

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING MULTICULTURAL IDENTITIES

An Investigation of a Middle Level Student's French-Canadian Honduran-American (Mestizo) Identity

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This study investigates 1 middle level student of mixed heritage and his siblings as they assimilated and achieved within a small urban community. The main case focuses on 1 adolescent's experiences both in and out of schools. How this middle grade student identified and was treated had vast effects on his educational performance, adding insights to the racial and cultural identity complexities of adolescents of mixed heritage. The ethnographic case study draws on interpretivist methodology, joining writing as inquiry and analysis through a poststructuralist perspective. A multicultural framework emerges by which the identity of the student can be better understood. The use of this framework, with reconstructions of identity toward social justice, also elucidates the student's identity experiences and may do so for other adolescents of mixed background. Inasmuch, it further demonstrates the strong yet contradictory relationship between assimilation and achievement to that of multicultural identity constructs.

Investigating how and why adolescents of mixed heritage construct their personal identities is important. Gollnick and Chinn (2009) report that more than 4 of 10 students in pre-kindergarten-12 schools currently are students of color; by 2020 it is anticipated they will comprise nearly 50% of all elementary and secondary students, with 40% of the U.S. pop-

ulation projected to be non-White (i.e., African American, Latino, Asian American, and/or American Indian). "However, the race and sex of their teachers match neither the student population nor the general population" (p. 2). Therefore, it empowers researchers, educators, and even adolescents to critically understand what factors historically influenced (and con-

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tinue to affect) mixed identities and why educators might perceive minority adolescents in certain ways. These factors are both ethnographical and phenomenological, equally impacting identity (Amundsen-Meyer, 2011; Probert, 2006).

This study investigates the particular identity construct of one adolescent's experience, and considers the similar experiences of his two siblings. Two interrelated research questions guide this investigation: (1) In what ways has the perspective changed for understanding the mixed identity journeys of adolescents? (2) Does this perspective elucidate the racial and cultural identity complexities of other adolescents with mixed identity? What naturally emerges is a multicultural framework by which the journeys of these siblings can be understood; it offers other adolescents of mixed heritage a voice as they continue assimilating and achieving within dominant American schools. This framework is the dichotomous discourse of pain and privilege which elucidates the indigenous voice.

To explain the development, this paper will open with a theoretical framework over minority populations, with a brief history on factors of Mestizo influence. Details of the resulting minor caste system provide a context for how minorities are seen and how their assimilation and achievement are then strongly influenced by their identity construct. Educators' perceptions and attitudes toward cultural affiliation are also described. The case of one adolescent's mixed identity journey is then explored, suggesting how other minority adolescents might navigate their mixed identity constructs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ogbu (1991) explained how people of minority status operate from imposed identities, or certain identities forced upon them during their transitions from school to school. Some minorities actually create for themselves what Ogbu (1992) called *cultural inversion*. Such minority group behaviors and *collective identities*

(Ogbu, 2004) run against or deny academic norms when minorities wish to misidentify with or resist against the dominant academic culture. In this sense, the mixed identities that adolescents choose may not be the same ones they believed they had (Ogbu, 1991).

In modern society, many adolescents of mixed identity/heritage may consider themselves to be of a minority population. Ogbu (1991, 1992) designated two separate terms for minorities. The first is what he called *immigrant minorities*, or those who have voluntarily chosen to migrate to the United States for improved economic, political, and/or social opportunities. Voluntary minorities admit they feel the sting of discrimination, and their children may struggle adapting, but overall "they view these conditions as temporary situations that will improve probably over a single generation" (Ogbu, 1991, p. 41).

Conversely, "involuntary minorities are people who became Americans through slavery, conquest, or colonization ... [forced] to an inferior position and denied assimilation" (Ogbu, 1991, p. 41). They and their children continue to struggle with discrimination because of their distinct perspective in identifying with yet resisting against the dominant culture. In other words, involuntary minorities adhere to an *oppositional identity* which causes them to see the United States as an adversary even though they live within and benefit from the country (see also Banks, 1997; Brown & Knowles, 2007; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). This oppositional identity is largely rooted in and influenced by a series of *belief systems* (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), some of which stem from the Spanish Conquest and others from current educator practices and beliefs.

The areas of research that inform this study are: (1) historical factors and influences on Mestizo students; (2) minority assimilation and achievement; and (3) educators' perceptions and attitudes toward cultural affiliation. Each will be explored in relation to how those of mixed heritage may have constructed their

personal identities and their subsequent acceptance into schools and society.

The Spanish Conquest

Mestizo is a term of Spanish origin, created to designate the peoples of mixed European and Native American ancestry. Typically a Spanish father and an Indian mother had children referred to as Mestizos (Anzaldúa, 2007; Kicza, 1997). They occupied the areas of the Americas from Canada in the north to Argentina and Chile in the south during the sixteenth century, when European Spaniards sought to colonize what they believed were newly discovered territories. Under establishment of the European “policy of divide and conquer” (Forbes, 2005, p. 3), elite Spanish rulers sought superior status by constructing a Mestizo race, with all its arbitrary divisions placed between different groups of the population (see also Weismantel & Eisenman, 1998). This left the Mestizos in “isolation from Spanish and Indian society along with the lack of their own [control and] culture ... often [feeling] pushed and pulled by different segments of society” (Burns, 1994, p. 6).

As such, Mestizos never became fully accepted into Spanish society. It was too advantageous for the Spaniards to maintain their status and distance from Mestizos (Burns, 1994). This social stratification led to at least three socially constructed races by the Spaniards: the Indian inhabitants, the Mexican inhabitants, and the Mestizos, or mixed Spanish-Indian and/or Mexican inhabitants.

The Minor Caste System and Mestizo Variations

With these new descriptors, Spaniards maintained their power needed for controlling native inhabitants. They also infused privileges upon them “in order that the native leadership would prevent their people from rebelling” (Forbes, 2005, p. 3). This allowed the Spaniards to further exert superiority over

inhabitants, namely the Mestizos who had trouble settling into any singular group.

The Spaniards and these various native groups did eventually intermarry. Over time, those groups adopted terms indicative of their particular dialects and geographical areas (as depicted in Figure 1). However, these terms were pejoratively used for Mestizos and their progeny (see Forbes, 2005; Pilgrim, 2000). Such mixed-identity formations represent sociopolitical and cultural-ecological descriptors of position and power; these are not just ones of race or ancestry. Historically, the (non) acceptance of minorities, especially those of mixed heritage, has been rather hegemonic (Hurd, 2008, in press). Accordingly, it is beneficial to return focus to the minority framework.

Minority Assimilation and Achievement

Tozer, Violeas, and Senese (2002) argue the rapid growth of any minority population should be of no surprise to the United States. The main influx of minorities occurred during the 1820s with the arrival of Chinese, Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants. Changes thereafter were (and still are) traceable in the social class differences between those groups. For instance, minorities who seek equal rights in the workplace may face challenges and experience inequity, lower pay for similar work, and under representation (O’Brien, 1993; Turner, 2007). In fact, minorities (with the exception of Asians) are more likely to experience *economic deprivation* and currently represent a disproportionate percentage of the population below the poverty level (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009).

These inequities necessitate that we look at how minorities might thrive within multicultural settings in schools. With inequities appearing in the media (Dyer, 2005) and in governmental practices (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001), we hope that schools might, after all, offer solace from the discriminations which further perpetuate the stereotypes of minority groups. Yet this does not generally seem to be the case.

Nation	African	↕	Spaniard	↕	Spaniard	↕	Indian	↕	African
		↓		↓		↓		↓	
U.S. North	<i>Negro</i>	<i>Mulatto;</i> <i>Mixed;</i> <i>Buck</i>		<i>Criollo</i>		<i>Mestizo;</i> <i>Cholo</i>	<i>No-</i> <i>caste;</i> <i>Out-</i> <i>caste;</i> <i>Outcast</i>	<i>Zambo</i>	
U.S. South	<i>Quad-</i> <i>roons;</i> <i>Nigger</i>	<i>Mulatto;</i> <i>Mustee;</i> <i>Tom;</i> <i>Coon;</i> <i>Buck</i>				<i>Half-breed;</i> <i>Half-blood;</i> <i>Quarter-</i> <i>blood</i>			<i>High-</i> <i>yellows</i>
Mexico	<i>Negro</i>	<i>Mulato;</i> <i>Mulo</i>			<i>Mestizo;</i> <i>Mexicano;</i> <i>Cholo</i>	<i>Coyote;</i> <i>Pardo</i>	<i>Lobo</i>		
Guatemala					<i>Ladino</i>				
Canada					<i>Métis</i>				
Brazil		<i>Mulato</i>			<i>Caboclo;</i> <i>Mameluco</i>				
Peru					<i>Cholas;</i> <i>Cholos;</i> <i>Campesinos</i>				

FIGURE 1

Critical Mestizo variations used historically and pejoratively throughout locales and nations. Illustrates several nations' responses to indigenous people of mixed heritage or identity, with respects to African, Spanish, and Indian groups.

Many schools still make use of history books which continue to record unbalanced or conventional explanations of Native American inhabitants (Wise, 2005). Likewise, poor calculation methods are used by officials reporting dropout figures of minorities and immigrants attending (or not) schools. For instance, Fry (2003) recalculated the overall 2000 U.S. immigrant drop-out rate and found significant differences. The aggregate figures included foreign born Latinos who never reentered and enrolled in U.S. schools, and foreign

born immigrants who arrived and then left the school system. When these figures were removed, the overall drop-out rate decreased significantly from "39% for all immigrant Mexicans to approximately 15% for U.S.-educated Mexicans" (p. 7).

Various minority identifications also have vast effects on school performance: those identifying as Black or Hispanic, or racially mixed, experience lower achievement than those from *similar* backgrounds who identify as Asian or White (emphasis added, Griffin, 2002; Herman,

2002; Ogbu, 2004). Gibson's (2005) work on West Indian youth in the U.S. Virgin Islands and with Punjabi Sikh youth in northern California supports this identity-performance relationship. Since constructed identities eventually become one's *self-identity* and *academic performance*, it is important to further examine layers of race and culture (Herman, 2002).

Recent research suggests this identity-performance phenomenon still exists. Smith, Estudillo, and Kang (2011) report that eighth-grade students who identify as minorities (Black) struggle more than their counterparts of similar backgrounds. White students had significantly higher grade point averages and academic achievement, even though Black students "held higher abstract identification with academics than White students" (p. 73). The authors admit that further study of *Latino* groups and *mixed race* distinctions is warranted. Even so, their findings support the strong yet contradictory effect of minority identity on school performance as "the dilemma facing schools and students of color today" (p. 84).

Educator Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Cultural Affiliation

It has been suggested that to simply ignore that minority adolescents have mixed heritage is unwise. "When such issues ... are left silent in the classroom, the implicit message for students of color appears to be that the teacher and the school do not acknowledge that experiences of oppression exist" (Erickson, 1997, p. 49). Yet many teachers claim otherwise. They claim to treat all students the same regardless of backgrounds or races. The problem with this approach is that "color-blindness helps maintain White privilege," an ultimate failure to recognize the existence of racial and cultural diversity and, even more, to recognize racial inequities in schools (Gallagher, 2003, as cited in Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 69).

The inability of some educators' to recognize students of minority status, or to change their practices and beliefs, is partially explained

by their disassociated backgrounds and genders. Accordingly, "84% of [U.S.] teachers are European American and 75% are female" (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 2). This *incongruence* may then give reason to how minority students do not feel their ethnicities or identities are reflected in schools, causing some to not participate or even dropout. If indeed the *degree of ethnic identity* is largely determined by recognition and promotion of ethnicity within a family, educators acting as ancillary family members can then reinforce students' identity formations. "However, teachers and others with whom [minority] students interact may continue to respond to them primarily on the basis of their identifiable [skin color, hair texture, ascribed physical features, etc.] ethnicity" (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 57).

Educators hoping to resist against such practices and attitudes must begin by personally confronting their own prejudice and experience which may perpetuate such oppressions. Later on, they can enter the classroom more prepared to teach about and assist students through such issues. The use of rich and inter-related middle level and multicultural pedagogy, as teaming, advisory, ethnic studies, and multiethnic curricula, will strengthen their efforts. The silent practices of ignorance and neglect are wholly dissimilar from and will eventually fade in the face of these sustainable pedagogies (Brown & Kysilka, 2009; Gay, 1997). Only then will more equitable practices and attitudes become responsive to adolescents' developmental needs, regarding their mixed identities/heritage.

METHODOLOGY

Although various disciplines have studied identity, little attention has been given to adolescents of mixed heritage. Therefore, I employed *ethnographic case study*, a preferred and familiar approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 1998), to investigate the identities of three middle level siblings of Mestizo heritage. Using significant factors from observa-

tions and interviews, I constructed, deconstructed, and then reconstructed (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) data to more fully understand the siblings' identifications.

Setting

The target community was small and urban: once a booming conservative railroad-town of steel, coal, and lumber. It changed with industrialization and quickly became an engineering town surrounded with meat-packing plants and factories. Significant changes also occurred within residential demographics. In 1990, Centerville (pseudonym) was only 5.1% Latino, but that population rapidly increased to 24.2% in 2000 (Walker, 2004, p. 1). By 2008, Centerville boasted of nearly 44% Latino. These figures were among the highest in the entire state of Iowa.

Paradoxically, environmental stratifications were also evident. One side of the town had beautiful condos and homes adjacent the country-club golf course, with nearby schools and churches. The other side—separated by the railroad tracks—was less appealing: abandoned old schools, run-down homes, and low-income apartments. Moreover, this side housed the meat, engineering, and power-plant structures. These “waste facility sites” being concentrated among low-income residents implied an *environmental racism* as polluting structures were only located on that side (Bullard, 2006, p. 189; Lipsitz, 2005, p. 73).

School boundaries placed impoverished students within the same school (*Annual Progress Report*, 2005). Even the free and reduced meal program, which was meant to alleviate economic strains, placed most qualifying students (87.54%) within one elementary school (*Annual Progress Report*, 2005). English as a second language (ESL) was offered, but data indicated approximately 20% of the entire ESL populace attended just one school rather than being split among the others (Walker, 2004). This number later increased to more than 50% of ESL students at the same school. The efforts produced little academic results (*Annual Prog-*

ress Report, 2005), leaving much to be accomplished for the social justice of adolescents of mixed identity.

Participants

Nick (pseudonym) was identified for the study because he lived in Centerville and acknowledged having a diverse racial and cultural background. He was of French-Canadian and Honduran-American descent. He was an 11-year-old sixth grader.

This study also investigated the particular identity constructs of Nick's two siblings, Isabella and Andre (pseudonyms) who were ages 15 and 9, respectively. However, this paper will focus on the findings of Nick since his siblings are at the extremes of what is typically considered middle level ages.

Nick and his family moved from Honduras to Iowa to escape various economic and domestic issues. Yet Centerville existed as a stark contrast to his previous Honduran home which teemed of rich colors, splashed with the backdrop of tropical rainforests and mountains. His Centerville residence was a three-bedroom flat duplex with apartments directly across a crowded street.

I gained Nick's confidence through natural research methods. As a participant observer, I shared the same ethnic backgrounds as Nick and his family. More importantly, I was interested in how my own identity journey might be better understood against that of Nick. This process was “the *sine qua non*—the essence—of any ethnography” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 137). As such, key components influenced my role as a participant observer. The primary factor involved what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) call becoming *native*. That is, I became an ancillary family member, experiencing the same benefits as Nick. This fluid role meant I shared in his life, ate dinner and exchanged recipes, traveled together, and much more. As an interpretivist/constructivist, I wanted to gain knowledge from my own experiences with Nick as a personal endeavor (Ellis, 2009; Peshkin, 1986). Even though my

ethnic background was similar to that of Nick's, I sought to construct an understanding of and represent his identity journey through this process. Perhaps the hardest thing of all was leaving Nick and his family when the research was done.

I was fascinated with Nick's art work for a boy his age. His artistry resembled Japanese animation, also called *anime* (Lamothe, 2006), and began to resemble his own bodily features. Like anime, his eyes were large and round, his hair full-bodied and disheveled. Nick bore this resemblance because he was unique and mixed, with an emerging artistic taste and form, much like anime of the art world (Izawa, 2005). Conversely, his appearance also closely followed his mother's. He had a solid and stocky build. Nick's hair, eyes, and skin tone all had the simple yet subtle hues of a pre-Inca *Moche*, or ancient Peruvian (Donnan, 1990).

Similar to his art, Nick's mixed identity was exemplified in his navigation between worlds. He negotiated not only as an adolescent caught between childhood and adulthood but as one of mixed heritage between two worlds of race, culture, and class. Therefore, Nick was caught in the middle: leaving childhood and striving toward adulthood.

Furthermore, he demonstrated a mixed heritage in terms of his cultural habits and language. Having a strong knowledge of both countries, he described TV shows and popular culture in rich detail, as equally as he recalled names of teachers from his bilingual schools in Centerville and Honduras. This especially surfaced when his father asked him to sing a comical song about mothers from Honduras. As Andre and his father began to sing enthusiastically, Nick just watched. He did not look comfortable and appeared as if he forgot the words in Spanish or how to sing. Nick admitted, "I don't remember how to sing it. I don't remember." After another moment, though, he finally joined in but seemed nonplused over the whole ordeal.

A rather large bunk bed stood where Nick and his brother could be found in the evenings, Nick on top and Andre on the bottom. The

room was smaller than average, with no dresser and bare-walls. The only item was a picture of a girl, of whom Nick denied interest and immediately indicated was placed there by Isabella. A cardboard toy box occupied space in the corner, holding walkie-talkies without batteries, uneaten candies, and other simple toys from their uncle Diego from Christmas. Next to a child's chair were two plastic shopping bags which contained their Honduran school artifacts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data on the identity experiences of Nick were collected over 5 months through two interrelated phases: site-based field notes and intensive interviews. Following the procedures of Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) and Wolcott (1994), I gathered field notes during weekly home, school, and community observations over 10 separate weeks. Visits were of considerable length, most being 4 hours each, and occurred individually and collectively. Through thick descriptions, data contained distinguishable factors of Nick's identity journey. To establish understanding and *transferability* (Shenton, 2004), factors were also compared and analyzed through *structural corroboration* (Eisner, 1998). Contextual findings between me, as the researcher, and Nick emerged. This allowed the data to reemerge and reflect the meaning within his life as *highly sensitive* (Wolcott, 1994) and relevant.

The second phase occurred over a period of 2 months, where I conducted at a minimum three interviews with Nick. These were formal (in English) and spontaneous (in Spanish) conversations, averaging 60 minutes per interview. I then followed with one or two reciprocal interviews with Nick for *coherence* (Eisner, 1998) and *rigorous subjectivity* (Wolcott, 1994). Open-ended questions were asked of Nick for *holistic analysis* (Yin, 2009), focused on critical factors derived from observations. These included the following:

1. How do you see yourself? How do your dad, siblings, and friends see you? Why? How did this happen?
2. What personal experiences have made you who you are today?
3. Do you feel your schooling experiences have helped or hurt your identity?
4. How do you think you will affect the town and/or schools now and in the future?
5. Do you think there are ways we can help all Mestizo-Latinos as they live and work and go to school? How?

Ethnographic *sketches* were developed to reconstruct the research process as a form of inquiry. I then highlighted specific responses from interviews to witness *patterned regularities in the data* (Creswell, 1998, p. 152). I used these patterns to construct comparisons between each sibling and the siblings collectively with those in historic groups. Comparisons were also analyzed using *consensual validation* (Eisner, 1998), that is, the multiple opinions and perspectives of others by ways of additional observations and interviews with Centerville residents, teachers, and other middle level adolescents of mixed heritage.

Emerging themes *within* and *across* interviews (Chase, 2005) were then compared against that of my own identity journey (Hurd, 2008) as well as the collective struggles and opportunities seen in Nick's journey. Working from Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) post-structuralist method, I arrived at interpretation, linking *language, subjectivity, social organization, and power*, to construct meaning of events through *writing as inquiry and analysis* (p. 961).

EMERGING PATTERNS: AN ANALYSIS OF NICK'S MIXED IDENTITY/HERITAGE

Several themes surfaced during the observations and interviews I had with Nick. These concurrent themes included factors related to:

(1) sociocultural disaffection; (2) schooling encounters; and (3) identity navigations. Contained within these three themes were nuances over how Nick was caught between his mixed identities/heritage, left uncomfortable, lonely, and fearsome while also experiencing transcendence and stability. Closer analysis revealed an unpredicted discourse which emerged to connect the different themes: an ongoing and interrelated homily of pain and privilege. The guiding heuristics became the twofold discourse of pain and privilege. This was observed in Nick's journey in several ways.

Nick's family went through a divorce, he relocated from tropical Honduras to rural Iowa, and then he switched languages, from Spanish to English in his schooling and community life. As a result, his identity was significantly affected. Like many Mestizos, Nick saw himself as one person from two separate cultures. He shared:

I am both. I am American and Honduran because of my parents, I guess. One is from here [United States] and the other is from there [Honduras]. I feel like I'm both because I'm from both countries and because Mestizo means the same. It's [my identity] cultural and racial: cultural because of what we did there. We played different games; we were more like doing stuff instead of watching TV. When we ate, it's different, too.

In this way, Nick was what Foley (2005) and Forbes (2005) call a *Mestisaje*, or racially mixed person, sharing in a collection of marginalized characteristics. He was marginalized as a mixed adolescent because "for every social category that is privileged, one or more other categories are oppressed in relation to it" (Johnson, 2005, p. 106). Johnson further explains:

Living in a particular society can make people feel miserable, but we can't call that misery "oppression" unless it arises from being on the losing end in a system of privilege. That can't happen in relation to society as a whole, because a society isn't something that

can be the recipient of privilege. Only people can do this by belonging to privileged categories in relation to other categories that aren't. (pp. 106-107)

He witnessed pain and privilege in the particular identity he did not choose as a result of his other identity. That is, his Honduran identity suffered as he navigated his American identity, and vice versa. His siblings, Isabella and Andre, expressed similar mixed identifications in their interview responses.

Nick moreover experienced pain and privilege due to his mixed language usage. We held a conversation about it next to his bunk bed. He admitted:

The language you use [in Honduras] is Spanish most of the time, but English [in Centerville] right now. When I'm in one country that uses a language, I use that language. When I'm in another, I use that language. When I'm in Honduras, I speak Spanish. When I'm in America, I speak English.

"Do you feel more Honduran or American when you are home, at school, or with other Hispanics?" I asked.

Neither. Well, like the language, I feel more American when I'm in the USA; I feel more Honduran when I'm in Honduras.

"How do your dad, brother, sister, and friends see you? Who do they say you are?" I continued.

My dad says I'm both, too, because he talks to me in Spanish, too. Most of the time it's half and half. He talks to me in English, too. My brother says the same. My sister says I'm Honduran because she talks to me in Spanish most of the time. With my friends I feel both because most of my classmates are Mexican, so I feel Hispanic. Most of the school is half and half [half White, half Latino]. There are Americans, too, so I feel both. I speak English with most of them.

Nick referred to the larger concentration of Mexicans or Hispanics enrolled in the dual

language program in Centerville. The program was created with the help of a federal grant to increase student achievement while using a dual language model among native English speakers and English Language Learners, or ELLs (Walker, 2004). This multicultural pattern was evident in the siblings' language usage. Nick and Andre mainly used English, whereas Isabella used Spanish, even though each could speak both fluently. The fact Nick and his siblings chose one language over another is common among those who speak two or more languages. Baker (2000) mentions that just as children choose certain peer group relationships over others, "so does the language dominance and preference of children for one of their two languages" (p. 75).

That Nick used formal English and Spanish during his bilingual schooling experiences required him to make racialized decisions regarding both ethnicities and environments. According to Wildman and Davis (2005) "We use our language to categorize by race, particularly, if we are White, when that race is other than White" (p. 96). In Nick's case, he used an analogy of language to categorize his own race and identity, and that of other races, saying he did not feel more Honduran versus more American by placement, unless it involved language. He mentioned:

Here I feel like I'm not at school. We used uniforms at school [in Honduras], but there are no uniforms here. I feel naked. In class, we have to speak Spanish in Spanish classes. When we go to the other class, we have to speak English, half and half. Some of the groups have a different language, new words. I didn't know some Mexican words or English words, like "cancer." I learned some new words, too. There [Honduras] we didn't use "vos" for teachers, only friends. Here we use "tú" for teachers and friends. There I used "vos" for Andre but dad was "usted."

Nick referred to the 50-50 model Centerville used in their dual language program. Half of the day, children are taught in English, and the other half, they are taught in Spanish (Walker,

2004). Isabella expressed similar disaffection for her schooling experiences.

Nick continued to share his many likes and dislikes of schooling. I then asked him what he missed about Honduras. He replied, "I miss the [Honduran] mountains, the poisonous snakes, and the dangerous cougars and jaguars.... Honduras is green and blue and blue" (green for the landscape, sandwiched between a blue ocean and blue sky). It was apparent that Nick missed his first home. Yet his ostensible disaffection for the climate and geography of the United States is also typical of adolescents who find themselves torn between two cultures or languages (Baker, 2000). Over time, it may diminish.

DISCUSSION

The dichotomous pain and privilege discourse of my own identity experiences is echoed by the identity experiences of Nick (Hurd, 2008). However, this discourse does not appear in the literature on mixed identity. In fact, limited research exists on the *intricacies of identity* (Rodriguez, 2011). Auto/ethnographical works on mixed Native American, African, and Mestizo(a) experience (Anzaldúa, 2007; O'Connor, 1983; Simmons-Bonnin, 1899) show the complex dichotomy between what a person wants to be and what a person is forced to be. These particular stories vividly illustrate the plight of those who found themselves torn between one race or culture and another. The Mestizas never completely fit into the White or Native American/African/Latina cultures, caught in the middle between binary oppositions. Even so, there is still a large gap within the research field for adolescents of mixed identity.

To better understand Nick, articulating his pain and privilege as reflexive, or recurring, is helpful. The interrelated yet dichotomous discourse of pain and privilege gives voice to his largely misunderstood identity and experiences within society. However, because many adolescents of mixed identity continuously

find themselves marginalized (e.g., racially, culturally, and/or socially), it makes sense to elaborate on his pain distinctively from his privilege. This vital multicultural stance helps to elucidate Nick's identity journey, one characterized by both pain and privilege.

The Reflexivity of Pain

Nick struggled with his identity. He assimilated fairly well against the oppressions he faced which offered hope during his rather difficult transitions in a monolingual society. However, his oppressions cannot be overlooked.

Nick experienced pain as he identified with at least two groups while also being part of a privileged system. Being an ethnic minority and mixed, he was part of a privileged section of monolingual society. However, those privileges only extended as far as other groups allowed. Moreover, he was a part of a losing system, unable to fully identify within a singular group. That is, he was unable to become *encapsulated* within his racial and/or cultural identity (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009) because neither was completely open or available to him. According to Johnson, "like privilege, oppression results from the social relationship between privilege and oppressed categories, which makes it possible for individuals to vary in their personal experience of being oppressed" (p. 106).

Although from Central America, Nick was treated differently simply based upon his skin-color, language, and academic successes. He was unlike Mexicans from Central America, yet still unlike Whites from the United States. Therefore, he was racially profiled and relegated to an inferior position because of his uniqueness. Foley (2005) explains that the "wages of Whiteness" exist from a convoluted system of privileges that many people of mixed identity seem to enjoy (pp. 62-63). Consistently, we observe adolescents like Nick with different language dialects or darker skin tones treated differently, indeed worse, than others with more common language or lighter

skin tones. Those without noticeable differences are more easily accepted into higher status and privileged groups, whereas others are shunned and berated.

Another pain in Nick's identity construct was reflected in how residents of Centerville, the dominant culture, "still know little about how the family ideology shapes the consciousness and expectations of those growing up in the margins of the mainstream" (Pyke, 2004, p. 438). This was seen with how Nick could not always find authentic foods reflective of his native cultures, how he lived with *environmental racism* (Bullard, 2006; Lipsitz, 2005), and how he had to reconcile against a climate and economic structure very different from his own in Honduras. Likewise, his comments about school not quite feeling like it should, due to language usage and cultural dress, caused a divide. As other youth of mixed heritage, Nick must instead consciously swallow the dominant cultural norms at the expense of his own family beliefs. These situations are painful, can lead to a "numbness" and "dislocation between two cultures" (Baker, 2000, p. 69).

The Reflexivity of Privilege

Contemporaneously, Nick experienced privilege. There is a general increased acceptance simply from being mixed. Even though "much still remains to be done," it seems the overall treatment of mixed people and groups has "changed considerably" and has improved (Burns, 1994, p. 224). Consider President Barack Hussein Obama who claims to be mixed and historically marginalized based on having a White mother from Kansas and Kenyan father from Africa. Like other minorities, President Obama is able to thwart the advances of the "raceless economic" movement, or those without any ancestral roots, by simply identifying with exploited or marginalized groups, even though he may not have personally suffered their pains. This is a privileged act seen as a *resistance* against *Western racism* (Harding, 1993).

Likewise, Nick's different social situations compelled him to attach himself to different self-identities which allowed him to travel between and negotiate within different groups and self-identifications. These different selves led to constructed and deconstructed images, dichotomized between what he wanted to be (the ideal self) and how others saw him (the limited self). By identifying himself as French-Canadian and Honduran-American, with variations between, Nick was privileged in his multicultural identities. His educational background and economic status also significantly influenced his identity formation in this regard (Hurd, 2010; Ogbu, 2004).

This ability to travel between identities was clearly seen with Nick because he was bilingual, able to travel between two languages simultaneously through *language juxtaposition* (Wildman & Davis, 2005). This allowed him to think and speak in more than one language yet use only one when needed, or vice versa. That Nick attended a prestigious bilingual school in Honduras (and another in Centerville) afforded him similar privileges. He experienced privileges in being multicultural (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). These privileges translated into social acceptance and advancement. The advantages of growing up bicultural and biliterate include: increased communication, rich enculturation, increased cognition, raised self-esteem, increased achievement, and economic and employment benefits. Ultimately, Nick's multicultural embodiment will "affect the rest of [his life]" (Baker, 2000, p. 2).

Another way Nick was privileged is through cultural inversion (Ogbu, 1992). A similar concept known as cultural opposition (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998) is more recently discussed in the literature. However, Ogbu (2004) himself indicated that this idea neglects what he originally called "oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference" (p. 3). Just before his unfortunate death in 2003, Ogbu further developed the ideas of collective identity as a response to oth-

ers who were misusing and/or misrepresenting it as oppositional culture.

Oppositional collective identity, as represented in cultural inversion (or cultural-ecological theory), demonstrates how Nick (and other minorities) create alternative subcultures and identities against dominant cultural belief systems (Ogbu, 1992, 2004). "The persistence of a group's collective identity depends on the continuity of the external (historical and structural) forces that contributed to its formation" (Ogbu, 2004, p. 3). Ogbu furthermore explained that the collective identities of oppressed minorities (voluntary and/or involuntary) are "created and maintained by two sets of factors: status problems and minority response to status problems" (p. 4). Nick's response to the status problem (or cultural frame of reference) was seen in his privilege of having and travelling to other self-appropriated belief systems and oppositional identities (Ogbu, 1992). These different subcultures/identities acted as privileges to which Nick could collectively identify.

Therefore, Nick was privileged and could at times escape the injustices surrounding him. As Wildman and Davis (2005) claim, "members of privileged groups can opt out of struggles against oppression if they choose" (p. 99). This choice was available because he was of mixed identity/heritage. He could either veil himself in the dominant identity, temporarily free from the oppressions of those that could not, or he could choose to endure pain.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study illustrate how Nick shared a significant characteristic in his mixed heritage: the dichotomized discourse of pain and privilege. Several conclusions can be made regarding his identity and this significant discourse. First, this is a fresh multicultural perspective by which we can uncover Nick and his mixed identities. In other words, pain and privilege constructed and deconstructed the images of culture, schooling, and identity in

Nick's life. This perspective is important since it serves as a framework for his assimilation and achievement and now may inform other adolescents with mixed heritage.

The framework becomes evident through the critical investigation of Nick's *movements* in and out of his mixed identity experiences. Engaging with this framework shows how he tried to navigate and negotiate his multiple identities in diverse and highly inequitable surroundings. Otherwise stated, he attempted to keep searching and learning about himself and others, holding to his ideal self while resisting and/or accepting how others saw him. By entering (constructing) and exiting (deconstructing) his own sociocultural, academic, and identity experiences, we can have a comprehensive understanding over how Nick endured painful and privileged situations. Since Nick was unable to fully identify within a singular community or schooling identity, the framework also suggests how he navigated and survived. In this way, the framework served ethnographical, phenomenological, and personal endeavors since it informed us of the factors Nick used to perceive and then transcend conventional ideas and positions concerning his mixed identities. It shows us how he regarding his own journey, that it was not left for someone else to define.

More importantly, this multicultural framework helps elucidate Nick's mixed identity experiences, and it may do so for others, since pain and privilege are not currently represented in the literature as interrelated. Consequently, the discourse of pain and privilege must be considered to better understand Nick's mixed heritage. This framework also offers substantial implications for researchers, educators, and adolescents themselves because it shows how assimilation and achievement are strongly tied to minority (or mixed) identity constructs.

The following list reflects the experience of Nick's and his Mestizo siblings' identity trends using this new multicultural framework of the dichotomous pain/privilege discourse,

and these may be seen in the identities of other mixed heritage students:

1. Mestizo adolescents construct/deconstruct their identities resulting from social systems.
2. Mestizo adolescents' identities are socio-political and cultural-ecological descriptors of position and power, constantly developing who they are and/or become.
3. Mestizo adolescents find they cannot fully identify (e.g., feel no tensions) within a singular race, culture, or social class due to societal fragmentations (change).
4. Mestizo adolescents bear the insinuations of the past, for how their particular identity descriptors have come to exist.
5. Mestizo adolescents experience pain and privilege by travelling between and negotiating within racial, cultural, or social groups and oppositional collective identities.

The entire multicultural framework is vital for understanding and supporting adolescents of mixed heritage. It offers researchers some insights into those affective experiences, as they hope to study minority adolescents. By utilizing the dichotomized pain/privilege discourse, there is likely to be an increased regard for the entire experiences of mixed adolescents, not ones limited to genetics, race, or schooling. Researchers may even find the study of their own affective identities and assimilative practices (such as I experienced) add points of interrelated connection.

This study has some limitations. The multicultural framework suggests that Nick experienced the dichotomous pain/privilege discourse and that his journeys might also inform other adolescents of mixed heritage. However, the interpretations of the data need to be considered within the scope of the study. Although additional observations and interviews were held with Centerville residents, teachers, and other adolescents of mixed heritage, no investigation was conducted with

other siblings of mixed heritage, or of adolescents without mixed heritage. Furthermore, Nick's school records, containing his grade point averages, were not obtained and therefore his translated academic achievements could not be corroborated. That Nick will one day not identify as a mixed adolescent or feel torn between his different identities is not the goal of social justice or multicultural education; however, investigating how one might overcome their different identity challenges was one major factor influencing the design of this study. Further studies could investigate the relationships between educators and students and how other minority and majority adolescents might characterize their own identities in this regard. The data in this study consisted of a single family of adolescents, particularly Nick; future studies could benefit from large-scale qualitative and quantitative studies. However the employment of this new and noteworthy multicultural framework may still offer a reconceptualization of mixed identity toward social justice.

This study provides several important implications. First, it is educators who have the most regular contact with middle level students. Their relentless efforts have certainly helped open doors for adolescents of mixed heritage; yet so many unfortunate practices continue within schools. I believe many of these practices are unintentional, resulting from either an unawareness of or a disregard for how multicultural education truly works. Educators must therefore heed a fundamental belief of multicultural education: that "social justice and equality for all people should be of paramount importance in the design and delivery of curricula" (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 4). It is within educators' daily plans and activities where we can find the greatest resistance to hegemonic practices. In these areas, "Multicultural education has an opportunity and a challenge to be counter-hegemonic" (Erickson, 1997, p. 49).

Two considerations might augment the enactment of this new multicultural framework. These considerations include: under-

standing *silence as speech* (Rodriguez, 2011); and implementing *crossing* (Stroud & Wee, 2007). *Silence as speech* is an ideology which argues there is an active relationship between race and language. This relationship between race and language, also supported by Park (2011), is nuanced and sometimes subtle. Educators must divest themselves of antiquated notions of disengagement (e.g., silence, hesitancy, lack of eye-contact, etc.) and realize that marginalized students weave together speech and silence to navigate within, resist against, and destabilize impoverished classroom practices (Rodriguez, 2011). These are, in fact, methods of communication and engagement on different levels. These levels include cultural inversion and collective identity (Ogbu, 2004). *Crossing* (Stroud & Wee, 2007) is another consideration for enacting the new multicultural framework. It invites students to invest in alternative identities. The crossing is accomplished when students adopt identities they may not have otherwise had, through language and role-play. The students actually adopt alternate identities which may decrease anxiety of learning for increased comprehension. This requires educators to *code* their speech and suspended normal classroom discourse and formal language so that they might implement differentiated activities of learning.

These considerations moreover require educators to advocate for their students. They must collectively acknowledge that middle schools need to have the compatibility to adjust to students' cultural needs. If this compatibility is lacking within their schools, then educators must seek out, organize, and then construct this rich environment on their own. This is being student-centered toward social justice.

Adolescents of mixed heritage also have a responsibility to this multicultural framework. In understanding it, they may be better equipped to navigate their different identities. It may furthermore empower them to resist Western racism as a social institution of power. However this same stance clearly shows how adolescents may experience pain

within their mixed heritage. It may enable them to travel between their different identities, forfeiting certain privileges of Whiteness or ethnicity, or it may not.

One way adolescents could become empowered with this framework is through advisory. For instance, adolescents of all backgrounds can engage in rich advisory curricula which encourages dialoguing. This especially gives adolescents the opportunity to discuss life and discuss negotiating life. It also provides adolescents of mixed heritage the chance to share their own stories, possibly educating their peers about the silent histories of oppressed people (Pyke, 2004). It becomes imperative, then, for adolescents to examine their own lives and learn about identities outside of their immediate racial and/or cultural groups. By taking on alternative identities and ethnicities, beside the minority one, adolescents may better situate themselves for increased involvement in ways different from their backgrounds. Others may then experience increased awareness or sensitivity to the importance of differences.

The dichotomous pain/privilege discourse supports Ogbu's (1991) oppressed minority theory as well as Ogbu's (1992, 2004) and Ogbu and Simons' (1998) theory of cultural inversion. However, unlike past theories, this new framework actually elucidates how minority adolescents of mixed heritage suffer yet simultaneously benefit as a result of the socioeconomic system. How these adolescents advance within this inequitable system is not a matter of *either, or* so much as it is a matter of *when* and *by what means*. The multicultural framework also provides critical evidence of how influencing belief systems amass to further develop and influence mixed identity constructs, which remain fluid and flexible; these identity constructs do not necessarily culminate to a singular identity or race.

That adolescents' identities remain continually *open* is confirmed by Du Bois (1982, 1903) who discussed *double consciousness*, and by Geertz (1979) who discussed *dual identity* (as reported in Gregg, 1991). This was also

shown in the new framework, that minority adolescents of mixed heritage live in and negotiate between worlds from within oppositional (double/dual) lenses. Likewise, Anzaldúa's (2007) work on *Mestiza consciousness* reinforces the new framework with how some are caught between *spaces* or *borders*, in what she believed were the crossfires of partial racial, cultural, and social transfusions. Thus, the *openness*, or fluid and flexible nature, of mixed identity constructs helps adolescents to adjust and continue navigating in these oppositional, collective identities of pain and privilege.

The notion remains that all empowered people can resist racism and oppression. This new multicultural framework is one vital way to do so. Efforts become even more effective when they are authenticated with enriched middle grades and multicultural pedagogy. The silent practices of ignorance and neglect will then be thwarted against such ideals. We will respond to adolescents' needs, recognizing and esteeming their mixed identities as they continue to change.

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