

LATINAS IN SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS: CONSTRUCTING A
TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST IDENTITY

By

ROSALINA DIAZ

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education
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Abstract

LATINAS IN SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS: CONSTRUCTING A TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST IDENTITY

By

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Latina girls have had the highest dropout rate of any group in the United States for almost thirty years. In New York City, 53% of Puerto Rican women over 24 years of age never graduated High School, and the graduation rate for New York City Latinas in 2002 was barely over 30%. In addition, Latina teens give birth in the greatest numbers, and most Latinas who leave school due to pregnancy do not return. According to a recent publication from AAUW, reasons for the dropout rate include high rates of pregnancy /childbirth, centrality of family obligations, and an inability to adapt to the American educational system. Traditional Latino schooling offers a morals/values based education, strong parental/community involvement, strict disciplinary structure and, in many cases, gender-segregation throughout secondary school.

Same-sex public and parochial schools in New York City, such as Notre Dame High School in the East Village and The Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem,

have been successfully meeting the academic needs of Latinas for several years. Notre Dame additionally offers a morals/values based education, as well as internships and community service. Both schools focus heavily on math, science, and technology, areas in which adolescent girls are often weakest. In addition, students seem to form deeper more nurturing relationships with classmates, faculty, and administrative staff.

However, my own research indicates that even though these outcomes seem to indicate a “cultural predisposition” to single-sex environments, there is a trade-off for the high success rates of *American* single-sex institutions. In many instances, students are encouraged to reject their own Latino community and familial relationships, as a means of achieving success. This may result in a cultural schizophrenia in Latinas, who have been raised to believe in the centrality of “La Familia”.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Latinas in Trouble

The growing inequities, shockingly high retention and dropout data, deteriorated school buildings and overcrowded classrooms, ineffective and compensatory bilingual education, overrepresentation of Latino students in special education, institutional barriers to parent involvement, deficit models of instruction that resulted in blaming students rather than teaching them, minimal support systems for students and families, a lack of qualified teachers and bilingual personnel, and inadequate and culturally irrelevant curriculum are just some examples of an alarming educational reality that unleashed resounding cries for educational reform (ASPIRA of New York, 1985; Caballero, 1986).

Latinas are amongst the most educationally disadvantaged groups in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2001 only 61.3% of Latino students graduated from high school, as opposed to 94.6% in Puerto Rico for that same year (World Bank Edstats, 2002). The dropout problem is even more alarming in urban inner-city areas. The graduation rates for Latinas in New York City, as reported by The Urban Institute Education Policy Center, were just above 30% in 2002. These statistics do not specify countries of birth, ancestry, or immigration status, which is problematic for reasons I will explain shortly, still it is clear that traditional American coeducational schools are not meeting the needs of the majority of Latinas. In fact, Latino students (of both genders) have maintained the lowest graduation rate in the United States for approximately thirty years. This dissertation, though, does not dwell on these statistics, or the underlying causes of Latina “dropoutism”, rather it explores an alternative type of

pedagogy that has been proven “successful” in counteracting these statistics among particular Latina groups in the last ten years, single-sex education.

Latinidad: A Question of Identity

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to first differentiate amongst the various Latino groups living in the United States in order to better understand the subjects implicated in this study. There has been much criticism regarding the use of the label Hispanic or Latino to “homogenize very diverse groups”. For example as Jorge Duany states, “According to the critics, the Hispanic Latino classification lumps together a wide variety of immigrant histories, colonial legacies, racial and ethnic groups, social classes, cultural traditions, languages, and dialects” (Duany 2003). Arlene Davila warns against the “growing consolidation of a common Latino/Hispanic identity”. She argues that “standard notions of Latinidad have very little value; they are for the most part, exercises in power relations rather than genuine expressions of people’s lived experiences, values, and aspirations”. There is some value to Davila’s argument, especially regarding the stereotyping practices of the mass media and federal government.

Yet, Davila’s statement seems to ignore the significant role that peer socialization plays in the identity construction of diverse Latino youth who are born in and grow up in the same neighborhoods and attend the same schools. The term *Latina*, as I use it here in this work, refers to the notion proposed by Duany that, despite their differences, the peoples originating in Latin America share a cultural background due to similar geographic, historical, and linguistic forces. I would also add that they share a common

history of colonialism and imperialistic exploitation that may have resulted in a need to migrate from their homelands and bond together in the US, despite the differences to which Duany refers. In immigrant group's efforts to create new communities, it is the similarities and not the differences that are emphasized. There is a tendency amongst "transnational migrants to forge new identities based exclusively neither on their home countries nor on the dominant groups in the host society, but on pan-ethnic allegiances". I have found this to be the most accurate description of my research subjects, most of whom are 1st generation Americans (born in this country), but who are of Latin American ancestry and who continue to self-identify as Latinas.

There are of course significant differences in the educational achievement of the various Latino groups living in the United States and these should not be ignored. For example, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, the largest Latino groups living in the US, have the lowest achievement levels and the highest drop out rates. John Ogbu defines these groups as "involuntary minorities". "Involuntary minorities are people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest, or colonization. They may resent the loss of their former freedom and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression" (Ogbu, 1996). South American, Central American, and Cuban immigrants are considered voluntary minorities.

According to Ogbu these groups moved to their present homes because of the possibility of "economic well-being, better overall opportunities or greater political freedom. These expectations continue to influence the way they perceive and respond to treatment by members of the dominant group and by the institutions controlled by members of the

dominant group”. These attitudes are reflected in higher achievement rates, hence substantiating Ogbu’s theory.

In a very recent work, Prudence Carter has critiqued this “cultural-ecological theory” as too simplistic and deterministic.

In essence, this theory construes sociohistorical forces (slavery, colonization, and conquest) as determinants of cultural phenomena (an oppositional culture to whiteness) that influence educational outcomes (rejection of schooling and lower academic achievements) for entire racial and ethnic groups.

The danger in this, she claims, is that it creates a “master narrative” that treats all involuntary minorities as if they were exactly the same. In addition she asserts that Ogbu’s theory minimizes the complexity of cultural development by “discounting positive values and functions of these students’ culture, instead focusing on their culture as a maladaptive response to social marginalization....” Contrary to Ogbu, she believes that young people “deploy culture” to serve their own ends and that “their approaches are better understood as a continuum rather than a fixed, singular cultural narrative (some comply with the dominant or cultural rules while others challenge them and create and their own set of cultural codes).

Further differences in Latino academic achievement might be attributed to geographical issues. Urban inner city students, such as those in my research sample, would generally be expected to have lower educational outcomes than rural or suburban

Latino populations. Socio-economic status, or class, can also influence educational outcomes and need to be considered as well. On the other hand, there is a very real danger of essentialism with any of these categories (race/ethnicity, gender, class, or place of residence) and so it is important to consider these as descriptors and not as indicators of educational achievement.

Another generalization that needs to be challenged here, in brief, is that Latina girls do better in schools than Latino boys. According to *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children* (2002), Latina girls had a higher dropout rate than their male counterparts in 1975, 1985, and 1995. In general the difference in dropout rates between male and female Hispanics averages out to approximately 1 or 2 percentage points. I am fairly certain that there are significant differences among specific Latino groups. However this type of data is not currently available.

Culture: A “Latino Problem”

The question, however, still remains. Why do the large majority of Latino students do so badly in American schools? Neither the problem nor the question is new. Much research was done in the 1960s and 70s, when the “Latino problem” first emerged as such. Groups such as the Committee for Economic Development, ASPIRA, the Puerto Rican Association for National Affairs, and even the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico’s Department of Education agreed, by overwhelming consensus, that the most important factor in high school completion for Latino students was culture. “Hemos Trabajado Bien”, a report on the first National Conference of Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Educators on the Special Educational Needs of Urban Puerto Rican Youth (1968),

proposed, “that the curriculum be expanded or revised so as to include the study of Puerto Rican history and culture in New York City Public Schools” (p. 12). Other proposals suggested “to bring about positive changes on behalf of Puerto Rican students” included that readers in elementary schools be more carefully selected so that their contexts provide a familiar background for the pupils to place themselves; that Puerto Rican music be incorporated into the curriculum at all levels; and that home economics syllabuses incorporate some Puerto Rican dishes.

Additionally, William Katz an Associate in Integration for the Department of Education stated, “in the secondary school curriculum teenagers should be made aware of Puerto Rican history, that Puerto Ricans have fought for freedom and security, that they have attained racial integration, that the mainland needs to learn about. Study of Puerto Rican history, culture, figures and the future should include its relations with the mainland and a discussion of controversial issues affecting Puerto Rico’s status” (1968). In 1971, the Committee for Economic Development’s Statement on National Policy asserted:

The typical Spanish-speaking American has a sensitive awareness of his culture and his language. But the general Anglo presumption of cultural superiority tends to destroy his confidence in himself and in his home and ethnic group. It often contributes to an emotional confusion that inhibits his intellectual advancement and affects his personal opportunities (CED, 1971).

Sadly, in the intervening years these proposals have gone virtually unheeded and the educational gap between Latino and Anglo students has continued to widen. Prudence Carter rearticulates these same concerns in her 2005 study of minority youth in Yonkers, New York. She again suggests that “ By examining the hierarchy of cultural meanings in schools and paying attention to culture and how it influences many students’ attachment to school, educators, parents, and students can work together to break the cycle of low-income African American and Latino youths ending up at the bottom rungs of the academic and socioeconomic ladders” (Carter, 2005). These cultural issues seem to be even more significant for Latina girls, who are considered the “keepers of cultural legacy” and are thus more bound by its strictures and conventions.

There has been a growing body of literature that addresses the cultural conflicts encountered by adolescent Latinas in traditional American public high schools and their possible correlation with increased drop out rates (Valenzuela, 1999). Most deal with the conflicts and problems encountered by first and second generation immigrant Latinas, but, as I mentioned earlier, the reality is that newly arrived immigrants fare far better in the public school system than do later generation Latinos. Though these works specifically address the cultural conflicts Latinas face in Public High Schools, most hesitate to take the logical next step of suggesting solutions in the form of culturally sensitive community based models of education. They acknowledge the problem but place the onus for change (adaptation, acculturation, or assimilation) on the student or cultural group and not the school system. Based on this existing literature I have identified the following causal factors as those most often used to explain the high

dropout rate among Latinas (all refer to cultural factors). Of these only Sonia Nieto (2000) clearly places the fault on the school system itself:

- High pregnancy rates – Latina girls have the highest birth rate in the nation (US Dept of Health and Human Services). In 2001 the birth rate (per thousand) for Hispanic girls aged 15 to 19 was 92.4, compared to 73.1 for black girls, and 41.7 for white), and are much more likely to leave school as a result. “Latinas in this country come from areas where teenagers often marry and bear children as their primary (or only) rite of passage to adulthood, and the status associated with these events is highly rewarding” (Ginorio, 2000). Latina girls are less likely to return to school after giving birth than African American or White girls. Latin tradition dictates that they marry and take on the responsibility of raising their families regardless of age, and abortion is rarely an option. In all Latino homes, family care-giving responsibilities fall primarily on girls. It is understood that a woman’s obligation to her family is central to her identity as a Latina woman, and supercedes any educational and/or career plans (Ginorio, 2000).
- Conflicting cultural messages regarding appropriate behavior, values, and morals from the family/home culture and the school culture (Espin, 1999.) Traditional coeducational schools do not make the psychological/emotional connections with students to which Latino students are accustomed. “Though inclusive of formal academic training, ‘educacion’ additionally refers to competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of others” (Valenzuela, 1999). Traditional Latino teachers’ expectations of students tend to focus strongly on the

- notion of respect, discipline, and social responsibility, which are often lacking in traditional coeducational public high schools.
- On average Latina girls come from homes with lower SES. Overall, New York Latino families have lower household incomes than either African American or white families and consequently suffer higher poverty rates ...well over one-third of Puerto Rican and Dominican families, live in poverty” (Weiler, 2000). This translates into greater responsibilities in the home from household duties to childcare to possible part-time employment outside the home, which may interfere with schooling, and girls ”charged with the maintenance of family ties” tend to shoulder more of these responsibilities (Ginorio, 2000; Weiler, 2000).
 - Internalization of negative societal stereotypes regarding inborn-intelligence, and incapacity to succeed (Orozco, 1999). In spite of the fact, that statistics have consistently found that quality education is a top priority for Latino families and youth (Latino Workforce, 2003), the stereotype of educationally unmotivated Latinos has taken firm hold in the American imagination. Suarez-Orozco, in *Children of Immigration*, blames “misrecognition”, a process by which children internalize negative societal stereotypes for the poor academic performance of Latinos. She explains, “ The hopelessness and self-deprecation that this resignation causes may in turn result in low aspirations and self-defeating behaviors”, such as dropping out.
 - School policies and practices that alienate Latino students. Latino students in the United States struggle to maintain their identity in the face of on-going pressures to assimilate and abandon their cultural diversity. A “1976 report by the US Commission on Civil Rights found that a primary reason for dropping out of school

as identified by young people themselves was school's unresponsiveness to their cultural backgrounds" (Nieto, 2000).

To date only a handful of scholars/researchers have looked to a single-sex education as a possible solution to the problem of Latina and African-American "dropoutism". More than Latino boys, Latina girls need to be in schools that value and respect Latino cultures and traditions and incorporate family and community values in the school philosophy and curriculum, in order to succeed. This has clearly not been the case in American coeducational schools. In light of this lack of concern on the part of the public school system, concerned Latino parents have consistently sought out a more culturally familiar option for their adolescent daughters, schools that offer the structure, discipline, and security more typical of a traditional Latin American education. For many parents this has meant single-sex schools.

Latinas and Single-Sex Education: A Perfect Fit?

Single-sex education (SSE) is not a new concept. In most societies it predates co-education. In the Spanish-speaking Caribbean it predates European colonialism. The study of single-sex education for Latinas is very complex, as it must take into account gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic and cultural factors as these intersect in an educational setting. Much has been written on the social, psychological and emotional development of females as opposed to males (Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1978; Noddings, 1984; Orenstein, 1994), as well as the academic benefits of single-sex education for the general population (Bailey, 1992; Sadker, 1994; Hagg, 2000; Lee and

Bryk, 1996; Tidball, 1990). But the research on the benefits of single-sex education as it pertains to specific ethnic/racial groups, such as Latinas, is practically non-existent. Latinas have historically been educated in single-sex environments, within a system that has traditionally favored complementary but separate gender roles. Same sex relationships, primarily mother-daughter, have been perceived as central to the formation of their identity (Sued Badillo, 1975; Vargas, 1982; Jimenez de Wagenheim, 1998; Hurtado, 2003; Rolon, 2000; Hidalgo, 2000; Gil & Vazquez, 1996). As a result, single-sex environments may be more conducive to their academic, social, psychological and emotional development. I hypothesize that the success of single-sex schools for the Latina population can be attributed to culture. The less disjuncture between the home culture and school culture, that is, the more culturally familiar (culture here refers to the characteristics, behaviors and value systems that develop as a result of shared experiences, geography, religious/moral indoctrination, language, and a shared history) the learning environment, the higher the level of emotional /psychological comfort, satisfaction, and academic achievement experienced by students. However for the most part, the recent resurgence of public single-sex education (SSE) has been presented by the literature as a color-blind, culture-blind initiative, with few exceptions, in spite of the fact that the first of these schools specifically targeted Latina and African American girls.

Single-Sex Schools and Latinas: What the Experts Have to Say

In the 1980s, Cornelius Riordan and Valerie Lee (at the University of Michigan) both conducted research studies on single-sex education. As a result of the dearth of public single-sex schools, these studies focused on Catholic school populations. Both studies showed that there were definite benefits to single-sex education for girls, which included “higher educational aspirations, plans for postsecondary and graduate school education, and entry into less stereotypically female fields” (Lee, 1998). Several years later, Lee conducted similar research focusing on independent private schools. The results perplexed her, as they were not consistent with the results of her first study. In fact this research seemed to indicate that there were no substantial benefits to be gained from single sex schools either for boys or girls. As a result of this new data, Lee abandoned her advocacy of single-sex schools. She has instead focused her research on identifying those characteristics of Catholic single-sex schools responsible for the initial success rates she encountered, with the end goal of replicating these characteristics in co-educational settings.

Cornelius Riordan, on the other hand, was not dismayed by the results of this second study. Riordan analyzed the data and explained that the results were actually predictable. Catholic school students, he explains, tend to come from working class minority parents where as private school students tend to be elite whites. This difference accounts for the skewed results. Riordan went on to explain that single-sex schools only worked for historically disadvantaged groups:

They work for girls and boys, women and men, whites and non-white, but this effect is limited to students of lower socioeconomic status and/or students who are disadvantaged historically -- females and racial/ethnic/religious minorities. The major factor that conditions the strength of single-sex effects is social class, and since class and race are inextricably linked, the effects are also conditioned by race and gender (Riordan, 1990).

Unlike Lee, Riordan does not believe that the success of single-sex schools can be replicated in co-educational school settings. He explains that the “organizational differences” that Lee describes in her research, “more successful same-sex teacher and student role models, more leadership opportunities, greater order and discipline, and fewer distractions from academic matters”, are set into motion because of an independent variable, which is single sex education. He adds, “Single-sex schools provide an *atmosphere* that ‘empowers’ African and Hispanic American students” (Riordan, 1998).

These words echo those of Elizabeth Tidball, who in her 1970s study on women’s colleges suggested that it was the “wholeness of the environment” which accounted for the success of same-sex institutions (Tidball, 1999). Riordan’s work is immensely important to the study of single-sex schooling. However, by positing that same-sex education benefits Latinas mainly because of their low SES, he implicitly denies the role of culture.

Building on the work of Riordan, Karen Stabiner, a journalist, writes a moving comparative ethnography of two single-sex schools in her book *All Girls: Single-Sex Education and Why It Matters*. The book, clearly written for a mainstream audience in 2002, follows two separate groups of students for a year: One from The Young Women's Leadership School in Harlem, NYC, and the other from Marlborough, an elite prep school in Los Angeles. Stabiner attempts to take us into the minds of these students, their struggles, and their triumphs, as well as the critical role that economics plays in determining the future destinies of these girls. It is also evident from her descriptions that she perceives single-sex education for both groups to be a positive and viable educational option. However, like Riordan, Stabiner dances around the issue of race/ethnicity and culture without ever directly addressing it. A lexical analysis of her word choices reveals cultural biases. She includes her perception that the girls at TYWLS "were *embarrassed* by what they saw as their cultural heritage". And she quotes one teacher who explains to the students "culture is a group of people's unique way of life". She adds as an aside to this, "It was not, as some girls assumed, their *destiny*." The then principal of the school Celenia Chevere, is quoted repeatedly and excessively:

It was part of Celenia Chevere's plan to *separate* her girls from the people they pass on the way to school. The girl at the coffee cart and her boyfriend represented to her a *pervasive threat*.... She made it clear from the start that *escape* demanded something more than the obvious attributes of dedication and academic excellence. A successful young woman made

TYWLS her community, and *left the temptations* of her neighborhood behind (Stabiner, 2002)

The implication here is that success for minority girls can only be attained at the cost of culture and community, but this is not the case at Marlborough where the family and community are considered important social capital. “Most of the girls at Marlborough considered a good education their birthright; their parents, and many of their grandparents, were college graduates. It was one of the perquisites of a comfortable existence, along with travel, access to cultural events, lessons, and sports” (Stabiner, 2002). She presents the school experiences and outcomes of both sets of students in a completely de-contextualized fashion, without ever confronting the social, historical and political reasons behind the apparent inequalities in their lives. This process of de-contextualization and mystification leaves one with the feeling that this is just the way things are, and may, in many cases, lead the public to believe that it is just a matter of individual or group merit. She ends the book with the following quote. “Why should Diana Perez miss what the rich girls had? No reason at all.” Really?

In this same vein, Rosemary Salomone of St. John’s Law School (legal advisor to Rubinstein Tisch – founder of TYWLS) also advocates for single-sex schools for minority groups in a book entitled *Same, Different, Equal* (2003). She presents a reasoned legal and historical analysis of single-sex education in which she is careful to point out the dangers of essentialism. Unfortunately, her own seemingly unbiased narrative falls apart in her revealing descriptions of the social issues affecting Latinas.

Viewing life through the lens of *few available options*, they (Latinas) perceive their economic and social situations as *hopeless* and resort to *early and repeat motherhood* as a source of competence and significance. Unfortunately, they soon learn the realities of raising children on their own without the emotional and financial support of a husband.... The impact [of *early marriage and pregnancies*] on their future lives proves *devastating*...for many girls, physical, sexual, and emotional *victimization* is the first step along the path leading to the *juvenile justice system*. A high proportion of them enter as runaways, seeking to escape *abusive homes* (Salomone, 2003).

By essentializing Latinas and minority girls as victims or future delinquents, Salomone paves the way for her defense of the cultural intervention of The Young Women's Leadership school – a school founded by a white upper-class woman from outside the community. This argument, as well as both Tisch's and Salomone's obsession with the excessively high pregnancy rates of minority girls, is reminiscent of the reproductive interventionist strategies associated with Operation Bootstrap in the 1960s. The poor in ghetto neighborhoods were seen as in need of supervision due to their “proclivity for immediate gratification and inability to plan for the future” (Lopez, 1998). This argument justified interventionist practices that ultimately led to massive sterilizations, 35% of all Puerto Rican women of childbearing age, and the largest percentage of births by c-section in the world.

Salomone goes on to describe the Young Women's Leadership School in relation to its host community - Spanish Harlem, which she describes as a "beleaguered community" with "graffiti lined streets." TYWLS on the other hand is described as "an oasis of excellence and hope in a desert of poverty, crime, and despair", "a striking contrast with the surrounding neighborhood...a safe haven for these girls", a "ticket out of the sub-culture, "a place that is orderly and secure with a palpable sense of energy and purpose " as opposed to the surrounding neighborhood. Underlying this form of discourse is what Henry Giroux calls "cultural deprivation/deficit theory".

In this ideology of 'need fulfillment', the category of need represents an *absence* of a particular set of experiences. In most cases, what educators determine as missing are either the culturally specific experiences that school authorities believe students must acquire in order to enrich the quality of their lives or the fundamental skills they will "need" in order to get jobs once they leave school. Underlying this view of experience is the logic of cultural deprivation theory, which defines education in terms of cultural enrichment, remediation, and basics...Specifically, the experience of the student as 'other' is cast as deviant, underprivileged, or 'uncultured'. Consequently not only do students bear the sole responsibility for school failure, but also there is little room for questioning the ways in which administrators and teachers actually create and sustain the problems they attribute to students (Giroux, 1997).

In other words, by using language that focuses on the deficits of the cultural group, the school can justify a culture-blind curriculum that reinforces negative stereotypes about the student's home culture. Conversely the overarching socio-historical context is ignored and the dominant society (represented by the school) is presented as benefactor and savior.

At TYWLS, this attitude is evident in a lack of representations of Latino culture in the school's curriculum, the lack of parental and community involvement, and the absence of Latino faculty and staff. The question here is, does this absence of cultural representation in the schools adversely affect Latinas? The answer to this is subjective and would have to take into account differing interpretations of success. Paolo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* states:

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunate and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example. Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressor (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism and makes of the oppressed objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization (Freire, 1970).

The efforts of all external educational, social and political programs, no matter how well intentioned, are problematic and suspect unless they begin as a collaborative effort with the community in question. Such an effort would strive to identify the actual needs of the residents of that community and not their own preconceived assumptions of those needs.

Diane Pollard of the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee conducted a research study at an Afro-centric single-sex after school program in a Baltimore middle school that attempted to do just that. Her reflections on this study were published in an AAUW journal, *Separated by Sex: A Critical Look at Single-sex Education for Girls*. In Pollard's own words, "The impetus for this program and study was the need for broader attempts to implement *culturally* centered educational models. In this context single-sex classes have focused on both formal and informal socialization for boys and girls". The program was aptly named "Rites of Passage". This program offered young African American students of both sexes the opportunity to focus on gender issues in an environment that was culturally supportive, nurturing, and even enhancing. The underlying tenet of African-centered education is that schools serving African American children need to be closely *linked* with the communities of their students, and should *build upon and reinforce* the cultural activities of those communities. This orientation suggests that these schools should not be limited to an academic focus, but should also concern themselves with social and personal development. Furthermore, this orientation emphasizes the notion that students are expected to use education not only for individual empowerment but also for the promotion and *empowerment of their communities*. Pollard argues that gender issues within minority communities need to take into account the *historical and cultural aspects*

of that community, as gender identity and relations are shaped by cultural heritage, colonization, and imperialistic exploitations. Issues related to gender cannot be separated from issues of class and race. Pollard's study emphasizes the need for education that builds on the strengths that minority students, both male and female, bring with them from their home communities. This issue begs for more research that focuses on the intersections of race/ethnicity, culture, and class as these intersect and play themselves out in a single-sex environment.

The research literature I have compiled here represents diverse views on the goals of SSE for Latina girls. Riordan's de-contextualized research on parochial single-sex schools repeatedly conflates issues of economics and race/ethnicity. This proves problematic, as it omits other aspects of the historical/cultural development of gender that are crucial to a complete understanding of the significance of SSE in Latin culture. Stabiner and Salomone both present "cultural deficit models" to justify their advocacy of a specific type of SSE for Latinas, specifically the Young Women's Leadership School. Lexical selections here show the "familiar form of negative other presentations, and positive self-presentation" (Van Dijk, 2001) and constructs Latinas as needy and disadvantaged. The discourse type here is persuasive. Diane Pollard's study introduces a new and alternative brand of SSE. This SSE has emerged as a result of a need expressed by a marginalized community. As a result, according to Pollard, it respects and builds upon the culture of the students and takes into account the socio-historical factors underlying the social realities of their community. The discourse is one of empowerment and self-determination. The students here are presented as active agents with a stake in

their own educational processes. Cultural continuity and familiarity become pedagogical tools that serve as a causeway to success in society as a whole.

Single-sex Education for a New Global Age

The recent resurgence of public *academic* single-sex education in the United States has a decidedly new twist to it. It specifically targets minority girls. In the United States single-sex education has historically been segregated by class status. Middle/upper class girls attended academic private and/or parochial single sex schools. Lower class girls were tracked into vocational single sex schools. The taken for granted assumption at present is that this shift to an academic focus in SSE for Latinas represents a positive progression in their educational options. However, this is a very dangerous assumption to make and needs to be critically examined and challenged. There are several important questions that need to be asked at this juncture. How has this new brand of academic SSE for Latinas come to be normalized (in spite of its unconstitutionality)? Why have minority girls been targeted? How have the various discourses of SSE actually played out in the academic school setting? How are minority girls, specifically Latinas, affected by it? What are the legal ramifications of public SSE, especially in light of Title IX and Brown versus the Board of Education?

Chapter Overviews

The chapter that follows will examine the history of single-sex education for adolescent girls in Latin America and why/how it is relevant to the study of the new single-sex movement that has emerged in the United States in recent years, as a possible

solution to the Latino dropout problem. I will also present a more detailed history of single-sex education in the United States commencing in the 19th Century and culminating in the present.

The theoretical framework for my research is complex. It was necessary to examine various historical periods in order to provide a complete overview of single-sex education for Latinas, and understand its present emergence. In order to accomplish this I utilized a Foucauldian inspired critical discourse analysis of various media, written documents, and texts throughout this work. However, in order to critically examine the effects of contemporary American SSE on Latinas, their families, and their communities, I also used ethnographic techniques (interviews, surveys, etc.). Chapter 3 combines these various theoretical and methodological strategies to compile and analyze the data collected. I have also included the issues I faced as an insider/outsider to the Latino community in NYC. I am a feminist scholar and an ethnographer. On the other hand, I am also a Latina mother of four girls. This positionality was often times problematic in conducting this research and inspired a great deal of self-reflection and introspection on my part.

The data is presented in various sequential formats. I begin by presenting background information on my research sites and my initial research findings on assimilationist pedagogical practices in the newer single-sex academies. Because of these initial findings, I began a more in-depth analysis of the identity construction processes I observed at three single-sex schools/programs in New York City. I focus on the ethnographic accounts of the students, faculty and staff at these schools. I conclude with an in depth case study of a single young woman from each of these schools. This portion

of the dissertation was very significant for me, as it takes us into the lives and homes of these girls in order to better understand all the relational factors that contribute to their educational success or failure. These case studies provide us with a multidimensional perspective that is holistic, and I hope, compassionate.

In the concluding chapter, I return to Foucault's theories of "disciplinary powers" and apply them to my critical analysis of the diverse philosophies and pedagogical practices of single-sex schools, and the resulting educational outcomes for Latinas. Foucault believed it was necessary to uncover "veiled" discourses in order to challenge the "sayable and knowable" of our time. In other words he challenged us to question our taken for granted assumptions. If nothing else, I hope this work will accomplish that much, in the area of single-sex education. I have tried above all else in this work to stay true to the voices of my research subjects. With that in mind, I conclude this dissertation with excerpts from my final focus group interview with the mothers of my three case study subjects. Their input provides this work with a "humanness" that I hope will make the difference between relevance and rhetoric.

Chapter 2

Latinas in Single-Sex Schools: A Historical Overview

The shameful history of school segregation in this country should not be forgotten. Particularly in light of that history, reinstating this practice in any form, regardless of whether it is voluntary or involuntary and regardless of the identity characteristic at issue, should not even be contemplated absent compelling evidence that it is the only way to ensure that all school children in the United States receive the education they deserve (NOW, 2002).

In 1493, Christopher Columbus wrote to Queen Isabella about a group of women he encountered while sailing in Caribbean waters. He referred to these women as Amazons. “These are the women who alone inhabit the island of Mateunin (or Matinino). These women, moreover, perform no kind of work of their sex, for they use bows and darts, like those I have described” (Paiewonsky, 1991). The native men were said to avoid these women at all costs. For it was said that if any approached them *outside the agreed upon time*, or dared to follow them, they would “defend themselves with well-aimed arrows—believed to be shot with an expert eye” (Martir, 1944) Columbus had learned of these women from the natives, but he had ample reason to believe their stories. There are several historical accounts of attacks on Columbus and his crew. Fernando Colon writes of one attack in which “the arrow, shot with such force and dexterity as to pass right through the shield was fired by...a woman”. And in another account it was reported that these warrior “women so fiercely held off the landing parties that cannons were fired to frighten them off” (Paiewonsky, 1999). Columbus searched in vain for the island of

Matinino with no success. Later, historians would claim that the island never existed and that the story of the Amazon of Matinino was a myth. But then what of the attacks? Several members of Columbus' crew, including Michel de Cuneo, Dr. Chanca, and Fernando Colon, corroborated the accounts.

Based on the combined accounts of Bartolome de las Casas, Gonzalo Oviedo de Fernandez, and Ramon Pane we know that young girls in the Caribbean were isolated from their villages during their liminal phase of development, beginning around the ages of 12 and 13, right after first menstruation, and lasting for approximately two years. These young women were "off limits" to all men during that period of time. It is quite possible that the mythical "Amazons" that Columbus sought were actually Native adolescent girls undergoing their rites of passage. Once the predetermined period of isolation and gender role socialization was completed, the girls were reintroduced into their society with a ritual celebration, but were restricted from all sexual activity until they were to be married. One of these celebrations is described by Oviedo in his *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*: "More than 300 unmarried maidens danced, all god-daughters of Anacaona (female Taíno Chieftain), and she did not allow any woman or man who was sexually experienced to participate in the dance" (1959). The period of European colonization in the Caribbean was perforce one of chaos and cultural disruption. Many traditions and cultural practices were irrevocably lost. Fortunately, as a result of Spain's assimilationist colonizing practices, concubinage with native women was widespread. It was through these women that aspects of the indigenous culture survived and were passed down from generation to generation. One aspect of indigenous culture that survived the transition to the 20th Century was single-sex education for girls.

The Spanish church implemented formal education in Puerto Rico in the early 16th century. These early schools were for boys only. There were no educational resources for girls until the 19th Century. And then, only those families, who could afford it, sent their daughters to same-sex private or parochial schools, “Lessons for girls usually included sewing and embroidery. Boys and girls were taught separately by teachers of the same sex”(Jimenez de Wagenheim, 1998). By 1897, the 551 public schools on the island were still very poorly funded by the colonial government, and were likewise segregated by gender. Of these schools, “nearly three-quarters (403) were attended by boys and the remaining (148) were used to teach girls. As a result of the Spanish American War, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States in 1898. One might have reasonably expected the US to immediately implement a coeducational system, such as was the norm on the mainland. This however was not the case. Instead, the US opened 34 new single-sex vocational schools that continued the training in the traditional skills of embroidery and needlework that Puerto Rican girls learned in the home. The needlework industry soon became the second most important industry on the island, with American-owned businesses profiting from the labor of Puerto Rican women (Vargas, 1987). This delayed the introduction of co-education in Puerto Rico until well into the 20th Century.

Transnational Feminisms: Expanding our Notions of Feminist Identity

In the majority of Latino homes, family care-giving responsibilities fall primarily on girls. It is understood that a woman's obligation to her family is central to her identity as a Latina woman, and supercedes any educational and/or career plans. Today, post-revolutionary Cuba has the highest literacy rate (97%) of any Latin American country and one of the highest in the world. Education is mandatory and free. Over fifty percent of college graduates and sixty percent of all doctors in Cuba are women (The World Fact Book, 2003). Havana even boasts a Museum of Education. But in spite of high educational levels and a socialist political system, which promotes more egalitarian and stable gender relations, Cuban women still perceive their fundamental role as mother and housewife. Teen pregnancy rates are high today, as they have always been. The average Cuban girl becomes sexually active at 13, and has her first baby by the age of 18. The rate of illiteracy in Santo Domingo is the highest in the Spanish speaking Caribbean. The literacy rate in 2003 was 84.7% for both men and women. Less than half of all Dominican children go beyond elementary school. Secondary schools begin at age 13, and only 40.2% of the population attends (The World Fact Book, 2003). Most institutions are religious and many are still gender segregated. Public secondary education suffers from poor facilities and inadequate funding. The Dominican Republic is still largely a male-oriented society based on the values of paternalism and machismo. Female children are closely chaperoned and their lives are heavily circumscribed. Brothers and male cousins are expected to protect them and their reputations, and those middle-class and

elite parents who can prefer to send their daughters to private or parochial same-sex schools. The average Dominican girl sets up her first home by the age of 14 or 15, many while they are pregnant or already have children. However, Dominican women still tend to attain higher educational levels than men. In 1997 (most recent available data), 27.1% of females attended college, as opposed to 19.2% of males (The World Bank – Dominican Republic, 2001).

Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic share a common cultural heritage rooted in Spanish colonialism, Catholicism, and a plantation economy. All were subjects of US hegemony, but followed quite different patterns of industrialization after World War II. In spite of differences in economic and political structures and ideologies, all have experienced significant increases in women's education and employment rates since the 1960s, in most cases surpassing that of the male population. Researcher and anthropologist Helen Safa identifies a common thread that differentiates Latin women's participation in the labor force from that of American women. She explains:

Families provide women with a social identity that proletarianization as wagedworkers has not diminished. Despite women's increasing incorporation into the labor force, they still define gender roles differently.... Women view themselves as wives and mothers with economic responsibilities; in fact, most women in our sample now consider paid employment part of their domestic role, because they are working to contribute to the household economy rather than for their own self-esteem or personal autonomy (1995).

Whereas for American women, “The decreasing importance placed by society on the family and housework undermined their value for women.... Women demanded a greater presence in the public sphere and began to claim individual rights based on equality with men and not simply on the basis of protecting women’s separate domestic sphere” (Safa, 1995).

One reason for this difference is the importance attributed to the role of the mother in Latin American society. The Spanish-speaking Caribbean has historically been based on a matrifocal system, with an emphasis on complementary gender relations. Raymond Thomas Smith (1996) uses the term *matrifocal* to describe families in which women, in their roles as mothers, are the focus of family relationships. Taking care of the family is seen as a sacred trust, and the status and respect afforded women in this role can be highly rewarding and satisfying. The mother is the acknowledged and unchallenged authority within the home, and her labor contributions in this sphere are considered of greater importance than that of her male partner. For Latinas, contemporary attempts at gender equality have largely been an effort to expand on this role and extend it into the public sphere. Latinas, like their African-American counterparts in the states, see little need to compete with male partners, who have been even more disenfranchised by the dominant society than they themselves have. The persistence of elopement and consensual unions, especially in the lower classes, reflect resistance to interference from patriarchal/colonialist Church and State institutions into the private realm of conjugal relations (Mintz, 1974 & Martinez-Alier, 1989). These more indigenous marriage patterns have benefited women in that they allow them to maintain control over the home

and children in the event of dissolution of the relationship. Ignorance regarding the historical and social structures of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean has contributed to a general belief that these women are passive/submissive victims of a misogynist Macho society, and completely disregards the fact that Machismo and Marianismo are European imports. Single-sex education in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean was grounded in a legacy of female empowerment and strength and, though it has gone through several transmutations, it continues to be a source of both feminine empowerment and respect for cultural tradition. To ignore the history of the development of single-sex education in the Caribbean is to omit information vital to a true understanding of how and why single-sex education works for Caribbean Latinas.

Latinas in American Single-sex schools: A Matter of Class

In direct contrast to these countries, coeducation in the United States has nearly always been perceived as an integral part of a truly democratic education. This assumption has persisted, in spite of the fact that educational institutions in America have historically been segregated by class. In 1951, Margaret Mead described American education as compartmentalized into three distinct and separate institutions. These were the traditional Little Red School House, the academy, and the city school. The first, Mead claimed, presently existed only as an ideal in our memories – “the symbol of a stable, democratic, slowly changing, real American world.” Then there was the academy, “at which the children of the privileged were initiated into the mysteries of our heritage from Europe.” The final image is that of the city school described by Mead as follows:

...A school so lacking in architectural personality that it would be almost impossible to represent one without the presence of the mass of children, crowded on the sidewalk, milling in the narrow playground. These children are the children of immigrants. They are not only poor, but they are foreign; they have unpronounceable names and eat strange things for breakfast; their mothers come with shawls over their heads to weep and argue and threaten a teacher who is overworked, whose nerves are frayed by the constant battle with the polyglot youngsters who surge through her classroom (Mead, 1964).

Mead goes on to describe the difference in the curriculum taught at these three separate types of schools. At the city school:

They must be taught, not the constancies of their parents immediate past, as in the little red schoolhouse, or the precious values of a long ancestral past, as in the academy, but they must be taught to reject and usually to despise, their parents' values. They must learn those things which, to the extent that they make them Americans, will alienate them forever from their parents, making them ancestorless, children of the future, cut off from the past (Mead, 1964.).

In spite of the dark impenetrable stain of class and racial segregation that has always existed in the history of American schooling, it is ironic that it is single-sex education that is labeled “undemocratic”.

Co-educational secondary schools were institutionalized in the US in the early 19th century for economic reasons. At that time, most young men were working full-time jobs. Too few were attending secondary school to justify having a separate school building for them, and so the two genders were thrown in together, regardless of the affect this arrangement might have on the quality of education for either group. David Tyack and Larry Cuban in *Tinkering Toward Utopia* describe the “widespread adoption of coeducation” as a “silent revolution” which only became “hotly disputed” after its implementation. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) This is not to say that there were no dissenting voices. According to Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot in *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools*, “protesting parents appealed to Tradition:

Above all, they feared what might happen if their daughters associated with low-life boys. Girls from eight to fourteen were at a “dangerous time” of life. During which they required “that watchful care, that attention to sexual difference, that jealous guarding of mental and physical purity, which, it is believed, cannot be had in a Mixed School”.

Coeducation exposed girls to “rude assaults by writings, allusions and intercourse, which no vigilance can fully prevent (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

In 1873, Dr. Edward M. Clarke of Harvard Medical School and Stanley Hall, psychiatrist and president of Clark University, challenged the notion of coeducation.

Identical coeducation, Clarke and Hall claimed, was a slippery slope leading to disaster. They conceded that women could learn the same difficult subjects that men mastered; young women's performance in secondary schools and colleges had conclusively demonstrated this fact. The problem was not girl's lack of mental ability; rather, it was the physiological effects of hard study on them. Academic competition with boys in coeducation institutions, they argued, would interfere with the development of girls' reproductive organs. By overloading their brains, girls not only ruined their health but threatened to bring about "race suicide" (Tyack and Hansot, 1992).

John Dewey responded in an article he wrote for Ladies' Home Journal *Is Coeducation Injurious to Girls?* (1911):

...Coeducation has grown up in America not for pedagogical but for social reasons. It is an intellectual and moral necessity in a democracy. Hence were the scholastic difficulties infinitely more serious than they are

they would still have to be met and overcome because, otherwise, their underlying causes would threaten democracy itself.

On the surface of this article, Dewey seems much more concerned with the ideal of “social democracy” than he is with meeting the educational and emotional needs of young women. However, if we look at Dewey’s words through a historical lens, there is no doubt that they were just and well intentioned. At the time, the only way girls could be assured of receiving even a relatively equal education was to be placed in a coeducational setting.

Advocates of woman’s rights were undeterred in their quest for coeducation.... They wanted girls to be educated with boys for reasons that went well beyond better pedagogy, greater economy, or more precise bureaucratic classification-the usual arguments advanced by school leaders. They believed that separate schooling would rarely be equal, given the male bias of those who controlled school systems. Mixed schools would allow the sexes to know and respect one another would ensure an equality of funding and instruction rarely available in girls schools, especially at the secondary level, either in public high schools or female seminaries. Caroline H. Dall argued that women “will never be thoroughly taught until they are taught at the same time and in the same classes (as men)” – in effect with boys as hostages to make sure that the facilities and curriculum were equal (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

Unfortunately, coeducational public high schools today have fallen dramatically short of the ideal educational setting hoped for and described by Dewey in *The School and Society*, “only by being true to the full growth of all individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself. And in the self-direction thus given, nothing counts as much as the schools....” Dewey speaks repeatedly of the different stages of growth in the child, “as essentially changing, presenting distinctive phases of capacity and interest at different periods” (1990). He strongly believed in the need for education to consistently adapt itself to these stages of life and yet he fails to address the importance of what is for girls probably the most dramatic and life-altering stage of life, adolescence. Once coeducation was firmly implemented, scant attention was given to the issue of coeducation in America:

Although coeducation has been an institutional fact in public education since the early nineteenth century, both critics and advocates have been rare. To foreign eyes coeducational classrooms often seemed strange and disturbing; to most Americans they became a natural and unquestioned part of the educational landscape (Tyack, 1992).

In his book *Tinkering toward Utopia*, Tyack focuses on the continuing inequalities of education for young women in coeducational settings during the mid-twentieth century.

Inequality of educational opportunity based on gender was less obvious to most people in 1945 than racial or class disparities, in part because girls and boys had roughly equal access to instruction and performed at roughly similar levels. To the degree that educators paid attention to sex differences among pupils at all, they tended to worry about boys because they seemed to have more trouble learning to read, outnumbered girls in remedial classes, created more discipline problems, and dropped out of high school in somewhat greater number. One response was to try to make the schools more attractive to boys by creating sex-segregated vocational courses and tracks, by adopting textbooks attuned to the interest of boys, and by stressing competitive, male-only athletic teams (Tyack, 1995).

Needless to say, the quality of education for girls in the early twentieth century was not yet a priority in the US. Still, it continued to be generally accepted that the only way young women could be assured of receiving equal treatment was to be educated with the boys. Even within coeducational schools, girls programs received less funding than boys programs did. It was feared “Girls Only” schools would be likewise discriminated against. In spite of this, the Life Adjustment movement of the 1940s and 50s encouraged the tracking of many Latino students into single-sex vocational schools. Schools like Eli Whitney, Norman Thomas, Sarah J. Hale, Clara Barton, Mabel Dean Bacon, Washington Irving and Fashion Industries High School in NYC offered Latina girls and their parents

the option of a career oriented school in a single-sex environment. These schools reflected the traditional single–sex manual training programs (i.e., needlepoint and dress-making) that had been an integral part of the educational system in Latin America for girls over the age of 13 for centuries (NYC Annual School Report Card, 2001-2). The New York City High School Division reports that in June 1962, 24.7% of single-sex vocational school graduates were Puerto Rican as opposed to only 4.5% in academic high schools. The tracking of Latinas into low wage manual labor encouraged by these schools was problematic, but the loss of these single-sex institutions was strongly felt by the Latino community, and has not resulted in superior or more equitable options.

Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments provided Feminist activists with legal mandates to secure identical coeducation, but institutional sexism was too deeply ingrained for any real change. Consequently, even then feminists argued for single-sex schools for girls. In the 1980s issues of race, class, and gender in the school system took a back seat to a failing economy and the needs of “A Nation at Risk”. This 1983 report produced by The National Commission on Excellence in Education essentially blamed the “crisis of education” on the educational system’s attempts to address the needs of special interest groups (minority, handicapped, or women):

Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them.... That we have compromised this commitment is, upon reflection, hardly surprising, given the multitude of often conflicting demands we have placed on our Nation’s schools and

colleges. They are routinely called on to provide solutions to personal, social, and political problems that the home and other institutions either will not or cannot resolve. We must understand that these demands on our schools and colleges often exact an educational cost as well as a financial one (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Monolithic institutions that imparted a watered down euro-centric academic curriculum replaced programs/schools that had been designed to address the needs of these groups. Whatever gains had been made by the Humanistic Reform movement of the 60s and 70's, were slowly and methodically dismantled. Neoconservatives like Diane Ravitch claimed that the needs and interventions of special programs such as bilingual education, multicultural education, vocational education, and the gender equity mandates secured by Title IX distracted the public from their "progress toward higher standards" (Ravitch, 2000).

New York City vocational high schools were fully co-educationalized by the 1980s. Washington Irving High School, which served a largely Latina population, was the last to convert (1986), in spite of an excellent academic record (85 to 90% of its graduates went on to post-secondary education) and vehement protests by parents and students. However, the co-educationalizing of these schools has not resulted in gender equity.

Coeducation apparently has not been completely effective in breaking down all the barriers even after almost thirty years of Title IX enforcement. Vestiges of discrimination and sex stereotyping remain. A

recent study from New York City undeniably gives cause for concern and reflection. Researchers found that coeducational vocational schools are still identifiable and predominantly boys' or girls' and clearly reinforce updated sex-role stereotypes in their course offerings-cosmetology, medical assistance, and fashion for girls; computer repair, mechanical engineering and computer electronics for boys. The study also found that schools that are predominantly male still offer a wider selection of courses and Advanced Placement classes, while recruiting methods and school names send strong messages to students that certain programs are more appropriate for girls or boys (Salomone, 2003).

From the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s a single-sex education was only possible for the middle to upper classes, predominantly white girls. Latino parents had no choice but to enroll their daughters in coeducational public high schools. With the closing of large numbers of Catholic Schools in the early 21st century, the choices for Latinos have become even more limited.

Meanwhile, a new feminist discourse on the benefits of single-sex education was emerging in the popular arena. This discourse, from a largely middle to upper class white perspective, was based on a series of studies conducted in the 1980s and 90s indicating higher success rates at women's colleges than coeducational colleges (Tidball 1972, 73, 85, 99; Riordan, 1992; Kim and Alvarez, 1995; Bernal, 2000). These studies found that women's colleges produced almost twice as many "achievers" as coeducational schools and promoted positive career and professional outcomes for their graduates. The research

also indicated that students attending women's colleges were more likely to complete their undergraduate degrees and attend graduate school, develop strong academic and leadership skills, have a strong diversity orientation and demonstrate concern for social change:

The researchers found that as compared with similar coeducational institutions, women's colleges provided an environment that promoted a high level of academic involvement, which in turn created greater student satisfaction and success. Students believed that the institution cared about them and their learning, about civic involvement, and about multiculturalism (Salomone, 2003).

Julia Robert's film, *Mona Lisa Smile*, reflected this renewed interest in single-sex education. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, a Wellesley Graduate, describes the benefits of her own single-sex education in her recent biography, *Living History*:

What I valued most about Wellesley were the lifelong friends I made and the opportunity that a women's college afforded us to stretch our wings and minds in the ongoing journey toward self definition and identity.... The absence of male students cleared out a lot of psychic space and created a safe zone for us to eschew appearances – in every sense of the word – Monday through Friday afternoon. We focused on our studies without distraction and didn't have to worry about how we looked when we went to class (Clinton, 2003).

The New Single-Sex Movement for Minority Girls

In 1996, The Young Women's Leadership School opened its doors in Spanish Harlem. For many Latino parents it was a godsend - a public school that offered academic rigor in a single-sex environment. Diane Ravitch, who had previously criticized single-sex schools and programs, now vehemently defended the young Women's Leadership School. In an article appearing in the *Daily News* right after the school's first graduation ceremony Ravitch, states,

When the school was first launched, it was the center of a national controversy about single-sex education. The critics attacked the school relentlessly in the national media, threatening court action to close it down. The New York Civil Liberties Union and National Organization for Women claimed that the school was segregated by gender and would foster "separate but equal" education. As recently as last week, officials at NOW insisted that the school "distracted" the Board of Education from reforming the rest of the public school system. Yet there was the elegant graduation ceremony for 32 seniors at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And guess what? The critics were wrong! The sky didn't fall, the girls did not get a second-class education, and this little school for 300 girls in grades 7 through 12 did not prevent the Board of Education from whatever else it planned to do...The young women were making history, for they

were the first students to graduate from a single-sex public school in this city since the 1970s, when the last one closed in the dubious name of equity (2000).

Having all but forgotten her own critique of single-sex education in the 80s, she goes on to address an appeal directly to the School's Chancellor, Harold O. Levy, "How about opening a single-sex school for girls and boys in every school district? As the Young Women's Leadership School shows, nothing succeeds like success."

The success of this school has prompted the opening of several single-sex schools in New York City. It has also prompted rigorous debate and discussion. Proponents of same-sex education include such philosophically opposed parties as Diane Ravitch and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Opponents are equally powerful, and include the National Organization for Women, the American Association of University Women, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Part of the reason for the controversy is that many of the benefits of single-sex education, increased self-esteem, development of leadership qualities, increased opportunity for same-sex bonding, are very difficult to measure quantitatively. In addition, because the students in single-sex schools are a self-selected population, it is difficult to ascertain whether the benefits are attributed to a same-sex education or simply to the quality of the students. The study of single-sex education for Latinas is very complex, as it must take into account gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic and cultural factors as these intersect in an educational setting. However, research on the affects of single-sex education for any ethnic/racial group, other than

white, is practically non-existent. And, as it is a relatively new concept, long-range studies on the affects of this new type of single-sex education for Latinas are unavailable.

Some Crucial Questions

The United States has a long historical tradition of coeducation. The father of American education, John Dewey, argued for equal coeducation as the ideal for a truly democratic society. He believed that separate could never be equal, and he sincerely aspired to full educational equality for women. Unfortunately studies and statistics have shown that in the case of gender, coeducation has not guaranteed equality. Title IX was flawed in that it offered an educational solution to a problem that is societal and cannot be fully resolved within the schools. Until women achieve full equality in American society the schools will continue to replicate these biases and inequalities within our coeducational classrooms. If *Brown versus Board of Education* has taught us anything it is that there are no simple answers to the problem of discrimination.

The No Child Left Behind Act included a bipartisan amendment sponsored by Senators Kay Bailey (R-Texas) and Hillary Clinton (D-New York) calling for single-sex schools and programs as one of twenty-seven “innovative assistance programs.” In the spring of 2002 the Department of Education announced its intention to loosen Title IX guidelines to allow for single-sex education” (Stabiner, 2002). Single-sex schools offer an alternative that appeals to many parents. Understanding the history of single-sex education in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean helps to explain this appeal for Latinos.

However, not all single-sex schools are created equally. Differing school philosophies and ideologies make for vastly different educational experiences. In many cases single-

sex schools focus on gender issues at the expense of more critical issues of race, class and ethnicity. The philosophy/ideology of The Young Women's Leadership School, for example, tends to be euro-centric, feminist, and color/culture blind. In aspiring to combine an idealized image of the elite "academy" with the assimilationalist mission of the city school, it leaves absolutely no room for the nurturing of cultural diversity and self-determination. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5. Finally, it is imperative that we consider the affects that the loosening of Title IX might have on the issue of segregated education. Might not this legal mandate allowing for segregated schooling, on the basis of gender, pave the way for other types of segregation in our public school system?

Chapter 3:

Discourses of Power

We live at a time in which the responsibilities of citizens transcend national borders. The old modernist notions of center and margin, home and exile, and familiar and strange are breaking apart. Geographic, cultural, and ethnic borders are giving way to shifting configurations of power, community, space, and time. Citizenship can no longer ground itself in forms of Eurocentrism and the language of colonialism. New spaces, relationships and identities have to be created which allow us to move across borders, to engage difference and other-ness as part of a discourse of justice...(Giroux, 1997).

Theoretical Framework & Methodology

The theoretical framework that I employed in my research is a Foucauldian inspired critical discourse analysis (CDA). I chose this framework because I fully believe in the constitutive power of discourse in shaping social reality.

Whereas other qualitative methodologies work to understand or interpret social reality as it exists, discourse analysis endeavors to uncover the way in which it is produced.... It examines how language constructs phenomena, not how it reflects and reveals it. In other words, discourse analysis views discourse as constitutive of the social-world-not a route to it-and assumes that the world cannot be known separately from discourse (Phillips and Hardy, 2002).

This is, of course, not a new concept. The opening chapter of the Bible, the most widely read historical document in the world, states, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God”. What clearer way to express this powerfully creative aspect of discourse than to deify it? Critical discourse analysis is used throughout this research in analyzing the discourse of the relevant texts, the media, and my research subjects.

Foucault speaks of the process by which discourse shapes social reality and elaborates upon the power dynamics involved in the production of this “Regime of Truth”.

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; ...the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault seemed most interested in the issue of power and how some discourses come to prevail over others. He believed it was incumbent upon intellectuals to use discourse analysis as a tool to both critique and “unveil” these hidden power systems in our society. The primary method he employed to achieve this purpose was the genealogy, which he defined as “ a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc. without having to make reference to a subject”

(Foucault, 1977). Rather than focus on a subject, genealogies focus on the emergence or reemergence of an event, without the usual historical focus on origins:

Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form on all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations-or conversely, the complete reversals –the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents (Foucault, 1984).

Foucault does not specifically elaborate on how this is to be done rather he encourages a “critical, questioning disposition” (p. 340). In this chapter, the genealogical method is used to examine the emergence of single-sex education for Latinas in two separate epistemes – the period prior to the implementation of Title IX, which effectively terminated public single-sex education for Latinas, and the period leading up to the loosening of Title IX guidelines to allow for the resurgence of single-sex education for

Latinas. Emergence refers to “the moment of arising”. Foucault states, “These developments may appear as a culmination, but they are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations.... Emergence is always produced through a particular stage of forces” (p. 184). This study will partially “unveil” the discourses and “regimes of truth” that allowed for these legal changes/mandates to become normalized and then later institutionalized. Through the ethnographic method, I will analyze the effects of these separate forms of SSE on Latinas, their families, and their communities. In the final analysis I hope to problematize the “taken for granted” assumption that contemporary academic single-sex education for Latinas is in fact an improvement over the vocational single-sex education of the 60s and 70s.

CDA is ideal for this type of research, as it is not just enacted as a theory but also a methodology and even political ideology. It combines “ ‘solidarity with the oppressed’ with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power....That is, CDA is biased- and proud of it” (Van Dijk, 2001). CDA also distinguishes itself from many other types of qualitative research in that it plays an active and emancipatory role in advocating for subordinate or marginalized groups and actually works to change existing power relations. “CDA follows a different and critical approach to problems, since it endeavors to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden, and thereby to derive results which are of practical relevance” (Meyer 2001). In order to find the answers to the questions I have raised earlier in this study, several discourses were examined and deconstructed. The discursive units (data) included the following and are sprinkled throughout this work:

1. *Institutional Statistics* – New York State Department of Education Annual Report Cards from 2001/2002 to 2003/2004 for the school/s researched (chap. 4).
2. *Historical (archival) texts* (including governmental policy statements, legal documents and media reports)- data on single-sex education for Latinas pre and post Title IX (chap. 2 & 3).
3. *Ethnographic research* (3 single-sex schools in NYC)– Student voices (individual & focus group interviews/surveys), parent/community voices (individual/community interviews), institutional voices (teacher interviews). (chaps. 4, 5, and 6)

Dispositif of SSE for Latinas (Figure 1): Dispositif refers to the practices, knowledges, power relations, and discourses surrounding the emergence of an “event” described by Foucault as a, “reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it... the entry of a “masked” other (88). For the purposes of this study the event in question refers to the emergence of academic single-sex education for Latina girls. Foucault further described the construction of the dispositif as the process of “isolating a cluster of power relations sustaining, and being sustained by certain types of knowledge” (Foucault, 1980).

Figure 1: Dispositif of Single–Sex Education	
Pre-Title IX (1960s)	Post Title IX (1990s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic (vocational training for the masses-CED) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic (Leadership training for the upwardly mobile)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal (The Bilingual Ed Act of 1972, The Vocational Ed. Act of 1963, TitleIX-1972) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal (2002 Amendment to the No Child left Behind Act-allowing for gender resegregation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social (self determination and citizenship) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social (Class equity)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative (Bilingual Education, integration, and culturally inclusive curriculum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative (Eurocentric curriculum, re-segregation, and isolationism)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy statements /governmental mandates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public discourse/Mass Media

The 60s – Assimilation into American Society

The problem of educating Latino youth in the 1960s was framed largely as an economic one. According to the Committee for Economic Development's policy statement for 1968, Latino youth needed a "functional education" that enabled them to enter the labor force and become productive citizens (vocational education). "We stand firmly on the principle that education is the instrument by which the poor and disadvantaged must enter the Mainstream of American economic and social life." CED also strongly advocated for a racially integrated public school system and believed it should be given "top priority." They charged that racial discrimination was "the Nation's most important single educational problem" and that school integration was "basic to the more complex solutions to urban educational dilemmas.' By the same token the CED asserted, "In providing urban youth with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful careers in our technologically based society, the schools must respect the group values of ethnic minorities. Minority values deserve preservation, and motivation for school success is strengthened by the self-esteem and aspiration for achievement that arise in part from pride in one's inheritance" (p. 17). The major obstacles to achieving these goals were seen as linguistic and cultural and the major issues of contestation were assimilation versus acculturation. Latinos, from various countries, were well aware of the threat to their cultural identity and joined forces in their struggle for self-determination and cultural inclusivity in the educational environment. The governmental response was the 1972 Bilingual Education act, which, on paper at least, was to provide not just second

language training but a truly bilingual/bicultural education for Latino students (Puerto Rican Association for National Affairs, 1972).

Vocational education in the 60s and 70s was for the most part segregated by sex and was problematic in reinforcing societal and cultural stereotyped gender roles. Girls were trained in Nursing, secretarial skills, fashion, and even cosmetology. Boys were trained in auto mechanics and aeronautics. These schools, however, managed to graduate a large majority of Latino students (Morris High School, NYC and The Migration Division –Department of Labor, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, 1961) in New York City and made it possible for many of these students to enter college and pursue an advanced degree. In spite of the Brown versus Board of Education ruling, which stated that separate education could never be equal, the majority of the population did not relate these legal mandates to gender. That is until Title IX came on the scene in 1972 and forced the closing of all single-sex public schools in the United States. In the decade that followed, cultural/gender issues were buried under the standards mania that gripped the United States as a result of the pressing needs of "A Nation at Risk". This document single-handedly managed to trivialize the needs of all minority and special interest groups and relegated these issues to the back burner and at least, on the surface, single-sex education seemed to disappear from the American educational landscape.

Single-sex Education in the Post Title IX Era

Despite appearances to the contrary, single-sex education never fully disappeared. While the daughters of America's lower income immigrants were forced into

co-educational public schools, in the name of justice and equity, middle and upper class private educational institutions continued to offer the daughters of the wealthy the same elite quality single-sex education they always had:

They broke down countless educational barriers for young women - teaching “male” subjects like geometry and Greek, cultivating girls’ physical and athletic selves, and preparing young women for college.... At the same time there was a thick thread of conservatism running through the history of girls’ schools. Parents often chose girls’ schools to shelter their daughters rather than to challenge them. Catering to wealthy families, most independent girls’ schools prided themselves for a long time on their social exclusivity—no Jews, Catholics, or girls of color need apply (Debare, 2004).

These special institutions included parochial schools that catered to an upwardly mobile Latino population. The percentage of minorities enrolled in Catholic Schools rose from 10.8 percent in 1970 to 26.1 percent in 2002 (Debare, 2004). The discourse of SSE also continued and proliferated (see chapter 2 above). Researchers and scholars conducted numerous studies on the benefits of single-sex education from a largely white middle/upper class perspective. These studies clearly showed that single-sex schools promoted higher success rates for their graduates. However, more specific studies examining the effects of SSE on Latinas were never conducted. Between 1991 and 2000,

more than thirty new private girl's schools opened their doors and enrollment at existing girl's schools grew by 15% (Debare, 2004).

The new wave of Single-sex Education

In the meantime, Anne Rubinstein Tisch, formerly a correspondent for NBC News, quietly set about trying to open up a new public school for Latina girls. It would be the first single-sex public school in NYC since the closing of Washington Irving High School in 1986 and the first new all girls' school to open in the United States in over a century. Accomplishing this goal would be no easy task. Tisch first approached Diane Ravitch, a prominent historian of education and former assistant secretary of education in the administration of the first President Bush, for support. then she sought out a legal advisor, but not just any legal advisor. Rosemary Salomone, a professor of Law at St. John's University, Chair of the Education Law Section of the Association of American Law Schools, and a leading authority on single-sex education (widely quoted on the topic in the National press and a featured commentator on PBS and National Public radio), assured her that Title IX would not prove an impediment to her "project". In addition to offering their support privately, both these media savvy women also began to pave the way for the opening of Ms. Tisch's new school by publicly coming out in defense of SSE. Ms Tisch also found allies at The Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank that had been a strong advocate of vouchers (Debare, 2004).

The popular press suddenly presented the discourse surrounding the education of Latinas in New York City quite differently. Language and culture were no longer the "stated" obstacles to the teaching of now 2nd and 3rd generation Latino youth. Instead the

problems were those associated to inner city life – pregnancy, poverty, and drug/alcohol use. In Tisch’s own words, “Latina girls dropped out because they got pregnant” (Salomone, 2003). Hence, it logically follows that if these girls could be removed from these “damaging” environments, they could, in essence, be saved. It now appeared commonsensical to the general population that prior initiatives such as the promotion of Bilingual education could not solve the Latino problem. Instead, the answer was full assimilation into American society and this could now be achieved by offering Latina girls the same option that had always existed for upper class white girls – single-sex education. California Senator Dianne Feinstein argued on the Senate floor, “why should not a parent have the choice of whether to send a youngster to a single-sex elementary school if that parent believes that youngster could learn better in that environment? It seems to me something that public education ought to offer.” This same discourse of class justice and equity was rearticulated by noted journalist Karen Stabiner in the concluding sentence of her previously cited book *All Girls: Single Sex Education and Why It Matters*, “Why should Diana Perez be denied what the rich girls had? No reason at all.” And Salomone closes her book with the following statement: “If equality is truly a fundamental goal of education, then public schools should afford students across the economic spectrum, and with potentially greater personal and social returns, the same choice and opportunity historically enjoyed by those with the means to purchase them in the market of private schooling” (Salomone, 2003). In a sense this became the rallying cry for a new wave of single-sex education for minorities, disseminated by white elite women.

However, what the media did not articulate was the fact that this new SSE was selective and was only offered to a few. The Young women's Leadership School, and other such academies that have sprung up in its wake, offer a handful of minority girls the opportunity of a single sex education, and then proceed to isolate them not just from the opposite sex but also from their home, community, and cultural group. As my ethnographic research indicates, the curriculum at many of these institutions is euro-centric and feminist, and "leadership" training strongly encourages the girls to leave their communities to attend largely white universities. Freire describes this type of selective "leadership" training as ultimately divisive and alienating:

The same divisive effect occurs in connection with the so-called "leadership training courses,".... These courses are based on the naïve assumption that one can promote the community by training its leaders-as if it were the parts that promote the whole and not the whole which, in being promoted, promotes the parts....As soon as they complete the course and return to the community with resources they did not formerly possess, they either use these resources to control the submerged and dominated consciousness of their comrades, or they become strangers in their own communities and their former leadership position is thus threatened... .The oppressors do not favor promoting the community as a whole, but rather selected leaders. The latter course, by preserving a state of alienation, hinders the emergence of consciousness and critical

intervention in a total reality. And without this critical intervention, it is always difficult to achieve the unity of the oppressed as a class (Freire, 1968).

DeToqueville also referred to the use of this divisive political strategy as a tactic of the French revolution. He stated, “Unless the ruling class (Aristocracy) finds a way of assimilating new blood from the lower classes into their ranks, they risk alienating the populace and inciting rebellion and ultimately a regime change” (De Tocqueville, 1888).

Why Latinas?

The renewed interest in assimilating Latinos in the 1990s is not surprising when one considers that in 2000 Latinos became the largest minority group in the United States. It is estimated that by 2050 Latinos will actually outnumber “whites” as the new majority. The political power inherent in these numbers is staggering. With this in mind it becomes politically expedient to incorporate this growing group into the American “majority” so as to neutralize their potential threat to the present socio-political structure. The use of “disciplinary practices”, described by Foucault as “a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior” (182), to maintain control of the Latino body now had to be reevaluated and readjusted.

Puerto Ricans, one of the first Latino groups to arrive in NYC, were originally recruited in the 1920s for their labor. In many cases their passage to New York City was paid for by businesses and corporations. Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and more recently

Dominicans and South Americans, have long provided the low-paid unskilled labor that New York City needs to function. They have traditionally done the work that no one else will do. According to La Raza's August 2003, Statistical Brief, *The Latino Work Force*, Latinos constitute nearly one-third of employees in the service industry (maids, housekeepers, etc.) and are paid at or below minimum wage. In addition, "nearly half (46.4%) of Hispanic workers are concentrated in the three lowest paying occupations (service occupations; operators, fabricators, and laborers; and farming, forestry, and fishing occupations)" (Breitfeld, 2003). The failure of the American educational system to retain and graduate Latino youth has virtually insured that these statistics will not change, and consequently has doomed Latino youth to a future of poverty. But now rather than perceiving Latino bodies simply and primarily as a source of cheap labor, it has become imperative to the existing sociopolitical structure to sway the minds and souls of Latinos and to incorporate them into a one cohesive political voice. And what better way to do this than through the "normalizing" practices of education.

Modern disciplinary society operates fundamentally through analogous strategies of normalization. The 'Judges of normality', in the figures of the social worker, the teacher, the doctor are everywhere assessing and diagnosing each individual according to a normalizing set of assumptions, or what Foucault calls the 'carceral network of power-knowledge'.

Individuals are controlled through the power of the norm and this power is effective because it is relatively invisible (McNay, 1994).

Consequently, the discourse of Latinos as unassimilatable “involuntary minorities” has gone underground and their marginality is now presented as a social problem in need of redress. In 2000 the Census bureau changed the language of the census to encourage Latinos to classify themselves as white thereby nullifying their political power as “people of color” and isolating them from other minority groups. Their emergence as a now assimilatable “population” at this particular time in history can better be understood by Foucault’s definition of governmentality or “bio-power”.

Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of “bio-power”.... With regard to discipline, this development was embodied in institutions such as the army and the schools, and in reflections on tactics, apprenticeship, education and the nature of societies.... As for population controls, one notes the emergence of demography, the evaluation of the relationship between resources and inhabitants, the construction of tables analyzing wealth and its circulation...They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony (Foucault, 1984).

A further analysis of how Foucault's theoretical understanding of "disciplinary powers" is applicable to the pedagogical practices employed at these three schools, and the resulting educational outcomes of Latinas, will be included in my final chapter.

Reflections on Myself as a Tool of Research

This genealogical work has been in many ways a journey of self-discovery for me. I do not claim objectivity. In fact, I am deeply implicated in this study on many levels. I myself am a Puerto Rican Latina, a mother of four Latinas, and an educator of countless Latinas. This "insider" status has proven problematic in a myriad ways including the "taken for granted" assumptions about being Latina that even I was not aware I was harboring. And yet, during the ethnographic portion of the research, which I relate in chapters 4, 5, and 6, I have been made painfully aware of my "outsider" status. It has been a cause of deep reflection and distress for me. I am a Latina, but I grew up in a different era – a time when our identity as a group was constantly being challenged. In the 60s and 70s Latinos, of all countries, bonded together in solidarity in order to survive as a cohesive whole.

I was raised by a single welfare mother in the worst neighborhoods in Brooklyn. In spite of her circumstances my mother was fiercely proud of her Latina identity. She passed this on to me. As a result of my light skin, full assimilation into white America would have been an easy option for me.

However as a result of my upbringing that possibility was never even considered. One of my major challenges in this study has been to resist the tendency to make judgments against those Latinas who have chosen this option. Understanding and empathizing with the assimilationist point of view is crucial for me in reaching a sense of coherence in this study. An ethnographic methodology is of critical importance in achieving this. “Ethnographers set out to show how social action in one world makes sense from the point of view of another. Such work requires an intensive personal involvement, an abandonment of traditional scientific control, an improvisational style to meet situations not of the researchers making and an ability to learn from a long series of mistakes (Agar, 1986).”

A primary objective of my ethnographic research has been to examine the impact of different types of single-sex schools on Latina girls and their families. For the purposes of this study, my focus has been primarily on The Young Women’s Leadership School. The philosophy/ideology of TYWLS is, for the most part, feminist, Eurocentric and color/culture blind. My initial assumption was that the more culturally familiar and community/family oriented the school, the greater the overall level of student satisfaction and achievement. As my study progressed I came to realize how overly simplistic and naïve this assumption was. Not all Latina girls or their families are interested or invested in cultural or community maintenance. This has been a blind spot in my own thinking as a researcher that emerged as a result of my “insider” status. In fact I would venture a guess that the majority of the girls (and families) who choose to come to this school do so because they too have incorporated a “cultural deficit model.”

They consciously choose TYWLS because what this school promotes, full assimilation to American society, is exactly what they think they need in order to succeed in American society. However, for girls who are more firmly grounded in their Latina culture I believe the curriculum and philosophy this school promotes becomes a ground for contestation and conflict. “In this version of liberal pedagogy, there is little recognition that what is legitimated as privileged school experience often represents the endorsement of a particular way of life, signified as superior by the ‘revenge’ that befalls those who do not share its attributes” (Giroux, 1997). As the research participants related to me in the second interview (chap. 5) many girls who do graduate from TYWLS do not, in the long run, “succeed”. And in fact the most recent school report card for TYWLS shows a decrease in the graduation rate from 97% in 2002 to 85.7% in 2004. In addition SAT scores in both the verbal and math were lower on average than those in city schools and only 35% of 2004 graduates went on to 4 year colleges as opposed to slightly over 50% of city school graduates.

Framing my research as the genealogy of an “event” allowed me the distance to understand the power dynamics involved in this ongoing historical dialectic between “oppressed and oppressor”. I have come to see assimilation, not as an end in itself, but as a temporary and strategic negotiation – a strategy, and as such a tool of power – not powerlessness. Consequently I have been forced to reexamine my own initial perception of the passivity and victimization of the “oppressed” subjects (Latinas girls) as a powerful illusion - one to which, as a consequence of my own positionality, I was

completely susceptible. By essentializing these girls as passive subjects, I was doing, exactly what I had so critiqued in others. When I felt that the girls were being “victimized”, by the same system that had victimized me as a young Latina in this country, my objectivity vanished. The more involved I became in trying to legitimize my own claims of victimization, the less I heard the actual voices of the girls. Michelle Fine describes this process in “Working the Hyphens: Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research”:

Fixed immutable ethnic (gendered, etc) identities are thereby inscribed. A picture of a homogeneous culturally dominant group is pitted against a picture of an equally homogenous group of outsiders on the periphery. The internal oppositional nature of ethnic and cultural life is thereby minimized. A fixed stereotypical picture of an isolated minority group is pitted against a “coherent white-American male power structure” etc. The image of overlapping, conflicting, de-centered circles of ethnic (gendered, etc) identities is never considered.... By creating flat caricatures we may indeed be undermining an opportunity for ourselves as social researchers to “come clean” about the contradictory stances, politics, perspectives, and histories we import to our work. Rendering fluid and not fixed our constructions of Selves and Others, and the narratives produced as qualitative research, can reveal our partialities and pluralities (Fine, 2000).

This I believe is one of the very real dangers of being what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as an “Outsider within” an organic or “indigenous” researcher, as described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith:

Many indigenous researchers have struggled individually to engage with disconnections that are apparent between the demands of research on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other indigenous communities, with whom they share lifelong relationships on the other side. There are a number of ethical, cultural, political, and personal issues that can present special difficulties for indigenous researchers (Smith, 1999).

Consequently, the research became less about exploring their reality than about fitting my own preconceived notions. I had to acknowledge to myself that they were not me. They had to negotiate their identities in a new global world far different than mine had been at sixteen - a world of “struggles within groups, movements of people across time and space, internet communications, extralocal networks, consumerism, and the mass media” (Eisenhardt, 1998). I had to learn to listen to their multiple voices and not just my own echo. More importantly for my growth as a researcher, as a result of this process, I had to learn to distance myself from my subjects and develop “strong objectivity” as defined by Sandra Harding in order to “work the hyphens” of Latina identity.

And so my genealogical research brought me full circle. As I continued the ethnographic portion of my research I came back to the very same question that I had started out with. In short, are single-sex schools the best option for Latina girls? But now I understood that this was about much more than grades and college acceptances. This was about the struggle for human hearts and minds – the battle for the human soul.

This real, noncorporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. On this reality reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out; psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc; on it have been built scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism. But let there be no misunderstanding; it is not that a real man, the object of knowledge, philosophical reflection, or technical intervention, has been substituted for the soul, the illusion of the theologians. The man described for us, who we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body (Foucault, 1984).

Chapter 4

Assimilation and the Single-Sex High School

Researchers do not know for certain whether the benefits derive from factors unique to single-sex programs, or whether these factors also exist or can be reproduced in coeducational settings. Studies or anecdotes suggesting a correlation between same-sex programs and positive educational outcomes have no meaning unless an effort was made to control for variables such as socioeconomic status of the students, selectivity of admissions, greater resources invested in the program, and smaller class size. Indeed, without controlling for those variables, one could make the case for separating students based on any identity characteristic (NOW, 2002).

Context

In my research, I looked at three separate and very different single-sex schools in order to design against the research confounds identified above by NOW, and to determine whether in fact single-sex schools are as beneficial for Latinas as the media and researchers imply. I chose three urban New York City schools that have a large Latina population but vary in terms of philosophy, structure, size, selectivity criteria, curriculum, and socio-economic status (SES) of parents.

The first and newest of these is the Young Women's Leadership School, a high school specifically designed to meet the needs of minority (mostly Latina) girls. The school is strategically located in Spanish Harlem, a largely Latino lower/middle income neighborhood in upper Manhattan. It was founded in 1996 by Ann Rubenstein Tisch

(noted journalist and philanthropist). According to an article in the *Daily News* by Diane Ravitch, “Ms. Ann Tisch wanted an all-girls school because she knew that the drop-out rate among Hispanic and African-American students was high and that many minority girls left school because they became pregnant. She wanted to create a girl’s school because she believed that minority girls would focus on their academic work more if they were not distracted by the presence of boys.” Even though her statements reflect a limited and essentialist understanding of the complex socio-economic factors that underscore the dropout problem, her solution seems to have been right on target. The Young Women’s Leadership Academy has been very successful and is now considered a role model for other same-sex institutions. The 2002 graduating class numbered 232, over 91% of its original cohort. Of these girls a total of 97 % went on to college, in comparison to the City’s average of 65% (New York City Public Schools Division of Assessment and Accountability 2001-2002 Annual School Report).

Fashion Industries High School (the largest of the schools in the sample) is located on 24th Street and 7th Avenue, in the heart of Manhattan’s Garment District. Fashion Industries High School is one of the few remaining public vocational schools in the city, a relic of the 1920s Social Efficiency movement and the 1940’s-50’s Life Adjustment (vocational) Training Movement for minorities. The Principal’s Statement, as quoted in the 2001-2002 Annual School Report states:

The only high school on the East Coast with complete programs in fashion-related fields of design, art and marketing.... Though a large school with a variety of offerings, we have a small school perspective

whereby we identify and nurture the talents of all our students through our specialized major.... The excellence of our vocational majors is paralleled by our academic performance.

Fashion Industries High School has a student population of 1,674 students, of which almost 60% are Hispanic, and over 30% are African-American. Only 6% of the students are white. The school has a graduation rate of 74%, which though low in relation to the other two schools researched is high compared to the city's overall graduation rate of 54%. The School's Regent's performance for 2002 was exceptional for a city high school, with a passing rate of 87.4 in English and 76.5 in Math Sequential 1. According to the school's own Annual report for 2002 – 2003, 81.6 of the school's graduates went on to college.

Although the school is no longer completely single-sex (92.4 female – 7.6% male population), the fashion design classes I observed at the school were single-sex. This school offers the unique advantage of a de-facto single-sex environment free of the self-selectivity research confound found in the other single-sex institutions. These girls are not actively seeking out a single-sex environment when they apply and are often surprised to find themselves in one upon entering the school. The one statistic that greatly concerned me was the post-high school plans of the 2002 graduates. According to the school's Annual report for 2001-2002, only 51.8 % of the graduates mentioned college in their future plans. This contradicted with the school's own annual report (mentioned above) provided to me by the school's college counselor. I attempted to meet with the

principal in order to ascertain the reason for this contradiction in numbers, but she repeatedly put me off and cancelled our meetings.

Notre Dame is a private parochial high school presently located in Greenwich Village in Manhattan. It has an enrollment of 250 female students, of which over 50% are Hispanic. The school was founded in 1912 by the Sisters of St. Ursula. Education at Notre Dame and

...has been characterized by close, family-like relationships between student and faculty. The educational program at Notre Dame is college preparatory and directed toward the development of each student as a whole person. We seek to meet the needs of each student intellectually, physically, socially and spiritually.

The school's most recent graduation rates were 93% of which 100% went on to four-year universities. In 2002, 90% of its students scored over 90% on the Spanish Regents, 100% passed the biology regents, and 95% passed World History. Notre Dame had the most clubs and extra curricular activities of the three schools I researched. The clubs include art, chess, chorus, computer, dance, drama, literary, math/science, student council and yearbook, as well as various athletic offerings. Additionally, all students are required to do 250 hours of community service, as opposed to 60 at TYWLS.

According to the New York State Department of Education's Report Cards for 2001 – 2002, the graduation rates, college acceptance rates, testing rates, and college acceptance rates at all these schools were higher, on average, than they were for Latinas

in co-educational schools. My research, however, will deconstruct the organizational and philosophical design differences of these separate single-sex school types in order to better ascertain the factors that contribute to this success and to determine whether in fact they are a positive and viable option for Latina teens.

Initial Research Assumptions

My initial assumption was that Latina girls in all three single-sex schools would perform better academically than in co-educational schools. However, I also assumed that there would be differences in both achievement and satisfaction levels based on the school type. The more culturally familiar and community/family oriented the school, the greater the overall level of satisfaction with the entire school experience. As my research progressed I continually revisited these assumptions and adapted them significantly. My final chapter will explore the extent to which these were born out.

Research Sample

Individuals included in the study included two grade 10 cluster groups and one grade 11 cluster group (classes) chosen at random from the three NYC urban single-sex schools described. All the research subjects were, of course, female, ranging in ages from 15 to 17. All were of Latino descent (either from the Spanish speaking Caribbean or Mexico) on at least one side of their family tree. My focus group and case study subjects were Latina on both sides and were all first generation, born and raised in NYC. Their families were of lower middle to upper-middle class. In order to determine levels of success, I looked at grade point averages, college acceptances, and satisfaction with the entire

school experience, as shared to me by both students and their parents. All the names used in this study were changed to protect the privacy of the research subjects.

Ethnographic Methodology

The methodology I employed in collecting the ethnographic data was mixed, comparative, and non-experimental. I used surveys, individual and focus group interviews, journaling and very limited participant observation of classes. My ethnographic research was mostly done outside of the schools, as all three schools were very resistant to allowing a researcher inside the school building. Only one principal actually granted me permission to work inside the school and this permission was rescinded less than three months later. The reasons for this reluctance varied, but for the most part had to do with fear of misrepresentation, especially regarding “very sensitive” cultural and race issues. I encountered quite a bit of this resistance as my research progressed and as my accounts will illustrate. As a result I had to repeatedly fall back on my own tenaciousness, resourcefulness and creativity to complete this research. In December of 2004, I conducted observations and surveys at one class at each of the three schools. The observations were made possible only by the kindness and generosity of the teachers who graciously invited me into their classrooms. The survey was voluntary and, on average, 10 to 15 girls from each class participated.

Observations and Surveys

At TYWLS I observed an 11th grade Humanities class comprised of 23 students, of which 16 were Latina and the remaining 7 were African-American. The lesson of the day

revolved around the concept of “dreams” as portrayed in the novel *Death of a Salesman*. I was very impressed by both the quality of the lesson and the instructor, Ms. G. The overall tone of the class was lively and boisterous. All the girls appeared to be actively engaged in the discussion and the activities, and all the girls were busily taking notes. Upon further examination I observed that there were some differences in levels of participation based on ethnicity. The African American students were the most assertive, calling out responses and engaging in “crosstalk” with other students. About half of the Latina students (mostly Puerto Ricans and Dominican) joined the discussion after about 15 – 20 minutes. Their involvement was somewhat more restrained. They were more likely to raise their hands and wait to be called upon. The remaining Latina girls (mostly Mexican and South American) never joined in the discussion. However, I did not perceive these differences to be as much cultural as social. The African American girls, as a group, are the most familiar with and cognizant of the expectations and acceptable behaviors of the American educational system.

In the U.S., K-12 education emphasizes verbal interaction, both among students and between the teacher and the students, as a cornerstone of the learning process. In general, students are encouraged to ask questions and share their opinions on the topic at hand. In fact, they are expected to do so, and part of their academic evaluation is based on their class participation. The U.S. classroom is typically a much less rigid environment than classrooms in other countries.... They (students) may speak out more, and in a seemingly more freestyle fashion, than you may

be accustomed to seeing, Of course, much of this also depends on the individual teacher's management style. (Diaz & Oaks, 2000)

The most recent immigrants, unfamiliar and possibly uncomfortable with the "American" learning style, were the most disengaged from the lesson, and their participation was limited to note taking. It is important to keep in mind that limited English proficiency may also play a role in discouraging verbal participation in recently arrived immigrants. Further research is necessary to determine how these limitations affect the academic achievement and "dropoutism" of these particular students.

Afterwards I surveyed the Latina students. The survey provided me with background information on the students and enabled me to examine their feelings about single-sex education in general, and TYWLS in particular. A total of 16 Latina girls from Ms. G's English class participated in the survey. The majority of the girls (14) were 16 years of age, Catholic (11), with a grade point average of 75 to 85% (10), and almost all (15) planned on attending college after graduation. The decision to attend TYWLS had, for most of the girls, been made by their parents (10) and initially only about 50% of the girls felt positively about this choice. However, the majority of the girls (13) now felt good about the school (figure 2). In addition, when asked what aspect of the school they considered the most positive, the responses were split 7 to 7 between quality of education and relationships with staff. Culture was last on the list at TYWLS (figure 3). The results of the survey are presented below. As an addendum to the information presented in the graphs, twelve of the students rated single-sex schools as superior to co-educational

schools. The most popular reasons given were (in order of preference): less distractions (boys), more opportunities to succeed, and equal treatment.

Background Survey Results for TWYLS Students (Figure 2)			
Hispanic Ethnicity	Puerto Rican	PR/other-mixed	Other
	8	5	3
Religion	Catholic	Other	None
	11	1	4
Ages	Sixteen	Seventeen	Eighteen
	14	1	1
Grade Point Average	70- 75	75- 85	Don't know
	2	10	4
Planning on college	Yes	No	?
	15	0	1
Who made decision to attend TWYLS	Parent	Student	Collaborative
	10	3	3
Initial Feelings about TWYLS	Positive	Negative	Mixed
	8	3	5
Present feelings regarding TWYLS	Positive	Negative	Mixed
	13	0	3

Aspects of TWYLS Education Students Regarded as Most Positive (Fig. 3) (Listed in order of Preference)	
1	Quality of Education
1	Relationships with Staff and Administrative Personnel
2	Relationships with classmates
3	School Structure and discipline
4	Extra-curricular activities
5	Cultural and/or religious aspect of educational experience

Next, I surveyed a double period Fashion Design class taught by Ms. M. at Fashion Industries High School. The class was comprised of 20 female students of which 14 were Hispanic, 5 were African-American, and one was Asian. The atmosphere of the class was very informal and relaxed. The students freely circulated around the room assisting one another and working in groups. The assignment for the first period was completing designs for baby rompers. The activity was self-directed with the teacher acting expressly as facilitator. All the students were genuinely engaged in the activity and I observed many instances of cooperative learning. This type of learning allows the students to create learning communities and social ties with their classmates.

Many of the students I spoke to expressed deep satisfaction with the program. They described it as “calming”, “comfortable”, and “homey”. One Latina student described the program as a continuation of a family tradition begun by her grandmother in her country. Others mentioned feeling as if the teacher was their “mother” and the other students their “sisters”, and indeed I observed a great deal of physical affection both toward the teacher and each other.

During the second period, one of the students presented a report on a famous fashion designer from her country. The other students listened attentively and were respectful and supportive. I observed no instances of unequal or preferential treatment from the teacher toward the students. She praised them consistently, encouraging their efforts and offering guidance when needed. I found the class reminiscent of vocational education classes that I myself had taken in junior high school in the 70s. I recalled the calming feeling of working with my hands and the feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction upon

successfully completing an article of clothing on my own. I also recalled moments of closeness learning to sew at home with my own mother. This program in many ways offers an extension of the cultural practices of many Latino communities, where women join together to sew and weave for the household. I found myself feeling nostalgic for those times. I was somewhat concerned though with the reinforcing of traditional and stereotypical gendered behaviors. For instance, whenever the room became too noisy the teacher would calmly say “ young ladies do not raise their voices” and the room would quiet down. I was also very surprised by the constant grooming that went on in the class. Girls were arranging each other’s hair and chitchatting about boyfriends while looking over fashion magazines.

The results of the survey I collected from these students are presented in the following charts. I surveyed a total of 14 Latinas from Ms. M’s Fashion Design class (figure 4). Of these, the majority was also Catholic (7), but Protestants came in a very close second (5). The average grade point average here ranged from 65 to 85%. All the girls in this group planned on attending college after graduation and the majority (12) made the decision to attend this school on their own. The majority had mixed feelings about the school their first year (10) but now most girls (13) felt positively about the school. In addition, when asked what aspect of the school they considered most positive (figure 5), the large majority indicated relationships with other students, with quality of education coming in a distant second. As an addendum to the information presented in the charts, all the girls interviewed expressed positive feelings toward the school/program. Five expressed feelings of love for the program/school and four were merely satisfied. When asked to rate the program in relation to coeducational schools, eight claimed single-sex

programs were better, five felt there was no difference, and one student felt single-sex schools were worse than coeducational schools. Reasons given for preferring this program to coeducational programs included; behavior of girls (less attitude, gossip, jealousy), more opportunities for success, less distractions, more of a family feeling.

Background Survey Results for Fashion Industries Students (figure 4)			
Hispanic Ethnicity	Puerto Rican	PR/other-mixed	Dominican
	4	7	3
Religion	Catholic	Christian	Other/none
	7	5	2
Ages	Fifteen	Sixteen	Seventeen
	11	3	0
Grade Point Average	65- 75	75- 85	85-90
	5	6	2
Planning on college	Yes	No	?
	14	0	0
Who made decision to attend this program	Parent	Student	Collaborative
	2	12	0
Initial Feelings about program (first year)	Positive	Negative	Mixed
	3	1	10
Present feelings regarding program	Positive	Negative	Mixed
	11	0	3

Aspects of Fashion Education Students Regarded as Most Positive (fig. 5) (Listed in order of Preference)	
1	Relationships with classmates
2	Quality of Education
3	Relationships with Staff and Administrative Personnel
4	Single-sex aspect of program
5	Extra-curricular activities (clubs)

The last class was a 10th grade Global Studies class at Notre Dame High School, taught by Ms. F. The class was comprised of 35 female students, of which over half were Hispanic or of Hispanic origin. In spite of the fact that it was a Friday and snowing, all the students were present in the class: 100% attendance. The students were dressed in uniform and seated in rows in non-movable desks. The class focused on geography and the reasons why it was important. The instructional style was traditional lecture and even though the teacher was animated, knowledgeable, and even enthusiastic, there was very little participation from the students. I noticed three students resting their heads on their desks. The teacher incorporated her travel experiences in travel, many maps and visual aids into the lesson, but the compartmentalizing of geography from its historical context, was a disappointment. Ms. F. is loved by her students and is considered (by the students) one of the best teachers at Notre Dame.

At Notre Dame I surveyed a total of 10 Latinas from Ms. F's Global History class (figure 6). Of these, the majority were Catholic (7), 15 years of age, with a grade point average above 90%. All planned on attending college after high school and the majority had made the decision to attend Notre Dame on their own, with varying degrees of parental input. The majority indicated that they initially had positive feelings about the school and that they continue to do so. The aspect of Notre Dame considered most positive by the majority of the Latinas surveyed was quality of education, with relationships with staff coming in at a very close second (figure 7). As an addendum to the information presented in the graphs, nine of the ten girls interviewed expressed positive feelings toward the school/program. Four expressed feelings of love for the

program/school and five were merely satisfied. When asked to rate the program in relation to coeducational schools, nine claimed single-sex programs were better, and one student felt single-sex schools were worse than coeducational schools. The two primary reasons given for preferring this program to coeducational programs included; less distractions and a more carefree comfortable feeling (less concern about appearance, periods, etc.).

Background Survey Results for Notre Dame Students (figure 6)			
Hispanic Ethnicity	Puerto Rican	PR/other-mixed	Other (Dom, Mexican)
	4	4	2
Religion	Catholic	Christian	Other/none
	7	2	1
Ages	Fifteen	Sixteen	Seventeen
	8		2
Grade Point Average	85- 95	95- 100	?
	2	4	4
Planning on college	Yes	No	?
	10	0	0
Who made decision to attend this school	Parent	Student	Collaborative
	2	5	3
Initial Feelings about school (first year)	Positive	Negative	Mixed
	5	1	4
Present feelings regarding school	Positive	Negative	Mixed
	8	1	1

Aspects of Notre Dame Education Students Regarded as Most Positive (fig.7) (Listed in order of Preference)	
1	Quality of Education
2	Relationships with Staff and Administrative Personnel
3	Relationships with classmates
4	Extra-curricular activities (clubs)
5	Cultural/religious aspect of Education
6	School Structure and discipline

The Focus Group Interviews:

Using King and Mitchell's *Black Mothers to Sons* as a model, I decided to conduct my focused interviews using a "group conversation methodology". I chose this method for the following reasons:

- Like King and Mitchell, I found that this type of "creative interviewing" is more in keeping with traditional Taino ways of communication and knowledge production. Caribbean Tainos were an oral culture. When Europeans initially made contact with this indigenous group in the late 15th century, they found no evidence of writing (other than petroglyphed images carved in stone). The primary venue by which information and cultural history were related was the "areyto" or social gathering. Ricardo Alegria, a noted Puerto Rican scholar, describes the "areyto" in his book, *Discovery, Conquest, and Colonization of Puerto Rico*. "They celebrated "areytos", or religious ceremonies, during which they danced, sang and recited the history of their gods, their chief and their settlement... this was their way of transmitting from generation to generation the myths, the history and the traditions of their culture" (Alegria, 1983). In addition to the "areyto" was "el bochinche" or gossip network. In Taino culture, gossips were and are considered a necessary, and often positive, component of the social system. Even today, in Latino neighborhoods, el bochinche, and el bochinchero, is a highly valued and entertaining source of local news and information. During one of our initial group interviews, one of the participants discussed having gone through a suicidal period and a consequent eating disorder.

Her peers, out of concern, “gossiped” about it. Eventually the gossip reached the ears of a teacher who took action. Though initially upset by this, the participant admitted that she was glad that her friends had cared enough to “gossip” about her and conceded that at times gossip could be a positive thing.

- The group conversation method is designed to “reduce social tension”, “identify shared experiences” and “facilitate the discussion of highly personal or deeply felt emotional issues” (Mitchell & King, 1995). In every group conversation I engaged in with the participants there was at least one instance of tears, and always I was grateful for the presence of the other girls who were so supportive, loving, and encouraging. I could clearly see that this method facilitated open and honest discussion and paved the way for emotional healing and bonding for the girls involved.
- During interviews, I found that I was not the only one being transformed by the information I was gathering. The participants verbally expressed clear moments of revelation or “epiphanies”, in which they came to never-before-glimpsed realizations of themselves as active or passive agents in a societal/patriarchal institution that had historically devalued their identity and needs as Latina women. Many appeared transformed by the process. “The group conversation enables participants to reflect on how things might be changed. In fact, this Afro-centric method is passionately and openly committed to understanding social reality in order to change it” (Mitchell & King, 1995).

I interviewed a total of fifteen girls in four separate group settings. All the girls were volunteers from the three separate groups I had surveyed. The TYWLS group was

comprised of seven girls, all 11th graders from Ms. G's English class. The Fashion group contained four girls, 10th graders from Ms. M.'s Fashion Design class. The Notre Dame group was mixed and included two 10th graders from Ms. F's World History class, and two 12th graders, former students of Ms. F. (the 10th and 12th graders were interviewed separately). The issues I was particularly interested in discussing during the group conversations were, as outlined: Relationship changes during their time at this school (friendships, family, and community);

- Levels of inclusion of student's family/community/culture within the school
- Conflicts regarding the "bridging" of home and school cultures
- Issues surrounding identity construction (both as individuals and as members of their communities).

However, in order to collect the necessary data, I often had to incorporate other research methods. These included semi-structured interviews (with parents and teachers) and participant journaling. I will explain these in more detail later in this chapter. The identity construction aspect of my research became so complex that it required a separate chapter – chapter 5.

Relationships – friendships/dating/sexuality:

Of the fifteen girls I interviewed, five were in opposite sex relationships. Four were in long-term committed relationships of a year or more in length, and were sexually active, and two were either involved in or considering same-sex relationships or bisexuality. The issue of same-sex relationships came up repeatedly in conversation at all three schools.

All the girls seemed to feel that there was "an above average" tendency toward

homosexual behavior at single-sex schools. Even at a “conservative” school like Notre Dame the respondents claimed that approximately 5% of the girls in their grade were homosexual.

Carrie: I think it (single-sex education) influences homosexuality because I used to have a friend who used to go to church and she was like a Pentecost. She came to Notre Dame and she met this girl and she became so obsessed with it that she would talk to me and she would tell me how her feelings were changing – like she was starting to like her and she had been straight! So I guess people can do that to you – influence you.

All the remaining girls were not presently involved in dating/sexual relationships of any kind. Most of the girls had started dating in co-educational junior high schools and had subsequently chosen temporary celibacy, in order to focus on school. Only one participant, Jenny, from Fashion Industries High School, was involved with someone at her school. Consequently, she had few friends, outside of her “Fashion Design” class, and in her own words, “many enemies”.

Jenny: It’s a very difficult thing to do because inside the school all the girls are like, even if the guy’s not too attractive they’re like crazy about...because its almost like an all-girl’s school. The girls try to grab whatever they can. It’s like a shopping mall – a sale. It’s been very stressful. I really don’t feel like fighting for a guy.

Sonia: I don't have any friends in this school – I just don't want to. I don't like a lot of girls in this school that have a smile on their face and then when you walk away they be talking about you behind your back, so I don't even bother anymore. I stopped looking and then I met Mara and Sandra (classmate from Fashion class) and they basically became my closest friends.

Jenny: When I came into the school I had more enemies than friends because of my boyfriend. Now the closest friend I have is Rachel (from Fashion Class).

Sonia: In Fashion class there never have been any problems. We all get along. I've never seen any arguments or anything. That's because... (Reflexive pause)
Yeah! I guess its because there's no guys to fight about - ya know – Wow! Guys *are* problems! (Girls laugh).

Rachel: All our problems begin with men! (All laugh).

Based on their responses, I would describe the girls from TYWLS as the most “assimilated”. All these girls considered themselves feminists. Notice the emphasis on empowerment and individual choice (considered American values).

Mandy: Well I'm not a virgin but I'm trying not to do anything *because of school*. I don't want to have a serious relationship with anyone.

Debbie: I'm not a virgin either. But it was my *choice*. I think *the school actually gave* me the will power for me to come up and say yes, *I want* to do it or no *I don't*. *The school was able to encourage me* to say that it's *my choice*. It's *my*

feelings, *my* emotions, it's what *I'm* gonna go through, Its what *I* gotta live with, it's whatever, so *the school helped me and gave me the confidence* for me to tell people who, I was with somebody for a year after him and I told him no. *The school gave me the power to say yes and it gave me the power to say no.*

Chrystal: It's your choice. The school teaches you that you don't have to do things for people- like – ya know – we don't need to follow the crowd and stuff.

Mandy: I think that in this school the fact that there are no men is like in a way us girls can talk about whatever we want because we're like sisters, all of us, so its like my choice. I made that choice when I was young. I made it before I came to this school. This school really empowers us cause nobody's here to put us down.

The girls here, *we're all female and like powerful* – we have pride in our sexuality. We're not...

Chrystal: dependent?

Mandy: Exactly!

In spite of the emphasis on individual choice here the girls repeatedly used terms like “the school gave me” or “the school empowers us” which placed them in a passive role in relation to the school. On many occasions I felt as if they were mouthing a written script, like they were saying exactly what they thought I wanted to hear about empowerment, feminism, and independence. There was also no mention of family and/or outside community input regarding the choices they were making on dating and sex.

Of the four girls I interviewed from Notre Dame, only one of them was in a long-term opposite-sex relationship. This was Rosemarie who was also the only mother in the

group. She had gotten pregnant in 10th grade and managed to have her baby and stay in school. She was graduating with honors. She and the other group participants most valued the family-like atmosphere in the school.

Kiana: None of the young ladies at Notre Dame are friends. We are all *sisters*. We live *daily together* in the classrooms and *are a part of each other*. There is never a moment that I can simply walk down the hall without saying “hi” to everyone that walks my way. *We all know and love each other*.

Carrie: The teachers and staff at Notre Dame are like your *older sisters* or your older brothers, with the exception of Mr. Jovan and Sr. Mary Dolan which are *like parents to us* all. *The staff* tries to help us all in every problem we have.

Rosemarie: *We all love each other*. I never believed I would have so *many friends*. When I was pregnant they were all happy for me. They would all (classmates and staff) touch my stomach and want to see pictures of the baby.

The combination of social/emotional support services available from the staff, and the loving, supportive relationships with classmates, were the most highly valued aspect of the single-sex environment, as expressed by the group participants. This is one of the attributes of a single-sex institution that enables girls to succeed. However notice the difference in tone here, as opposed to TYWLS. There is not as much emphasis on the self

or individual, as separate and apart from the group or community. There is also no sense that the school is fostering or encouraging a set ideology or viewpoint. The school is seen as a collective of individuals - the teachers and staff, who are like older sisters, Mr. Jovan and Sr. Mary Dolan who are “like parents” - as opposed to the repeated reference to the *School* as an entity, in and of itself, in the TYWLS responses.

Relationships – Parents:

The issue of parental relationships was very highly charged for most of the participants. Where the topic of peer relationships produced much laughter and light joking, this conversation produced anger and tears. It was obvious, that for the large majority of participants, the mother-daughter relationship was the most central and significant of their lives. Latinas are historically known for their close but often tense relationships with their mothers. Aida Hurtado addresses this issue in *Voicing Chicana Feminisms:*

Many of my respondents experienced this tension in their relationships with their mothers-pulling away while simultaneously feeling the need for connection. They were also aware of the ‘mirroring’ between their own lives and the lives of their mothers. They spoke often of ‘carrying their mothers’ dreams’ and of living their mothers’ yearnings for ‘independence and accomplishments’ (Hurtado, 2003).

When I asked the students from Notre Dame about the quality of their relationships with their parents all but one responded positively.

Carrie: I don't think I have a good relationship with my mom at all. We don't talk. We don't do anything. (Pause) I think I'm gonna cry. We can't talk about my life or anything – just like stupid things like dinner. I don't know, and then like my mom tries to be my best friend but I don't think she should. It bugs me when she tries to do it all at once. It should be like a growing relationship not just, 'oh tell me everything you did' and like right off the bat. She makes it hard on me.

In spite of this lack of communication in Carrie's relationship with her mother, she is a good student and a dutiful and respectful daughter. She is not dating and tries hard to gain her parent's approval. Egypt, a 12th grader at Notre Dame, has a "really good relationship with both parents". She has never had to deal with issues of "rebellion" and feels that the school (Notre Dame) has nurtured her relationship with her parents. She feels that through the school she has been able to "learn to balance the traditional ways of my parents with the independence and modern ways of the world. My parents are not from here, but the school teaches you to communicate with them without anger or violence." My experience interviewing the girls at Fashion on this topic was almost identical to that in Notre Dame. The majority of the girls have excellent or fairly good relationships with their mothers. Only one girl felt her relationship with her mother was problematic, and like Carrie, this student was respectful and was trying hard to win her mother's approval by doing well in school, not dating, and not arguing. The girls also felt that their relationship with their mothers had either improved or stayed the same since

they have been in this high school program. Three commented on the positive affect that the Fashion class, in particular, was having on this relationship. Here is one example:

Sandra: My mom and my grandmom - they're good at it (sewing). My mom when she was younger used to make her own clothes. She would dress up her dolls and then when I showed her the baby romper I made she was so proud. She was like 'Aiyee, it's so cute...'

For many Latino mothers, this connection to their own traditions through the sewing aspect of the Fashion Design class helps them to bond with their daughters in ways that are more culturally familiar and comfortable.

The extreme differences, in response to this topic, that I elicited from the TYWLS girls was a revelation for me, and accounted for what Michael Agar refers to as an ethnographic "breakdown". "Expectations are not met; something does not make sense; one's assumption of perfect coherence is violated. For convenience, the differences noticed by an ethnographer are called breakdowns" (Agar, 1986). Almost all the girls at TYWLS remarked that their relationships with their parents had gotten worse since they have been at this school. This directly contradicted my assumption that attendance in single-sex schools tended to improve family relationships. I was initially so surprised by these responses that I asked them to elaborate.

Mandy: My relationship with my mom is not a good thing. *Since coming here* it's gotten worse, because I've grown up so fast. I had to – *I had no choice*. I am 18

but I feel like I'm 35, so it pisses them off. *I blame my parents* for not doing well. Puerto Rican Latino parents have very strict views.

Debbie: It made my relationship with my mom worse, because *this school - it made me see* that I'm not from 104th and Lexington like she is. I'm not the girl who needs to hang around with all the boys. I'm not the one who needs to show off that she has a shape. I don't have to do that and *this school lets me know* that I can come outside in a plastic bag and regardless be able to articulate everything I have to say and I'm gonna get respect – regardless. I'm not her and she's not me. I know for a fact that *I never want to be like her*. That's my goal. Every morning when she says something dumb I say 'when I move out – when I got money- don't call me. I'll call you'.

Again, note the emphasis on the school as active agent, “This school—it made me” and “this school lets me”, and the anger toward the parents, “ I blame my parents” and I never want to be like her.” The American feminist's values advocated by members of the TYWLS staff apparently create a chasm between these Hispanic girls and their more traditional families, and consequently their culture.

Margie: I admit that's why I want people to call me Margie. Because with Maria, you can tell right away *I'm Spanish, and I admit sometimes I want to deny that*. I mean I'm proud to be Spanish – Mexican and Puerto Rican – Rah, Rah, Rah. But there's a point when I don't want to be that

anymore. People judge me on that. *In spite of my family and my culture*
I'm gonna make it and then they are all gonna be on my ass.

My group interview with the students of TYWLS brought up some intriguing questions. I became concerned with the possible conflicts engendered in the girls by the differing philosophies of the school (mission toward successful assimilation into American society), and their families (insistence on the maintenance of cultural traditions and values).

Community/Family Inclusion in School Environment (Journaling and Semi-Structured Interviews):

The core curriculum at all three schools was for the most part Eurocentric with little or no cultural inclusivity. However, based on the responses to my initial interview questions, I suspected that, for various reasons, the girls at TYWLS were the most affected. All the girls I interviewed at Notre Dame and Fashion Industries were involved in extra-curricular school activities, and/or Church, neighborhood, or community service, which theoretically makes for a more well-rounded and complete human being, and is consistent with Latino notions of “educacion” as described by Angela Valenzuela”.

Educacion is a conceptually broader term than its English language cognate. It refers to the family’s role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility and serves as the foundation of all other learning. Though inclusive of formal academic learning, *educacion* additionally refers to competence in the social world, wherein

one respects the dignity and individuality of others.... Latino teacher's expectations tend to focus strongly on the notion of respect, discipline, and social responsibility (Valenzuela, 1999).

The girls at TYWLS claimed they were not involved in any such projects. With all the emphasis on academics the girls asserted they had no time for anything else, and they claimed the school had no cultural clubs or activities of any kind. In addition they assured me that the classroom curriculum totally omitted any Latin literature or history. This makes for an almost complete "cut-off" from the home community and culture.

In order to ascertain the level of that disconnection and its affects, I decided to incorporate a new method into my research - the use of something I refer to as Latina journals. The purpose of the journal was to record instances of cultural inscription in the students' lives, either positive or negative, and the source (home, community, media, school, peers, etc.). They were to record this information in their journals for a period of two to three weeks. I felt this was the best method for gathering the data that might reflect the conflicting messages the girls were receiving from both their home and school environments. The method is very similar to that used by Cross & Straus in their study of African American college students in, *Transacting Black Identity: A Two-week Daily Diary Study* (2002). However, the journal assignment I created was open-ended and less structured, which I felt was more appropriate for this particular population. Upon receiving the journals the girls were initially excited about participating in this "self-awareness" project, but as time progressed I became aware of resistances on many levels. The group seemed to have split. A few consistently forgot to bring their journals to our

scheduled meetings and seemed less than enthusiastic about discussing them. As a result of these “resistances” I was compelled to reflect, and re-evaluate my practice.

I came to some interesting revelations. The pure Latinas (Latino parents on both sides) were enthusiastic about the project, where as the mixed Latinas were having some issues. For the most part they were negative and seemed conflicted about their identities as Latinas. In retrospect, I realized these were also the girls who at our first meeting indicated the most problems with parental relationships and cultural identity. This discovery was very significant for the study. Eventually I did get the journals back but only from the pure Latinas. I found that the journal assignment had in fact proven effective in getting the girls to reflect on the role culture played in their lives. In addition, the journals helped to isolate the factors that were upper-most in their minds, such as mother-daughter relationships, college plans/anxieties, and relationships with peers. More importantly, it also made me aware that my assumption regarding what I imagined to be “conflicting cultural messages” emanating from both the home and the school might in fact have been incorrect. I now realized it was imperative I speak to the parents and teachers so that I might more adequately ascertain what these messages were. Finally, I also noted resistance to writing about the lack of cultural representations at the school, even though the issue had come up repeatedly in our conversations. In fact, it seemed the girls were hesitant to write anything critical about TYWLS at all.

Semi- Structured Interviews: Teachers

In addition to the journals it was imperative I interview teachers and parents. My interviews with the teachers proved to be a very fruitful and eye-opening experience. I structured the interviews around questions that had come up in my interactions with the

participants. These were questions on school philosophy, classroom curriculum, parental involvement, and the apparent lack of Latino culture in the school.

The first teacher I interviewed was Heather, a white woman who teaches English and has incorporated a Women's Studies department at TYWLS. Heather has taught at TYWLS for four years. She claims that there are fewer classroom management issues, but there are still very serious issues to resolve. She believes that in coeducational schools girls get shortchanged. Boys act out more behaviorally and so get more of the attention. Girl's problems are of a more subtle nature. She finds that girls carry a lot of psychological baggage. They need to figure out how to deal with their emerging sexuality in a "safe place". She has found that as a result of the perception of single-sex schools as "safe places", the school tends to attract more incest/rape survivors. Parents are looking for "safe spaces" for their daughters. She asserts that the girl's families are not feminist and concedes that their philosophy may not be in line with that of the school. The school's mission, as described by Heather, is that of "universal empowerment", but she adds "this means different things to different people. As she sees it the mission is "to get the girls to be responsible for their own education/lives and to make good decisions toward individual empowerment." Heather feels really good about the mission of the school, but wishes they were more overtly feminist. She feels the younger students initially resist the mission of the school but eventually are "incorporated". In terms of curriculum, Heather emphasizes literature that focuses on self-esteem and coming of age. She uses multi-cultural, feminist, and non-traditional themes. Her classes are student-centered and she does, to the best of her ability, incorporate Latina authors (she offers Sandra Cisneros as an example). She acknowledges the absence of a Latin component in

Global Studies, as well as clubs and activities in the school. She sees this lack of culture as a real weakness in the school. In terms of relationships with parents, Heather acknowledged that this is very limited. Very few parents come to parent-teacher conferences. She herself speaks no Spanish and has very little contact with parents.

The second teacher I interviewed was Ana. Ana is a Dominican woman who teaches Spanish Language and Dance at TYWLS. At present she is the only Latina teacher on staff. Ana agreed with Heather regarding the absence of Latin culture at the school. She feels very strongly that the school makes no attempt to involve itself in the community of the girls. "You can see this," she explains, "in the teachers – they are predominantly white". But she adds that the parents are just as much to blame. "Students are not proud of their culture," she states. "Spanish is not spoken in the home." She asserts that Latin culture is very much alive in the Spanish classes (required of all students). In her own small way she tries to "reactivate" Latin cultural identity for her students. She tells them to embrace their culture. "Some get it and some don't. Look at yourselves," she tells them, "You are Latina. That's your identity. That is who you are." She feels that most of them are ashamed of it. "They are pressured to speak English from friends. They don't want to be seen as hicks. There are a very few who are proud of their culture". This attitude she says comes from the home. They came to the school with it. If the parents are proud of their culture it is reflected in the students. In her four years at this school, she has not noticed any changes in terms of cultural identification. "If they had it when they came in, they still have it now." According to Ana, culture is primarily constructed in the home.

My thoughts on Heather's interview were mixed. I worried about the fact that this teacher, as well intentioned as she seemed, was not concerned with the idea of imposing an Americanized feminism on Latina girls, in spite of the fact that she noted their resistance. She, herself a graduate of Women's Studies program, was completely ignorant of the differences between American feminism and Caribbean/Latina feminisms. She claimed to offer a multicultural curriculum, but only mentioned one Latina author. She placed the responsibility for parent involvement wholly on the parents and reported making no real effort to reach out to parents on her own.

Initially I did not agree with Ana's conclusions either. I felt that she underestimated the power of the socialization processes that occurred at the school site. "Schools, in this sense, are ideological and political terrains out of which the dominant culture in part produces its hegemonic 'certainties'....In other words schools are not ideologically innocent...." (Giroux 1997) However, as my research at TYWLS progressed and I interviewed a few of the parents, I came to understand, appreciate, and even share Ana's perspective a lot more.

Semi Structured Interviews: Parents

A few weeks later I began the parent interviews at TYWLS. The parents were resistant to the idea of being interviewed as well and I had to call the homes repeatedly with reassurances regarding my motives, in order to get them to agree. I met with Jubilee and Margie's mothers on April 27th, 2005, separately. Initially both mothers seemed

suspicious, but once the interviews got under way, they relaxed and shared many details of their own personal lives (which I will not relate here).

Teresa, Jubilee's mother shared with me that Jubilee had been in trouble with the school on several occasions for minor infractions (such as purposely wearing her school badge upside down, or hanging out with neighborhood kids in front of the school). She also informed me that many other girls also had problems with the rigid structure of the school. Several of these girls had been "pushed" out or transferred. We also discussed culture a great deal. Jubilee's mother is strongly anchored to her Latina identity. She has always insisted on a Latino home. Meals are traditional Latin fare, television is bi-cultural/lingual, and only Spanish is spoken in the home (English is for the outside world). She was born and raised in Puerto Rico and even received a college degree there. She travels to Puerto Rico with Jubilee at least once or twice a year, and owns a home there. Later when I spoke to Jubilee about this she stated, "Half my life is there," and then added, "When people ask me where I was born I say New York...unfortunately."

Margie's mom Nancy was similar and yet very different. She too was born and raised in Puerto Rico, though she came to New York as a child. She no longer speaks Spanish and did not teach it to Margie. In the home they mostly eat out (Italian, Chinese, and Mexican) and watch only American television shows. Like Margie, her idea of culture is imbedded in abstract values, such as pride and strength, but there are no actual indications of a "lived Latino culture" in the home. I also learned from her that Margie does aspire to leave the neighborhood because she says she "wants more for herself."

Both mothers felt that the school should incorporate more Latino culture. Nancy stated that she felt it would be better for the students if the school were more involved with the community.

Nancy: Teach them (the students) a little of their culture. African Americans have a whole month – but what do we have? They teach them about famous people – we have smart people too. I would like Margie to know that. They never go out of that school. Maybe they are afraid because they are all white.

Teresa suggested the school focus on the culture of the students and involve the entire school in cultural holidays, such as Puerto Rican discovery Day and Martin Luther King Day. “This would motivate parents and involve them in the life of the school.” She feels the school only focuses on academics, uniforms and attendance, but don’t really care about the student’s lives.

In one case (Cheryl’s mom) the resistance to being interviewed was apparently so great that she pulled her daughter out of the research. This disturbed me greatly that I tried to reach the parent for some kind of explanation or discussion. The result of this was that the parent, an upwardly mobile educated school administrator, made a complaint to the school and had my permission to do research there rescinded. I have included my field notes of my final phone conversation with this mother below.

Field Notes: May 6, 2004 10:30 pm (approximately)

The phone rings. It is Soraya – Cheryl’s mom. I am pleased she has called. It is the first time, in spite of repeated efforts on my part to reach her. I greet her amiably - ask about her visit to Florida. She is upset. She insisted that she had not been made aware of the details of this research. I responded by telling her that I had made repeated attempts to contact her, but she had not returned my phone calls. In addition I had sent home a consent form with all the details of the study (which Cheryl had lost). I then proceeded to explain my research study to her in detail. I emphasized my commitment to dispelling negative stereotypes about Latinas and educational achievement. For this reason I was exploring educational options that resulted in higher graduation and college acceptance rates for Latinas. Soraya listened but her anger was not abated. She insisted that I could not adequately represent her daughter because I did not really know her. She began trying to convince me that neither she nor her daughter was a “Typical Latina”. She insisted that I go to the school and ask anyone and that they would tell me how actively involved she was (ex PTA president) - how amazing her daughter was – how she had always maintained an 85 average in spite of a learning disability – how she had been awarded \$160,000 in scholarship money (not very likely). I congratulated her on her daughter’s achievements and asked for clarification as to why she was angry with me. Her response was a lengthy 60-minute monologue of the obstacles she had had to overcome as a widowed mom and more and more anger and bitterness She

ended the conversation by threatening to go to the Principal the following day to complain. I tried to dissuade her, asking her to consider the consequences. My research was intended as something positive for the Latina community. The principal is not sympathetic to the research. By going to her she would be seriously jeopardizing it. She hung up the phone on me. I felt mangled. I went to my computer and sent out two emails – one to the Principal of TYWLS and the other to my advisor at CUNY. And then I went to bed – but not to sleep.

My initial reaction to this conversation was confusion. I could not comprehend the woman's anger at me. This conversation accounted for the second major "breakdown" in my research. I felt the need to interrogate the matter further in order to arrive at some kind of coherent resolution, as described by Michael Agar:

For convenience, we will call the process of moving from breakdown to understanding a process of resolution. The process is an emergent one; and like the breakdown that triggers it, it is constrained by the traditions in which it occurs....A breakdown is a lack of fit between one's encounter with a tradition and the schema –guided expectations by which one recognizes experience. One then modifies the schemas or constructs new ones and tries again Based on this new try, further modifications are made, the process continuing iteratively until the breakdown is resolved (Agar. 1986).

I gave the matter a great deal of thought. The term “Traditional Latina” came up repeatedly in this conversation. It was clear Soraya had her own negative stereotypes associated with his term. I was extremely troubled by this. How could anyone so strongly dislike their own culture and not dislike him or herself? There was obviously much fear behind her anger – fear of losing everything she had worked so hard to achieve for her daughter. For some reason, she felt my research into Latino culture at the school posed a direct threat to her. It was not really me she was angry at. She feared what I represented. Repeatedly she accused me with, “I wouldn’t have expected this from another Latina.” I had never before felt my outsider status so painfully. And yet the reality was that I did not really understand her or what she was feeling. When she says “Traditional Latina”, she means the stereotypical Latina welfare mother as seen through the eyes of mainstream American culture. But when I hear traditional Latina, I visualize a Latina on the island – proud, defiant, and strong. Our views are shaped by our personal histories, educational levels, and class status. I wondered if I had ever felt as she does now. Had I ever been as desperate as she seemed to be to escape my own cultural identity? It was clear that in the case of Cheryl, there was absolutely no disconnect between the assimilation advocated by the school and the messages coming from the home. I wondered how many of the parents of TYWLS students had likewise chosen this school because it was totally in line with their own assimilationist views.

In direct contrast to the parents at TYWLS, the parents I interviewed at Fashion and at Notre Dame were immediately warm and welcoming. The suspicion I noted at

TYWLS was glaringly absent and the parents had no problem discussing their feelings and complaints about the schools openly. Of course their responses regarding the schools were very different. Overall Notre Dame parents were more generally satisfied with the traditional aspect of the curriculum at this school. One parent stated, “We were in line with the school. What they taught her there is the same thing we were teaching her here at home.” Another parent very convincingly argued that the Eurocentric aspect of the Notre Dame curriculum was not a problem for them at all.

Johnny: We have taught our daughter to be Latina first but not to limit herself to that. The world does not revolve around us. We can learn from other cultures without losing our identity. Children should be able to experiment and try new things. The world is our lab. Being Latino/a should not keep you from this. Being Latino-centric denies you all that. You isolate yourself.

These parents were sufficiently grounded in their Latino culture not to be threatened by the lack of cultural inclusivity at the school. In addition, this school was sufficiently” in line” with the traditional values of Latino parents to provide a seamless bridge between the two cultures. Parents were encouraged to be actively involved in all aspects of their daughter’s educational process and the school consistently sought to meet the needs of Latino parents.

Parents at Fashion Industries High School had an entirely different story to tell. They reported instances of neglect on the part of the school staff and administration. In two cases, students had been absent and or cutting form the school for several months before

the parents were informed. One parent had to go to the school repeatedly to get her daughter out of a class she was failing. And another parent complained that a teacher had disrespected her when she tried to get her daughter out of the class early because of a family emergency.

Rosaura: The teacher said I would need the Principal's permission in order to get my daughter out of class, in spite of the fact that the guidance counselor had already called her up on the phone and told her it was ok. She was very rude and condescending. After calling the principal I called the teacher back and she yelled at me saying that my daughter had walked out of class and would be marked cutting. What did she expect her to do!

Fashion Industries High School on the surface appears to be the most culturally inclusive of the three schools. The principal, Hilda Nieto, is a Latina and as mentioned earlier the vocational curriculum is one that is culturally familiar to many Latinas. However, for parents at Fashion the culture question is completely overshadowed by more pressing issues, such as drug use, pregnancy, and whether or not their daughters would graduate at all.

Place Does Matter

The educational outcomes for these girls are related to context, as we will more clearly see in the next chapter on identity construction. The outcomes of the Fashion students largely reflect the problems of large urban public schools. Fashion Industries High

School is by no stretch of the imagination among the worst of them, yet, according to my student respondents, it is plagued by a high faculty turnover, drug problems, and too few support services. In an interview with Rachel's mother she asked me how it was possible that her daughter had been missing classes for months and no one had contacted her. The positive aspects of the Fashion design curriculum I initially observed and commented on were not enough to counteract the negative aspects of public schooling. At a school of over 1500 students it is just far too easy to slip through the cracks, unless one is highly self-motivated.

At the other extreme is Notre Dame High School, which provides a supportive, values oriented education that promotes a feeling of community and educational achievement. The students of Notre Dame are high achievers, but more importantly they are socially and culturally secure human beings. The adage, "You get what you pay for," certainly applies at Notre Dame. Unfortunately the majority of New York City Latino families cannot "pay for" it.

In spite of the additional foundation monies, TYWLS cannot afford many of the support services available at Notre Dame, such as an additional college advisor. The small community-like environment here is similar to that of Note Dame, but TYWLS promotes an American feminist philosophy whereas Notre Dame promotes a traditional values oriented philosophy, which seems to be much more in line with the values of Latino families. This may cause conflict with the community and provide a confused educational environment. It is certainly telling that Spanish Harlem residents I spoke with did not even know that the school existed. One neighborhood resident who owns an art gallery around the corner from the school visited the school to welcome them to the

neighborhood. He left a message for the Principal but never heard back from her. He had this to say about the type of education taught at schools like TYWLS:

They teach you about Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and how to fit into their world, but then you discover you don't fit in that world. You get lost for 20 years – trying to find out who you are. You finally end up right where you started and you realize that the *bodegero* on the corner knows more about who he is than you do.

Chapter 5:

Latinas Constructing a Transnational Feminist Identity

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One never feels his two-ness...two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Dubois, 1903).

She has discovered that she can't hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries.... Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically.... She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality...in attempting to work out a synthesis; the self has added a third element, which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness...and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes for continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm (Anzaldua, 1987).

Spence Girls Date Doctors,
Chapin Girls Marry Doctors
Brearley Girls are Doctors.
(Anonymous)

Date: March 10, 2006

I recognized her immediately when she entered the restaurant, though I had never seen her before. Her hair was cropped short, her clothing was casual but trendy, and her face radiated warmth and self-assurance. We introduced ourselves and sat down quickly to a lunch of rice, beans and plantains. I began to ask questions regarding her experiences at The Brearley School. She was very open and forthcoming with her responses. She had

been one of only three students “of color” that entered Brearley as fifth graders in 1979/80, as part of a privately negotiated “arrangement” between Brearley and a teacher at Josie’s school. One of the others, luckily for Josie, was an African American girl from her own school in the Bronx. Josie frequently referred to this other minority student as her “saving grace” and her “counselor” during those years. She repeatedly stressed the importance of this one relationship with another minority girl who could understand the issues that she was confronting – her touchstone. She spoke very animatedly about how difficult it had been in those early years to “catch up” to the “white” students. Her skill levels, particularly in writing, were far behind those of her Brearley counterparts.

Midway through our conversation I asked Josie about assimilation. She immediately became very emotional and fought to control her tears. I was honestly surprised at the depth of her pain surrounding this issue and questioned her about it. It was in the 7th grade that Josie began to feel that she was living a “double-life”. This became the major thread that ran through the remainder of her conversation. At home she was dealing with issues of inner-city urban life. Her father was a traditionalist Latino who did not want her hanging out in the streets. He was also a violent alcoholic. She made reference to other family member’s involvement with drugs and violence, but I did not press her for details regarding these issues. It was enough for me to understand that her home life had been a difficult one. Attending a school like Brearley, with students with lifestyles so unlike hers, and at the time perceived as “better than” her own, was very disconcerting and alienating for both Josie and her friend. In school, the girls were never fully integrated. “It was always clear that we were... different – our clothes – our style - our accents - something.” It was a natural consequence of this difficult situation that the girls began to

“compare and devalue” their home environment and culture. Relationships with her community and family became tense, especially with her “older sister”. Josie reflected, “Class issues became intertwined with race/cultural issues in our minds.” In discussions with her friend, they discussed “how much better our lives would be, if we were not...” Josie continued, “We wanted what they (white classmates) had but neither of us had families we could talk to about this.” She became angry at the world for being forced to live a “double-life” and felt she couldn’t do it. It became necessary to cut off the home life in order to be able to deal effectively with the rigorous academic demands of Brearley. “It was really hard for us and I thought, I can’t be Latina and do this right now. I had to learn to shut it off. I had to do my own thing.” The struggle to emotionally disconnect from the problems of her home life was so difficult for Josie that she couldn’t focus on school and her grades suffered. Her mother sent her to a counselor, the same woman who had initially gotten her into Brearley, for help. Eventually Josie mastered the art of living in “two worlds”. “Separating emotion is just not a Latino thing to do but I had to learn that skill, which some will say is a white skill.”

In spite of her struggles, Josie is grateful for her experiences at Brearley. Brearley empowered her “to move in different worlds.” She now feels she can go anywhere and succeed at anything she does. She is especially proud of the changes that have occurred at Brearley since she left. The new headmistress of the school is a young African American woman. There has been a much greater emphasis on easing the transition for minority girls like Josie. Josie herself has done volunteer work at Brearley with a few Latina girls and their families to help them through their own adjustment issues. For Josie learning to fully function in the white world was a painful but necessary step in her identity

construction process, “which some might call assimilation.” Nevertheless, Josie never fully disconnected from her Latino identity and later more fully reconnected with her cultural roots in order to regain a sense of wholeness. “In college, I became all about being Latina. I even started an all-girls Latina sorority.” She adds that she perceives complete assimilation to be a negative thing. She cannot think about assimilation without visualizing the “poor *campesino* (her grandfather) working in the fields of Puerto Rico.” It is necessary, she explains, “...to stand in a statement.”

We need to show that we can do this. We can be educated – we can contribute to society. We can live in both worlds and be successful and manage our lives. With the disconnect - we lose the history of the struggle. It would be in vain - if it was just about me - that would be a lonely place.

I did not set out to conduct a study on the identity construction of Latinas in American single-sex schools, but the emergent data was so compelling that I felt I had to explore the issue further. The complexity of the identity construction process at the single-sex schools I was researching intrigued me, particularly the comparative elements of the study. My interview with Josie, an alumna of the private elite Brearley School for Girls, was an attempt on my part to understand the long-range effects of an assimilationist curriculum on Latina girls. On a personal level, as I described in previous chapters, I was deeply distressed by what I had observed at TYWLS. In trying to emulate elite schools like Brearley, TYWLS had incorporated a very Eurocentric assimilationist curriculum, but unlike Brearley they seemed totally oblivious and indifferent to the effects this might

have on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the girls. On Tuesday, May 25th, I went back to collect the journals of the three girls who would continue on in my research study for the following year. Though the journals were not too helpful in identifying the primary site of identity construction, based on their responses I could see that they were already grappling with identity issues.

Jubilee

- Being Latina means to me: proud of your race and ethnicity, beauty, curves, discrimination, minority, traditions, strict parents, the need to succeed, overcoming stereotypes and anything that puts us down/blocks our goals, fighters, achievers, dreamers.
- My mom is a very strong, independent Latina woman. Her experience influences me to do better and to be good, strong and independent, like my mom, maybe even more.
- I honestly don't feel that when you get married you have to include your husband's last name, especially putting "de" because that means that when a woman gets married she becomes the property of her husband. She's stuck on tradition and old time, she needs to look beyond traditions. I think that is what limits Latina women; Hispanic traditions.

Cheryl

- What does it mean to be Latina? To me Latina means being proud of your background and where you came from. Your experiences with your family at home, your values, what you were taught by your mother or your family [Added

in pencil:] and going to college and becoming successful in your life, not dropping out of school and having children.

- My mom just finished having a talk with me about leaving to college and how important it is. Being the first person to go to college and being the first woman is something that I am proud of as well as my mother. My mother always tells me that besides love, education is the only thing she can give me, and she knows I will succeed. I have an extremely close relationship with my mother.
- I was so happy and shocked to see a Latina at Princeton because it is an extremely hard school to get in and for her to be there made me happy because not all Hispanics are dropouts. Looking at her and seeing how she was handling college made me feel that I could go to college and do anything

Margie

- I will never forget this day. This girl had the balls to say a comment about Spanish people. The thing that makes me even madder is that she thought it was funny. On top of that she said it in front of other Spanish people. It gets me so mad. Those people don't understand at all.

The more familiar I became with the girls, the more I came to understand how they, like Josie, were each in their own style negotiating and constructing their very personal and individual identities. Ana's argument that identity was constructed primarily in the home, though somewhat reinforced by the study results, did not resonate with me. I instinctively knew there had to be more. This assertion was partially supported by the focus group interviews in which I had been able to elicit a kind of group identity that was

very different from one school to the other. Considering the general population at all three schools were very similar, I knew that that group identity had somehow been forged by or at the very least during their time at the school. Among the members of the three groups there were very obvious differences in levels of cultural assimilation, so it was clear the school had indeed played some role.

Focus Group Interviews II

In March of 2005, I returned to TYWLS to do follow-up interviews with the three girls I had interviewed the year prior, now seniors. It was my intention as well at this juncture to interview their parents. I felt certain there were conflicts regarding the socialization and identity construction processes the girls were undergoing, and was perplexed by the girl's silence on the matter. I saw the school as being a site of contestation, as described by Giroux (1997). Increasingly I felt a sense of tension at the school. The principal would not talk to me. I felt as if I were walking on eggshells. The questions I was asking seemed to be disturbing some people, and the initial indifference regarding my research had been replaced by an air of distrust and suspicion. I met the girls at a nearby restaurant for a focused group interview.

Field Notes: March 4, 2005 1: 30 pm (approx.)

I wait for the girls outside the restaurant. Cheryl is the first to arrive (right on time). It's amazing the difference one year can make in the life of a teenage girl. She looks mature - sophisticated - long hair loose – blown out, make-up very subtly applied. We discuss her college plans while we wait for the others. She has been accepted at a few

schools and has been offered substantial scholarships. She is very proud of her accomplishments. We wait for the other for about 15 minutes. Then both Margie and Jubilee arrive together. Margie has also changed dramatically. She is dressed for work – very smart look - white top, black slacks, loose curls, glasses, and no makeup. Is it possible they dressed up for this interview? Jubilee seems the most unchanged – still wearing her hair pulled back, no make-up, relaxed jeans. We enter the restaurant and begin the interview while we wait for lunch to be served. The girls are all speaking excitedly about their college plans. It is what is uppermost in their minds. I remind them that we are here to talk about TYWLS and how their feelings for the school have changed since last year. Their faces change. Cheryl begins the discussion. She relates the story of how she came to be a student at TYWLS. Her mother, she explains, had plans to send her to boarding school. Cheryl had visited the school and loved it. She came home to pack her bags. Her mother wanted to let her go, but in the end she just was unable to do it. Instead Cheryl and her mom both agreed upon TYWLS. Cheryl has no regrets about attending TYWLS. She likes the school very much and says her feelings for the school have grown stronger this year as a result of the college process. “The staff has been very supportive”, she says, “they have been there for me and I am very *thankful*.” Margie relates a very different story. TYWLS was imposed on her by her mother. Margie initially hated the school. She was a target for abuse and bullying because she was “the quiet one.” The bullying led to stress, depression, anxiety and ultimately an eating disorder. Jubilee also had TYWLS forced on her by her mother. She explains that as a child she was “always playing with the boys.” Her mother wanted to get her away from that. She claims that even though she has not liked this school and has even hated it at

times, she “will really really miss it.” She is afraid that once she leaves she will “be leaving a part of herself behind because I have been here since the 7th grade what I am now is part of *what this school brought me.*” Jubilee then goes on to discuss the problems at the school related to the college counselor, Gary, “one - because he is a white male and secondly because I feel like he forgets things – like he is good but you have to be on him all the time and you always want a second opinion – you know what I mean - and so we need another counselor for a second opinion.” The third and primary concern the girls expressed was related to the lack of ethnic/racial diversity at the school. They strongly feel that this will affect their ability to accommodate and feel comfortable in college. This was especially significant for Cheryl who will be going away to an “all-white” college next year.

Cheryl: I’m going to a private college – nothing but rich white kids you know and I’m really nervous about that – it’s going to be real hard on me. My mother tells me - don’t compare yourself to those kids – you don’t have that lifestyle and you don’t have their money and you have to remember that you are different. And I guess that *TYWLS hasn’t prepared me* for college in that sense. I never really experienced that (having white friends) and in college its going to be the first time and I don’t know if I’m going to find a white girl who could relate to me. Even though, we may be from completely different backgrounds and religions, I want to find that person. And *I haven’t been prepared* for that ya know. I want to have a white friend who understands me the way you guys understand me and

I'm afraid that I may not have that and I'm going to be alone in college and that's what *TYWLS* *doesn't have – it lacks that.*

At this point Jubilee jumps in to assert that at least she (Cheryl) could pass because of her skin color, but “sadly not everyone could” (Jubilee is darker skinned). This starts an entire conversation on skin shades and racial diversity. Jubilee will not be going away to college and so this issue is not as significant for her as it is for Cheryl. Margie speaks of a cousin who attends private school. She feels he is ashamed of his family because they are not “like them [whites] or we're not like that”. He is lighter than she is and could pass for Caucasian. She says she could not do that. “ I'm proud of who I am. If I go into a place – a college or... I already know that I can't go to this college because I know I'm going to be unhappy.” Jubilee then attempts to extend the discussion of race and ethnicity in educational settings to society as a whole.

Jubilee: As Latinas, we have to be open-minded and ready because we were going to be discriminated [against]. It's like you want a good job...but like all the top paying jobs are probably the majority are Caucasians. You gotta make sure that in your own life you go to the best schools no matter if its all-white – or you have the best jobs - something you like to do – no matter if its white. Even your own people will have something to say to you about it and you just have to push it away because...we can reach anything you want to reach.... Things are getting better in society but I know there's always gonna be that look because of maybe - because of my

skin color- like I'm not good or something or ... they question. Its like - would they feel the same if I was a person of their same race. It's just not fair. Like Cheryl said before, the education in that school is probably the top, but the culture aspect - no *they don't prepare you*.

Margie: I think that's up to you to learn on your own. It's up to you to go out there and like to be with other people...the school is there for education. What I love about public school is like they give a person common sense; my cousin thinks everything is just going to come to him.

Jubilee: I have two African American friends, in private schools, one coed the other all girls, and they act just as ghetto as anyone. They [schools] don't change the way you are like your culture and all that you learn that from your upbringing you learn that from your environment. The school can't do that because there's a lot of people of different cultures. I could be of the same race as someone else but their culture could be like different and I don't know like because a lot of things bring up your culture, your religion or whatever it may be. And it not up to the school to be your house and its up to the individual. We/they reach a certain level where they can more or less identify themselves. There's been girls in our school who graduated and was accepted to college, but some of them never went. And they come back to school with babies and it's so sad. All those girls were accepted and they still come back with babies or working as a retail in some 3rd avenue store. That's their *fault*. Like I said there

comes a point in an individual's life when they're old enough or sane enough to make a choice.

This conversation was very long (approximately 2 hours), intense, and maybe for the first time, honest. The tone was very different – self-reflective and critical – perhaps as a result of their new status at the school as would-be graduates. As Josie had stated in her own interview, “How can you be a critical thinker and not critically analyze the situation you are in?” I was surprised and pleased at the level of understanding regarding issues of race, culture and identity construction expressed in this interview. These are very complex issues for any of us to grasp, but I felt their insights were insightful and intelligent. In spite of this they do have some blind spots (as we all do). Their relationship with TYWLS constrains what they feel they can say. Cheryl's initial statement contains the obligatory gratitude for the “support and help” she has received from the school, also expressed by Josie in her interview, but later she and Jubilee claim they have been ill-prepared by the school a total of seven times. Their criticisms of the school far outweigh their praise, at least during this conversation. However, in the end, they recapitulate and claim that it is not the school's job to deal with issues of race or culture. Their dependent relationship with the school places them in a position of “sleeping with the enemy” so to speak. They are unable to see the school as part and parcel of the dominant society that discriminates against them. The conversation continued with a discussion of the neighborhood (Spanish Harlem) and their thoughts as to the impact that staying or leaving will have on their future opportunities for success. The responses were predictable. Cheryl felt very strongly that in order to succeed,

leaving the neighborhood was a must. She feels that those girls who “messed up” did so because they remained in the neighborhood. Jubilee on the other hand strongly disagrees. She feels it is all up to the individual. “You live in the neighborhood; the neighborhood does not have to live in you.” The conversation ended with a very personal and emotional sharing of the ways that their success-oriented choices (going away to college) have negatively impacted on relationships at home with male family members (father and brothers). I found this surprising. I had always assumed the female in Latina culture to be the “guardians of cultural traditions” and yet the girls related that it was their fathers and brothers who were rejecting their choices to leave family, community and culture. In the Jubilee’s case, her 20-year old brother was no longer even speaking to her.

Jubilee: We used to be so close. He would pick me up and hug me or throw me around. We used to talk about everything. Now he won’t talk to me at all. I don’t know why. Sometimes I think its because all the attention is on me now – cause I’m graduating and going to college. Meanwhile he dropped out and had to get a GED. I think he feels bad. But I just want things to be the way they were. On my birthday (few weeks ago) he came into my room while I was sleeping and hugged me and told me he loves me [cries softly]. I was so happy. He didn’t tell anybody he did that, not even my mother.

Racial and ethnic identities are social constructs, but because we live in a racialized society they carry with them social and economic repercussions (Bonilla, 1997).

By disconnecting the girls from their racial/ethnic identities/communities, the school may be sincerely attempting to help the girls escape this social construct and its constraints. However, as illustrated by Josie's story, this process creates conflict as well as choices, as presented here:

- “Development of collateral identities” - As children, these young women have already internalized the culture of their family and community, “the self – which I have been using synonymously with “identity” - not only contains mental representations of one's bodily life and of primary relationships within the family but also holds mental representations of one's group and its culture, that is the group's configuration of beliefs about man, nature, and social relations (including the view of the other). These cultural propositions, transmitted and internalized through symbols, have strong emotional impact on those who grow up as members of a particular cultural group” (Kakar, 1996). Thus, even though self-identification is an on-going process, the sudden “encounter” with a new cultural boundary may cause a rupture or split between the home identity and the school identity. The attempt to maintain both separately may produce internal conflict and a cultural “schizophrenia”.
- “Site transfer and deactivation” – Many young Latinas opt for “site transfer” and accommodate the school's efforts to “fit” them into the “dominant society” (Tilly, 2003). “Thus, young women or adolescent girls who migrate

with their families confront the question of how to ‘become American’ without completely losing their own cultural heritage. Girls frequently respond to these negotiations through adolescent rebellion against parental culture. They may refuse to speak their first language at home, reject cultural customs, and react negatively toward parents and native culture. Since American society at large encourages immigrants to deny their cultural heritages, the adolescent immigrant finds ample support from adults in positions of authority to challenge her parent’s values.” (Espin, 1999). In addition to creating conflict with parents and community, “deactivation” of the home boundary dissolves support networks and erases valuable cultural capital.

- Boundary activation and defense - In many cases, Latinas resist the cultural assimilation imposed by the school and develop oppositional social behaviors, such as “dropping out”, which result in failure in school and ultimately in American society (Suarez-Orozco, 2001).
- “Bridging” or “layering” of identities – “Ultimately, all identities are socially constructed, a collective product of the human imagination. Social identities are invoked, used, and rewoven in the myriad encounters of everyday life at both the individual and group level’ (Le Vine, 1997). The more successful Latinas learn to meld the two cultures into a “homogenous, bounded unitary, entity” (Brubaker, 2000).

In order to successfully resolve the internal and external conflicts resulting from the “imposition” of dominant cultural norms, these young women are forced into a critical negotiation of identities.

People everywhere organize a significant part of their social interaction around the formation, transformation, activation, and suppression of social boundaries. It happens at the small scale of interpersonal dialogue, at the medium scale of rivalry within organizations, and at the large scale of genocide. Us-them boundaries matter (Tilly, 2003).

How they choose to negotiate these boundary changes will have a great impact on their future selves, yet for the most part there is no one present at schools like TYWLS to guide them in this process.

In the case of Mexican and Caribbean-born Latinos this situation is further complicated by the transnational identity of these groups. Latinos are not like earlier immigrants in several important ways. The close geographical proximity of Latin America, and in the case of Puerto Ricans, dual citizenship, facilitates consistent back and forth travel or circular migration. The migrant population is thus consistently replenished, and it becomes necessary to maintain a dual cultural identity. “Deactivation” of the home culture dissolves support networks and erases valuable cultural capital. “Although assimilation has been rationalized by schools on many grounds, recent research on cultural and linguistic identity has challenged the long-standing wisdom that in order to get ahead one must sacrifice one’s identity” (Nieto 2000.) The research has

shown that the more successful Latinas are those that learn to meld the two cultures into a “homogenous, bounded unitary, whole” (Brubaker, 2000).

As Heather stated during our interview, without the boys as a distraction it is possible to focus on the more subtle issues of the girls, including the various forms of identity development that adolescent Latina girls must engage in as they transition to adulthood in American schools. Here, in this “liminal space” they are free to negotiate the multiple aspects of their identity, without the added stress of gender-issues. However, this gender empowerment should not come at the expense of racial/cultural empowerment. Edward Bonilla asserts, “the United States is a racialized society, and movement from one side to the other is not so easily accomplished for a person of color”. Jubilee very strongly and clearly rearticulated this same concern during her discussion on “passing” when she stated, “sadly not everyone could.” In Barth’s words (1969), “ethnic identity implies a series of constraints on the kinds of roles an individual is allowed to play and is similar to sex and rank in that it constrains the incumbent in all his activities” (Bonilla, p.473). In spite of the best intentions of the school, these girls will never fully be accepted as “white”. “White ethnics have a lot more choice and room for maneuver than they themselves think they do. The situation is very different for members of racial minorities, whose lives are strongly influenced by their race or national origin regardless of how much they may choose not to identify themselves in ethnic or racial terms” (Waters, 1990). Thus to “deactivate” their cultural identities and deny themselves the support, nurturance, and security that cultural networks can provide is, in my opinion, a grave mistake. I do not believe the path to success for Latinas lies in assimilation, even were this completely possible. On the other hand, to allow the process of imposition or external

identification to control one's life is equally disempowering. These are truly difficult choices for a young adolescent. The lack of cultural and parental inclusion at TYWLS only serves to make it more so. These girls inhabit a multiplicity of identities, in addition to that of being Latina. And negotiating these diverse identities so as to best capitalize on their strengths, while at the same time overcoming the obstacles of racial and ethnic discrimination, would indeed prove to be a challenge for them.

All individuals possess many social identities as they belong to multiple groups. However, social identities gain particular significance when they represent 'master statuses' and when they are stigmatized. Race, social class, gender and sexuality are the significant social identities that are considered master statuses, because individuals must psychologically negotiate their potential stigmatizing effects. In the United States, as in many other countries, master statuses are used to make value judgments about individuals' group memberships (Hurtado, 2003).

The Girls of TYWLS

It was almost one full year before I again had the opportunity to speak with any of my respondents from TYWLS. My permission to do research at the school was rescinded shortly after my "talk" with Soraya (see chapter 4). The girls graduated as expected and each attended very different schools. Cheryl went away to Connecticut College and was successfully passing her classes. Margie went away to a very small Jesuit college in Syracuse where she is studying psychology. Rumor has it she is several months pregnant.

Jubilee attends Marymount College in Manhattan and is still living in NYC with her family, as was her plan. I later learned that the school college advisor had in fact “screwed up” the college applications, as Jubilee had predicted. As a result many of the girls were not able to get into the colleges of their choice. Chrystal, one of my earlier respondents, was so frustrated by the situation that she decided not to attend college that year.

The Girls of Fashion

It was almost two years before I was again able to speak with my research subjects at Fashion Industries high-school, and then only individually. Sandra’s mother had transferred her out of Fashion during the spring of 2005. This was after her mother discovered that she was no longer attending classes. I was able to conduct a phone interview with Sandra in her senior year at this out of state private academy. She was very happy. Her perspective on school had totally changed. She claimed that even though initially she did not want to be transferred she now realizes that had she stayed at Fashion she would have probably dropped out. She was at the top of her class now and was graduating with honors. What she most liked about her new school was its small size and how relaxed the teachers were. “They hang out with the students and are our friends.” She fully expected to go on to college.

The second student, Rachel, had remained at Fashion and was hoping to graduate with the help of night school (a very common thing at Fashion). She had no college plans and was thinking of joining the Coast guard upon graduation. Her relationship with her mother had deteriorated. In her junior year, like Sandra, she had started cutting classes

and smoking pot on a regular basis. At present she was struggling to stay focused on school in order to graduate by June. However, she confided in me that she was still engaging in many of the self-destructive behaviors that had initially gotten her in trouble at school. In spite of all this, she felt she was doing well, because she was not pregnant (like most girls in her graduating class), and had not dropped out.

The third student, Jenny, had only failed one class, Chemistry, which she had already made up. She was very actively involved in extracurricular activities (mostly outside of school), which included anime, chess, and photography. She had traveled to China the previous summer with her chess club and described it as a “life changing experience”. She was definitely going on to college and had already been accepted to two CUNY colleges but was waiting to hear from FIT, Parsons, and Pratt. She was still very interested in a career in Fashion Design. Jenny had nothing positive to say about her experiences at Fashion Industries High School and described the school as “shitty”. She echoed what Rachel had said about the high pregnancy rates, high dropout rates (only 400 will graduate on time out of a senior class of 600) and heavy drug use in the school. She claimed that there is drug dealing going on in the school and no one seems to be aware of it. When I asked Jenny what had inspired her she said it was her mother, who had raised her and her siblings alone and still managed to get a Master’s Degree and become a teacher.

The Girls of Notre Dame

In the spring of 2006, I met with Egypt at a nearby McDonalds. She was on break from Smith College where she had entered in 2005 as a pre-med student. Egypt had

recently switched her major from pre-med to law. “How did your parents take it? I asked. “They were great. My father wasn’t even surprised. He said that he knew that was where I belonged all along, but that he wanted me to figure it out on my own.” I met with Egypt for two hours and later met with her parents for an additional four hours. I will elaborate on these conversations in the next chapter. Needless to say, Egypt, a Dominican girl from the Southside of Brooklyn, is what is considered “a success story”. Not only is she a good student, but she is also president of her class. As if that weren’t enough, she has started an association for Latinas at the school. In this conversation I asked her about her feelings toward Notre Dame high school. She had nothing but good things to say about the school and its staff. She was a little less enthusiastic about the Principal and even related some stories of what she considers racist attitudes on her part.

Rosemarie was the only teen mother to graduate from Notre Dame in 2005. She is presently attending Hunter College where she is Creative Writing major. She is a straight A student. She and her now 4-year-old daughter still visit Notre Dame High school where she still has close relationships with the staff. She expressed gratitude at the support she received from the school during her pregnancy. Though she has no complaints about the quality of the education she received at Notre Dame, she does wish she had been taught more about her own culture during her time there. She is now taking Puerto Rican Studies classes at Hunter. She also plans to visit Puerto Rico for the first time this summer because she wants her daughter to learn about her culture. Both Egypt and Rosemarie, like Josie, have chosen to reconnect with their cultural roots.

These girls come from traditional Latin homes, but live in a racialized contemporary American society. In order to succeed they have to construct their identities accordingly.

And how these identity negotiations take place has been unique to each. “Negotiating gender roles in both the home and host cultures becomes one of the major developmental tasks for immigrant adolescents. Thus, young women or adolescent girls who migrate with their families confront the question of how to “become American without completely losing their own cultural heritage” (Espin, 1999). However, based on these outcomes it is clear that the ideology, philosophy, and curriculum of the school does matter. There are very clear patterns regarding the potential for both academic and psychological/emotional success at each institution. I will elaborate on these in more detail in the following chapter.

In closing, the following eloquent description of the dance-like fluidity of the identity negotiation process made me reflect on the many forms that this dance has taken in the lives of these students, as well as my own life. Often times it does not feel like a dance at all, but like a violent struggle. I’m sure it is this way for all Latinas, all women, perhaps all human beings. But in retrospect, you come to realize that each dance evolves and develops into an art form. The struggles become less and you can relax enough to allow yourself to be swept away in the sheer joy of movement.

She slid from victim to survivor, from naïve to coy, from deeply experienced young woman to child. In her deposition she dismantled the very categories I so worried we had constructed as sedimented pillars around her, and she wandered among them, pivoting her identity, her self-representations, and therefore, her audiences. She became neither the Other nor the Same. Not even zippered. Her mobile positioning of

contradictions could too easily be written off to inconsistencies of adolescence...but she would better be viewed as an honest narrator of multiple poststructural selves speaking among themselves, in front of an audience searching relentlessly for pigeonholes (Fine, 2000).

The next chapter presents one case study from each of the school sites and will provide the reader with a more detailed exploration of additional factors that have influenced the identity negotiation process, as well as the educational outcomes of these three girls.

Chapter 6:

The Power of Relationships

There was no way for me to explain to [him]...why the thought of leaving my mother...terrified me. He hadn't been there when she showed up on Long island in the middle of a snowstorm to rescue me from sex.... He hadn't heard the pain in her voice when she mourned her unfinished education, young, unmarried motherhood, men who betrayed her. He hadn't been with her at the welfare office, had not stood solemn and scared as she humbled herself before people who would conquer her pride because they couldn't vanquish her spirit. He'd never placed his head on her lap, had never listened as she revealed her dreams for her children, who would, she hoped, be smarter about life than she had been (Santiago, 1998).

I have told my daughter that her values and her heart are her treasure. The rest are just tools for navigating life (Cynthia, mother of Egypt).

In the end it came down to three very special girls, each representing her school. It is important, first, to clarify how these three girls came to be chosen out of the one hundred with whom I initially began the study. In step one of the research, I observed and surveyed classes of approximately 30 girls from each of the schools. As part of the survey I asked for volunteers for further in-depth interviews. I followed up on these surveys by contacting these girls and scheduling the focus group interviews. At this point the numbers had been reduced to about 5 to 7 girls from each of the schools. I conducted two to three focus group interviews at each of the schools and by the time the last of these had been conducted, I had only three girls left from each group. Many had dropped out or lost interest, especially when they realized that it was a long term study and required some time and commitment. I began the last year of the research with three girls from each

school. I then scheduled individual interviews with these nine girls and their families. Here I lost most of the other girls. Many would not show up at their scheduled interviews or would neglect to return my messages. It became increasingly difficult to attain personal information that would enable me to ascertain the changes in their personal lives as a result of single-sex education. In the end, it was mostly those girls who “showed up” that became the representatives of their school. However, there is no denying that I did have some agency or influence over these choices. It is not coincidental, for instance, that my final three choices were the girls with whom I was initially the most impressed.

In this chapter I will present biographical sketches or portraits of each of these three girls as thoroughly and compassionately as possible in order to understand the changes that occurred in their lives during the period of attendance at a single-sex school. These portraits are based on interviews I conducted with the subjects and their parents during the last year of my research. The interviews were extensive. For the sake of brevity I often found it necessary to delete expletives and condense statements. However I made every effort to present their voices as accurately as possible.

Egypt

Egypt was born in New York City to Cynthia and Johnny Alvarado. Cynthia and Johnny were both born in the Dominican Republic and came to New York City as young adults. Cynthia attended a private parochial school in DR, which she loved. As a result of her own fond memories of her Catholic school education, Cynthia always told herself, that if one day she had a child, she would put her in private school. “Catholic school, Catholic! Because I loved the discipline, order, structure, the teaching methodology. It

molds you for the rest of your life.” Johnny attended a vocational all-boys high school in Brooklyn, New York in the early 70s. In spite of what Johnny terms “ a poor quality of education”, especially regarding second language acquisition or bilingual education, he was very grateful for the support he received from several of his instructors and credits the vocational training he received at this school for his present success as an architect. However, the poor quality of education he received in high school and junior high school came back to haunt him in college where he struggled through remediation classes and exams.

Johnny: In high school I got the architectural medal, the Spanish medal, this medal and that medal, lots of goodies, but academically I was not prepared. I didn't even know what a scholarship was. I found out in the school corridor. I saw other students filling out applications and asked them. If it wasn't as a result of that coincidence I would have never have applied. No one told me. My parents had no clue. They couldn't speak English. My guidance counselor in high school almost led me to believe that I could not make it in a four-year college and when I finished school I wanted to find her and kill her. If it wasn't for my brother who had gone through the system, Baruch College - my brother took me by the hand and said no way. You are not going to a two-year program, you are going to a four-year – sure you can make it. Finding a helping hand definitely helped me. Another thing that helped me succeed was having desire. I had that desire to be that profession, so in my mind there was nothing else. I did

not question that I wanted to be an architect. I knew that I wanted it. I desired that and I knew that in order to get there I had to go through the system.

In spite of the obstacles he had to overcome, Johnny is still an advocate of vocational education. Both Cynthia and Johnny came from traditional large Latino families. They met and married in the Dominican Republic and came to New York City to make their lives. It was many years before Cynthia was able to conceive. They had started to accept the fact that they would be childless, when Cynthia finally became pregnant. Her pregnancy was a complicated one. She hemorrhaged at 6 months and spent two months on bed-rest before giving birth to Egypt. It was a c-section birth. From the moment that Egypt was born, “everything in the home revolved around her”. Cynthia asserts that for her and Johnny, raising Egypt became “ a project”. They carefully structured and managed her life. During her pre-school years, Egypt developed asthma. Cynthia and Johnny immediately sent her to Dominican Republic until her condition improved. She lived there with an aunt for a period of one year.

Johnny: She learned to read, write and speak Spanish. She used to go the countryside with my father and she learned about country life and chickens. Because of this she learned to appreciate and be proud of her culture. That stayed in her and did not disappear.

Egypt: When I lived in DR, I lived with him, my *abuelito* [grandfather]. The one thing I remember about him is that he was not educated in a

school. He was educated by life and that's all he needed. He had un *genio* and *caracter* that you're like, damn! And he always emphasized *educacion*. Every time I walked into the house, he was like, Egypt, how is school? He would discuss politics with me at the age of 7. He actually cared about what I thought. The last time I saw him before he died he asked me about school 'Egypt, I want to see my children and grandchildren at the top and if I don't see that it will break my heart.' He used to look at me and say, 'you have something *Chiquita*'.

Upon returning to Brooklyn, Egypt spent only two years in public education. Her mother became concerned at the quality of education she was receiving and tried to convince Johnny that it would be in Egypt's best interest to attend a private parochial school as she herself had done.

Cynthia: I would pickup Egypt and observe the people hanging out in front of the school and listen to them talking and I asked myself, is this where I want my daughter to be educated? No, no, no, no...it's not that she was better than anyone else; it's just that it's her future! I thought to myself there is some reason why I have give birth to her.

Convincing Johnny was another matter entirely. He was an advocate of public education, and at the time was on the board of directors for a community program, El Puente.

He believed that public community education was the best option. In the end, Cynthia took all of Egypt's paperwork and took her to a neighborhood parochial school on her own.

Cynthia: In DR we have a saying, you don't put all your money in a pocket with a hole in it. This is how I felt about keeping my daughter in public education. All my effort and sacrifice would be wasted. I saw the behavior of those children and I knew that kids learn from their peers. I saw my daughter's future in jeopardy and I made a choice.

Egypt attended a neighborhood parochial school, that was approximately 75% white, through out the remainder of her elementary school years. Egypt was not considered a remarkable student and struggled in many subjects. However for Egypt's parents developing her intelligence was only part of the "project":

Johnny: One of the things I have discovered is that Egypt is not bright, as an intellectual. She's not great with testing – she's not good at it. Her grades are not the greatest, so looking from that standpoint she is not the greatest. But as a human being – see that was my project – to make her as human and Christ-like as possible. If you think of your child as a project, and that becomes your priority, then something good has to come out of it.

Even if the child does not have all the material to work with, she can still make it.

Cynthia: I don't care if she is brilliant or what people might say about her. What I want is for her to succeed and make it, but that at the same time she is happy with her life.

Egypt: I'm spoiled in the sense that my parents have had the time to sit down and talk to me - in the material things - not necessarily. My mother made me sit with the elderly and listen to their conversation and what they would say was recorded into my brain. I hated her for doing that to me. She would say, 'you will sit and converse like an adult.' And you know I learned a lot from this. Sometimes I identify more with the elderly than with young people my age and that's because I respect them so much. Anything they say, I just listen. They have words of wisdom in their stories.

Cynthia and Johnny instilled values of respect and humility in Egypt. She was actively involved in the church and was well-versed in the Bible. They taught her to "pray for the thief" and to be "*sencilla*", simple, and to treat all people with respect. "That is why they love her. You go to the *bodega*, or anywhere, and they all ask for Egypt." Because they did not live in the best of neighborhoods Cynthia and Johnny knew they had to keep "Egypt's eyes and brain busy" even if they had to pay for it. "Keeping the child busy is key - it is a good and healthy thing to do." They got her piano lessons and took her traveling all over Europe.

Johnny: This kind of education cost a lot but marks your whole life because learning about cultures - about other people's ways of doing things – you just don't learn that in school. I wanted to expose her to everything so she can broaden her mind, so that when she goes to college she has already seen everything, or almost everything, because she is going to have to compete in the white world. That's what I wanted for her and I think that it helped her life.

When it came time for Egypt to attend secondary school, the public/private debate again arose in the Alvarado home. Cynthia wanted a parochial high school, Johnny advocated for a specialized public high school. The debate ended quickly however when Egypt failed to pass the qualifying exams for the specialized schools. The Alvarado family visited many schools before Egypt finally settled on Notre Dame High School, “the last school on the list.” Cynthia and Johnny were most impressed by the ethnic/racial diversity of the student body, the warm and welcoming climate, and the positive attitudes of both students and faculty, especially Ms. Frawley with whom Egypt had developed an instant connection. They fondly recalled, when we walked out of the school Egypt turned and said to us, “guys get your pockets ready because this is the place I'm coming to.” At Notre Dame, Egypt flourished. “We never received any negative reports about Egypt from the school. Everything was always wonderful.” The Alvarados found that the school's values and educational philosophy were totally in line with their own. “What they taught her there was the same thing we were teaching her here.” The school also

believed in keeping the child busy and strongly emphasized community service and extracurricular activities. “Egypt would not get home until 7:30 pm. That was her life.”

The aspect of her Notre Dame experience that had the most positive impact on Egypt was the student teacher interaction.

Egypt: I have teachers that I still write to and stay in touch with, especially my World History teacher, Ms. Frawley – I love her to death. I find so much in her that inspires me - she and Ms. Kaufman the French teacher. We had a really good relationship. Some people were not too fond of Ms. Kaufman but I thought she was a very strong and direct person and you can't find too many direct people and that struck me. I liked it – I loved her. Sometimes I would sit and talk to her for two hours – talking about politics and other things. She was the first person that said to me, ‘you’re not going to do medical, you are going to do something in politics.’

Unfortunately, Egypt’s experiences with the school principal were not as pleasant. Egypt described her as “*rara*” and an “oddball” and as not being “pro-Latina”. She is concerned that now that there are more Latinas coming into the school the quality of education will diminish, because she feels this woman ‘just won’t care about them.’ She shared several incidents in which she felt that the principal’s attitude toward her was condescending and even disparaging. In addition the school curriculum at ND was Eurocentric and culture-blind just like at TWYLS. Egypt could remember only one cultural event – dance classes with the Ballet Folklorico. And these were organized and sponsored by an outside

organization. When I asked Egypt's parent about the euro-centric curriculum, they seemed unconcerned.

Johnny: In Christianity boundaries do not exist, so religion comes first, culture is second. People are more important than culture. We can respect and learn about other cultures without losing our identity. Be Latino, but don't limit yourself to that. The world does not revolve around us. If something works – try it.

When Egypt was 14/15 years of age, she started to change. Her parents became concerned that she was succumbing to peer pressure. She started to demand more freedom, especially regarding dating and her choice of clothing.

Egypt: I've never said I wanted to fit in. I've said, ok, how can I fit in while still being me? Because I have to fit, I mean in order to move I have to be socially... That was my experience in Notre Dame. It was hard because there were times when I thought you know I want to do that or I want to do this – like I wanted to have a boyfriend when I was in high school. I was like Aye, *Santo Dios*, but mom said you're only like what... 16? And I was like, *pero yo quiero un novio*. So she said, do you want a cell phone? And I said No, *yo quiero un novio*. But it was only because I saw how all these other girls had boyfriends and I thought that must be something I should get. I was thinking about it like you could just go to

the supermarket and get one. The other girls would ask me and when they asked me I would be like hmm, the love department aint going so well for me.

The Alvarados again used everything at their disposal to get Egypt through this rough patch. “We used religion, family, culture, eating out, and traveling.” Egypt graduated Notre Dame with flying colors and was accepted at Smith, an elite all-girls college.

Her first year was very difficult. Johnny and Cynthia recall, “She hated it. She did not want to stay, but we convinced her to finish the semester. We told her that if her feelings did not change by the end of that semester, she could go somewhere else. Adapting to a new place takes strength. It does not occur immediately, so we told her to hold on and be strong. But we also assured her that our door was always open and that our support of her would continue, unchanged.” Egypt stayed on and is now completing her second year at Smith. I met with Egypt for the last time in the spring semester of her second year at Smith. She had just switched from pre-med to Law. She seemed almost hesitant to tell me, as if she felt I might be disappointed in her. She and I spent three hours talking about her experiences at Notre Dame and at Smith.

Egypt: The transition from high school to college is not an easy one. I found many people still trying to find themselves, especially if the high school experience was a shaky one. You’re still trying to figure out who and what you are and what you like. There’s a lot of pressure, not only academic – though its more academic, and this is where the hard part

comes in because Smith is known for giving a lot of work - *mira mas que* Harvard or Yale. The work...it's amazing. I don't even know how to explain...I'm like, organization doesn't help, and color-coding doesn't do it. My first semester sucked. My grades were low, low, low, because I felt like I was happy with how I was doing but I was just pushing to get through. And it was so hard to come home to my family. And say, hey guys I passed a class. C- sounded good to me. But they were not hard on me. They were like its ok. It's your first semester. But the second semester they were like '*Ponte los pantalones, Dominiqui* and move on.' I also had hard experiences with friends. I didn't find the right people from the beginning. They were trying to suppress who I was. They were odd people – not uplifting. I couldn't protest anything – I couldn't cry in front of them. They were like you just can't handle stress. I don't think they were mature enough. Now I have great people around me, intelligent as well. They are blessings – well rounded in the sense that they have experienced aspects of life that I have not – like growing up with only one parent. They are also under stress both emotional and academic and I listen to them and I think it makes me more sensitive.

Egypt feels that being away at school has strengthened her relationship with her parents. They have had to learn to "draw back" and let her resolve her issues on her own. Regarding her future, Egypt feels that upon graduation she would like to return to her community in Williamsburg and do something related to politics.

Egypt: I've learned to appreciate my community more. It's hard to come back and see our community shrinking - with no sense of purpose. My people are having difficulty staying, because our culture is being washed down the drain by another group. It hurts me. Because they have the money and the Latinos are still trying to figure it out. I try to have knowledge of what happens in the area because when I come back, and I will, I want to contribute, so I can be useful, but first I need to have something to contribute. I would love to work with Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez. I love Williamsburg. I feel a human warmth here. Where else can I go and find that? The woman down the block who has been doing my hair my entire life tells me she wants to come to my graduation. She is like family to me, so she is coming to my graduation. All of them want to come. Can you imagine them at the gates of Smith with a *lechón* playing *merengue* music? I would love that.

Rachel

Rachel was born in Brooklyn to Becky and Junior Rodriguez. Both Becky and Junior were born in Puerto Rico and came to New York as small children. Becky was born in Mayaguez and came to the United States at the age of 16 months. She grew up in the largely Hispanic Bushwick area of Brooklyn and attended neighborhood public schools. When Becky was 10 years old, her father disappeared and her mother was forced to take

on two jobs. Shortly thereafter Becky and her three sisters was sent to Puerto Rico to live with her grandmother, and attended high school there for three years.

Becky: I loved school there and since I had to get adjusted to the language, because I didn't know how to read or anything in Spanish, and I accomplished it and had such good grades - all As, when she decided to bring us back I kind of rebelled, so I told her I wanted to get a job and would attend night school and she said ok as long as you go to school.

At the age of sixteen, she met her first husband- a Cuban man eight years older than she was – and fell in love. She agreed to marry him on the condition that she be allowed to continue her education. Unfortunately after they were married he did not respect his agreement. “ He was so jealous and possessive. He did not want anybody to even look at me. That ruined my life.” In spite of alcoholism, mental abuse and infidelity, Becky remained in this marriage for 14 years and raised two sons. Both graduated college. One became a teacher in Puerto Rico and the other is a businessman. She was not able to get her GED until she was thirty years old and finally divorced.

Approximately five years later, she met Junior at a picnic. He was a male carrier that was somehow related to her brother-in-law. They liked each other and started dating. Two years later they were married and three years after that Rachel was born. It was at that point that Junior changed.

Becky: He thought that because I had a baby I was stuck with him. He started doing all those things he had promised me he would never do, like hanging-out, gambling, drinking, and cheating. That was the beginning of the end.

Rachel spent the first two years of her life in Bay Ridge and then her family purchased a home in Florida. When Rachel was six years old, Junior and Becky split-up. Rachel claims the break-up was difficult for her but watching them argue everyday was even more of a problem. "I would sit there on the stairs and pray to God to make my daddy change so everyone could be happy." After the breakup Becky and Rachel moved into Becky's mother's house also in Florida. Becky believes Rachel was hurt by Junior's lack of interest in having a father/daughter relationship with her.

Becky: He has never been interested in spending time with Rachel. That has hurt her a lot, especially as she has gotten older. He rejects her. She has always adored him, but now she is in a lot of pain.

Rachel attended one and a half years of public school in Florida. As a result of a medical condition, Becky had to remove Rachel from school in the middle of her kindergarten year. She was home-schooled for a period of five years using the A-Beka Christian curriculum from Pensacola Florida. The curriculum was primarily taught to Rachel via videotaped classes. Becky served as a co-facilitator and handled the drills and

assessment. Rachel feels the program was very thorough and effective. When she returned to public school, first in Florida and then New York, she found she was two years ahead of her classmates in both math and English. She feels this was due to the individualized attention and the lack of distractions in the home. In addition she was raised to be completely bilingual as a result of frequent visits to Puerto Rico prior to the age of ten, and a strong relationship with her grandmother (who only speaks Spanish).

In 1999 Rachel and Becky moved to Staten Island permanently and Rachel graduated elementary school. Rachel attended a “ghetto” junior high school. “Oh my God, fights broke out all the time, but I was the teachers pet, so I was not really affected by the bad influences around me until maybe the 8th grade.” Rachel cut class for the first time that year. “I didn’t really have anyone to cut with, so I stayed home.” Because of her model student status, Rachel lied to her teachers and was able to get away with it. Unfortunately, this would begin a pattern that would continue throughout her high school career. Her relationship with her mom was such that her mother trusted and believed in Rachel.

Becky: At thirteen, she started changing, but she was still good – respectful. She did her homework, but she wasn’t into school too much because they would always call her – bookworm, so she stopped caring a little. When she started high school she started very good. She had honors in Fashion, but this one teacher was very, very hard on her. Sarah complained that she was very rude. The first year everything she did she got 97, 98, but this teacher didn’t like my daughter, She would embarrass her. It all started because of homework. She got an attitude with Rachel

and she [Rachel] completely shut down. This teacher was the first to fail her for homework. I went to the counselor and asked her do you think this is fair. The counselor told me that at Fashion it is up to the teachers. Rachel became rebellious after that. She said, ma, I'm not going to care anymore.

Becky related several such stories to me regarding conflicts that Rachel had been engaged in with the teachers, counselors, and staff of Fashion Industries High School. Usually the problems revolved around the homework issue, but there were also issues with lateness, cutting, and negative peer influence. Though it is clear that Becky understands that Rachel is not completely innocent of blame, she initially tended for the most part to side with Rachel and usually presented her as the victim in these scenarios. Becky never wanted Rachel to attend Fashion Industries High School. Friends had told her that the neighborhood was not "good".

Becky: Rachel picked Fashion. She convinced me, because I did not want her to go there. She's an artist and, um, so I said to myself... They told me that that neighborhood was not good at all – a lot of people telling me bad things. I didn't know that it was almost all girls or that the boys that go there are gay and that there are a lot of lesbians. I didn't know that. That's definitely a negative, because at that age they go by what their friends like very easily. They can be brainwashed. A child at that age has to be very strong and have their own mind that they don't go along with others. The

way they are at that school, they're very liberal and they're always telling my daughter, oh in our house... we're allowed to do this. We're allowed to go out and then...but now she doesn't hang out with anyone at the school.

By the end of her third semester at Fashion Industries, Rachel had become an accomplished liar and forger. At this point she was only attending school for two to three days a week. The remainder of the time was spent with her boyfriend, with whom she had commenced a sexual relationship. Rachel did most of her cutting at home, while her mother was working. Because she continued to do well in her classes and, had an engaging and charming personality, she was able to literally con her teachers, guidance counselor, and mother. She claims that the school security guards actually helped her leave early. "I asked the guard if I could leave before 8th period and he responded, "You see that door? If there's no one in uniform at the door, they can't stop you from walking out. So I just walked out. That's what a lot of the kids did." By the end of that semester, Becky caught on to Rachel's activities and visited the school guidance counselor.

Becky: The first time I found out my daughter was cutting it was through someone I knew, not the school. I wasn't getting any absence cards. I think the counselor knew about it, but didn't do anything. They only said that if anything I would be the one to blame, when I had to go to work. If a truant officer picks her up, you're the one in trouble because a parent is

responsible for knowing where their children are. I said but I'm working.
How could I know if she's cutting?

Rachel continued to lie to cover up her activities with her friends and boyfriend. Rachel was placed on a daily sign-in sheet to try to monitor her attendance.

Rachel: It didn't really mean anything because it was just to show my mom. After about three weeks, I stopped doing it and no one really cared. My mom questioned it, but I basically talked my way out of it. I'm really good at that.

The school never followed up on Rachel's activities thoroughly nor did they again mention the sign-in sheet. Only one faculty member ever called the home in the entire four years that Rachel attended Fashion, and this misguided person confused Rachel with her mother and never actually spoke to Becky. In spite of all this, Rachel was able to slide by academically until her junior year. Rachel failed her first class in the second semester of her junior year, not as a result of cutting or absences, but because she was missing a project. "Absences might lower your grade, but at the end of the term it all comes down to the work you hand in, as long as they don't think you are a habitual cutter." At the beginning of senior year, Rachel failed English again and by the second semester she stopped attending school all together, this time with her mother's knowledge.

Rachel: I think my fascination with cutting, besides being able to get away with it, was being free. My mom wasn't there to tell me I couldn't do something. And sometimes in the morning, if we got into an argument, I would think ok I'm not going to school. It was like giving myself a treat.

Two months into her final semester, after a heated argument with Becky, Rachel decided she did not want to complete her education at Fashion. She and Becky visited the school again. In Becky's presence, the attendance officer agreed to "make a deal" with Rachel. They agreed that if she signed in at the attendance office on a daily basis, and attended at least two of her classes, they wouldn't call her house. Her guidance counselor did not agree to this and continued to insist that Rachel could still get all the credits she needed in order to graduate if she attended and passed all her academic courses. However she confided to her privately, that she did not necessarily have to pass gym or art. Unfortunately, the guidance counselor and attendance officer did not inform Rachel's teachers of this "deal" and they continued to treat her like a "delinquent". They did not agree to give Rachel preferential treatment and continued to insist that she needed to complete and hand in all the semester's work, including what she had missed, in order to pass. It seemed to Rachel that no body cared about her situation. One teacher told her, "I'm not going to feel sorry for you because basically you get the grade you deserve. I don't do pity parties." Rachel became frustrated and angry with the school. She felt totally unmotivated and found she could no longer get out of bed in the mornings. Meanwhile, the attendance office had started calling the home again causing arguments

and conflict in the home. When Rachel reminded them of the “deal” they had made with her, they responded, with attitude, that they were too busy to change the rules for her. “When my mom is not concerned, they don’t care.” Finally, the school wrote a formal note to Rachel and her mom asking that Rachel sign herself out of the school permanently as a result of absences.

Rachel has recently accepted a job with a Babies R Us store in Staten Island and hopes to attend a high school program in the fall in order to earn the remaining 4 credits she needs toward the completion of her high school diploma. She still believes she can graduate by January, take the SATS, and attend the College of Staten Island in 2007.

Rachel: I don’t want to end up not going to college. Not too many people in my family have gone to college. I want to make them proud. The older generation struggled to keep us from making the same mistakes they made. I don’t want to let them down. I don’t regret going to Fashion because regardless of what life throws at you, you have to make the best of it. I make it a point to not regret anything in my life, but to see it as an experience or a challenge. I did learn responsibility in that school because everything was on me. No one else in that school really helped me.

Becky acknowledges that Rachel is a great actress. “I get confused, because she lies so well. I don’t know when she’s telling the truth or when she’s lying.” However, she too primarily faults the school for what has happened with Rachel, as a result of their mismanagement of the situation and their uncaring attitude.

Becky: My daughter has changed so much to the worse. I no longer recognize my daughter. We were very close and now we are no longer friends – ever since she started going to Fashion. I want to get my daughter back. She is very, very intelligent. I really wish she would feel the desire again for school. She always says she will go to college, but right now she just needs a break. I feel a little sad because she doesn't show that she wants to improve her grades or anything. She says nobody cares so why should I struggle. I'm hurting. If I knew she was a C student, but she is a very, very smart girl. There is nothing impossible for Rachel and to see the end like this – the end of high school – when she should have been with honors. It hurts.

Jubilee

Jubilee was born in New York City to Teresa and Julio. Both Teresa and Julio were born in Puerto Rico and came to the United States as young adults. Teresa came from a large traditional Latino family of thirteen, of which she was the youngest. Her parents stayed together for their entire lives. She was the first in her family to attend college. She earned a BA degree from a Catholic University in Puerto Rico and came to El Barrio straight out of college to live with her sisters. At the time her goal was to get a job in education in district 4, but language was a problem. Teresa did not speak any English. She taught herself how to read English by reading the *Daily News* and attended classes in English at the Women's Network on 116th Street. Eventually she got a job working as a

caseworker for an incarcerated mothers program. She still works for that program today. She feels she still has problems with the language but “can defend and present herself well”.

Jubilee: My mom is such an independent woman and such a *strong* woman. If you meet her you’re probably gonna get the same vibe because my mother has done so much since coming from Puerto Rico straight out of college, not knowing English and, um, she used to go to court and still like - she had to defend her clients -so it’s like my mother – this woman is undefeated – like nobody can defeat her. She was a woman that you had to fear.

Julio grew up in a campo in Cayey. He too was the youngest of thirteen children. Sadly he lost his father when he was two years old. His mother opened up a bar to make money and Julio’s older brothers were frequently drunk and abusive toward him. He dropped out of school in Puerto Rico in the 9th grade and never went back. Teresa says that it was their shared love of their music that brought her and Julio together. They were both strongly grounded in their culture. They met at a salsa dance in New York City, fell in love, and married. Shortly thereafter their first child was born, a boy. Jubilee was born only three years later. Teresa recalls how nervous Julio was the day that Jubilee was born. “He was useless and I really wished he wasn’t there. I told him to get out.”

Jubilee: My father was a street guy and he was like into drugs and stuff like that. My mother told me that he didn't actually change until she had me and like that made me so proud of my father. Despite what he was or what he used to do, I still loved him and I thought so highly of him. I used to defend my father from my mother a lot of times and I considered myself a daddy's girl. It was interesting cause I felt like he changed for me - like I felt – like it was a big thing. My father and my mother are totally different – their upbringing was totally different. I always used to say that I loved my father more because he was more flexible and loving. He always used to come out of nowhere and give me a hug and a kiss and be like, Oh God you're growing up but you're still my little girl, and stuff like that. It was cool.

Jubilee and her family always lived in El barrio. When Jubilee was little they lived in an area she describes as a “crack head ghetto”. Jubilee states that even though the area she presently lives in is better “ across the street from Central Park, the building is actually prettier, the rooms bigger, and stuff like that”, she grew to hate it because of the people.

Jubilee: The area where I live now is ghetto too, drugs and killings and stuff like that, but the difference is that back then [in her old neighborhood] it was the older people who were doing it and my father was involved with those people, so it was more of a family type of thing.

My mother tells me that she used to go down stairs with me in a carriage and my brother and sit down in a beach chair and like everything was, um, like still hood but it was like cool.

Teresa became the disciplinarian in her home and raised her children in a strict Pentecostal church. Jubilee and her brother were required to attend this church for most of their young lives. She also raised them to love and appreciate their Latino culture as much as she did. She took her children home to Puerto Rico once or twice every year. They both learned to speak, read and write Spanish, as well as to appreciate Puerto Rican food, music and traditions.

Jubilee: I am so into my culture. When I said I was born in NY, I wanted to say *unfortunately*. I always tell my mom, why couldn't you go to Puerto Rico when I was born so I could've been born there? I love Puerto Rico. I used to go over there every year, but recently it has been twice a year - Christmas and summer. The longest I've stayed is two months. And, um, this is since I was a baby so half my life is in Puerto Rico and I love it. Because it's like when I go over there it's not a vacation. It's like I'm going to my second home.

Though Teresa and Julio stayed together, it was she who was the primary care giver, disciplinarian, and provider for her children. She also made all the decisions regarding the education of her children. Her husband was completely disconnected from these

issues. Teresa relates a story of how Julio showed up at the wrong school for one of Jubilee's graduations: "He did not even know what school she was in." When Jubilee graduated from elementary school, Teresa heard about the Young Women's Leadership school and decided that it was the best choice for Jubilee. "It was an all girls school, in the neighborhood, and it was public – you didn't have to pay". Jubilee was not thrilled with the decision. She initially hated the school and resented her mother for sending her there. "I felt mad and had no kind of identity because my mom chose my life."

Jubilee: I didn't want to come to this school. My mom wanted me to come – because it's all girls. I guess she thought I used to play with boys a lot and I guess she wanted to get me out of that I don't know why. But I wanted to go to the same school all my friends were going to – a coed school. I was like, oh my god! An all girls' school? - None of my close friends were coming here so I was like...scared. I didn't know what the hell it was going to be like.

In spite of her initial objections, Jubilee eventually came to appreciate several aspects of the school, including the quality of education, the fact that it was easier to focus and do work without boys as a distraction, and that it was a college preparatory school. However, it was never smooth sailing for Jubilee at TYWLS Teresa recalls that she had to come to school on several occasions to deal with issues related to "conduct":

Teresa: I had to leave work and go up to the school many times for things like cell phone use, smoking outside of the school, and wearing the school badge upside down. Jubilee is confrontational. She is like me. She stands up for herself and that caused problems. They showed preferential treatment at the school and many other girls were pushed out.

Jubilee's favorite subject at school was Spanish and her favorite teacher was Ana (interviewed in chapter 4).

Jubilee: A lot of people don't like Ana because of her focus on Spanish culture but I love Ana. My mother loves her because not only is she Hispanic, but also she is so strict. She gets mad that there are some Hispanic girls that don't even speak Spanish and she gets mad because why don't parents teach their kids? And that's why my mom and her get along, because my mom raised us speaking Spanish. Ana and I have a good relationship because I understand her. She's Dominican and she's proud. If you are Puerto Rican, you need to be proud and if you are Mexican, you need to be proud. If you're not proud of your culture and language, nobody is going to be because this is an English dominated system so if you're not taught in the home you're not going to get it anywhere else. In her class you couldn't speak English. She would talk to

you only in Spanish. I thought it was cool but some people didn't like her
for that and

even told her that if they didn't feel like speaking Spanish, they wouldn't. She also taught Spanish dances, like Salsa and we did a research project on different Hispanic countries. Mine was Cuba. Ana was strict but after class she was like your friend and that's what I liked about her.

At 15 years old Jubilee began to rebel against her mother's rigid mandates and stopped attending her neighborhood church. Instead she started attending another more liberal church of her own choosing in the Lower East side. After a year she stopped going to that one as well because, "I still felt like I was going because of my mom."

Jubilee: That's why I leaned more towards my father because he was not a churchman and I loved some of the stuff from this world. Like there was a time when I couldn't buy pants. My mom had to buy them for me and it was her taste and I didn't like it. I wanted to wear the tight jeans and go to church whenever I feel like it, and it wasn't like that.

When I visited Jubilee in her senior year, her relationship with her parents had changed significantly, as a result of what we came to refer to as the "incident". Julio's infidelities had become public knowledge the year prior. Teresa had eventually forgiven Julio, after a brief two-month separation, and allowed him back in the house, but Jubilee found she could not be as forgiving. She resented both her parents – her father for what he had done and for trying to blame it on her mother, and her mother for forgiving him and allowing

him back into the home. The “incident” forced Jubilee to reevaluate her loyalties and family relationships from a very adult perspective.

Jubilee: Even though I think I loved my father more, I don't think I loved my father more. I just felt like my feelings leaned a little more toward him but I'm very appreciative of my mother regardless, because she taught me not to rely on any guy – to be strong – even what she has done. It has taught me that I would never accept that my man cheated on me because I don't want my father in my house because of what he did. I'm definitely not going to put up with it from any man. I feel like if you love somebody you won't do it – period! I also got from my mom that I need to struggle to get where I have to go sometimes. The struggles are hard but that's fine. I have to accept struggle and I got that from my mother. Um, even though she enforced a lot of things on me like school and religion um I still have my beliefs and that's because of her and school wise I want to go to college, not because she enforced it but because she has taught me, both of them have taught me that. I don't want to end up like my father, even though he has always been a hardworking man and he has also had his struggles. I know I can't hate him for my entire life, but I want to be like my mom. She is the head of the family and I want to be like that. I want to rule in my house.

In June of that year, Jubilee graduated from the Young Women's Leadership school and attended Marymount College, a largely white private institution on the Upper East-side of Manhattan. Teresa believes that Jubilee chose Marymount because the staff at TYWLS encouraged the girls to "go away to expensive private schools". Jubilee claims she chose it because it had a good psych program and she liked "the small school vibe". I met with Jubilee in early March and she confided in me that she hated the school and wants to transfer out. She had failed two classes the first semester and felt she might fail another this semester. She said she didn't fit in and found herself spending most of her free time at Hunter, a public city college, a few blocks away. "The students at Marymount are mostly white wealthy out of state kids who don't understand the struggle". Jubilee felt that the students in her classes were ignorant of social inequalities. She related one story to me where a professor, a Puerto Rican man, asked his students what were the races in the United States. "This one white girl answered, white and minority. I was like, oh my god! And she wasn't even trying to be funny or anything. She was totally serious."

Jubilee takes school very seriously. She wants to study for a PhD, but also wants to enjoy her college years. She has gotten into the habit of staying out late almost every night, especially on Fridays. This caused some conflict with Teresa, but the two were able to negotiate a truce that has allowed Teresa to maintain some sense of control. Jubilee feels that her mother is finally "loosening up". Initially Jubilee wanted to live in the dorms, but now she is glad she could not get in. Her relationship with her brother has

improved dramatically. Nevertheless, she worries about the fact he doesn't seem to know what to do with himself and gets depressed when he is out of work or has no money.

Jubilee: It feels a lot like when we were younger. We go to the movies together and I borrow money from him [giggles]. He talks to me about personal stuff and we lie in bed and watch TV together. If I was away from home, I would feel depressed, because I feel good when I'm in my area, especially because my school is so different. I don't feel ... in place. When I go home to El Barrio, I know I'm ok – it's ok. I feel like a lot of the decisions I make are because of how I was brought up. If I had gone to a different school, it would not have made any difference - my mentality would still be the same. I am a family-oriented person.

Jubilee, Egypt, and Rachel are all first generation Latino girls living and studying in New York City. They are similar in many ways and vastly different in others. All three are the only girls in their families. All three have working parents who love them and wanted to provide them with the best possible education. However, the resulting educational outcomes have been very different depending on the type of school chosen. This is not to underestimate the importance of the home environment. Based on this research, home appears to be the primary site of identity construction, especially considering the differences in socioeconomic status, culture, discipline, religion, and family stability I encountered. However, there is no doubt that by either supporting or undermining parental authority, the school impacts very strongly on the educational

outcomes of these girls, often with disastrous results as in Rachel's case. The school, as a "normalizing" institution, wields a great deal of power. How this power is utilized at these very different schools will be analyzed in more detail in my final chapter.

Chapter 7:

Who can Find a Women of “Virtue”

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies... Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her candle goeth not out at night... Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all... Give her the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Proverbs 31:10-31).

In March of 2006, I met with the mothers of my case study group for the last time. We were to share a dinner together to celebrate the end of my research. When I arrived Cynthia was already waiting. She greeted me with an effusive hug. I ran into the restaurant to check us in. When I came back out, I saw Cynthia speaking to a well-dressed woman. It was not until I stepped closer that I realized that woman was Becky. We quickly embraced. I expressed surprise at seeing the two of them chatting so amiably and asked if they had met previously. Cynthia quickly jumped to inform me that they had just met that evening while waiting for me, but that as soon as they saw one another they felt something and knew each other. They could not quite explain it, but felt “there was something between them”. By the time Teresa arrived they were best friends. We were called immediately into the restaurant and were seated in a very noisy center table. I expressed my gratitude to the mothers for their support with my research and formally

invited them to attend my defense. I felt that they should be there to see the outcome of all the work we had accomplished together.

We spent three wonderful hours together that night, discussing our daughters, our pains, our struggles. Cynthia and Teresa both seemed relaxed and comfortable. Their daughters were “past the danger point” and were now college students. Teresa talked about the sense of relief she now felt. Her load had lightened. She now felt she could go away more, take more time for herself, get her nails done, and be a wife to her husband again. Becky, however, was still in the midst of her struggles with her own daughter Rachel of Fashion Industries High School. Her graduation was now seriously in doubt. She did not have the required credits and was in danger of failing due to excessive absenteeism and habitual cutting. In addition she had become verbally confrontational with her mother and had threatened to leave the home (now that she was 18). Becky was ill, both in body and spirit. She related to us her lengthy list of ailments – she could barely walk and had recently passed out and ended up in the hospital. The doctors had diagnosed her with the flu. Teresa and Cynthia exchanged looks. It seemed clear to all present what our primary purpose was to be on that night.

In the hours that followed Becky shared the details of her pain with us over pina coladas and was altered by that sharing. The other mothers listened, supported, and laughed. Becky laughed as well, and in that tearful laughter her pain evaporated, dissolved. I observed all this in awe. These three very different women became one entity that night. And strength, along with advice, was freely given and accepted. Cynthia suggested that Becky take her pain to God. “You can not let your daughter see you with this Boo Hoo....She must see you as a woman of strength and character.” Teresa

discussed her own issues with Jubilee regarding the negotiation of freedom and responsibilities, and explained how she had put her foot down to resolve these issues in her home. We discussed acceptance and “letting go” – a hard proposition for any Latina mother. And there were moments of reflexive silence.

I asked a few questions intermittently and at one point I asked about husbands and fathers and the role they played in the raising of the children. Teresa responded, “My husband helps out financially but I am everything to my kids. You know he was seeing another woman a while ago, pero ahora yo lo tengo controlado, and I taught Jubilee to control him too.” And then it happened. She mentioned words I did not know or understand. She said “*Una Mujer de Virtud, Quien la Encuentra?*” The others chimed in, in agreement. I was unfamiliar with the biblical passage, but they all knew it word for word. And I marveled at the coincidence. They discussed it at length while I listened. It was a passage that was obviously extremely relevant to them. Cynthia explained, “It is important because as Latina women we are perceived as docile and subservient, but this passage says *she* is the manager, the business woman, the abundant producer, the wise and astute one. The husband is welcome at the gates but only because of *her* works. *She* is the strength in her home.” And there it was.

As I analyzed the research findings, this revelatory moment returned to me time and time again. It bought me back to Foucault and his own theories regarding power. Where does the true power lie? I started out thinking the school curriculum had power, but both the parents and the students had convinced me otherwise. They believed the curriculum content itself was of negligible importance – almost insignificant. My initial assumption was that the more culturally familiar and community/family oriented the school, the

greater the overall level of satisfaction with the entire school experience. I clearly overestimated the importance of culture (as in race/ethnicity). In order to be successful in this society it is important to accommodate the dominant culture to some extent and to learn their values and mores. Both parents and students in my study seemed to understand this better than I. However, this accommodation can't be accomplished by devaluing the home environment, which includes culture. My familiarity with the history of single-sex education in Latino culture led me to assume that single-sex schools would be a more comfortable environment for Latinas and their parents. In a sense the research study has borne this out. Though gender segregation may not be the most important factor in determining successful academic outcomes, it was definitely considered a positive for the majority of Latino students and their parents in these programs. In this regard, my assumption was at least partially correct.

The single most important factor in determining successful educational outcomes, as reported by all my respondents, was the quality of relationships – teacher/student, teacher/parent, and parent/child. It was the parent/child relationship that impacted most strongly on educational success or failure. And those schools that were the most successful were those that reinforced the values/goals of the home environment and worked in partnership with the parents to achieve these mutual goals for the child. In my initial survey and interviews, students at all three schools reported preference for single-sex environment because of the family-like feeling and positive relationships. In the lexical analysis, almost 50% of the respondents surveyed (largely at FIHS and NDHS) actually used the word *love* to describe their feelings for the school and staff. If the school is to be the bridge that facilitates the transmission of knowledge from one world to

the next, it appears the method used to transmit this knowledge must be love and care (Valenzuela, 1999; Noddings, 2003).

Applying Foucault's theoretical definitions of "disciplinary power" to the schools can be a useful tool in understanding their success or failure to adequately educate transnational and/or immigrant populations. Foucault understood power as something that was all around us and something that all people, all groups, had access to:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they're always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. (Foucault, 1980)

The disciplinary powers are techniques used toward "the ordering of human multiplicities". These techniques, according to Foucault, had to fulfill three basic criteria:

... first, to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost; second, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible... third, to link this "economic" growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial,

or medical) within which it is exercised in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system. (Foucault, 1984)

Because schools often act as the vehicles by which different populations are sifted through the system, organized, catalogued, and fitted for different roles in society, the types of disciplinary power used must perforce vary from institution to institution. The types of disciplinary power described by Foucault are as follows:

1. Disciplinary or Normalizing power:

Schools exercise disciplinary power as a means of “normalizing” young people. These disciplinary institutions and practices produce “ a submissive, productive and trained source of labor for society”.

The workshop, the school, the army were subject to a whole micropenality of time (latenesses, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (“incorrect” attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency). At the same time, by way of punishment, a whole series of subtle procedures was used, from light physical punishment minor deprivations, and petty humiliations...a certain coldness, a certain indifference, ...(Foucault, 1984).

We are all familiar with such practices. They are usually employed in large public schools, such as Fashion Industries, schools that contain more students than they can reasonably be expected to handle. These institutions resort to this type of power in order to manage and maintain control over the large populations that come through their doors on a daily basis. The harried teachers in these schools teach 150 students every day and do not have the time or ability to guide with love or kindness.

Regarding this type of education, Becky stated in our final interview, that this type of schooling only works “if the child is 100% sure of what she wants and is highly motivated, because she can’t count on the teachers or counselors for help”.

According to all my Fashion respondents the disciplinary power exercised at Fashion is unstructured, inconsistent and chaotic and produces an environment of neglect, negative experimentation, and permissiveness.

2. Governmental or bio-power:

As Foucault explains, bio-power or governmental power works by “distributing the living in a domain of value and utility.” It functions through the use of quantitative methods that emerged primarily in the eighteenth century. “Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor.” It “gave rise to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups taken as a

whole” in order to acquire knowledge of them, so as to control their movement and placement in society.

As I explained in chapter 3, it is very clear that this is happening at the present with the Latino population. All public institutions are agents of disciplinary power, but of the three schools I researched, the curriculum and philosophy of TYWLS seemed most closely aligned with these goals. TYWLS’s very existence can be attributed to the use of statistical data (dropout rates, pregnancy rates, math/science scores) for Latinas. It was only as a result of their manipulation of this data that they were able to slip through a legal loophole in Title IX that allowed for single-sex education as “affirmative action” to remedy an educational “imbalance”. The founders of TYWLS needed a “disadvantaged” group, Latinas, in order to justify their existence, hence the cultural deficit discourse. In order to continue to justify itself it has to produce quantifiable, measurable proof that indicates that they are indeed successfully moving this population toward more successful educational outcomes. In essence the students of TYWLS are pawns on a chessboard being moved for purposes they do not yet fully understand. These schools may be more concerned with numbers than they are with the actual care of human beings. Foucault suggest that “the population...is ... the object in the hands of government, aware... of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it” (McNay, 1994).

In Teresa’s case even though the curriculum may not be what she desired, and the school “showed preferential treatment” she would still recommend the school for the opportunities it offered Jubilee. “It’s about her future.” Teresa felt the all-girl’s aspect of the school was the biggest positive. “It helped them focus. Boys are not the priority

in their lives.” And she added that because of the small size “they get a lot more personal attention”. Jubilee is a young woman strongly grounded in her culture. Thus she has not been impacted negatively by the euro-centric curriculum and attitudes at TWYLS. “She has continued to be a Latina and wants to prove that Latinas can succeed.”

3. Pastoral power:

The strength of this power lies in the power of relationship – the relationship of the shepherd or guide to his flock, or that of the teacher (as counselor and guide) to her students.

The notion of pastorship...first appears in Hebrew thought and is subsequently intensified in the Christian tradition. Several themes run through the Hebrew notion of pastorship. Firstly, it is the relation of the shepherd to his flock.... Secondly, the shepherd gathers together and unifies his flock, which, without his presence, would consist only of dispersed individuals. Thirdly, the shepherd’s role is to ensure the salvation of his flock through constant, individualized and final kindness. Finally the shepherd should watch over his flock with scrupulous and detailed attention.... Converging with the governmental concern with efficient management, salvation takes on a new meaning in a series of worldly aims such as health, well being, (in the sense of sufficient wealth, and standard of living), security...(McNay, 1994).

Of the three schools implicated in this study, pastoral power can most clearly be seen at Notre Dame, where the teachers care for and guide the students through their successful transition to the “next world” or next step in their lives. This power is most visible at private institutions that fit their populations for positions of a higher order, such as the professions (medical, legal, etc.). Pastoral power is also the power most used by parents in the guiding and nurturing of their children. So in many ways this power more closely accommodates the techniques used by parents in the home environment to ensure the child’s future success. Cynthia reasserted at our final interview, “I would recommend this school to any parent – the structure, discipline, consistency. The extra-curricular activities kept my daughter busy and focused all the time. Their technique has been very much like ours.”

Difficult Choices

I was initially drawn into the study of single-sex education as a result of my familiarity with the history of this educational practice in Latin America. My research study seems to indicate that this practice continues to be a beneficial one for Latinas today, largely because it allows for the development of quality relationships among students, between students and staff, and in some cases between staff and parents. In my final interview with Egypt, she stated that Notre Dame had prepared her to “deal with people on a one to one basis. I was not afraid to speak to my professors at Smith. I realized I could have the same relationships with them that I had with my teachers at Notre Dame”. Josie, from Brearley, had likewise mentioned to me that her Brearley

education had prepared her to “move in different worlds”. And even Jubilee, from TYWLS, mentioned the importance of her relationship with her teacher Ana, who after class was “like your friend”. She chose Marymount because of the “small school vibe”. She additionally mentioned that in small schools “the teachers know you”. This seemed very important to her. In spite of her negative feelings toward Marymount, she has managed to build good relationships with several of her professors. This emphasis on social development is, in my opinion, the strongest attribute of single-sex schools. But in order for it to be fully realized, my research indicates that the school must be completely single-sex. The effect seems to be diluted in de facto single-sex classes in a coeducational setting. The girls I interviewed at Fashion H.S. reported getting along well with the girls in their same sex class, but having conflicts with girls in their coeducational classes. In these classes they reported more negative gossip, jealousy, and competition. This phenomenon is significant and requires further research.

There appears to be no doubt that a single-sex education offers Latinas many benefits. However, in an environment where Latinos are now the largest minority population, and yet have consistently maintained the lowest educational achievement and economic levels, my research also indicates that TYWLS, and similar schools, may merely serve as a distraction to the injustices and educational inequities that confront the majority of Latino children of both genders on a daily basis, as Now and the ACLU have argued. The reality is that these public schools are selective and small and can only offer their services to a select few. For most Latino parents these schools are still not a realistic option.

With the recent popularity of single-sex schools in the United States, and their immense appeal to minority parents in NYC in particular, it is very probable that more

and more of these schools will continue to open. It is vital that we as educators and parents understand the implications of this. If single-sex education has proved to be an effective method for countering the dropout rates of minority girls, then we should continue to research and support it, but in so doing we must be careful not to abandon our advocacy of culturally sensitive/relevant, student centered, community -based education, which has likewise been proven successful in these same areas for the greater portion of our Latino students. As a critical Latina feminist, I would suggest that segregation of any kind is a dangerous proposition, especially in light of the history of racism, sexism, and classism in American society. This detail cannot and should not be forgotten or taken lightly. However, as a mother, I understand that in making decisions for one's own children, politics is very rarely the priority, and usually not even a consideration.

My research at these schools dealt with a very small research sample and in that sense is not generalizable. However I believe that ethnography “can examine the macro world through the way the latter shapes and in turn is shaped and conditioned by the micro world, the everyday world of face-to-face interaction” (Buroway, 1991). In his description of “the extended case method” Buroway explains, “The significance of a case relates to what it tells us about the world in which it is embedded. What must be true about the social context or historical past for our case to have assumed the character we have observe...” (Buroway, 1991). The young ladies and parents I interviewed are individuals, but they are not individual. They are part of a web of relationships that continues to connect us all. As our dinner ended, I asked the mothers what personality characteristics they most admired in their daughters. They each gave very different responses; for Jubilee it was determination and a fighting spirit, for Egypt it was honesty

and sincerity, for Rachel it was an open and forgiving heart. It wondered if these mothers realized that the descriptions they gave for their daughters could be equally attributed to each one of them. Perhaps they did. I only know that these identities were not created in a New York City School. They were created in a world between worlds – a world we are only now beginning to explore.

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