

LOOKING LIKE A LANGUAGE, SOUNDING LIKE A RACE

Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning
of Latinidad

Jonathan Rosa

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

INTRODUCTION

MAKING LATINX IDENTITIES AND MANAGING AMERICAN ANXIETIES

In February 2010, as I was nearing the end of several years of Chicago-based fieldwork focused on language, race, and Latinx identities, the *Chicago Sun-Times* ran a series of stories titled “Nuevo Chicago” (“New Chicago”), “How Young Hispanics Are Reshaping the Region.”¹ The stories frame the experiences of “young Hispanics” growing up in Chicago as “two cultures finding a happy medium in the mainstream”:

In high school cafeterias, college dorms, Loop offices, and River North nightclubs, a new generation of Latinos is rising, pushing toward success and often seamlessly weaving together elements of their heritage into the mainstream culture.

The stories suggest that “emphasis on language and identity seem to go hand in hand,” and point to examples of young Latinx Chicagoans whose “multiple national identities” give them a unique perspective. One boy “thinks of himself as Mexican” even though he “was born in Chicago and speaks fluent English without an accent. . . . Like many young Latinos, [he] identifies strongly with his parents’ home country even while growing up in the United States.” A young Latina in one of the stories said that she used to be embarrassed because she felt different from her White peers, but during “her senior year in high school, she began embracing her Latino identity.” After this change in perspective, she was no longer ashamed, and now she is “very proud [to be] Mexican.”

After foregrounding these multicultural, coming-of-age Latinx success stories, the tone of the report begins to shift:

Overwhelmingly U.S. born, bilingual and optimistic about the future—though lagging in education levels and facing a

stubborn teen pregnancy rate—Latinos are the largest and youngest minority group in the United States. . . . While Hispanic women and other groups have increased their bachelor's degree attainment rate, the rate for males has remained stable at 10 percent, the lowest of any group. . . . Latino men are less likely to start or finish college because of family pressure to work and gang activity. . . . Coupled with the fact that Hispanic women have the highest rate of teen pregnancy of any group, both males and females end up having trouble staying in school.

In one moment, Latinxs are “bilingual,” “optimistic about the future,” and “seamlessly weave together elements of their heritage into the mainstream culture,” while in the next they struggle with gangs, teen pregnancy, and educational underachievement. Dávila (2008) and Chavez (2008) characterize this narrative dynamic as “Latino spin” and “Latino threat,” respectively. Dávila argues that seemingly contradictory representational tropes associated with Latinxs, such as “illegal, tax burden, patriotic, family-oriented, hard-working, and model consumer” (2008:1), should be understood as efforts to reproduce normative American racial, class, gender, and sexual ideals rather than empirical representations of Latinxs’ fundamental character. While Dávila explores whitewashing through “Latino spin,” Chavez tracks racialization through “Latino threat” narratives that position Latinxs as an abject Other population in need of careful management. Importantly, both “Latino spin” and “Latino threat” narratives often frame language shift from Spanish to English as a sign of progress, which reflects how seemingly contradictory representations contribute to the overdetermination of Latinx identities and linguistic practices as part of broader projects of population management. These popular discourses demonstrate how conceptions of Latinx difference—the stereotypical characteristics associated with US-based (im)migrants from Latin America and their descendants—are closely linked to a set of anxieties and ideologies surrounding race and language.² I argue that the co-naturalization of language and race is a key feature of modern governance, such that languages are perceived as racially embodied and race is perceived as linguistically intelligible, which results in the overdetermination of racial embodiment and communicative practice—hence the notion of *looking like a language* and *sounding like a race*. Thus, race, language, and governance must be analyzed collectively.

The ethnoracial³ status of Latinx identity is widely debated in both scholarly and popular discourses, often from the perspective of spectrum-based racial logics that problematically imagine Latinxs as an intermediary “brown” population located between Blackness at one end and Whiteness at the other, or as

a phenotypically heterogeneous group that is better understood ethnically (i.e., stereotypically defined culturally or nationally) than racially (i.e., stereotypically defined physically). The former logic is anchored in white supremacist histories of Indigenous erasure and anti-Blackness through which some groups and bodies come to be positioned as desirable for their perceived mixed-race status and proximity to Whiteness; the latter logic is anchored in white supremacist colonial management schemas that homogenize and differentiate populations in varying ways.⁴ Thus, historical power formations, rather than objectively similar or different bodies, organize processes of phenotypic homogenization and differentiation. There is infinite phenotypic heterogeneity within Indigenous, Black, Asian, and White populations, so Latinxs are not a magical, “cosmic race”⁵ that will usher in a newly mixed-race American future in relation to imagined pasts consisting of bounded racial categories that never were.

Spectrum-based racial logics also tell us very little about how populations come to be positioned in particular historical, political, and economic circumstances. Imbricated, ongoing American histories of Indigenous genocide and containment, African enslavement and subsequent African American societal abjection, Asian and Latinx (im)migrant labor exploitation, detention, and deportation, and contemporary Islamophobia cannot be understood by locating populations on a binary Black-White racial spectrum. However, rather than moving beyond a Black-White binary, which is often a convenient way in which to reproduce anti-Blackness, we must understand this binary as but one racial logic among many, albeit a very powerful one that is tied to consequential histories of colorism of which Latinxs are certainly a part (Fergus, Noguera, and Martin 2010). An alternative approach to racial assemblages seeks to understand the linked modes in which racialized populations inhabit various historical, political, and economic positionalities as they orbit around Whiteness in shifting, yet colonially patterned, ways.

Regardless of perceived phenotypic heterogeneity, semiotic ideologies recruit linguistic practices and various signs of difference to homogenize Latinxs as racial Others. Crucially, I approach race and language not as objectively observable or embodied phenomena in the first place, but rather as historically and institutionally constituted subject formations that are rooted in the rearticulation of colonial distinctions between normative Europeanness and Othered non-Europeanness that emerged through the contested production of modernity as an ideology and power formation that is global in its scope (Bauman and Briggs 2003). From this perspective, perceptions of bodies and communicative practices are colonially conditioned constructions of reality rather than unmediated reflections of preexisting differences or similarities. While I am interested in how

bodies and linguistic practices are perceived, parsed, and experienced in everyday interactions and modes of identification, I argue that we must attend to the historical and institutional conditions of possibility for such intersubjective phenomena in order to understand how they reproduce, disrupt, and reconfigure racial categories and linguistic varieties. Insofar as Latinx identities are produced as part of a US settler colonial history and broader histories of European colonialism, we must continually attend to the ways that these forms of coloniality shape perceptions of Latinx bodies in relation to an imagined phenotypic spectrum from Blackness to Whiteness, and Latinx communicative practices in relation to an imagined linguistic spectrum from Spanish to English. Indeed, these spectra hinge on the reproduction of anti-Blackness and the erasure of Indigeneity, and as such should be interrogated as racialized colonial logics rather than empirical rubrics within which bodies and linguistic practices can be objectively situated. The fact that millions of people are perceived from some perspectives as Indigenous, Afro-Latinx, White, Asian, and/or some combination thereof, yet self-identify as “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or “Spanish,” is a reflection of the constructed nature of these categories on the one hand, and of the need to interrogate their historical and contemporary reproduction on the other. The same could be said for people who might identify as monolingual English users or English-dominant, yet who often engage in practices that could be classified as bilingual or multilingual. The inability to apprehend the role of coloniality in shaping these modes of perception and identification leads to the indictment of individuals and populations as suffering from racial and linguistic denial, rather than the indictment of colonialism as a historical and contemporary power formation that profoundly circumscribes desirable and possible subjectivities. Thus, I am interested in the ways that the rearticulation of colonial logics surrounding race and language figures centrally in the creation of Latinx as particular coordinate within a broader assemblage—note, not a spectrum!—of racial categories and language varieties.

This book explores the joint perception, construction, and naturalization of racial categories and language varieties in the context of a predominantly Latinx Chicago public high school and its surrounding communities. I demonstrate the ways that Latinx difference is ambivalently imagined as the cause of and solution to stereotypical urban challenges such as educational underachievement, gang violence, and teen pregnancy.⁶ These ambivalences are tied to tensions involved in the emergence of Latinx panethnicity as part of wider patterns of ethnicization and racialization, as well as the reproduction of these patterns in conjunction with the management of socioeconomic class, gender, and sexuality. I examine how broad, racialized and panethnic identity formation processes are negotiated locally in Chicago through historically situated interrelations among

self-identified Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Ideological constructions of varieties of English and Spanish play an important role in unifying and distinguishing between these Latinx subgroups. I show how national discourses surrounding language and Latinx identity link to linguistic ideology, policy, and practice in this context. Through the analysis of these linkages I argue that the co-naturalization of language and race powerfully shapes everyday life across social contexts and institutional scales.

Toward A Raciolinguistic Perspective

In efforts to conceptualize the co-naturalization of linguistic and racial borders, this book deploys what Nelson Flores and I have termed a *raciolinguistic* perspective (Rosa and Flores 2017).⁷ This perspective on processes of racial and linguistic co-naturalization analyzes the ongoing rearticulation of colonial distinctions between populations and modes of communication that come to be positioned as more or less normatively European.⁸ These semiotic distinctions organize the joint governance of markets and difference within modernist projects of racial capitalism and liberal democracy.⁹ This historical, political, economic, and semiotic vantage point takes its inspiration from Inoue's (2006) theorization of the "listening subject" as the masculine subject position that produces the overdetermined category of Japanese women's language in the context of Japan's political and economic modernization.¹⁰ On the one hand, Inoue deploys Silverstein's (2003a) notion of "indexical order" as the dynamic semiotic process through which signs and contexts are co-constituted and transformed. On the other, she mobilizes Irvine and Gal's (2000) conceptualization of iconization/rhematization as the naturalizing semiotic process whereby stereotypes about language are mapped onto social personae and vice versa, thereby contributing to broader modes of social and linguistic differentiation. Inoue suggests that Japanese women's language should be understood as an "indexical inversion" through which language ideologies produce the very linguistic forms that come to be experienced as empirically perceivable; thus, Japanese "women's language" can be understood as a "compelling copy which needs no original for its effectivity" (2003a:325). For Inoue, Japanese women's language is deceptively produced not by the communicative practices of Japanese women, but rather by historically, politically, and economically situated ideologies of language and gender that shape the hearing practices of masculine listening subjects.

Reyes (2014) and Chun and Lo (2016) have adapted Inoue's conceptualization of indexical inversion and the listening subject to questions of language and race by interrogating the troublesome commitment to the "distinctiveness paradigm

in sociolinguistics,” which hinges on “the ideology that group *x* speaks language *x*, a distinguishable speech variety from language *y* spoken by group *y*” (Lo and Reyes 2009:6).¹¹ A focus on indexical inversion redirects attention from the always already constituted bodies and language practices of racialized subjects to the conditions of possibility for the interpretive practices of racially hegemonic perceiving subjects. Just as Inoue roots her analysis of Japanese women’s language in hegemonic representations and perceptions rather than the communicative practices of Japanese women themselves, I show how Latinx linguistic practices are construed from the perspective of hegemonically positioned White perceiving subjects. This is exemplified by my analyses of racialized ideologies of “languagelessness” through which Latinxs are perceived as producing neither English nor Spanish legitimately, as well as “Inverted Spanglish” practices through which Latinxs invoke stereotypes about White Americans’ stereotypes about Latinxs. Thus, relations among ideologies of race and language—raciolinguistic ideologies—are at the center of my analysis.

Flores and I (2015) have shown how raciolinguistic ideologies relegate racialized students designated as Long-Term English Learners, Heritage Language Learners, and Standard English Learners to a perpetual status of linguistic deficiency regardless of the extent to which, from many perspectives, their linguistic practices might seem to correspond to standardized norms.¹² Thus, we suggest shifting focus from modifying racially minoritized subjects’ linguistic practices to contesting hegemonically positioned subjects’ modes of perception. In mainstream educational contexts, the focus is often on the former rather than the latter, such that the goal for racially minoritized subjects is to supplant or supplement their perceived “home” language practices. These efforts toward the modification of racially minoritized individuals’ linguistic practices are rooted in a troublesome accumulation-based theory of change that promotes the acquisition of cultural and linguistic capital. This reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of racial capitalism, a colonially constituted, inherently stratified power formation that must be dismantled not simply through redistribution but also through decolonization (Tuck and Yang 2012). Thus, a raciolinguistic perspective must be informed by a theory of change that is focused on reconstituting or eradicating systems of domination, such as racial capitalism, White supremacy, and the normative modes of colonial subject formation that organize these systems rather than modifying the embodied communicative behaviors of racially minoritized individuals.¹³

This raciolinguistic perspective combines Inoue’s argument that “noise and language are neither naturally pregiven nor phenomenologically immanent” (2003b:157), with Barnor Hesse’s “colonial constitution of race thesis,” which holds that “[r]ace is not in the eye of the beholder or on the body of

the objectified,” but rather “an inherited western, modern-colonial practice of violence, assemblage, superordination, exploitation, and segregation . . . demarcating the colonial rule of Europe over non-Europe” (2016:viii). Together, these approaches call into question positivist, empirical accounts of language and race, and, by extension, a metaphysics of raciolinguistic presence. Thus, rather than starting from the vantage point of always already constituted racial categories (e.g., Black, Asian, Native American, White) and linguistic varieties (e.g., Standard English, African American English, Spanglish), a raciolinguistic approach considers the joint production of these categories and varieties across institutional and interactional scales. This approach involves accounting for the modes of perception through which bodies are parsed in relation to racial categories and communicative forms are construed in relation to named language varieties. Thus, the goal is not to document typologically Latinxs’ racial characteristics and linguistic practices, but rather to interrogate the processes through which Latinx becomes a racially perceivable and linguistically intelligible category.

My ethnographic account situates processes of Latinx racial category-making and embodiment in close relation to a perceived linguistic repertoire of varieties of English and Spanish.¹⁴ Latinx students’ negotiation of racial and linguistic identities creates a context in which minute features of language become enregistered as high stakes signals of institutional affiliation. Enregisterment is a theory of the processes through which forms of language become endowed with cultural value as coherent sets in relation to models of personhood (Silverstein 2003a; Agha 2005a). I show how the enregisterment of Latinx identity involves a powerful dialectic through which individuals come to look like a language and sound like a race.¹⁵ I frame this as a process of *raciolinguistic enregisterment*, whereby race and language are rendered mutually perceivable.¹⁶ This raciolinguistic perspective directs attention not simply to the ways that race is socially constructed through language but also to the ways that language is socially constructed through race.

Instead of beginning by attempting to document the range of linguistic practices that are distinctive of a given racial group, a raciolinguistic enregisterment approach involves asking how and why particular linguistic forms are constructed as emblematic of particular racial categories, and vice versa.¹⁷ This emblematicity creates the seemingly peculiar phenomenon of people being recognized as producing linguistic forms that are unperceivable from some perspectives, as well as people not being recognized as producing forms that from other perspectives are readily perceivable. For example, Latinxs are often associated with the Spanish language even when they are producing what from many perspectives might be perceived as “unaccented” English or when they identify as monolingual English users.¹⁸ In seeking to understand the ways that language becomes an emblem of group identity, it is crucial to consider the role that race and related categories

of difference play in shaping perceptions of language use.¹⁹ In the contemporary United States, this involves the powerful remapping of race “from biology onto language” (Zentella 2007:26; Urciuoli 1996, 2001).²⁰ This remapping overdetermines the relationship between language and race, such that language practices and racial categories become iconic of one another. I analyze the ways that Latinx students anticipate and respond to presumptions about their language use and racial identities by participating in and contesting the enregisterment of linguistic varieties and racial categories.

Setting the Ethnographic Scene

Opening with this analysis of a media narrative and theoretical rumination rather than a conventional ethnographic vignette represents my effort to enact what Simpson (2014) conceptualizes as ethnographic refusal in the context of colonially overdetermined populations and practices. My goal is to open up an alternative conceptual space in which to understand not only the historical and contemporary raciolinguistic construction of US Latinxs as a problem population but also the everyday practices through which Latinxs creatively contest, reimagine, and redefine ethnoracial, geopolitical, and linguistic borders. These practices were a central focus of the ethnographic research that informs this book, which I conducted between 2007 and 2010 within a newly created public high school and its surrounding communities on the Near Northwest Side of Chicago. During the period of my fieldwork in New Northwest High School (henceforth NNHS),²¹ Chicago Public Schools classified nearly 90% of NNHS’s approximately 1,000 students as Mexican or Puerto Rican (91.8% overall Latinx from any national subgroup); almost all of the non-Latinx students were classified as African American, reflecting the school’s proximity to the predominantly African American West Side of the city. While I met a few students who identified as both Black and Latinx, the vast majority of students, school employees, and community members constructed these as distinct, yet linked, racial categories in contrast or opposition to Whiteness. Although students self-identified in distinctive ways, their life trajectories were profoundly anchored by shared experiences of spatial, racial, and class exclusion. Chicago’s educational context is emblematic of urban socioeconomic and racial hierarchies in schools throughout the nation, where attending a private versus a public school, or a selective enrollment magnet or charter school versus an open enrollment neighborhood school such as NNHS, powerfully sorts the overwhelming majority of students into a path toward the precarious service economy or exclusion from the formal economy altogether on the one hand, and grants the select few with access to the exclusive

knowledge economy on the other. Media portrayals such as the *Chicago Sun-Times* story mentioned previously typically frame these disparate outcomes as products of a racialized culture of poverty created within the home and the hood or as meritocratic rewards for individual strivers, respectively. Neither of these explanations remotely reflects how schools and mainstream institutions more broadly are structured by systematic forms of racial and class exclusion that characterize the fundamental nature of the US liberal democratic project, its settler colonial underpinnings, and the modes of governance required to maintain the image of its political legitimacy.

For the principal of NNHS, racial and class exclusion, along with intersectional forms of gender and sexual marginalization, were primary foci of her administrative project. A brief ethnographic interlude will help to demonstrate this. In March 2010, I attended a meeting of the NNHS Local School Council,²² whose participants included students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members. A few minutes before the meeting was scheduled to begin, Dr. Baez, the school's principal, entered the cafeteria space in which the meeting was held. After observing that no one other than the council members was present at the meeting (that is, no one from the public showed up), she went upstairs to the school library and recruited an adult English as a Second Language (ESL) class to attend the meeting. She returned with a small crowd of approximately 25 adults. The ESL class participants sat in the last two rows of chairs that were set up for the public audience. Dr. Baez encouraged them to move up to the front two rows and partake of the refreshments that were stationed along the wall. The formal meeting opened with the reading of the previous meeting's minutes. Because the ESL class participants almost exclusively composed the audience for this meeting, several members of the Local School Council initially expressed confusion about whether the meeting should be conducted in English or Spanish. With a council whose members were all self-identified English-Spanish bilinguals, it was possible to consider using either language or a combination thereof. Dr. Baez intervened, stating that everyone should feel comfortable speaking English and Spanish at the meeting and that the ESL class should see this as an opportunity to practice their English. Thus, Dr. Baez disrupted the normative terms of English language learning by orienting it in relation to legitimate participation in a formal meeting rather than rote classroom learning; she also disrupted normative expectations of monolingual English language use in the Local School Council meeting by stipulating both normative English-Spanish bilingualism and egalitarianism among the elected council members and the adult ESL class participants. Dr. Baez recognized processes of institutional exclusion and used her position of authority to performatively enact a counter-hegemonic otherwise.

There were two main topics for this meeting: the upcoming Local School Council elections that would take place in April 2010 and the 2010 US Census. For Dr. Baez, these topics were closely related. Drawing on a range of English and Spanish language practices, she explained to the audience that they should seriously consider running for positions on the Local School Council, such as parent representative (if they had children who attended NNHS) or community representative (if they lived within the school's neighborhood boundaries). She said that as members of the Local School Council, they would be able to join the school in helping students to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of their educational success, such as gang participation and pregnancy.²³ For those who were uninterested in running for a position on the Local School Council, Dr. Baez provided instructions for how to vote in the Local School Council election. She told audience members that they would need two forms of identification. When Dr. Baez noticed that this prompted whispers among audience members, she clarified that even a paper indicating participation in the ESL class could count as identification. She suggested that both voting for in the Local School Council election and filling out the 2010 US Census form are important ways to improve the community. She said that the Latino population is on the rise and that this population must be counted in order to secure resources for the school and the community. Dr. Baez reassured the audience that “*las personas sin papeles*,” or people without papers,²⁴ would not be at risk of attracting the attention of US immigration authorities by participating in the Census.²⁵

Those who are unfamiliar with the variety of US Latinx²⁶ experiences might not think that there was anything particularly noteworthy about this meeting. In contrast, I saw it as characteristic of the unique panethnic Latinx relationships that I had consistently encountered in Chicago since I began living in the city and working in its schools in the fall of 2003. Dr. Baez, a Puerto Rican woman who was born on the island (and thus a US citizen by birth) but raised in Chicago from the age of 4, had closely interacted with Mexicans in Chicago—citizens and noncitizens alike—throughout her life. In fact, she is a mother to MexiRican children (i.e., children of Puerto Rican and Mexican parentage). Dr. Baez immediately understood the potential anxieties of unauthorized migrant audience members at the Local School Council meeting when issues of identification and Census participation were raised. She also drew on a range of English and Spanish linguistic practices to communicate with audience members and fellow Local School Council members. Interactions like these have been taking place in Chicago for the better part of a century.

I am interested not only in the ways that Dr. Baez's multilingual, panethnic, and political sensibilities reflect Chicago's unique Latinx and broader social histories, but also in the embodied knowledge that informed her savvy signaling of

mainstream institutional allegiance and simultaneous contestation of normative expectations about a school such as NNHS. Despite Dr. Baez's awareness of stark inequality within Chicago and throughout the United States, she promoted participation in liberal democratic political rituals such as elections and the Census, which are legitimated through ideologies linking normative civic behavior to the equitable distribution of rights and resources. She also invoked stigmatizing tropes of gang membership and teen pregnancy, which are commonly used to frame Latinx educational underachievement as a behavioral problem rather than as a structural phenomenon. Yet, Dr. Baez deployed these normative scripts while concomitantly facilitating a political dialogue among Local School Council members and adult ESL students that challenged structural hierarchies of language use, citizenship status, educational credentials, and socioeconomic class. To make sense of this situation, we must attend to the classic linguistic anthropological distinction between the denotational text and interactional text—both what is said and what is done, or better, what is done by or through or while saying something.²⁷ Dr. Baez communicatively invoked normative scripts while enacting a counter-hegemonic otherwise.

Such an analysis is also required to understand Dr. Baez's overall vision for NNHS students. In one of our initial conversations, she explained: "When people look at these students they see them as gangbangers and hoes [whores]. . . . I want them to see Young Latino Professionals."²⁸ I was struck by the ideologies of race, class, gender, and sexuality invoked in this formulation, questions surrounding the forms of embodiment and communication associated with a Young Latino Professional, and, importantly, the ambiguity in the location of the problem within the students themselves versus society's recognitions of them. I conceptualize this administrative effort as an intersectional mobility project—following the crucial Black feminist insight that intersectionality is not simply about understanding a given individual's multiple identities, but rather the interlocking systems of domination that fundamentally structure particular populations' everyday experiences of marginalization (Collins 2000). The administrative effort toward transforming recognitions of students as gangbangers and hoes into Young Latino Professionals rejected the figured opposition between assimilation and distinctive cultural identity maintenance as the exclusive possibilities for intergenerational (im)migrant trajectories of socialization—the notion that Latinxs must either assimilate to normative American Whiteness through a disavowal of their Latinidad or maintain their cultural authenticity while accepting a subordinate racial and socioeconomic status. The racialization of NNHS students meant that assimilation to Whiteness was not an option for them, regardless of their phenotype or other conventional signs of race. Moreover, NNHS students' access to any sort of professional class was profoundly limited

if not altogether foreclosed. Thus, Dr. Baez's notion of professionalism differs from a conventional economic definition of the term. She was not merely distinguishing between modes of labor, that is, a professional as opposed to a service sector laborer. For Baez, Young Latino Professionals are not necessarily Latinxs who hold jobs in privileged sectors of the formal economy, but rather Latinxs who graduate from high school and become normatively economically self-sustaining to any degree. What might sound like a dramatically low bar is in fact a radical goal in the context of endemic intergenerational poverty and a deeply inequitable urban school district with a roughly 50% graduate rate. Further, as I explore in Chapter 1, the effort to forge the category Young Latino Professional simultaneously rejects and reinscribes normative gender and sexual scripts. Importantly, the intertwined ideologies of race, class, gender, and sexuality that compose the figures of gangbanger, ho, and Young Latino Professional pose difficulties for any effort to divorce these figures from one another. The co-constitution of these figures creates a double-bind in which recognition of a young professional as Latino might involve the joint recognition of their stereotypical, racialized essence as a gangbanger or ho.²⁹ I approach Dr. Baez's intersectional mobility project of shaping recognitions of students into Young Latino Professionals as part of a broader effort toward resolving this double-bind through the deployment of counter-hegemonic institutional strategies which challenge an educational structure that systematically fails students like those at NNHS. Similar to the Local School Council meeting, Dr. Baez draws on scripts that invoke normative stereotypes while simultaneously contesting structures of institutional inequity through her broader educational project, which ultimately resulted in a graduation rate at NNHS that hovered around 98% during the years in which I conducted fieldwork there. The ingenuity of this kind of strategic simultaneity is a central component of Latinx responses to exclusion that is too often overlooked. Throughout this book, I analyze how Latinxs challenge exclusion by contesting ethnoracial, geopolitical, and linguistic borders.

Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Exclusion

The Local School Council meeting at NNHS and media discourses surrounding the 2010 US Census include references to Latinx marginalization, the rising US Latinx population, the segregation of Latinx students in US schools, and the language practices that play a central role in defining Latinx identities. These issues pertaining to implications and perceptions of Latinx difference are managed in everyday affairs through a projected negotiation between assimilation and multiculturalism.³⁰ My analysis of multiculturalism builds from Povinelli's characterization of liberal multiculturalism "as an ideology and practice of governance,

a form of everyday affective association and identification, and a specific discursive incitement across the variegated contexts of national and transnational life” (Povinelli 2002:6). This approach involves a focus on multicultural difference as the product of liberal democratic governance rather than preexisting group essences, and a consideration of the practice of multicultural inclusion as the very mode through which such political orders legitimately reproduce marginalization. Povinelli shows how liberal multiculturalism requires “subaltern and minority subjects . . . to perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation” (2002:6). For US Latinxs, this performance of difference produces a double-bind that requires them to signal their difference constantly without ever overstepping the shifting boundaries of what constitutes tolerable difference in a given context.³¹ Thus, institutional affirmations of multicultural diversity must be interrogated based on the ways in which they circumscribe, domesticate, and commodify difference (Shankar 2015; Urciuoli 2016). In a similar line of examination, the mantra of “diversity and inclusion” can be understood as part of a normative project that seeks to present the superficial appearance of racial diversity while leaving white supremacist institutions and structures fundamentally unchanged (Ahmed 2012).

However, the politics of multiculturalism as they pertain to Latinxs in the contemporary United States have taken on a distinctly *postmulticultural* quality. The widespread racialization of Latinxs as “illegal,” border militarization, and the corresponding rise of a massive deportation and detention regime that systematically targets Latinxs as “impossible subjects” (Ngai 2004) demonstrate the legitimization of Latinx exclusion.³² Márquez theorizes the United States, as well as Latinxs’ marginalized and stigmatized positionality therein, as a “racial state of expendability” (2012a:476). This expendability responds to anxieties that the rapidly rising US Latinx population will fundamentally redefine American identity, authorizing widespread efforts toward Latinx management, containment, and eradication.

The alleged threat that Latinxs pose to Americanness heightens the demand for ways to identify and manage Latinx difference and results in alternately celebratory and ominous framings of this population. At times, Latinxs are characterized as another in a long line of American immigrant groups possessing a range of ethnic differences that are to be celebrated in the nation’s multicultural melting pot. In contrast, Latinxs are often described as a highly racialized, culturally distinctive, and stubbornly unassimilable group that must be managed carefully to prevent it from undoing the nation’s cultural fabric. These framings simultaneously position Latinx as a distinctly American category *and* as a diasporic concept that potentially redefines Americanness by linking it to Latin America in newfound ways; the regimentation of signs of Latinidad becomes

central to the management of the direction in which this scale tips.³³ This book tracks the (trans)formation of signs of Latinx (in)commensurability to draw connections between local calibrations of difference and broader processes of social category-making (Povinelli 2001). Specifically, I show how public high schools are central sites for observing how liberal democratic differences are produced in systematically contradictory ways, both institutionally and interactionally. The management and experience of Latinx identity presents a unique opportunity to analyze these contradictions.³⁴ Not only is such an identity undergoing intense ethnicization and racialization in the contemporary moment—both of which are key forms of liberal democratic difference—but it is also the object of legitimate liberal democratic exclusion. That is, because Latinxs are racialized as problematic national Others, questions arise about their precarious political subjectivities. Thus, Latinx is a category-concept firmly rooted in the United States and yet also articulated as a problem that highlights, reinforces, and transcends the nation-state as both a political imaginary and institutional reality.

Central to this imaginary are space-time narratives—chronotopes, in the Bakhtinian parlance—that position social personae in relation to figured “heres” and “nows” or “theres” and “thens.” This is especially crucial in analyses of race as matter out of place. Think of the two-part question commonly posed to countless persons who are racialized as non-White: “Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?” Place of birth is of little relevance when one’s racially overdetermined body, primordially anchored in an imagined foreign elsewhere, demands to be accounted for. This interrogative script is the race-place counterpart to the imperative, “Go back to Mexico.” . . . or Africa, India, China, etc. However, this fixing of racialized bodies reflects not only spatial imaginaries but also temporal anxieties about *when* a given person is from. Are you an embodiment of that which is imagined as having made America great in some constructed past or that which will be America’s potential undoing in a possible future? The possessive “America’s,” which invokes a territorial mandate in place since at least the 1823 Monroe Doctrine that claimed US neocolonial ownership of the Americas, must be distinguished from the plural Americas, which simultaneously invokes a foreclosed geopolitical order and a haunting of US sovereignty. These chronotopic figurations become highly consequential through their capacity to constitute the terms of legibility and legitimacy of particular identities and populations in particular times and places.

Povinelli (2011) examines the implications of these temporal and representational frameworks through her conceptualization of “social tense” as a way of apprehending the political and economic conditions in which particular populations’ abandonment is legitimated through narrative linkages between the present durative—what some “we” must continue doing now—and the future

anterior—the actions that will have been necessary to ensure either the reproduction of an existing social order or the creation of a specific social order yet to come. This framework is particularly relevant in the context of the contemporary abjection, incarceration, expulsion, and extrajudicial killing of racialized populations in the United States and elsewhere, whose disposability is legitimated, indeed necessitated, by demographic anxieties about imagined futures as the meanings of “majority” and “minority” are continually called into question. I am particularly interested in examining these dynamics in the context of nearly constant, and seemingly optimistic, invocations of US Latinxs, language, and the American future, as demonstrated by mass media headlines such as “U.S. Future ‘Unthinkable’ Without Hispanic Population,”³⁵ “Latino Children Are This Country’s Future,”³⁶ “The Census, English, Spanish, and the New U.S. Latino,”³⁷ and “The Sound of the Latino Future? It’s English.”³⁸ These media portrayals emerge as part of a deceptive social tense in which today’s Latinx marginalization is legitimated by a figured egalitarian future. Latinidad, in its joint articulation alongside prevailing forms of racialized difference, including Africanness, Asianness, and various American Indigeneities, is more than 500 years in the making, yet always just on the demographic horizon. How is it that a population whose origins in many ways predate the very European histories in relation to which “America” is conventionally imagined, could be framed as a demographic whose value lies only in some figured future? If Latinxs, now numbering approximately 60 million and estimated to constitute nearly one-fifth of the overall US population, are only ever an “emergent” demographic of future significance, then how are they to stake claims to rights in the present? It is not by chance that Latinxs are simultaneously perceived to be everywhere in the contemporary US and yet continuously framed as a new population of future significance; imagined future American demographics justify the perpetual deferral of contemporary Latinx rights claims. Thus, on the one hand, the contemporary societal positioning of US Latinxs demonstrates the familiar always already overdetermined nature of race—perhaps most strikingly articulated by Fanon (1967) as “the fact of Blackness,” the disorienting ontological experience of existing as a racialized Other in advance of one’s being. On the other hand, Latinxs are positioned in relation to a distinctive social tense of *always not yet*, or perhaps, *never quite yet*. If you would just learn English; no, unaccented English; no, the right variety of English. If you would just enter the country the right way; no, get in line and traverse a pathway to citizenship; no, act like a good citizen.³⁹ This is a racialized social tense of the always already and never quite yet.

These dynamics surrounding constructions of Latinx difference on national and transnational scales are articulated locally in NNHS and its surrounding communities through the anchoring of Latinidad in forms of spatial, racial, and

class exclusion. These forms of exclusion position Latinx and American as frictive, often incommensurable categories. In Povinelli's (2002) analysis of Australian multiculturalism, Indigenous subjects' dilemma is precisely the inability to reconcile the paradoxical reality of such incommensurability. For Povinelli, the facade of the multicultural project is revealed when it is clear that there are no real opportunities for inclusion; she powerfully demonstrates the various ways in which the Indigenous subject is left trapped. This dilemma is where my study begins. I locate the negotiation of the projected tension between multiculturalism and assimilation in relation to a range of contexts and actors within NNHS and its surrounding communities, with the broader goal of analyzing the semiotic creation of a US Latinx social category and the signs that index it.⁴⁰ To do so, I carefully track the intersectional creation of Latinx panethnicity—an overarching category-concept that encompasses Latin American national groups—in this local Chicago scene and broader scales to which it is linked.

Orientation to an emergent, intersectional Latinx panethnic category involves multidirectional trajectories of socialization. I show how the experiences of generations 1.5, 2, and 3 Mexican and Puerto Rican students involve modes of socialization that redefine ethnoracial, geopolitical, and linguistic borders.⁴¹ This remapping of borders is linked to *axes of differentiation* (Gal 2012) involving stereotypes and ideologies whose interrelations I analyze throughout the book⁴²:

- Chapter 1: gangbangers/hoes vs. Young Latino Professionals; neighborhood high schools vs. selective enrollment/application-based schools
- Chapter 2: Mexico/Puerto Rico vs. United States; Latinx/Hispanic vs. American
- Chapter 3: Mexican vs. Puerto Rican; ghetto vs. lame
- Chapter 4: bilingual vs. monolingual; English Language Learner vs. mainstream student
- Chapter 5: Spanish vs. English: Inverted Spanglish vs. Mock Spanish
- Chapter 6: gang-related graffiti vs. non-gang-related tagging; street kids vs. school kids

Collectively, these axes of differentiation demonstrate how Latinxs learn to be—and sound like—themselves in highly studied ways. While the binary presentation and operation of these categories is central to the modes of exclusion with which they are associated, the reconfiguration and rejection of such binaries is central to the story of creativity in the face of marginalization that this book hopes to tell. I suggest that the ingenuity of panethnic, diasporic category-making and the deployment of polyvalent expressive practices show how a deep, shared awareness of oppressive circumstances inspires everyday actions.⁴³

Category-Making in American High Schools

As institutions charged with the responsibility of (re)producing legitimate US citizen-subjects, public schools occupy a unique structural position within American society. In particular, public high schools come to be viewed as institutional last chances at shaping individuals on the cusp of American adulthood. These naturalized conceptions of education obscure the normative ways in which US public schools, as governmental institutions, participate in the creation of the very forms of difference that they purport to manage and overcome.⁴⁴ In their analysis of the educational production of categories, Varenne and McDermott (2003) analyze the powerful role that the hegemonic and co-constitutive notions of success and failure play in structuring schools as distinctly *American* institutions. Schools simultaneously legitimate meritocratic imaginings of the United States as an exceptional nation in which individuals get what they deserve by means of a neutral sorting system and confirm presumptions about the truth of particular groups' inferiority. Note that these ideologies are reflected in discourses that frame educational outcomes as straightforward successes and failures. To grasp the concepts of success and failure not as fundamental truths about individuals or schools, but as categories central to the "structuring powers of America" (2003:213), Varenne and McDermott demonstrate the contradictory ways that educational practices such as standardized testing, tracking (i.e., placing students into separate cohorts based on academic performance), and the identification of learning disabilities collaborate to establish and naturalize US notions of difference.

Building from this focus on the denaturalization of difference and school-based linguistic ethnographies that aim to situate interactional and institutional structures in relation to broader political and economic processes, this book takes up questions about language, schools, and the production of ethnoracial categories.⁴⁵ I follow Eckert (2000) in identifying a schoolwide axis of differentiation and tracking the ways that students construct and contort their presentations of self by manipulating stereotypes about social categories. Similar to Eckert, the paramount categories of difference among students and administrators within NNHS become linked to socioeconomic class trajectories. Eckert shows that schools are staging grounds for life, in which relational identities position students either in alignment with or opposition to schools' efforts toward socialization. In the broader scheme, the institutional powers of schools tether these negotiations of identity to the socioeconomic class trajectories into which students are sorted. Thus, in the canonical studies of Eckert, as well as of Willis (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), high schools are key sites for the reproduction of socioeconomic stratification.

NNHS is distinct from the educational contexts analyzed in these previous accounts. This book presents an ethnographic study of a school that is actively trying *not* to reproduce economic stratification by sorting students into successes and failures. The principal of NNHS recognizes that her school is already positioned as a failure in the context of the hierarchy of Chicago Public Schools. She attempts to overcome this positioning by creating what I describe as an *intersectional mobility project*. That is, the principal acknowledges her students' shared racial and class marginalization and suggests that her school must find a way for *all* students to become defined as institutional successes. Unlike the schools that Eckert and Willis describe, students at NNHS are managing their markedness with respect to class *and* race. Thus, the primary axis of differentiation for NNHS students—Mexican vs. Puerto Rican—involves categories that are anchored by spatial, racial, and class exclusion. Students come to understand that they are participating in an intersectional mobility project. As a result, stereotypes surrounding the paradigmatic categories of Mexican and Puerto Rican become infused with racialized and gendered notions of “ghetto” and “lame,” which allow students to identify and deride what they imagine as one another's class-negative and class-positive characteristics.⁴⁶ That is, students' notions of “ghetto” and “lame” are intertwined with the principal's explicitly stated administrative project of transforming them from gangbangers and hoers (i.e., ghetto) into Young Latino Professionals (i.e., lame). Importantly, NNHS students' inhabitation of shared, marginalized socioeconomic positions means that regardless of whether they identify as Puerto Rican or Mexican, they often draw on similar material resources as they construct and enact these categories.

As with Eckert (2000) and Mendoza-Denton (2008), I show how language and other semiotic practices tie school-based identities to various social figures and positions outside of school. Similar to Mendoza-Denton's study of gang-affiliated Latina youth in California, I am interested in situating linguistic practices alongside clothing styles, musical tastes, and modes of embodiment, among other symbolic realms.⁴⁷ I also follow Mendoza-Denton in demonstrating how local scenes uniquely instantiate and reconfigure broader social relations. In Mendoza-Denton's case, girls affiliated with *Norteña* (North) and *Sureña* (South) gangs stereotype one another as US-oriented/English-dominant (*Norteñas*) and Mexico- or Latin America-oriented/Spanish-dominant (*Sureñas*); these geographical, behavioral, and linguistic distinctions also map onto “the semiotics of the body and the circulation of material artifacts” (2008:294). To make sense of these distinctions, Mendoza-Denton introduces the notion of “hemispheric localism” through which her research participants “not only . . . display historical continuities in terms of group formation and political thought in the Mexican-US

borderlands, but by ‘taking sides’ as a Norteña/o or a Sureña/o . . . interpret and stancefully deal with the world around them (2008:87).” Like Mendoza-Denton, I show how students’ stereotypes about and enactments of Puerto Rican and Mexican identities situate Chicago’s local (im)migration history in relation to the broader creation of diasporic and panethnic Latinx identities. I argue that this (im)migration history uniquely positions Chicago as a producer of emblems of Latinidad that are composed of elements associated with the nation’s most populous Latinx subgroups (i.e., Mexicans and Puerto Ricans). Thus, Chicago becomes a ritual center for imagining and experiencing Latinx diaspora and panethnicity.

I approach students’ engagements with categories such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Latinx in terms of the models of personhood with which they become stereotypically associated. I follow Wortham’s (2006) lead in tracking the ways that students’ enactments of these models of personhood change over the course of their educational careers in a given school context. In NNHS, these changes involve the creation of increasingly rigid discursive borders between Mexican and Puerto Rican categories as students move from their freshman to senior year. I argue that this reflects students’ uptake of and resistance to the administrative category of “Young Latino Professional,” which erases Mexican-Puerto Rican difference. Importantly, these increasingly rigid discourses of difference take shape alongside consistently intimate interrelations between Mexican and Puerto Rican students. I build from Eckert, Mendoza-Denton, and Wortham by focusing on the institutional creation and experience of identities that mediate local concerns and national anxieties. The fraught construction of Latinx identities reflects NNHS administrators’ and students’ efforts to transform their local participation in a national ritual of educational socialization and stratification. The following section links the construction of Latinx identities on these local and national scales.

Latinx Panethnicity

Between 2000 and 2010, when I conducted my preliminary and formal fieldwork, the US Latinx population grew from 35.3 million to 50.5 million.⁴⁸ This 43% growth made Latinxs 16.3% of the total US population,⁴⁹ accounting for 56% of the overall US population growth during the first decade of the 21st century.⁵⁰ Latinxs are projected to compose one-third of all US children by 2035 and nearly one-third of the overall US population by 2050.⁵¹ It is crucial to understand these shifting contemporary and future demographics in terms of the historical, colonial relationship between the United States and Latin America.⁵² Since at least the beginning of the 19th century, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and James Monroe advocated US control of the entirety

of “Spanish America” (González 2001:32). This culminated in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which stated that European powers should no longer pursue colonies in the Americas.⁵³ US interventions following Spanish rule in Mexico and Puerto Rico are prime examples of US efforts toward supplanting European influence in the Americas. Shortly after Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1821, the US sought to incorporate territories from an independent Mexico. The subsequent Mexican-American War (1846–1848) ended with the creation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and transferred 55% of Mexico’s prewar territory to the United States (González 2001). This is similar to the sequence of events in Puerto Rico. At the end of the 19th century, Puerto Rico experienced increased autonomy from Spain. Following the 1898 Spanish-American War, however, Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States. This colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico exists to this day, albeit in modified form, with Puerto Rico officially designated as a US commonwealth or unincorporated territory. The US geographical expansion throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the corresponding colonial and economic empire built by American political leaders and multinational corporations, “laid the basis for and helped to spark the massive Latino immigration after World War II” (González 2001:xiii).

This “massive Latino immigration” to the United States contributed to debates about how best to measure this population in demographic terms. In particular, Hispanic community leaders complained that they were unable to make claims for government resources because they had no way of demonstrating the size of the Hispanic population. Until the 1980 Census, Hispanics were counted as White, rendering them indistinguishable from Italians, Irish, and other European immigrant groups (Mora 2014). By 1980, the US Census Bureau had instituted a panethnic demographic category based on “Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent.” Importantly, this category was positioned as “commensurate with, though not officially equal to, race” (Mora 2014:118). The Census question about “Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent” was (and continues to be) separate from the race question, yet the Census Bureau frequently presents these data in ways that position “Hispanic” as both an ethnic and racial category. This means that a given individual can identify as Hispanic and as any race on the Census. Yet, racial data are often reported as “White (non-Hispanic),” “Black (non-Hispanic),” etc. These questions and the data they generate are framed in similar ways to this day. The main change is that “Latino” is added to the question on ethnicity, which now reads, “Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?” It becomes important to track the ways that Latinxs are positioned in relation to race and ethnicity. As Urciuoli explains, “race and ethnicity are both about belonging to the nation, but belonging in different ways” (1996:15). Each

of these concepts is defined in relation to the potential for assimilation and class mobility. Whereas ethnic difference (as experienced by Italians, Irish, and other European immigrants) becomes legitimately American, racial difference is defined in opposition to the nation. When one is racialized as non-White in the US context, one's potential to be American or contribute to Americanness can perpetually be called into question.

In the Chicago context, Mexicans began arriving in the early 20th century, following the Mexican Revolution and recruitment by railroad companies (Cruz 2007).⁵⁴ By the 1920s, Mexicans had started their own social service organizations and built their own churches in the city. Yet, during the Great Depression nearly half of Chicago's Mexican population was forcibly repatriated. The population began to increase again in the context of the "Bracero Program" (1942–1964), a wartime US labor recruitment strategy that brought four and a half million Mexican workers to the US, including thousands who came to Chicago. Puerto Ricans entered the US mainland en masse beginning in the late 1940s as part of the US program "Operation Bootstrap," which sought to decrease the island's poor population so as to facilitate its industrialization (Briggs 2003). Puerto Ricans were the first ethnoracial group to migrate to the United States en masse by airplane, largely to cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. US citizenship was imposed on all Puerto Ricans beginning in 1917 by way of the Jones Act, which immediately allowed 60,000 Puerto Ricans to fight for the United States in World War I (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). Amaya (2007) refers to this as nonconsensual citizenship and compares it to the 60,000 Mexicans on whom US citizenship was imposed in 1849, following the end of the Mexican-American War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Shortly after the end of my fieldwork in 2010, there were 1,561,000 Mexicans and 190,000 Puerto Ricans in the greater Chicago area (out of an overall population of 9,185,000), composing 79.2% and 9.6% of the Chicago-area Latinx population, respectively.⁵⁵ This made Chicago the city with the nation's third largest population overall, fifth largest Latinx population, fourth largest Mexican population, and fourth largest Puerto Rican population.⁵⁶ Previous studies of Mexican-Puerto Rican interrelations in Chicago and elsewhere have looked at issues such as labor (Padilla 1947), political mobilizations (Padilla 1985), contradictory discourses of difference (Pérez 2003), and histories of shared experiences (Fernández 2012). De Genova and Ramos-Zayas (2003) present the most extensive ethnographic account of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in Chicago, yet they do not focus specifically on interactions and interrelations between these groups. Meanwhile, sociolinguistic studies of Latinx panethnic intrarelations have generally focused on issues such as dialect leveling among varieties of Spanish (Zentella 1990; Ghosh Johnson 2005; Otheguy and Zentella

2012), language socialization (Zentella 2005), and identities and linguistic practices of Latinxs with parents from different Latinx subgroups (Flores-González 1999; Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997; Rúa 2001; Chabram-Dernersesian 1999, 2009; Potowski and Matts 2008). In fact, Chicago's "urban plurilingualism" (Farr 2011) makes it a frequent focus of research on language and Latinx identities (Farr 2004).

This ethnography takes its cue from Ricourt and Danta (2003) and Rivera-Servera (2012) in approaching intra-Latinx relations as a matter of *convivencia diaria* (living together daily) and frictive intimacy. Ricourt and Danta's study of a panethnic group of adult Latinas and Rivera-Servera's analysis of queer Latinidades provide instructive models for approaching the complexly interwoven everyday lives of Latinxs from various national backgrounds. Two important points of departure in my study are (1) my focus on generations 1.5, 2, and 3; and (2) my focus on enregistered English and Spanish language practices as potential indexes of US Latinx panethnicity, such that it becomes possible to investigate processes of being/doing Latinx in Spanish *and* English. Of course, it is also important to disrupt hegemonic language ideologies that equate English language use with stereotypical signs of inclusion and assimilation into American society, such as access to upward socioeconomic mobility—a measure that fundamentally misunderstands the nature of language, racism, and capitalism within the United States as a settler colonial and imperial formation. As of 2010, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans were classified as having the highest rates of English language proficiency among any Latinx subgroups, at 80.5% and 61.6%, respectively.⁵⁷ Yet, in the same year they also had the second and third highest poverty rates, at 22.6% (Puerto Ricans) and 22.3% (Mexicans).⁵⁸ These poverty rates are striking evidence of the similar forms of socioeconomic marginalization experienced by Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Such ethnoracial and class dynamics also demonstrate the importance of challenging preconceived notions about language, citizenship, national identity, and societal exclusion.

Entering New Northwest High School

I established a relationship with NNHS through my work with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago's Humboldt Park community area. After meeting with the school's principal, I was officially hired by Chicago Public Schools as an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) tutor. This nationwide program was introduced to Chicago Public Schools in 2003. AVID is a non-profit organization that provides study skills support and seeks to increase college preparedness for students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. All NNHS

students were required to participate in AVID classes. This means that every classroom in which I worked was composed of students who demonstrated varying levels of academic achievement.

During the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, I worked closely with 10 teachers and their students in grades 9 through 12, tutoring approximately 30 students individually each day (and interacting with many others). Through my work in these classrooms I was able to identify potential key participants and set up interviews. I conducted formal, in-depth interviews with: (1) 10 freshmen, 10 sophomores, 10 juniors, and 10 seniors, who were evenly distributed among Mexicans and Puerto Ricans as well as among girls and boys; (2) 4 African American students; (3) 10 teachers; (4) 2 school administrators; and (5) 2 school support staff. In many cases, I interviewed students and teachers in their homes. Outside of school, I tutored students in their homes, helped them to complete school projects, went to get haircuts with them, went out to eat with them, helped them to find jobs, chatted with them on the phone, exchanged cellular text messages, and brought them to the college classes that I was teaching. Additionally, I attended various school events, such as soccer games, pep rallies, Local School Council meetings (I was elected to the Local School Council as a community representative in 2010), and the prom.

My work in NNHS was also informed by my preliminary field experiences in several other predominantly Latinx and African American high schools and community organizations in Chicago. Through these preliminary experiences I learned about the stereotypes surrounding different schools, neighborhoods, and ethnoracial identities in Chicago. It was also through these preliminary field experiences that I learned about and became interested in NNHS. Additionally, I lived four blocks away from the school. This allowed me to walk to and from the school with students each day, and to accompany them to local restaurants and stores. These interactions with students outside of school played a crucial role in helping me to understand what was going on inside NNHS. Had I not lived near the school, I might not have ever seen the Mexican and Puerto Rican flags juxtaposed in storefronts, apartment windows, and cars; nor would I have encountered the Mexican and Puerto Rican food items sold side by side on the shelves at the Walgreens and Cermak Produce stores near the school. These Mexican-Puerto Rican panethnic displays are particular to the Near Northwest Side of the city. Living nearby the school allowed me to participate alongside other Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in the mundane panethnic interactions that are a central part of everyday life in this context.

As a third-generation Puerto Rican born and raised in Western New York, I alternately occupied insider and outsider ethnoracial positionalities while conducting this fieldwork. Students, school employees, and community

members frequently assumed that I was Puerto Rican—often explicitly stating as much—primarily based on stereotypes about my physical features or language use (I describe these stereotypes in detail throughout the book). In other situations, I was asked about my race and nationality. For example, the principal of NNHS asked whether I was Puerto Rican during our first meeting. Many of my interactions with Puerto Rican students and school employees unfolded as Puerto Rican in-group conversations. There were some Puerto Ricans with whom this was not the case, most notably a few members of the school's security personnel and members of the principal's support staff. In the former case, I discovered that some of the security guards (many of whom were Puerto Rican men) communicated almost exclusively with fellow security guards, students, and administrators, but not with teachers or support staff such as myself; in the latter case, I perceived that my gender and relatively youthful appearance made it difficult to break into the close-knit circle of middle-aged Puerto Rican women who constituted the principal's administrative support staff. Likewise, my Puerto Ricanness neither facilitated nor hindered my ability to establish relationships with Mexican students and school employees in straightforward ways. In some interviews with Mexican participants, it was initially difficult to elicit stereotypes about Puerto Ricans. In these cases, I would get the ball rolling by providing examples of such stereotypes and jokingly self-deprecating. I frequently used my knowledge of Puerto Rico and Mexico, as well as stereotypical Puerto Rican and Mexican cultural practices, to initiate conversations with students about where they and their families were from. I constantly used different varieties of English and Spanish to navigate a bilingual cultural context in which students and school employees made use of expansive linguistic repertoires consisting of a range of English and Spanish language practices that I describe and analyze throughout the book.

My apparent age also seemed to play a role in how teachers viewed me. I informed every teacher in whose classroom I tutored that I was a doctoral student conducting a study focused on language and identity in NNHS and sought their consent for participation. Every teacher agreed to participate, but only a couple of them seemed to take me particularly seriously as a researcher and educator. The few who did occasionally asked me for curricular advice or turned to me when students stumped them with a tough question. In the vast majority of classrooms, however, I was treated like the other tutors. Almost all of the tutors were Latinx undergraduate college students in their late teens and early 20s; many of them attended a university where I had taught several courses. Unlike most teachers, students regularly acknowledged and expressed interest in my research, frequently asking how my "book," which they also jokingly referred to as my "homework," was coming along. Gender norms played a significant role in shaping my interactions with students outside

of school. Whereas my interactions with most male-identified students involved stereotypical academic (e.g., tutoring and working on various school assignments) and nonacademic (e.g., going out to eat, getting haircuts at local barbershops) activities, my interactions with many female-identified students primarily involved stereotypical academic activities and took place under their parents' supervision. This characterization of my position in the school and the community should give readers some sense of how I went about collecting the data that I analyze throughout the book.

Inside New Northwest High School

NNHS opened in the fall of 2004 and served a full freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior student body for the first time in the 2007–2008 academic year, with a total of roughly 1,000 students. In the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years (the period during which I conducted fieldwork in the school on a near daily basis), the principal and her support staff were predominantly Puerto Rican. The teachers and teachers' aides were more or less evenly distributed among Whites (non-Hispanic), Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans; there were also three Asian teachers, as well as an African American teachers' aide and an African American librarian. The security staff was mostly Puerto Rican, whereas the lunchroom and janitorial staff were Mexican, Puerto Rican, and African American. The student body was roughly 45% Mexican, 30% Puerto Rican, 15% other Latinx, 7.5% African American, and 2.5% multiracial.

Most students' careers at NNHS began during the summer before their freshman year, when they participated in a transition program that introduced them to high school level mathematics and English classes. The presumption was that by the end of elementary school many students were already performing below grade level and were in need of additional support in these core subjects. The six-week summer program was administered by a small group of ninth-grade teachers. During the regular academic year (from September to June) the school day officially began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 2:45 p.m. The school served free breakfast to all students who arrived before 7:40 a.m. as part of the Chicago Public Schools breakfast program, but only a few freshmen and sophomore students participated in the breakfast program. Based on their families' incomes, nearly all students qualified for free meals in the breakfast and lunch programs. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of each week were generally structured as "regular" (i.e., full-length) school days. The school used block scheduling, with a 25-minute division (i.e., homeroom) and four 90-minute classes each day. Most Wednesdays were either "Student Development" or "Professional Development" days. During these "half-days" (as most people in the school referred to them), classes were shortened to 27 minutes. On Student Development

days, students took a 75-minute Student Development class at the end of the day. Whereas there was a relatively standard set of math, science, English, social studies, and elective courses, students were free to choose from a range of Student Development courses, including music, dance, drama, and leadership. Teachers designed Student Development courses based on their skills and interests, but students also pitched courses that the school then created and integrated into the set of available options. Professional Development days were similar to Student Development days, but at the end of these days the staff met for Professional Development workshops that consisted of team-building exercises, presentations from outside experts, and dialogues about educational best practices. Importantly, unlike most other neighborhood high schools, NNHS's combination of Student Development Wednesdays and block scheduling on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays paralleled the structure of the city's most prestigious selective enrollment high schools. In Chapter 1, I describe the crucial distinction within Chicago Public Schools between selective enrollment schools and neighborhood schools such as NNHS.

Chapter Overview

The chapters in Part I focus on the creation of a racialized Latinx panethnic category by analyzing NNHS's complex project of transforming students into Young Latino Professionals (Chapter 1), the ways that this project shapes students' ideas about and identifications with ethnoracial categories (Chapter 2), and the stereotypes that become central to the embodiment and enactment of Latinidad in this context (Chapter 3). Together, these chapters provide a thickly described ethnographic account of the school-based creation of Latinx ethnoracial categories.

Chapter 1, From "*Gangbangers and Hoes*" to "*Young Latino Professionals*": Intersectional Mobility and the Ambivalent Management of Stigmatized Student Bodies, focuses on the school administration's overarching goal of transforming students. It analyzes the contradictions teachers and administrators face as they simultaneously work to validate and transform students' modes of self-making. The chapter begins by describing the anxieties surrounding violence, pregnancy, and poverty that are associated with Latinx youth socialization in the Chicago context. I go on to show how these racial, class, gender, and sexual anxieties are heightened within the context of an open enrollment neighborhood high school. I argue that the transformation of students into Young Latino Professionals, which I formulate as an intersectional mobility project, becomes an ambivalent negotiation that alternately locates the problem within the students themselves and outsiders' perceptions of them.

Chapter 2, “*I Heard that Mexicans Are Hispanic and Puerto Ricans Are Latino*”: Ethnoracial Contortions, Diasporic Imaginaries, and Institutional Trajectories, unpacks the relationship between the principal’s project of creating Young Latino Professionals and students’ investment in their Puerto Rican and Mexican identities. I track the contradictory ways in which race and ethnicity are conceptualized in the context of NNHS and demonstrate how these contradictions are systematically linked to broader forms of ambivalence surrounding interrelated processes of racialization and ethnicization. I argue that “Mexican” and “Puerto Rican” are not merely straightforward identities that students bring with them to school; instead, I show how students respond to the erasure of Mexican-Puerto Rican difference within the school’s project of socialization by twisting and turning these categories through practices I describe as “ethnoracial contortions.”

Chapter 3, “*Latino Flavors*”: Emblematizing, Embodying, and Enacting Latinidad, shifts from the previous chapter’s analysis of the ethnoracially contested construction of Latinx identities to demonstrate how emblems of Latinidad are made recognizable in everyday life. In particular, I focus on the ways in which qualities attributed to objects, practices, and bodies are mapped onto one another in the contemporary fashioning of a racialized, panethnic Latinx category. By analyzing interrelations among forms of emblematicity associated with a range of cultural concepts, from hairstyles, clothing, and language, to food, dance, and music, I track the complex semiotic operations that connect the creation Latinx things to the embodiment of Latinx people. These processes allow actors within NNHS to experience and enact Latinx identities. I conclude the chapter by pointing to the close relationship between conceptions of Latinx identity and “Spanishness” as a cultural and linguistic quality, laying the groundwork for the second half of the book.

The chapters in Part II draw on the ethnographic and analytical framework crafted in the beginning of the book to situate processes of ethnoracial category-making as crucial counterparts in relation to which language and literacy are understood and practiced in NNHS and its surrounding communities. In particular, these chapters analyze the mechanisms at work in a profound redefinition of bilingualism as disability (Chapter 4), students’ emergent strategies for escaping their linguistic marginalization and voicing Latinx identities (Chapter 5), and the semiotic operations through which students’ literacy practices become criminalized (Chapter 6).

Chapter 4, “*They’re Bilingual . . . That Means They Don’t Know the Language*”: The Ideology of Languagelessness in Practice, Policy, and Theory, analyzes the ways that the ethnoracial constructions and contortions detailed in the first half of the book map onto the school’s approach to and ideas about

students' language use. I argue that these ideas and anxieties produce a profound transformation in which bilingualism comes to be equated with Limited English Proficiency and in which students designated as English Language Learners are positioned alongside special education students as second-class educational figures. I show how this situation can be productively understood in relation to a racialized ideology of "languagelessness," which frames US Latinxs as illegitimate users of any language. The double stigmatization that results from standardizing forces surrounding English and Spanish demonstrates how languagelessness operates in powerful ways to racialize students as linguistically inferior across contexts.

Chapter 5, "*Pink Cheese, Green Ghosts, Cool Arrows/Pinches Gringos Culeros*": Inverted Spanglish and Latinx Raciolinguistic Enregisterment, builds from the preceding analysis of the stigmatization of Latinx students' English and Spanish language practices to demonstrate some of the creative ways that they attempt to fashion linguistic escape routes from modes of discrimination. Students feel pressured to signal their intimate knowledge of Spanish, but they seek to do so without calling into question their ability to produce what is perceived as unaccented English; they are faced with the task of producing Spanish and English simultaneously without being understood to possess an accent. I argue that students combine emblematic Spanish lexical items and English phonology as part of the broader enregisterment of "Inverted Spanglish" usages that differ from what has been previously described as "Mock Spanish." I suggest that "Inverted Spanglish" is a linguistic icon of US Latinx panethnicity and a parodic take on the school-based category of Young Latino Professional.

Chapter 6, "*That Doesn't Count as a Book, That's Real Life!*": Outlaw(ed) Literacies, Criminalized Intertextualities, and Institutional Linkages, demonstrates how students' literacy skills are not simply erased within the school but also criminalized. Students write their identities in complex ways, highlighting the competing forces that require them to signal simultaneously their alignment with and opposition to the school's project of socialization. Previous analyses of school-based socialization in urban contexts characteristically distinguish between "school kids" (who graduate and become upwardly socioeconomically mobile) and "street kids" (who never finish school and become part of the racialized American underclass). In contrast, I show how NNHS students draw on various literacy practices to construct and signal school kid and street kid identities concurrently.

Collectively, the chapters of this book explore the indeterminate ways that semiotic practices simultaneously reproduce existing relations and entail unforeseen futures and, by extension, how language and race are dynamically co-naturalized. Analyses of semiotic indeterminacy and naturalization demand careful attention

to context, scale, and perspective and undermine any universalizing claims about the fundamental nature of a given racial category or language variety. In NNHS and its surrounding communities, this involves the creation and enactment of Latinx identities that are both deeply anchored in long-standing local histories and continually renegotiated in contemporary circumstances. While the analysis that emerges throughout the book focuses on particular people and places, the broader goal is to provoke discussions about the potentially global co-naturalization of language and race, such that we might interrogate the forms of governance through which people come to *look like a language* and *sound like a race* in various societal contexts. Insofar as this dynamic interrelation between race and language is understood as a colonially constituted phenomenon, we might also consider anticolonial and decolonial possibilities for unsettling normative forms of governance, institutionality, identity, and expressivity. I hope to demonstrate how schools and their surrounding communities can become key sites for both the rearticulation and contestation of these colonially organized racial and linguistic power relations.

Through my engagement with the rearticulation and contestation of power relations, I seek to present neither a romantic portrayal of triumphant individuals who transcend the profound marginalization that constrains their everyday lives, nor a pathological account of victims of structural inequality who are unable to do anything beyond reproducing their own disparity.⁵⁹ Too often, urban ethnographers attempt to move beyond this structure/agency binary by focusing on the most sensationalized situations, providing broad reading publics with a glimpse into hyperexotic worlds, whether precarious domestic ghettos or peculiar foreign elsewhere, rather than exploring the deep embodied knowledge cultivated within mundane everyday life. Even if inadvertently so, such narratives cannot help but contribute to the replication of the very forms of stigmatization that they purport to combat. These analyses are often problematically heralded for their readability, canonized in introductory anthropology courses, and circulated widely among scholarly and popular audiences alike. This deep resonance is derived from the ways that many of these studies reinforce preexisting assumptions about imagined ghettos and jungles rather than subjecting common-sense notions to critical scrutiny. *Looking like a Language, Sounding like a Race* is my attempt to disrupt troublesome raciolinguistic legibilities and demonstrate an alternative approach to the analysis of structural inequality. Rather than seeking to make objectified racial groups and their linguistic practices intelligible to outside audiences, I seek to denaturalize the categories, differences, and modes of recognition that condition everyday life in particular neighborhood and institutional contexts. By emphasizing the production of racial categories and linguistic varieties through interrelations among institutions, actors, and ideologies, I show how

contingent processes rather than naturally occurring cultural essences structure these contexts. Thus, this examination of the co-naturalization of language and race becomes a potential vantage point from which to imagine alternative theoretical and practical approaches to understanding communication, identity, and the governance thereof.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Kara Spak and Dave Newbart, "Our Baby Boom: Growing Up with Multiple National Identities Gives Chicago's Young Hispanics a Unique Perspective—and Opportunity," February 19, 2010, *Chicago Sun-Times*, <http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/2060425,nuevo-chicago-hispanics-022010.article> (accessed March 6, 2010).
2. I seek to emphasize the perspectival nature of the Latinx category, its everyday interactional production, and the particular ways that individuals are interpellated by it. While this category is associated with US-based Latin American (im)migrants and their descendants, people who fit this description are not necessarily interpellated as Latinx (Chapter 2 includes a discussion of a student who self-identified as African American and Latina, but who was often recognized only as African American); conversely, people who do not fit this description can be interpellated as Latinx (Chapter 5 includes a discussion of a Filipino teacher who was often recognized as Latino). Moreover, the political territories associated with Latinidad are highly contested, including the shifting US-Mexico border and questions surrounding the ethnoracial identities of Central American, South American, and Caribbean populations.
3. Throughout the book I use the term "ethnoracial" when I am explicitly addressing both race and ethnicity, as well as when I am referring to the relationship between the construction of Latinx national subgroups (e.g., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans) and the racialization of Latinidad as an umbrella category.
4. Bucholtz (2011) demonstrates how a key feature of Whiteness as a racial and linguistic power formation is its alternate homogeneity and heterogeneity. On the one hand, Whiteness is homogenized through its position as an unmarked norm; on the other, Whiteness is differentiated through heterogeneous instantiations that afford White individuality in contrast to people of color, whose practices are conventionally

understood as collective rather than individual phenomena. These patterns become highly consequential insofar as they exceptionalize perceived deviance by individual White people and essentialize perceived deviance by individual people of color.

5. Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos (1997) famously predicted that a superior “cosmic race” would emerge in Latin America as a result of miscegenation in this context.
6. In the chapters that follow, I analyze the troublesome stereotypes surrounding each of these “problems.”
7. This focus on naturalization is inspired by the theorization of linguistic and social boundary-making within influential work on language ideologies. In their conceptualization of the semiotics of sociolinguistic differentiation, Irvine and Gal note that, “linguistic differentiation is not a simple reflection of social differentiation or vice versa, because linguistic and social oppositions are not separate orders of phenomena” (2000:76). The crucial point is that social and linguistic boundaries must be understood as situated semiotic configurations and perceptions rather than empirical realities. Relatedly, Silverstein’s (2003a) framework of indexical order points to the dynamic semiotic processes through which social and linguistic relationships come to form and undergo transformations through situated instances of communication.
8. Shankar (2013) and Carbado (2005) have also productively theorized racial and linguistic naturalization in relation to advertising and legal domains, respectively. Their important work demonstrates the ways that these distinctive domains are organized by historical and contemporary modes of racialization.
9. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) theorize linguistic boundary-making phenomena in relation to colonial histories. From a contemporary political and economic perspective, such boundary-making practices are often organized by the logics of “pride” and “profit” that circumscribe the values associated with particular modes of communication for particular populations (Duchêne and Heller 2012). For Shankar and Cavanaugh (2012), the commodification of communicative phenomena underscores the ongoing importance of attending to the co-constitutive nature of language and materiality in the ways that contemporary workings of global capitalism rearticulate long-standing structures of language and political economy (Gal 1989; Irvine 1989).
10. Racial theorists have invoked this interplay between linguistic and social differentiation, such as Bonilla-Silva’s (2011) notion of “racial grammar.” However, rather than viewing linguistic structure simply as a metaphor for the organization of racial dynamics, I am interested in exploring the co-naturalization of language and race.
11. Bucholtz (2003) has also challenged conceptions of authenticity within the field of sociolinguistics, and the ways that such conceptions replicate stereotypes about language and identity, rather than analyzing the production of these stereotypes.

- Relatedly, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) propose “authentication” and “denaturalization” as a central dynamic in the sociolinguistic analysis of identity and interaction.
12. Throughout the book I use the phrase “students designated as English Language Learners” rather than simply referring to students as “English Language Learners” in an effort to emphasize that this label is an institutional attribution rather than an objective fact about one’s language proficiency.
 13. See Heller and McElhinny (2017) for a stunningly comprehensive overview of the relationship between language, capitalism, and colonialism.
 14. My analysis of emblematic forms of Spanish and English involves attention to the interplay between linguistic structures and social contexts. I take my cue here from practice-based approaches to communication, which recognize that “language has radically systematic features, and yet these appear to be almost constantly locked into the kinds of activities that speakers carry on with speech” (Hanks 1996:9). Thus, I investigate the register formation that I call “Inverted Spanglish” as a scalar phenomenon whose meaning takes shape in specific contexts. In the context of New Northwest High School, this involves the invocation of the institutional identity of Young Latino Professional.
 15. My conception of “looking like a language” and “sounding like a race” is inspired by Fanon’s (1967) discussion of the interplay between language and race in “The Negro and Language,” the opening chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*. For Fanon, “the Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately Whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French Language” (1967:18). To theorize this raciolinguistic dynamic in the context of US Latinxs, I build from Anzaldúa’s suggestion that “ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language” (1987:81). See González (2006) for a borderlands-oriented linguistic ethnography of education that also draws inspiration from Anzaldúa.
 16. Ethnicity has been a long-standing concern among sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists, including the recent theorization of “ethnolinguistic repertoire” (Benor 2010). My conception of raciolinguistic enregisterment (i.e., looking like a language and sounding like a race) seeks to contribute to more recent theorizations of language and racialization (Urciuoli 1996; Hill 2008; Alim and Reyes 2011; Bucholtz 2011; Dick and Wirtz 2011; Wirtz 2014). I take my cue from Alim and Reyes (2011) in drawing attention to the ways that American society is hyperracial and hyperracializing, as well as in seeking to problematize the presumptions associated with dialect-based and group-based approaches to the analysis of language and race. I contribute to these modes of analysis by theorizing strategies for “linguaging race” (Alim and Smitherman 2012:2) and “racing language.”
 17. Enregisterment is also a crucial analytical tool for understanding the invention of languages and the populations to which they are understood to correspond. As such, this concept contributes a great deal to broader efforts toward denaturalizing

languages and combating the stigmatizing effects of regimes of standardization (Makoni and Pennycook 2007).

18. Inoue (2003, 2006) demonstrates how similar interconnections play out in the notion of Japanese “women’s language.” The fact that most women do not speak “women’s language” does not prevent the widespread circulation of the belief that they do as a language ideology. She points to practices of translation as productive and complicated vehicles for the reproduction of this ideology by arguing that trans-lation calibrates “women’s language” in relation to cultural categories such as race and class. For example, enslaved Black women in the Japanese translation of *Gone with the Wind* do not speak “women’s language,” whereas middle-class White women do. “Women’s language” in Japan is similar to “Spanish” for many Latinxs in the United States; that is, Latinxs can be imagined to speak “Spanish” regardless of whether they are speaking English or have no Spanish language proficiency whatsoever. As Eisenlohr points out, “there is no necessary relationship defined between the valuation of a language as an emblem of group identity and its use as a predominant medium of interaction” (2004:36). This is similar to Lo’s analysis of codeswitching, in which “outgroup talk contextualizes . . . stances as characteristic of a given ethnic category, projecting category memberships for each of the participants and assumptions about speakers’ positions as animators or authors of the stances” (Lo 1999:475). Thus, stance-taking and the recognition thereof (Kockelman 2004; Jaffe 2009) become central to the process of raciolinguistic enregisterment that I describe.
19. Chun notes “the importance of attending to how racialized language is a negotiated process, how this process intersects with local ideologies of race, gender, class, and authenticity, and how reading race often achieves more than racial classification alone” (2011:404).
20. Dick and Wirtz (2011) examine how this remapping is often enacted through “co-vert” racializing discourses.
21. The name of the school as well as all school employees and students are pseudonyms.
22. Each Chicago public school has a Local School Council, which consists of parents, teachers, community residents, a student representative, and the school’s principal. In Chapter 1, I describe Local School Councils in more detail.
23. Chapter 1 analyzes the relationship between ideologies surrounding race, class, gender, sexuality, and educational achievement.
24. The phrase “sin papeles,” often glossed in English as “without papers” or “undocumented,” indexes solidarity with those whose US migration status is unauthorized. This stands in contrast to the term “illegal,” which has come to index anti-immigrant perspectives. Plascencia (2009) and Rosa (2012) explore debates surrounding these usages, and De Genova (2004) traces the historical emergence of the notion of “il-legality” as it pertains to US Latinxs, specifically Mexicans.
25. The Census counts all people residing in the United States regardless of migration status.

26. In Chapter 2, I analyze situations in which distinctions were drawn between “Latino” and “Hispanic,” but even the people who drew these distinctions alternated between using both terms to identify themselves and others.
27. This approach involves viewing language not simply as a window through which to analyze social life or as a cognitive capacity distinct from culture, “but, above all, as a cultural practice, that is, as a form of action that both presupposes and at the same time brings about ways of being in the world” (Duranti 1997:1).
28. Dr. Baez framed this transformation project in a range of ways, sometimes substituting “at risk youth” for “gangbangers” and “hoes” and other times using “professionals” as shorthand for “Young Latino Professionals”; she also used combinations thereof, including the statement, “we are transforming at risk youth into young Latino professionals.” I capitalize “Young Latino Professional(s)” to emphasize the paradigmatic nature of this category for my analysis.
29. In linguistic terms the principal’s project of transforming students into Young Latino Professionals could be understood as a call for them to be *articulate while Latinx*. This is akin to Alim and Smitherman’s (2012) analysis of language, race, and the politics of respectability in the context of discourses surrounding President Barack Obama and African Americans more broadly.
30. It is crucial to emphasize the deceptive nature of the distinction between assimilation and multiculturalism. Indeed, as Brown (2006) and others have shown, the multicultural embrace of difference often aligns with the very assimilatory ethos it purports to oppose.
31. Chow (2002) refers to this required embodiment of authentic difference as “coercive mimeticism” and highlights the roles that members of marginalized groups play in reproducing these dynamics through the policing of authenticity. Similarly, Reyes (2002) analyzes the ways in which multicultural authenticity is constructed in particular institutional settings and performatively renegotiated in everyday discourses and interactions.
32. Deportation and detention are linked to many other contemporary examples of racist, often specifically anti-Latinx, sentiments and policies, such as the continued creation of a 2,000-mile security fence and surveillance regime along the US-Mexico border, as well as calls for the abolishment of the 14th Amendment in order to prevent the US-born children of unauthorized migrants from becoming US citizens. De Genova (2004) analyzes the production and political effects of “illegality” and “deportability” in the context of Mexican migration to the United States. Hernández (2008) historicizes detention as a particular, racialized US immigration enforcement strategy. Rosas (2012) explores the interpellating and criminalizing effects of US border surveillance, as well as the uptake and cooptation of this criminality. These theorizations shed light on the surge in deportations during the Clinton, G. W. Bush, and Obama administrations. By 2014, the number of people deported under the Obama administration surpassed two million, making Obama

- the president with the highest rate of deportation in US history. This has led some immigration reform activists and Latinx civil rights organizations to dub Obama “deporter in chief.” Meanwhile, those opposing comprehensive immigration reform, particularly an expansion of migration rights and access to citizenship for unauthorized migrants, claim that Obama was in fact too weak on immigration enforcement. These debates involve questions about the distinction between “returns” and “removals” as distinctive modes of repatriation. Anti-Latinx racism also played a central role in immigration discourses surrounding the 2016 US Presidential campaign and subsequent election of Donald Trump.
33. In Rosa (2014b), I show how these signs are structured as ideological bundles that link the United States, Whiteness, and the English language, on the one hand, and Latin America, Brownness, and the Spanish language, on the other.
 34. For an extended analysis of the contradictory ethnicization and racialization of Latinx identity and the problematic nature of efforts to resolve these contradictions by creating a coherent Latinx subject, see Viego (2007).
 35. “U.S. Future ‘Unthinkable’ Without Hispanic Population,” May 2012, *Latin American Herald Tribune*, <http://www.navigationpartnersllc.com/u-s-future-“un-thinkable”-without-hispanic-population/> (accessed September 26, 2017).
 36. Kristian Ramos, “Latino Children are This Country’s Future,” May 21, 2012, *NBC Latino*, <http://nbclatino.tumblr.com/post/23476898511/opinion-latino-children-are-this-countrys-future> (accessed September 26, 2017).
 37. Sara Inés Calderón, “The Census, English, Spanish, and the New U.S. Latino,” April 12, 2011, *NewsTaco*, <http://www.newstaco.com/2011/04/12/the-census-english-spanish-and-the-new-u-s-latino/> (accessed September 26, 2017).
 38. David Morse, “The Sound of the Latino Future?: It’s English,” September 18, 2012, *AdAge*, <http://adage.com/article/the-big-tent/reach-hispanics-moving-forward-speak-english/237157/> (accessed September 26, 2017).
 39. Ramos-Zayas (2004) frames US Latinxs’ recruitment to perform desirable citizenship in relation to a “politics of worthiness” that continually reproduces their marginalization.
 40. Semiotic approaches to racialization (Urciuoli 1996; Bucholtz 2011; Wirtz 2014) provide an alternative to analyses of race that privilege “pigmentocratic logics” (Bonilla-Silva 2004) rather than attending to the multiple, dynamic sign processes through which race is rendered visible. Thus, my approach to analyzing the racialization of US Latinxs from a semiotic perspective is distinct from efforts to move beyond the “Black-White Binary” (Perea 1997) or posit a “Latin Americanization” (Bonilla-Silva 2004) of US racial concepts. Rather than staking claims to a new racial paradigm, I track the ways that racial categories are invoked, circulated, embodied, enacted, and transformed institutionally and interactionally. As Chun (2011) demonstrates, a semiotic approach can reframe the notion of moving beyond Black and White, not by displacing these categories altogether, but by attending to the

shifting, multiple, and indeterminate ways they are invoked in context. For Wirtz, this involves asking “what semiotic ideologies drive this indexical anchoring of racialization in the body” (2014:16).

41. Elsewhere I explore this remapping of linguistic and ethnoracial borders as a form of “diasporization” (Rosa 2014a). In his analysis of US-based Dominicans, Bailey (2002) examines similar negotiations of race and language across (im)migration cohorts.
42. Gal theorizes the concept of “axis of differentiation” to understand the allocation of “contrasting values to linguistic forms” (2012:22), as well as the ways that these values “distinguish and rank linguistic forms and forms of personhood” (2012:23).
43. Indeed, these practices involve the enactment of alternative social relations and symbolic orders, what Povinelli (2012) calls an *otherwise*.
44. While the idea of governmental intervention into the lives of the populace through compulsory education might conjure images of a unified locus of power, Foucault emphasizes the importance of understanding governmentality without attributing undue weight to the concept of the state. To overemphasize the role of the state is to reduce it to essential functions, such as the “development of productive forces and the reproduction of relations of production” (Foucault 1991:103). This reduction both misunderstands the differential forms that power takes in its dispersion and creates the illusion that the state is the sole institutional location of power. In a contrasting take on the dispersion of power, Althusser argues that institutions such as schools, families, and churches (“Ideological State Apparatuses”) can be understood as plural only because “the unity that constitutes . . . [them] as a body is not immediately visible” (Althusser 1994[1979]:111). For Althusser, this unity is manifested in the hailing of subjects through interpellation. Thus, schools become part of a structure of interlocking, authorized institutions of interpellation. Insofar as these institutions operate in coordinated ways to interpellate subjects, it is important to resituate Foucault’s claims about the institutional particularity of power.
45. Like Paris (2011), I attend to the ways that students contest naturalized relationships between language and ethnoracial identity. Whereas Paris pursues this line of analysis by exploring the linguistic repertoires of students who are racialized in relation to distinctive categories, I focus on the interplay between the sociolinguistic production of a particular ethnoracial category and the range of institutional contexts and scales that organize this process. My specific interest is in the production of notions of difference as they pertain to communication and categories of identity.
46. In Chapter 3, I analyze the ways that qualia of “ghettoness” and “lameness” structure the embodiment and enactment of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Latinx identities.
47. I draw on Rymes’s repertoire-based approach to the analysis of communicative practices that “investigates the possibility for productive heterogeneity across diverse social domains” (2011:210). This approach is central to the analysis of often

- mass-mediated language use that is characteristic of “late modernity” (Rampton 2006). These approaches correspond to calls for “an account of language that explores its modernity (Urla 2012:7). Central to this effort is attention to the ways that language practices and populations are positioned as (il)legitimate in particular institutions and contexts, as well as the modes of mediation that link broad political and economic dynamics to everyday interactions. Heller (2006) points to the ways that schools become key sites in which to track processes of linguistic minoritization and the political and economic structures that organize them.
48. Jeffrey S. Passel, D’Vera Cohn, and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanics account for more than half of nation’s growth in past decade,” March 24, 2011, *Pew Hispanic Research Center*, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/03/24/hispanics-account-for-more-than-half-of-nations-growth-in-past-decade/> (accessed July 27, 2014).
 49. Ibid.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Mark Mather and Patricia Foxen, “America’s future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends,” April 28, 2010, *National Council of La Raza*, http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1200/AMERICA_S_FUTURE_Latino_Child_Well_Being_in_Numbers_and_Trends.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed September 26, 2017).
 52. Rodríguez-Muñiz (2015) cautions against viewing demographic predictions as straightforward reflections of empirical population shifts. Instead, he argues that we must attend to the performativity of statistics and the ways that they structure both popular anxieties and Latinx political organizing.
 53. The 19th-century US-based claims to neocolonial control over the Americas were contested by counter-hegemonic pan-Latin American movements that included figures such as Simón Bolívar, José Martí, and Eugenio María de Hostos (Ramos 2001).
 54. In addition to Cruz (2007), see De Genova and Ramos-Zayas (2003) and Fernández (2012) for a historical overview of Mexican and Puerto Rican migration to Chicago.
 55. “Hispanic Population in Select U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2011,” *Pew Hispanic Research Center*, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/hispanic-population-in-select-u-s-metropolitan-areas-2011/> (accessed July 27, 2014).
 56. Ibid.
 57. “Country of Origin Profiles,” April 22, 2010, *Pew Hispanic Research Center*, <http://pewhispanic.org/data/origins/> (accessed May 21, 2010).
 58. Ibid.
 59. Here I follow Richland’s crucial point that while “prevailing anthropological theories that treat claims to cultural distinctiveness as binaries of resistance-hegemony—as either liberatory or reifying, autochthonous or other determined . . . [are each] accurate to [an] extent, a more nuanced picture emerges by attending to the semiotic ‘microdetails’ of actual social practice,” where instances “of cultural difference,

always informed by but never identical to each other, are deployed over the course of sociocultural events” (2007:541).

CHAPTER I

1. “508 Chicago Kids Shot in Just 16 Months,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 9, 2009, <http://www.suntimes.com/news/commentary/1466791,CST-EDT-edit09.article> (accessed August 4, 2009).
2. Eric Zorn, “Killings of Students Provides a Grim Tally,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 2009, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/2009/mar/17/local/chi-zorn-17-mar17> (accessed August 4, 2009).
3. Andrea Billups, “36 Chicago Area Students Killed Sets Record,” *The Washington Times*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/may/13/record-36-students-killed-this-school-year-across-/> (accessed August 4, 2009); in Chapter 6, I analyze the news coverage, online message board postings, and local discussions surrounding the 36th killing.
4. I join Ralph (2014) in seeking to develop an analysis and portrayal of structural inequality in Chicago that avoids the pathologizing tendencies that are characteristic of scholarly analyses of urban contexts.
5. Andrea Billups, “Chicago: Murder Rate Sparks Political Spats,” *The Washington Times*, July 25, 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/jul/25/spiral-murder-rate-sparking-political-spats/> (accessed August 4, 2009); more recently, there have been debates about the use of the term “Chiraq,” a reference to Chicago’s warlike rates of violence, in political commentary, social media, and popular representations, including the name of a 2015 Spike Lee film. For example, the website Chicagoist.com featured a June 10, 2013 article by Samantha Abernathey titled “Is the Term ‘Chiraq’ Offensive?” (http://chicagoist.com/2013/06/10/hbo_vice_chiraq_chicago.php, accessed June 3, 2014). Similarly, a May 30, 2014 story by Adrienne Samuels Gibbs in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, titled “Attack on Chiraq: Activists Want The Word to Die” (<http://www.suntimes.com/news/27541587-418/attack-on-chiraq-activists-want-the-word-to-die.html#U43XrP3VSoo>, accessed June 3, 2014), highlights perspectives from which terms such as “Chiraq” sensationalize and naturalize violence in Chicago. Ralph (2014) presents an incisive analysis of the logics surrounding violence and the experience of its aftermath in Chicago.
6. During the summer of 2009, another 15-year-old CPS student was shot and killed in almost the same exact location. He was riding his bike on a Thursday afternoon when a bullet struck him in the back; he was rushed to the hospital and died shortly thereafter.
7. They said that the Almighty Latin Devils are “lame” because they attempt to appropriate the school’s mascot, the blue devil, as a gang symbol. For these girls, the fact that the school would let them wear the school uniform (with a blue devil on it)