established, the individual acts with proper demeanor while in contact with others and is treated by others with deference" (Goffman 1967: 91). The rules of conduct that constitute the interaction order demand that all actors are *obligated* to comport themselves in a manner that communicates deference, and in turn, the *expectation* is there that other actors will do the same (Goffman 1967).

Interactions between students and teachers at South Carmen High often failed, I argue, because obligations and expectations were not met, resulting in what can be conceived of as a breach of the interaction order. Teachers were often perceived by Latino students as not caring and unwilling to invest, and Latino students were often perceived to lack the attributes of a well-demeaned good student. Exploring the deference that teachers and Latino students expect of the other, and are obligated to convey, is a fruitful approach to understanding student-teacher interactions. Deference is commonly thought of as something that is *only* owed to those in positions of authority. Goffman argues that this is a limiting view because deference is also expected among social equals and "there are deference obligations that superordinates owe subordinates" (1967: 59). While deference owed to authority figures (e.g. parents, bosses, teachers, etc.) typically involves "rituals of obeisance, submission, and propitiation," the deference owed to subordinates (e.g. students, children, employees, etc) typically involves a

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demonstration of "affection and belongingness" (Goffman 1967: 59). The best way to conceptualize deference is to think of it as simply mutual respect. When the term deference is used henceforth in this thesis, I am referring to mutual respect between Latino students and their teachers.

The link between deference and demeanor lies in the fact that an actor communicates deference to a recipient through his or her demeanor. According to educators at South Carmen High, proper student demeanor involved positioning oneself towards the front of the classroom, sitting up, participating, and bringing materials to class. The Latino students interviewed discussed the deference they expected from teachers in terms of investment. They expected teachers to demonstrate that they cared about them and wanted them to succeed. According to students, this deference was conveyed by teachers through their attentiveness and willingness to help students. The data from the interviews suggest that interactions between teachers and Latino students often fail because neither party was successful in conveying deference to the other. I argue that when this occurs, it may potentially lead to teachers categorizing students as unable or unwilling to play school, and students categorizing teachers as not caring. Before continuing, it is important to clarify that it does not matter whether or not these perceptions are accurate. Regardless of their accuracy, these perceptions, and potential categorizations have practical consequences that are discussed below.

With respect to categorizations, Goffman argues that they are a component of face-to-face interactions and that these interactions serve as "people-processing encounters" (1983: 8). Regarding such encounters Goffman writes that they involve

> "…a vast lore of fact and fantasy regarding embodied indicators of status
> and character that render persons readable. By a sort of prearrangement,

then, social situations seem to be perfectly designed to provide us with evidence of a participant's various attributes – if only to vividly re-present what we already know" (1983: 8).

Data from this study suggest that such people-processing and categorizing may be occurring in student/teacher interactions. This was best described in an interview with Carol Rose, a counselor at South Carmen High. She remarked, *"In a class of forty students, it's easy to start grouping students, to start thinking, 'alright this student, I don't know; this student, ok; this student's on the right track."* According to Ms. Rose, these categorizations were based on the impression conveyed by the students through their demeanor. When asked about playing school, Ms. Rose specifically referenced the impression students give through their demeanor. She commented,

> *"If you bring paper or pencils with you to class, then you look like a student who's going to get some work done, and if you don't bring those things, you're looking like a slacker student. So I think the perception is, 'you don't care about school or you do care about school."*

Like many other educators at South Carmen High, Ms. Rose held that the demeanor of many Latino students, right or wrong, was perceived negatively because they lacked knowledge of the "hidden rules." She discussed the components of proper demeanor in terms of these hidden rules. Referring specifically to the perspective of newly-arrived immigrant students, she added, *"Do I know the hidden rules? Do I know that putting my head down on my desk is disrespectful or sending the message that I don't care, rather than I'm tired? So I think there are some cultural or geographical factors."* She went on to comment,

> *"I think the hidden rule to some degree for all our students is to sit closer to the front and participate, because then the teacher is going to know that you want to learn. You might be sitting in the back soaking up every word, but it may seem or appear that you've checked out."*

What these informants indicated is that regardless of Latino students' intentions and attempts to perform the role of a good student; their performances were often not received by teachers as such. Moreover, as the above quotes suggests, this resulted in the categorization of many Latino students as "*disrespectful*", or "*slacker students*", who are "*checked out*" and do not care about school. Real or imagined, this was the impression that many Latino students made in their interactions with teachers. Goffman tells us that the impression an actor makes in any given social situation communicates information about that actor to the audience. This information influences the audience's *expectations* of that actor, and thus how they are *obligated* to treat him or her (Goffman 1959; 1983). The information communicated by many Latino students through their performances led teachers to expect these students to be disrespectful, lazy, and/or to not care about school. Consequently, teachers' treatment of students often reflected these expectations.

The point I am trying to make is that the Latino students whose performances made the impression that they were lazy or that they did not care about education were precisely those students who were perceived to be unable or unwilling to play school. There were very serious consequences for making this impression, including referrals to the office, bad grades, and lack of investment. When discussing teachers' responses to those students who do not know how to play school, Mr. Narron commented, *"There are some teachers, direct or not, who just cut kids' legs right off. They say, 'This is how I do it, you're not doing it how I teach it. Sorry, that's an F."* He went on to say,

> *"I don't mean to make it sound like just because a kid doesn't know how to play school, the kid's not a jackass, but the kid who decides, 'I'm going to be the one to throw the front up to the teacher', the kid who tries to push the buttons is gonna be the first one who's gonna get punched in the kneecap. And that's gonna come by way of grade."*

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Mr. Narron's comments here are significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it is important to draw attention to the metaphors used to describe teachers' reactions to students who do not know how to play school. He equates these reactions to "*cutting kids' legs off*," and "*punching them in the kneecap*." These are violent metaphors which suggest a certain degree of animosity or even anger on the part of teachers towards these students.[32] It is also important to note the language used to describe the performances of students who do not know how to play school. For instance, the notion of a student *throwing the front up to the teacher*, or *pushing the teacher's buttons* suggests that these performances are perceived as flagrant denials of the deference that teachers expect. Goffman notes that "to be pointedly refused an expected act of deference is often a way of being told that open insurrection has begun" (1967: 61). When this occurs, he argues, these performances are perceived as efforts "by the actor to reallocate tasks, relations, and power" (Goffman 1967: 61). In essence they are perceived as student attempts to openly challenge the authority of the teacher and dispute the interaction order at South Carmen High. Reactions to these performances by teachers, then, can be understood as attempts to reestablish their authority and restore the interaction order.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify that regardless of severity, any performance that violates the interaction order communicates a similar message. Just as the student who yells (i.e. throws the front up) at a teacher communicates a lack of deference; so does the student that lays her head down on the desk, or the student that does not bring a pencil and paper to class. A performance need not be openly hostile to

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[32] In the following chapter I address emotional responses to violations of the interaction order. I would also like to point out that the use of these violent metaphors is interesting in light of Bourdieu's argument that symbolic power is often wielded through symbolic violence.

violate the interaction order; nor does it have to be intentional. Although interviews with Latino students indicated that it was not their intention to violate the interaction order, this was how their performances were commonly perceived by teachers. Moreover, while conducting fieldwork in classrooms at South Carmen High, many Latino students were frequently observed who verbally challenged the teacher, did not bring paper and pencil to class, laid their head down on the desk, and did not participate -- all components of demeanor that conveyed a lack of deference towards the teacher. The question is thus, if Latino students know the script and are committed to the interaction order; why then, did their performances consistently violate that order?

The data indicate that this occurred because of Latino students' perceptions of teachers' performances. Just as students were not meeting the obligations that teachers expected, nor were teachers meeting the obligations that students expected. In other words, teachers were not communicating deference to the students through their demeanor.

When asked what could be done differently to improve Latino students' experiences at South Carmen High, Mirna responded, *"Helping them more and giving them more support. In the class they* [teachers] *could be more sensitive. They need to help more."* Eduardo commented, *"I would tell teachers to put a little bit more effort into helping students."* Discussing the attributes of a good teacher, Vicente remarked, *"A teacher is good because she cares about her students and doesn't want them to fail."* He went on to comment, *"If I see that the teacher cares or that the teacher takes initiative with me and is concerned; then we can get somewhere."* It was clear throughout the interviews that the care, concern, and initiative (i.e. deference) that Latino students

expected was often not conveyed in the behavior they observed of their teachers. Instead, the perceived demeanor of many teachers communicates a lack of deference to the students. Consequently, teachers who fail to communicate deference (i.e. mutual respect) were perceived to not possess the attributes of a good teacher and potentially categorized by students as uncaring, unconcerned, and unwilling to help.

For the Latino student respondents who were not faring well at South Carmen High, these perceived denials of deference were critical because they caused them to give up on *their* performances. In other words, this led to them neglecting their obligations to convey deference to the teacher. For instance, when asked if she implemented the strategies one can take to be successful in school, Mirna replied, *"Well I try to do them, but if they give me ugly looks or something like that, I get all serious. I'll just do what I can do. I just stay quiet."* Mirna's comments speak to the embodied indicators (e.g. facial expressions) that render teachers readable by students, and thus subject to categorization. Mirna could very well be misperceiving the facial expressions of her teachers, but the point is that teachers' bodily comportment may be highly scrutinized by students and can potentially communicate to students that the teacher does not care and does not want to help them (i.e. was not invested). Mirna and others responded by disinvesting themselves. Fernando reported similar experiences to those of Mirna. When asked if he felt comfortable asking teachers for help, he commented, *"Some teachers like, I don't want to ask them for help because like for some teachers I've already asked them for help, but they don't really pay attention to me."* Regarding his responses to lack of teacher investment, Eduardo commented, *"Sometimes I don't even try. I'll just put my head down or whatever."*

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The purpose of this discussion is to highlight the reciprocal nature of student-teacher interactions at South Carmen High. I argue that these interactions are of critical importance because it is precisely *here* where school gets played. I want to emphasize that in these interactions students and teachers are simultaneously both actors and recipients. That is, they are both performing roles, and interpreting each other's performances. It was clear that Latino students and teachers at South Carmen High often interpreted each other's performances as violations of the interaction order. As Goffman notes, when the interaction order is breached, "both actor and recipient are threatened" (1967: 51). The tendency to disinvest in these interactions was a result of both teachers and students feeling threatened and discredited. Consequently, these failed interactions between students and teachers may lead to a student's complete withdrawal and ultimately to the decision to drop out of high school.

In this chapter I have discussed the major themes and patterns that emerged from the observations and interviews with members of the educational community at South Carmen High. I highlight that Latino student attrition and lack of success was often explained by educators as the students' inability or unwillingness to *play school* by a preferred or "appropriate" script. The inability or unwillingness to play school was often perceived as a lack of cultural capital, or as Ruby Payne might argue, lack of knowledge of the correct, albeit hidden rules of education (2001). Drawing on Bourdieu, I argue that the concept of cultural capital in the field of education lacks a sufficient discussion of power, which leaves unexplored more foundational issues of how these rules are defined and who gets to define them. I argue that this is particularly problematic given the contrasting perceptions of educators and Latino students and their families at South

Carmen High. Given these disparate interpretations, I draw on Goffman to analyze how

Latino students and their teachers interact, how these interactions are perceived, and what

happens when these interactions fail. I argue in this chapter that Latino student-teacher

interactions often fail because the obligations and expectations that govern those

interactions are not met; which can be interpreted as a breach or violation of the

interaction order. In the following chapter I explore the emotional responses to these

violations of the interaction order, discuss the practical implications of these failures, and

make some suggestions for further analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

"When an individual becomes involved in the maintenance of a rule, he tends also to become committed to a particular image of himself. In the case of his obligations, he becomes to himself and others the sort of person who follows this particular rule, the sort of person who would naturally be expected to do so. In the case of his expectations, he becomes dependent upon the assumption that others will properly perform such of their obligations as affect him, for their treatment of him will express a conception of him" (Goffman 1967: 50)

In this thesis I promote an analysis of the interactions between Latino students

and teachers at South Carmen high that explores the rules of conduct (i.e. interaction

order) that governs these interactions. While I recognize that there are other potential

interpretations, I argue that when interactions between Latino students and teachers fail,

these failures can be explained as violations of the interaction order. My objectives for

this chapter are to discuss the consequences of these violations, the practical implications

of these failed interactions, and make some suggestions for further analysis.

Goffman argues that "the rules of conduct which bind the actor and the recipient

together are the bindings of society" (1967: 90). These rules (i.e. the interaction order)

govern our interactions with others and allow us to perform various selves depending on

the rules of the particular situation in which we are performing. As a result, Goffman

argues, we become deeply invested in maintaining the interaction order because our very

conceptions of self depend on it (1967; 1983). When the obligations and expectations of

the interaction order are not met and the interaction order is breached, these violations can often be interpreted as affronts to the self that we are trying to perform and potentially produce negative emotional responses. Scheff (2006: 18) notes that "Even a slight difference between what is expected and what is received, whether it be too little or too much, can cause embarrassment and other painful emotions."

I argue in this thesis that interactions between Latino students and teachers at South Carmen High fail because the interaction order is breached. Moreover, these violations *can* be interpreted affronts to the selves Latino students and teachers are attempting to perform. If teachers are attempting to perform the role of a good teacher, then there are obligations and expectations of the audience associated with that role. When the audience (i.e. students) fails to treat the teacher in a manner that confirms the self the teacher is trying to perform, this can potentially produce negative emotions for the teacher. The same is true for Latino students. There are obligations and expectations associated with the performance of a good student. If Latino students are attempting to perform the role of a good student and the audience (i.e. teachers) fail to treat the students in a manner that confirms this self, this may also evoke negative emotions in Latino students such as embarrassment or shame. These negative emotions are "primarily social emotions, because they usually arise from a threat to the bond" (Scheff 2006: 18). My central point is that the performances of both teachers and students are often perceived as violations of the interaction order. The bond between these actors is broken. These violations of the interaction order result in both Latino students *and* teachers feeling threatened which may explain the consequential tendency of both parties to disinvest in these interactions.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to reiterate the context in which this study was conducted. The year this study was conducted was a turbulent year for Carmen City School District. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the district was undergoing substantial changes in personnel, they were in the midst of a budget crisis and a labor dispute between the Carmen City Teachers' Union and district administration. As a result, morale was low among teachers. Despite these challenges, the educators at South Carmen High who participated in this study expressed a deep investment in pedagogy and in the quality of education that they were offering their students. Moreover, when teachers were asked about the most important duty in their job description, they invariably answered that the most important aspect teaching was building a relationship with their students and positively impacting their students' lives. However, when asked about the biggest difficulties they had in completing this duty, *all* of the teachers interviewed expressed that there were systemic structural constraints (e.g. class size, over-emphasis on assessment, lack of resources, lack of appropriate compensation for teachers, etc.) that impede those relationships. The point I am trying to make here is that teachers nation-wide have received the brunt of criticisms of a struggling public education system. Considering these constraints that teachers face, I argue that it is just as problematic to place the blame on teachers as it is to place the blame on students. However, one cannot deny that the consequences of failed interactions between students and teacher that have been explored in this thesis fall primarily on students whose opportunities for future success become constrained.

Any claims about who experiences more emotional damage from these failed interactions are speculative at best and wholly unnecessary. However, the implications of

failed interactions are far greater for Latino students. When interactions between Latino students and teachers are unsuccessful, these failures can drastically impact the life chances of the students involved. If Latino students are perceived as unable or unwilling to play school and *categorized* as such, this can negatively impact those students in a number of ways. First, as the work Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) indicate, if students are perceived negatively, this can impact students' access to social capital with institutional agents. Second, when interactions between students and teachers fail, these failures can potentially have negative impacts on the students' acquisition of human capital as well as other forms of capital. For example, this may negatively impact students' grades, the possibilities of post-high school education; and ultimately their future occupational position. With respect to the categorizing that may occur in "people-processing encounters," Goffman writes, "it is in these encounters that the quiet sorting can occur which, as Bourdieu might have it, reproduces the social structure" (1983: 8).

How institutional agents perceive and categorize students is certainly a factor that impacts the educational experiences of those students. Moreover, negative perceptions and categorizations may "reproduce the social structure" (Goffman 1983). However, focusing exclusively on institutional agents' perceptions of students assumes that those agents are the only ones engaged in the interaction, leaving unexplored students' perceptions of teachers. The reverse is true when we focus exclusively students' perceptions of teachers. As I have argued throughout this thesis, these arguments tend to foster an atmosphere of finger-pointing and attempts to place blame on one party or entity. Moreover, this often leads to public discourse regarding racial and ethnic variation in educational achievement and attainment that *individualizes* the problem (e.g.

it's teachers' fault; or, it's the students' fault) and by individualizing the problem, we hinder our ability to come up with collective solutions that may lead to more systemic change.

In this study I offer a more multi-dimensional, multi-faceted analysis, approaching all members of the educational community as stakeholders, exploring how Latino students and teachers at South Carmen High interact. However, it is important to mention the limitations of this study and what I would have done differently to get at my research question if given unlimited time and money.

With respect to the limitations of this study, it is necessary to recognize that this is a case study of one high school located in a specific geographic location and within a specific historical context. Therefore the data found in this study is not necessarily representative of other high schools in other regions or other high schools in Carmen City. Another significant limitation to this study is that fieldwork was conducted over a period of six months due to limited time and resources. If given access to unlimited resources, first and foremost I would have spent considerable more time conducting ethnography at South Carmen High and I would substantially increase the number of participants. Ideally, I would have spent four years at South Carmen High and I would have followed a cohort of Latino students from their freshman year through their senior year.

I would also have other students and their parents in the study (including non-Hispanic white students and the small, but growing newer immigrant student population primarily from Somalia and Burma) and further explored the interactions between Latino students and these other *groups* of students at the school. With respect to methodology, I

would not limit the study to observations and in-depth interviews; rather I would also include focus groups with just Latino students and just teachers, and mixed focus groups with Latino students and teachers together.

Considering these limitations, I argue that future ethnographic research is required that explores and compares the educational experiences of Latino students at high schools located in various regions, and within various historical contexts. Data from this research could potentially be used to draft surveys that could be administered in high schools on a much broader scale. Further research is also required that examines the educational system as a whole, and the structural aspects of that system that affect both teachers and students. That is, we need to critically analyze how we "do" school. Regarding the need for systemic change, one educator at South Carmen High remarked,

> *"It doesn't matter how many kids have A's or B's, because the way we go about school right now, we should be measuring learning, but we measure how well kids play school in a lot of classes. I say we measure compliance"* (Bill Lebohn, Administrator)

Limitations notwithstanding, this study is relevant to the study of racial and ethnic variation in educational experiences because it offers a more holistic approach and explores how all social actors within one educational community interact and perceive those interactions. While the research presented in this thesis is only representative South Carmen High, I argue that many of the challenges and difficulties facing the educational community of South Carmen High are similar to those faced in school districts nation-wide. In order to address these challenges, I contend that scholars and educational practitioners should back away from one-sided arguments that focus on one specific group or component of the educational community and lead to placing blame. Moreover, future research in this area of study should take a more holistic approach to the

challenges minority students are facing in our public schools and recognize that these are collective challenges. By first recognizing the collective nature of our challenges, we may then begin to create collective solutions to these challenges that recognize the legitimacy of all stakeholders.

It is important to recognize that there are programs that have been implemented in recent years that seek to promote mutual acceptance of various populations from different class, ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and improve the educational experiences of minority students. One such effort is a student organization called No Place for Hate. No Place for Hate is a program that was developed by the Anti-Defamation League to "organize schools to work together and develop projects that enhance the appreciation of diversity and foster harmony amongst diverse groups" (League 2009).

There is also a program in place called Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). GEAR UP is a program funded through a U.S. Department of Education grant that specifically targets low-income students and offers tutoring and other support in order to channel these students into undergraduate programs following high school (Education 2009). At South Carmen High GEAR UP staff offered services in both English and Spanish and was a popular place for students to go and get the help and support they needed.

There are also several university outreach programs that are gaining prominence. Among these programs is Upward Bound which provides outreach to high schools and also seeks to channel low-income students into college-track classes and assists them to negotiate the application process and the transition to college (Education 2010). South

Carmen High also has an Upward Bound representative from a local university who works with several of the students at the school.

I argue that all of these programs are steps in the right direction and certainly improve the experiences of some students. Many of these programs help students acquire social capital with institutional agents at the schools by helping them create meaningful relationships with those individuals who provide these services. All of these programs are also actively working towards increasing minority representation in institutions of higher education. However, future research addressing the educational experiences of minority students and students living in poverty is still necessary. Moreover, future research is required that further explores how school gets played and potential other ways we can play school. This research could provide valuable insight that may lead to the creation of newer programs that promote more nuanced multi-cultural curricula and possibly help to improve some of these programs that are already in place.

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Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: An Ethnographic Analysis of Low Graduation Rates among Latino Students

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Dr. Lynn Hempel, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Colorado State University, B258 Clark Building, Fort Collins, CO 80523, Phone: (970) 491-4109*

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Nathan Dollar, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Sociology, Colorado State University, B265 Clark Building, Fort Collins, CO 80523, Phone (970) 491-3881*

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a member of the educational community at Greeley West High School.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
This study is being conducted by Dr. Lynn Hempel, assistant professor of sociology at Colorado State University and Nathan Dollar, Graduate Research Assistant in sociology at Colorado State University.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The goal of this research is to gain a clearer understanding of why Latino students graduate at much lower rates than other groups.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
This study is going to take place at Greeley West High School and the surrounding community

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
With your permission, we would like to interview you about your experiences as a member of the educational community at Greeley West High School. The interview will take approximately one hour of your time. We would like to audio record our conversation. The recordings will not be heard by anyone else. The interview is completely voluntary, and you can refuse to answer any question or end the interview at anytime. At a later date, with your permission, we would like for you to participate in a focus group interview with other members of the educational community.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
There are no reasons why you should not take part in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
There are no possible risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There are no direct benefits to participants in this study, but we hope to give you the opportunity to tell your story if you wish to, express any concerns you may have. We also hope to facilitate more comprehensive strategies for retaining Latino students through the identification of problems and concerns members of the educational community of Weld County are facing.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?
Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Page _1_ of _2_ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?
We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep you name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?
The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Lynn Hempel at 970-491-4109. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

"This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on (Approval Date)."

I agree to participate in the interview Yes_____   No_____

I agree to participate in the focus group Yes_____   No_____

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing ____ pages.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____
Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

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Page _1_ of _3_ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?
We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep you name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

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_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

Obtain your parent's permission ONLY if you are UNDER 18 years of age

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian I authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to me by _____ and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

_____
Minor's date of birth

_____
Parent/Guardian name (printed)

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian signature   Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule for Administrators

- First I'd like to ask, how long have you been working at South Carmen High?
- What is your administrative position?
- Did you work somewhere else before? [If no, skip next two questions]
- What was your position there?
- Is South Carmen High different from other schools where you have worked? How?
- Do you have a lot of discipline problems with your students?
- If yes, what are some examples?
- How does the school deal with disciplinary problems?
- How do you deal with disciplinary problems?
- There is a lot of concern regarding low graduation rates among Latino students in this school district. What are your opinions on this?
- In your opinion, what factors are involved in a students' decision to drop out?
- Has A.) the school district B.) South Carmen and/or C.) You personally taken measures to mediate some of these factors?
- What are some examples?
- Which of these measures have been most effective? Which are not?
- In your opinion, is there anything more that could be changed to retain Latino students?
- What are some examples of these changes?
- How would these changes be implemented?

   Now I'm going to ask you about interactions with Latino parents
- How often do you communicate with Latino parents?
- Through what medium do you most frequently communicate (i.e. telephone, conferences, letters home, etcetera)
- When you do communicate with Latino parents, how would you describe these interactions? (do you feel they are receptive to suggestions you make, or concerns you raise, etcetera?).
- In your opinion, what could be changed to better facilitate open communication between Latino parents and the faculty and staff at South Carmen?
- What do you consider to be the most important duties in your job description as an administrator?
- What are some of the biggest difficulties you have, or obstacles you face in the successful completion of these duties?
- What could be done to help you overcome these obstacles?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss that I have not asked you today? [Thank respondent for their participation.]

APPENDIX D

Interview Schedule for Teachers

- First I'd like to ask, how long have you been working at South Carmen High?
- What do you teach?
- Did you work somewhere else before? [If no, skip next two questions]
- What was your position there?
- Is South Carmen High different from other schools where you have worked? How?
- Do you have a lot of discipline problems with your students?
- If yes, what are some examples?
- How does the school deal with disciplinary problems?
- How do you deal with disciplinary problems?
- There is a lot of concern regarding low graduation rates among Latino students in this school district. What are your opinions on this?
- In your opinion, what factors are involved in a students' decision to drop out?
- Has A.) the school district B.) South Carmen and/or C.) You personally taken measures to mediate some of these factors?
- What are some examples?
- Which of these measures have been most effective? Which are not?
- In your opinion, is there anything more that could be changed to retain Latino students?
- What are some examples of these changes?
- How would these changes be implemented?

Now I'm going to ask you about interactions with Latino parents
- How often do you communicate with Latino parents?
- Through what medium do you most frequently communicate (i.e. telephone, conferences, letters home, etcetera)
- When you do communicate with Latino parents, how would you describe these interactions? (do you feel they are receptive to suggestions you make, or concerns you raise, etcetera?).
- In your opinion, what could be changed to better facilitate open communication between Latino parents and the faculty and staff at South Carmen?
- What do you consider to be the most important duties in your job description as a teacher?
- What are some of the biggest difficulties you have, or obstacles you face in the successful completion of these duties?
- What could be done to help you overcome these obstacles?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss that I have not asked you today? [Thank respondent for their participation.]

APPENDIX E

Interview Schedule for Parents

BEGIN INTERVIEW BY ASKING IF RESPONDENT PREFERS ENGLISH OR
SPANISH AND PROCEED IN THAT LANGUAGE.

- First I'd like to begin with some basic information…
- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Where are you from?
  [If respondent is second generation or later, ask where family is originally from]
- What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?
- How many school age [5-18] children do you have?
- Are they all currently attending school? If not, why?
- How long has your child [name of child(ren) enrolled at South Carmen High] been attending school here in Carmen City School District?
- How would you describe your child's experience in the school system here in Carmen City?
- Do you think that your child's educational experience is different than other students? How?
  [If no to previous question, skip next two questions]
- Who are these students?
- Why do you think these students educational experiences differ from your child's?
- How would you describe your experience with school officials here in Carmen City? At South Carmen?
- Have you ever contacted your child's teachers apart from parent/teacher conferences?
- How often do you communicate with your child's teachers?
- How available are your child's teachers to discuss your child's education?
- How comfortable do you feel discussing problems and concerns you may have regarding your child's education with faculty and staff at South Carmen?
- In what ways do you feel that school officials at South Carmen High could better address you and/or your child's concerns?
- What are your biggest concerns regarding your child's education?
- What are your child's biggest concerns?
- How often do you discuss school life with your child?
- What are some of the biggest obstacles to successfully completing high school that your child faces? [Ask respondents to mention obstacles in their personal life and those faced at school?
- In your opinion, what could school officials do or not do to do help your child overcome these obstacles?

- What could you do, or not do, to help your child overcome these obstacles?
- In your opinion, are there any major obstacles that you face in helping your child have a successful educational experience?
- Could school officials do anything to help you overcome some of these obstacles?
- There is a lot of concern regarding students of Latin American origin choosing to drop out before finishing high school. As a parent of Latin American origin, what do you think causes students to choose to drop out?
- What do you think teachers, administrators, parents, or students could do differently to help students finish high school?
- Do you think your child will finish high school? Why or why not?
- If not, what do you think your child will do?
- If so, what will your child do upon completion of high school?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss that I have not asked you here today?

[Thank respondent for their participation in the study.]

APPENDIX F

Interview Schedule for Students

BEGIN INTERVIEW BY ASKING IF RESPONDENT PREFERS ENGLISH OR
SPANISH AND PROCEED IN THAT LANGUAGE

- First I'd like to begin with some basic information…
- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What grade are you in?
- Where is your family from?
- When did your family come to the US?
  [If family came to the US before respondent was born, skip next 4 questions]
- Did you ever attend school in [country of family's origin]?
  [If answer to previous question is no, skip next three questions]
- What grade were you in when you left [country of family's origin]?
- Did you like school in [country of family's origin]? Why?
- What did you dislike? Why?
- Have you attended school in other parts of the United States?
  [If no, skip next 2 questions]
- What are some differences between [other places in US where respondent has attended school] and here?
- What do you like and dislike about school here?
- In what ways would you say your educational experience different from other students here because your family is from [country of family's origin]?
- Are students from [country of family's origin] treated differently from other students? How?
- Do you feel you receive more or less attention from faculty and staff at South Carmen than other students?
  [If no, skip next two questions]
- Who are these students?
- Why do you think you receive more or less attention than these students?
- If you had a problem, do you feel that you could openly discuss it with faculty and staff at South Carmen High? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what are some of the biggest obstacles to successfully completing high school that you face? [Ask respondent to mention obstacles they confront in their personal life and/or obstacles they confront at school]?
- How do you handle these obstacles?
- What recommendations would you make to school officials to help you overcome some of these obstacles?
- In your opinion, are there certain strategies one can take to be more successful academically? If yes, what are some examples of these strategies?

- Do you implement these strategies yourself? Why or why not?
- Do you find your classes to be intellectually stimulating? Why or why not?
- What do you like and dislike about your classes?
- Do you feel that the grades you get are fair? Why or why not?
- Could you tell me what kinds of grades you get?

Now I'm going to ask you about school in general.
- There is a lot of concern regarding students of Latin American origin choosing to drop out before finishing high school. What do you think causes students to choose to drop out? Which of these is most challenging for Hispanic students?
- What do you think can be done differently to help students finish high school?
- Who do you think is responsible for implementing these changes?
- What are some of the reasons people have for finishing high school?
- Do you plan on finishing high school? Why or why not?
  [If answer is no to previous question, skip next question]
- What do you plan on doing after you finish high school?
- If you don't plan on finishing high school, what do you plan on doing?
- Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that I have not asked you today?
  [Thank respondent for their participation]