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Between Drama and Danger:
The Effects of Latino Second Graders' Identities on Gendered
Patterns in School Success

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Swarthmore College Senior Thesis in Educational Studies and Sociology/Anthropology

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Abstract

In this study, I used participant observation in a second-grade Sheltered English Immersion classroom to investigate how race and gender identities in elementary school may be affecting the gendered achievement gap among Latino students in high school. I spent two weeks working closely with the teacher in this classroom, and gathered data on standardized test scores, discipline in the classroom, and achievement in the classroom as they related to gender.

I found that, while boys and girls acted out at about an equal rate, boys who acted out did so frequently and severely, while nearly all girls acted out, but less intensely. This led to the impression of boys being more troublesome, even though half the boys in the class were not disciplined at all while I was there, and all but one of the girls were.

Behavior was also not linked to academics; students navigated behavior and school success independently, allowing some students to behave badly yet achieve highly, or vice versa.

The patterns of behavior, however, fed back into a loop of teacher expectations that classified boys as aggressive and girls as subdued, yet dramatic and catty. These classifications may be seen as precursors to patterns found among Latino adolescents; that boys are dangerous, and girls are sexualized and social.

In order to work towards providing more equal access to school success for all genders and ethnicities, teachers should try to provide multiple definitions of “success” in the classroom. Positive feedback should be balanced between academics and behavior, both in terms of prevalence and publicity.

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I would like to thank my cooperating teacher and her students for welcoming me,
 Steve and Lisa for advising me,
 Swarthmore for funding me,
 and my parents for supporting me.

Chapter 1

Introduction: who we are

Wiggle Breaks

During a “wiggle break” in room 380 at Warner Elementary School, eight-year-old Braulio thinks hard about what to instruct the class to do. He scowls and makes an exaggerated thinking face as the teacher, Ms. A, waits for him to finish his turn as the instructor in “Simon Says.”

“*Brinca...*a hundred times!” he cries, finally, with an exaggerated flair.

A smattering of reactions rises up from the other second graders in the class. I catch a “Yesssss!” and an “ugh, *no me gusta*” from the class, as they conduct a running commentary in English and Spanish on how the game is going.

“How about ten times,” suggests Ms. A, and the students commence to jump up and down behind their seats. Students grin and flail in a controlled chaos for a few more minutes, as a few more students take turns being “Simon” before they all sit back down to continue working.

Wiggle breaks happen a few times a day in room 380, where Ms. A, a young second-year teacher, instructs the class of eighteen Latino immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Central America. The breaks normally consist of a game of Simon Says, or something else physically engaging, and last a few minutes. Ms. A sees them as one way she tries to give boys and girls an equal shot at school success. Based on the idea that girls are better at sitting still and working than boys are, she hopes that injecting physical activity throughout the day will help energetic young boys focus on the long school day, she tells me during one of our frequent conversations during the school day.

I have returned to Ms. A’s classroom because of a similar concern: while males in general are falling behind females in school success, the gap is particularly pronounced among racial minorities, especially Black and Latino students. This issue is a central one in the field of urban education, especially for educators like Ms. A who specialize in teaching native Spanish-speaking students (or otherwise marginalized students). After having spent time working in her classroom as part of an internship program, I have come back a year later with a more focused intent: to gather information about why this “gender gap” exists, and what can be done about it.

Research Questions

In the time between my two stints in room 380, keeping up with contemporary issues in education often led me to stories about students with backgrounds similar to those I had worked with. It was hard to reconcile the complex interactions I participated in and observed at Warner with the statistics on dropout rates and lagging test scores I often read about Latino students, particularly the male ones. In delving into the literature on the topic, I found that the majority of studies conducted about gender among Latino students focused on identity formation in high schoolers, not the younger students I had worked with. So I decided to return to room 380 the following year and investigate how students' experiences there might be feeding into the bleak statistics and stereotypes that threatened their futures. Briefly, I wanted to investigate how the students and teacher in a second-grade Sheltered English Immersion classroom are shaped by, and contribute to the shaping of, race and gender-based expectations and practices in schools.

Having worked in this classroom previously, I had established a trusting relationship with Ms. A, and knew I could re-insert myself into the classroom with relatively little disruption. In my previous work, I found my presence caused excitement and better behavior for about two days, then the second-graders adjusted to my presence and the classroom dynamic essentially returned to normal, according to Ms. A. The urban school district where Warner is located uses a Sheltered English Immersion model for students who are native speakers of other languages. In this model, students are grouped together by native language and placed with a teacher who speaks that language. Classes are conducted in English, with translation for those who need it, with the goal of getting students to the point where they can be mainstreamed into general education classes. All the students in the class spoke Spanish at home, and while a few required occasional translation, most were conversationally fluent in both English and Spanish. Ms. A, a twenty-four year old of South Asian descent, speaks conversational Spanish after having studied it in high school, but only uses it when a student requests a translation, or when she is talking to parents.

The students remained, of course, aware of my presence in the classroom, and of my status as an outsider, denoted by my whiteness and accented Spanish. While my Spanish is objectively "fluent," it is not seamlessly idiomatic and betrays my academia (I learned in school and through time spent in Spain and Ecuador). The students recognized Ms. A as a cultural outsider as well. Her academic Spanish also gave her away - she told me that with her dark complexion and curly hair, she often "passed" for Latina with parents. Students relished in correcting her when she misspoke or forgot a word. For the first week or so, the students were convinced that she and I were related somehow, despite our only common physical feature being the curly hair. Students made continuing inquiries asking if we were sisters, or if I was her daughter.

Unlike Ms. A, however, the students also recognized me as white. A few days into my research a student seemed to have an epiphany, exclaiming, "Ms. P, you talk Spanish...but you're white?!" (fieldnotes 1/4/13) One benefit of working with younger students was that this incredulity was rarely, if

ever, framed as suspicion or hostility. In second grade, the students were generally happy to have another adult in the room to pay attention to them and translate things if needed (which only a few students ever did). So while the students did see me as an outsider, I believe this was not as large of an obstacle as it might have been with older students.

I re-entered the classroom intending to examine the ways in which male and female second graders in this classroom interacted with each other, the teacher, and the school system in ways that may affect the trend of Latina girls having more school success than boys. Patterns regarding gender and race are often generalized into sweeping trends, often by educators themselves; one of the goals of this study is to help break down some of those generalizations by examining the many ways in which race and gender intersect with each other to shape (or not shape) a student's behavior and academic achievement. All the students in the class are Spanish-speaking Latinos - my goal is to look at gender within this context to identify ways in which experiences in elementary school may contribute to gendered discrepancies in achievement later on.

While it is often seen as natural for me, as a woman, to study gender, it is frequently questioned why I have chosen to focus this research project on a minority group to which I do not belong. The implication is that I perhaps could not understand, or should not be concerned about, the experiences of Latino students. It is true that I have not personally had the experience of moving to a country where I don't speak the language, and being thrown into a school system there. However, this experience is something more and more students in American public schools have had, and a close look at what that experience is like is necessary in thinking about the future of American schools, if they are truly to benefit all students. The question of what it is like to go through U.S. public schools as a Latino immigrant is not just a "Latino issue", but an educator's issue.

Methods

In this classroom, I worked in the capacity of an assistant teacher in order to get the most contact with students, to normalize my presence for the students, and to create more of a reciprocal relationship between myself, Ms. A, and the classroom. I did a lot of walking around the room during individual work, helping where needed, and translating instructions to Spanish for the few students who needed it. I also took over a few lessons when Ms. A was called out of the room or was working one-on-one with students. This shifted my role in the classroom a bit more towards the "participant" side of participant-observation.

In this way, my study differs from that of other school ethnographers like Barrie Thorne, who describes the students at her observation sites being fascinated by her work. Those students constantly asked her what she was writing, and they became wary when she replied that she was writing down what they were doing so she could figure out what it was like to be a kid. I wanted to avoid drawing this kind of attention to myself, because from Thorne's description it seems as though when students (of

comparable ages) became cognizant of her role as a researcher, they became a bit self-conscious, at least for that moment.

I believe the most significant impact of my presence on student behavior had to do with attention-seeking habits. Students were more calm, Ms. A said, when there were more adults in the room, because they could get more individual attention. However, at times I felt as though students were raising their hands with questions they knew the answer to, just so I would come talk to them. This effect, of course, is not easy to measure. I trust Ms. A's analysis that student behavior was representative of regular times when I was not present, even if students were intrigued by my presence as a novel adult.

Besides the slight impact on attention-seeking I believe my presence had, I quickly became integrated into the classroom landscape. By participating fully instead of trying to hang back, and taking notes during breaks instead of in front of the students, I was able to fit myself into a role the students knew. They saw me as someone who was there to help them learn, not to study them. The classroom had regular visits from other adults, as well. Ms. A's mentor teacher paid periodic visits to check up on her, and reading specialists and social workers were regularly coming in and out to work with one student or another. While it is impossible for a researcher to fully eliminate the effect of her presence on the people she studies, I minimized my intrusion by embodying a role with which the students were familiar.

However, while establishing my relationship with each class as a teacher allowed me to normalize my presence for the students, it carried the connotation of authority. Thorne points to the inevitability of a power inequality when adults study children, comparing it to "westerners doing fieldwork in colonized cultures, or academics studying the urban poor" (12). However, I took on a bit more of that power in occupying the role of "teacher". In many ways I acted as an extension of the primary teacher – albeit with my own motives, identities and perspectives. But in my effort to minimize my intrusiveness, I followed the lead of the head teacher, which often meant backing up Ms. A on the very disciplinary sanctions I was keeping track of for my study.

These disciplinary sanctions were tracked on Ms. A's color-coded "clip stick" system. She kept a yardstick at the front of the room that was colored black, green, yellow, orange, red, blue, and purple, in descending order from the top. Attached to the yardstick were clothespins - "clips" - with the students' names on them. Each student began the day on green, which meant "good." With every behavior infraction, the student would be asked to move their clip down a notch - to yellow, then orange, etc. Particularly good behavior could be rewarded with a move up to black. Students could earn their way back up the stick after an infraction or two by behaving well the rest of the day. At dismissal time, Ms. A would give a final assessment of the day's behavior, and students would color in the day on their take-home calendars for their parents to sign. If a student ended up on yellow, they would have to color it accordingly and bring it back the next day with a parent's signature.

This system could be analyzed from any number of different angles, but I was interested in what

behaviors warranted a clip move, which students were performing which clip-worthy behaviors, and how frequently. The clip stick was an indicator of Ms. A's values in the classroom, and was a concrete way of keeping track of how girls and boys may be experiencing school differently. Starting at the beginning of my fieldwork, I kept track of whose clip was moved each day, how many times, and for what behavior, looking for gendered patterns.

To complement my data on the clip system, I also collected data regarding students' test scores and progress. While I did take into account MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) scores in describing race and gender-based trends in the whole school, in analyzing patterns within the class I stuck to tests Ms. A designed and administered. Ms. A kept track of reading and math progress for each student on a chart on the wall, which provided a picture of each student's academic performance and trajectory in the controlled environment of the classroom.

But the most important data I collected were my daily fieldnotes, in which I attempted to create a map each day of what had happened in the classroom. I tried to avoid taking notes in front of the students, so during breaks I scribbled down everything I could remember about the chunk of learning time I had observed and acted in. While doing my best to paint a holistic picture of the events, I paid special attention to the ways Ms. A interacted with different students, and instances in which students either performed or refuted behaviors that have been outlined as typical of males or females in studies on Latino adolescents (such as the stereotypes of males being angry and females being passive).

I started out asking whether there were different expectations for girls and boys, and whether one gender had more "success" in the classroom. Fairly quickly, I honed in on the clip stick as a reliable way to keep track of student behavior, and defined a clean record on the stick as connoting a certain level of behavioral "success". I also found the charts tracking reading and math progress as relatively objective measures that I could use to contextualize each student within the class.

I also used Ms. A's interpretations of student behavior as a way to check my own subjectivity. Because I went in looking for data on race and gender, I wanted to be careful not to attribute student performances to either of these factors where it was inappropriate. From the first day, Ms. A was open about her analyses of students' behavior and performance, attributing certain struggles or successes to their family lives or backgrounds. These offered a point of comparison as I collected information - as I went, I looked at the extent to which the evidence I had found supported or refuted these analyses. This helped me minimize making assumptions about causality, and was a constant reminder that the issues I was examining are necessarily complicated.

Expectations, Findings and Conclusions

Entering this research, I expected gender dynamics to be different than those reported in studies of Latino adolescents. So much of Latino adolescent males' experiences in school is defined by stereotypes that cast them as "dangerous." This could not possibly be the case for second graders, I

reasoned, since they are so clearly still children. I thought the same for Latinas, as studies often found that Latina adolescents are sexualized early in high school, and it did not seem plausible that students as young as eight could be sexualized in the same way. “Danger” and “sexuality” seemed inextricably wrapped up with adolescence, and incompatible with elementary aged students. I did wonder, however, if I would find patterns that might reasonably act as predecessors for Latino adolescent criminalization and Latina sexualization. I expected there to be a strong connection between behavior and academic achievement, thinking that second-grade students only needed to behave decently, and they would do well academically. I used studies of urban Latino high schoolers as a guide, looking for patterns in room 380 that might parallel, precede, or refute those found in adolescents.

As it turned out, gendered expectations pervaded the classroom, despite Ms. A’s conscious attempts to maintain practices that did not enforce race/gender stereotypes. She interpreted similar behaviors differently depending on who was performing them: for example, speaking out of turn could be seen as either a call for attention or an expression of anger. And her impressions were not entirely unfounded. In the class as a whole, there arose gendered patterns of behavior that made it seem as though boys were more troublesome, when in fact boys and girls collectively misbehaved at equal rates.

Also contrary to my expectations, behavior and academic achievement were not reliably linked. While older students tend to oppose or disengage from school using both misbehavior and low achievement as weapons, students in room 380 were able to maintain different configurations of behavior and achievement-based identities. While some students paired good behavior with high achievement or vice versa, many students held intriguing combinations and variations of the two, pairing misbehavior with high achievement. This becomes more difficult to do as students get older and consequences for misbehavior become more serious.

Layout of Chapters

In order to put my study in context, I first needed to explore literature on Latino students, gender, and elementary schools. Chapter Two consists of a review of recent studies that have been done relating to these topics, many of which focus on one or two of the three concepts. Because little research has been done on the effects of race/gender identity on elementary-aged Latino students, I include studies about Latino high schoolers to which I have referred throughout the introduction, research about gender and elementary-aged students in general, and studies about students’ awareness of race during early stages of their cognitive development.

In the next chapter, I report the results of my observations, situating the class within the context of the school, neighborhood and district. I include a “thick description” of the school, as well as achievement and behavior patterns across the second grade at Warner, and among Spanish SEI students in the entire district. I report reading and math test scores within room 380, comparing them with patterns in behavior based on the classroom discipline system.

From there, I refine my analysis in Chapter Four to focus on case studies of individual students and how their experiences corroborated or refuted the general trends in the classroom, school, and district. While patterns did emerge regarding race, gender, achievement, and behavior, individual students departed from these trends as often as they followed them. A look at the varied ways in which students navigated racialized and gendered expectations leads to implications about how educators may inadvertently be reproducing systemic inequalities, and what can be done to make it better.

Chapter 2

Past research: Where Race, Gender and Cognition collide

Introduction to the Literature Review

My research is situated in the context of other studies that examined the identities of Latino students, and how their interpretations of racialized and gendered expectations affect their performance in and access to school. Upon reviewing the literature, I found that while there are many studies that explore what race and gender mean for Latino students' achievement in high school, almost none focus on those questions in elementary school. So, while there is much documentation of Latinas academically outperforming their male peers (yet being objectified by the school system) in high school, there is not as much on when and how these trends begin. I use these studies of high schoolers as a jumping-off point for my research questions, asking how experiences in elementary school may contribute to the higher rates of dropping out and school failure for Latino adolescents. I read these studies asking: how do gender-based patterns of behavior and school success among the second-grade Latino students I researched compare to the patterns found in older students? How might patterns in elementary school lead into those found in high school?

Exploring this question requires a multi-pronged approach. In examining experiences affected by

race, class, and gender, it is important to remember that all of them intersect to describe a particular student's experience, and one cannot ever be fully separated from the influences of the others. Because so many previous studies, however, focus primarily on either race or gender, I organize this section to first examine the studies that look mainly at race, and then introduce gender as a complicating factor. While class does not come into my analysis as much, the students in my study (and many of those I read) do experience race in a way that is also shaped by class and location: for them, living in a low-income, high-crime neighborhood. All the experiences I describe are particular to a low-income, urban environment, and the findings do not necessarily hold in other settings.

Age is at the forefront of my investigation as well. Because most of the studies on race and gender in Latino students focus on teenagers, their findings cannot be directly compared to mine without a certain amount of attention being paid to students' developmental stage. I include a section that examines cognitive development research in relation to my study because an understanding of students' cognition shows how messages about race and gender may be internalized at this age, and lead to troublesome patterns down the road.

Goals of this Research

The phenomenon that females have begun to attain higher levels of education than their male counterparts has been well documented over the past 20 years. Within this trend, studies have also shown that the gender disparity is especially salient among Black and Latino students: young males from these minority groups tend to lag further behind females than young men from other racial or ethnic groups. (Carter 2005, Qin-Hiliard 2003) Most studies on the effect of race and gender on school performance focus on adolescents, using dropout rates and SAT scores as measures of success.

But even if the "race-gender gap is [indeed] solidified" in high school, as one researcher puts it (Lopez 2001 p 41), it is unlikely that the gap springs up without warning as soon as a student enters eighth or ninth grade. I argue, as do scholars like Ann Ferguson, that racialized and gendered expectations affect students' behavior and performance in elementary school. However, there remains relatively little research on how Latino students construct gender in elementary school. Often, studies on adolescent students will describe students' experiences in elementary school as informing their attitudes in high school, but always as a reflection. A study on Latino adolescents by Stanton Wortham asserts that "even at the elementary school level, children had begun to develop an oppositional identity." (165) But this is mentioned as an aside because the focus of the study is older students (also mentioned in Flores-González 2001). The studies that do focus on elementary schools tend to set their sights on either race (Lewis 2003, Apfelbaum et al 2010, Bigler & Liben 2007) or gender, (Eliot 2009, Martin & Ruble 2004, Hilliard & Liben 2010, Thorne 1993) not the intersection of the two.

This study sets out to explore how the students and teacher in a second-grade Sheltered English Immersion classroom are shaped by, and contribute to the shaping of, race and gender-based

expectations and practices in schools. Previous research on elementary-aged Latino students has mixed implications about this, but most lack the focus necessary to adequately investigate the question. In Nilda Flores-González' 2001 study of Latino high school dropouts, many students who left school reported that they were initially placed in accelerated classrooms in elementary school, but by high school were demoted to lower-level or remedial classes. Flores-González attributes this demotion largely to low teacher expectations. Among immigrant students across ethnic groups as well, researchers have attributed girls' superior performance to various different factors: a shift in parents' views of their daughter's life possibilities, girls having a more positive attitude towards school, or being less likely to experience and internalize racism. (Qin-Hilliard 2003, Portes and Rumbaut 2001) Overall, girls are generally found to be less likely to develop an "oppositional relationship" with school, and more likely to be looked upon favorably by teachers and school officials (Qin-Hilliard 2003, Carter)

In conducting this research, I hope to shed light upon why these patterns emerge in high school by examining if and how they manifest themselves in earlier years.

Schools as Cultural Reproduction

The question of how a student's identity affects and is affected by their experience in school is particularly important to society because schools are a central medium through which the values of a culture are produced and reproduced. Bradley Levinson asserts that schools, indeed, have more impact than any other single factor on the way culture is transmitted from one generation to the next (17). Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Levinson reminds us that schools, in fact, may perpetuate the social inequalities that already exist - an idea known as reproduction theory.

Because the students in my study are native Spanish speakers, of a non-white racial phenotype, and come from low-income families, they enter school with little access to the mainstream, dominant culture (that is, white, English-speaking, and middle class). Bourdieu's ideas hold weight for them because they suggest that schools offer little hope for them to change any of that. Studies on race and gender in schools often draw on reproduction theory, pushing the definition of how schools reproduce existing inequalities, and how students both react to and play into that reproduction. Paul Willis' 1977 study *Learning to Labor* examined how working-class students actively resisted the school system they felt was not helping them. Flores-González touches upon this same idea in describing students who have dropped out: low achievement for many of these students, she says, is meant to "challenge some aspect of schooling" (8) - both these researchers suggest that cultural reproduction involves more agency on the students' part than Bourdieu suggests. Honing in more specifically, Ann Ferguson points to the way the Black males she studied co-opted their own reproduction, in a way, and came to define "transgressive behavior [as] that which constitutes masculinity." (185)

John Ogbu's studies on immigration complement Bourdieu's theory, but many scholars take issue with his analysis as well. Ogbu argues that minorities are denied equal access to good education

because they do not receive equal rewards for their academic accomplishments - an equally bleak understanding of the potential for immigrant minorities to benefit from American schools. However, Ogbu also makes the distinction that some types of immigrants are worse off than others: he distinguishes between “voluntary minorities,” who immigrated more or less by choice and tend to do better in school, and “involuntary minorities,” whose ancestors came to the U.S. by force. Involuntary minorities, he says, have often developed a number of “secondary” cultural characteristics, which are defined in opposition to the mainstream culture. These reactionary and oppositional definitions of identity often extend to involuntary minorities’ experiences in school, he says, leading them to reject schooling. In contrast, voluntary minorities maintain a “different but non-oppositional social identity,” in the first generation, which allows them to have a more optimistic attitude towards school. This claim is directly refuted in Flores-González’ study: “oppositional” is a commonly used word to describe the attitudes of the Latino youth she interviewed, including many who are first generation.

Ogbu’s theory falls short in several other ways that are relevant to the students in my study. He fails to account for the importance of political climate in relation to the experiences of “voluntary immigrants.” In some areas of the U.S., Spanish-speaking students have evoked symbolically violent reactions from school officials anxious to preserve the dominance of English in schools. These reactions vary in scale from the banning of Spanish use in classrooms across an entire district (Wortham 2001 p 44) to Spanish-speaking students being inadvertently taught less of the curriculum because of the structure of the ESL instruction (Flores-González 81). So, although the students in my study are technically from “voluntary immigrant” families, they are navigating a school system entrenched in a society that feels threatened by their language and culture, which causes them to have different experiences in school than, for example, the Vietnamese immigrant students down the hall. Lopez airs a similar critique in her study, saying that Ogbu’s analysis “ignores the neocolonial relationship between the U.S., Haiti and the DR” (23).

Perhaps even more important than neocolonialism, however, are the stereotypes surrounding Spanish-speaking Caribbean youth, particularly the males. Ann Ferguson’s study *Black Boys* highlighted the phenomenon that young black boys are being punished much more frequently and harshly than anyone else in school. Ogbu would attribute their struggles to their status as involuntary minorities and a development of culture in opposition to the white mainstream. However, Latino male youth, despite their status as “voluntary minorities,” are often stereotyped as criminals both in school and on the street in the same way Black males are. While fewer young Latino men are under the supervision of the criminal justice system than their Black counterparts (1/3 versus 1/6), there are still far more Latinos in the system than whites (about 1 out of every 12 young white men is under supervision) (Rios 2013).

Ogbu’s analysis also, as Stanton Wortham points out, does not account for divergent adaptive strategies of girls and boys, because his analysis implies that students from the same families will have the same position towards school. In Wortham’s study, quite the opposite was the case: young Latinas had much different attitudes towards school than their brothers did. Lopez found that boys and girls

were treated much differently by school officials. Girls were often allowed to get away with things like wearing hats, while boys were not, and Lopez reported nearly all the altercations with security personnel involving boys. This contributed both to the criminalization of males and to the different strategies used by each gender to navigate school.

In short, schools are worthy of our attention because they reflect larger society. Just as young Latino (and Black) males are being criminalized on the streets (through policies like “stop and frisk” in New York City), they are criminalized and pushed out of the school systems. We see the evidence of this in the disengagement from school and higher dropout rates found in male Latino adolescents. A closer look at the ways in which schools work to shape students (reproduction theory) and students work towards the opposite (resistance theory) will contribute to a better understanding of questions of race and gender-based inequalities in our society.

Teacher Expectations

Teacher expectations are one aspect of reproduction theory that play an especially large role in my research and analysis. In interviews, minority adolescents in urban schools often cite low teacher expectations as something that frustrates them about school. In an interview with Prudence Carter, a boy named DeAndre said he hates it when “ ‘in school a teacher gives you something and you already know how to do it.’ ” (35) This particular student gives the example of learning about the same main players in African-American history year after year, but stories like this abound through the rest of Carter’s study, as well as others like Lopez’ and Flores-González’. As a general trend, teachers are not expecting much academic success of urban minority students, and the students pick up on these expectations.

Ray Rist’s 2000 study examines just how much teachers’ expectations can have an effect on student performance. Through observations at an elementary school, Rist found that “certain criteria became indicative of expected success and others became indicative of expected failure.” Visual cues like the tidiness and newness of a child’s clothing, as well as previous knowledge regarding the child’s family led the teacher to place students at table one, two, or three, with the students she expected to do the best at table 1. From the time the class was arranged this way, “the activities in the classroom were perceivably different from previously.” Students at the first table were given more attention, praise, and benefit of the doubt. The students in all three groups began to act with hostility and cruelty towards the poorer students at tables two and three.

This classroom became what the title of Rist’s study suggests: a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students from whom the teacher expected the most ended up performing the best, while students from whom she expected little were pushed to the side. Because he began this study with kindergarten students, the teacher had no previous academic work on which to base her expectations; they were based entirely on superficial factors like poverty level and appearance.

Rist's findings point out just how important teachers' expectations are in terms of forming students' experiences in school. They are also in line with the findings of a 2010 study on gender salience in preschool. In this study, conducted by Lacey J. Hilliard and Lynn S. Liben, two classrooms were observed. In one classroom, the researchers performed an intervention to make gender more salient - asking teachers to point out different genders by physical separation, like lining up by gender, or posting girls' and boys' work in different areas of the room.

These actions alone, without any reinforcement of concrete stereotypes, led students in the increased-salience classroom to have stronger notions of gendered stereotypes, lower esteem of other-sex peers, and less play with other-sex peers.

These studies highlight just how much impact teachers' expectations have on student behavior. They help describe the implications of such attitudes observed in a 2009 study by Carola Suárez-Orozco, in which teachers confided things like, "Latino boys are aggressive and really, really, really macho...and the girls are pure sweetness." (11)

This research also supports my argument that the behavioral patterns I observed in my research reinforce gendered stereotypes in a way that contributes to an academic achievement gap between boys and girls, even if that gap is not yet salient in second grade. The behavior patterns in my study feed the teacher's expectations that boys are angrier and more troublesome than girls, which causes her to treat them that way and eventually contributes to their higher rates of school failure and dropping out.

Being "Latino"

****immigrant paradox****

Stemming from the literature on reproduction and resistance theory, many recent studies have focused specifically on Latino students' place in schools and how they achieve success, behave themselves, and construct their identities. While this section focuses on studies that used race as their primary question, gender also comes into play in nearly all of them.

An important question in all these studies is how to define terms like "Latino," and how students come to align with certain identities and self-conceptions instead of others. There is no simple answer to this question; Prudence Carter writes that "both ethnic and racial identity can be situational, volitional, dynamic, and fluid." (123) One student in her study, Monica, is of Dominican origin, and in the course of conversation switches fluidly between identifying with a pan-minority identity and a Dominican-specific ethnic identity. When talking about how Blacks and Latinos are viewed and treated by whites, she says "we're all the same," yet criticizes her brother for what she says is "acting Black" - using Black vernacular slang and employing hip-hop styles. She recognizes the distinction between how she and her family are viewed by the mainstream culture and how they would like to view themselves, but also understands that both contribute integral parts of how she will come to identify herself racially and ethnically.

Monica demonstrates a trend that Portes and Rumbaut documented in their study published in 2000. Compared to other immigrant groups, Latinos demonstrated the biggest disparity between parents' and children's self-identifications. First-generation parents tended to identify with their home country (i.e. "Puerto Rican" or "Cuban"), while their second-generation children "racialized their national origin" to identify as "Latino." The researchers attributed this dissonance to the racial definitions that American culture imposes; so, because American society treats Latino youth as an "other" race, separate from the white mainstream, that is how they often come to identify.

Recent literature on what has come to be known as the "Immigrant Paradox" situates Latinos in an unclear position. While many studies have shown that first-generation immigrant students tend to do better in school than their second or third generation peers, one study found that "Hispanics the only ethnic group that displays a foreign-born disadvantage among immigrant students - math achievement improves for each successive generation of Hispanic students." (García Coll and Kerivan 2012, p 225) This is a potential clue as to why Latino students end up at the bottom of the school academically, yet in the middle in terms of teachers' expectations of their behavior.

Acknowledgement of how one is viewed from the dominant culture's perspective, however, is only part of the story of Latino identity. While some students recognize society's conflation of Blacks and Latinos, and employ a pan-minority identity when they see fit, they can also be deeply steeped in an ethnic or country-specific identity. In Nancy Lopez' (2001) study on the differently racialized experiences of Latino men and women, she outlines tensions between Puerto Rican and Dominican students (mostly males) in one high school that cause students to identify with one side or the other within the context of the school. Students interviewed in Carter's study also pointed to the Spanish language as an important marker of identity; even though Blacks and Latinos were associated together in many ways, speaking Spanish could be used to prove one's "authenticity" with regard to a certain group.

This process of racialization through otherization (and students' awareness of that process) affects their experiences in the school system. In Nilda Flores-González' study of identity formation in Latino students, she asserted that establishing what she refers to as a "school-kid identity" is particularly difficult for "ethnic and racial minorities in the inner-cities," because the schools there are low-status institutions and attending them carries a stigma. More validation exists, she says, in the street culture whose presence permeates school hallways. For students who do not excel academically or athletically, school holds few rewards and "alternative cultures" like gangs become more appealing. (40)

Despite commenting on these structural factors, explanations like Flores-González' take issue with Bourdieu's and Levinson's idea that schools, as representations of the mainstream culture, inevitably reproduce class and structural inequalities that already exist. Like Paul Willis, Flores-González chooses to focus on the agency that the Latino high schoolers in her study demonstrated, and came to the proposition that reproduction theory does not explain "exceptions" and is therefore a limited understanding of how and when students achieve success in school. Flores-González asserted that, for

the students in her study, “low achievement is behavior intended to challenge some aspect of schooling.” (8) Prudence Carter’s 2005 report also commented on the intentionality of low achievement for some Latino students she interviewed. Those who rejected school, both these authors found, did so in large part because they felt, in some way, let down by the school system. One student in Carter’s study criticized the squalid state of his school building as well as the apathy of his teachers - qualities common in inner-city minority schools that have the effect of discouraging students from engaging in school.

While all these studies work directly with adolescents, many recognize that the sequence that sets students on a failing trajectory begins much earlier than that. Flores-González asserts that, for students who leave school, “it may be fear of what awaits them in high school, and their exposure and familiarity with street culture in elementary school, that tilt the scale in favor of adopting a street-kid identity.” (42) For the school “leavers” she interviewed, most of what influenced their disengagement from school began at a young age: many of them report getting into fights frequently with both peers and teachers, and a lack of positive validation in the classroom starting in elementary school. Conversely, students who developed “school kid” identities reported having positive relationships with teachers from an early age.

Insights like Flores-González’ underline the importance of researching these topics in elementary schools. For most of these studies that take place in high school, the process of identity development is being examined long after it has already begun, leaving definition of the earlier stages up to memory and speculation. A better understanding of how racial and ethnic identities begin to form and affect students’ school success in elementary school will lead us to a stronger sense of what compels students to achieve or leave in high school.

Latino Students, Black Students, and the Gender Gap

I chose to focus specifically on Latino students because, relative to other race and ethnic groups, Black and Latino males lag further behind their female counterparts in terms of graduation rates, test scores, and levels of academic achievement. That is to say, the “gender gap”, as it has come to be known, is more pronounced for Black and Latino students. In recent years across the population in general, a gap has emerged between the number of males and females earning bachelor’s degrees or higher: out of the total population, about 25% of men hold such degrees while the number of women earning them continues to climb, having reached 35% in 2009. According to an analysis from the Population Reference Bureau, the trend holds true across “all major race and ethnic groups,” but there is evidence to suggest the trend is true to a larger extent among minorities (Pollard 2011). A 2010 study by the American Council on Education found that the gender gap has stabilized for all ethnic groups except Latinos - Latino men continue to lag further and further behind Latinas. Nancy Lopez also asserts in her 2001 study on gender and Latino school success that the gender gap is much more salient in “racially stigmatized groups, namely Blacks and Latinos.” Carola Suárez-Orozco’s 2004 article

reports results that “confirm the trend [of boys achieving less] for boys in general, and Latino and Black males in particular.” (4) This article provides a useful background for other studies on the subject, mentioning,

Brandon’s (1991) study of Asian American high school seniors shows that females reached higher levels of educational attainment than males. Rong and Brown (2001) find that African and Caribbean immigrant black females outperformed their male counterparts in schooling attainment. Waters’ (1996) study of Caribbean American teens also suggests that it was far more likely for girls to graduate from high school than for boys. Similarly, Gibson (1993) finds that Mexican girls did better than boys in terms of grades and attitudes toward school. (p 11)

In studies that reference the gender gap, researchers have used all manner of measuring devices, usually some combination of graduation rates, standardized test scores, and GPAs. The ACE study cited above uses the number of male versus female students enrolling in higher education. Stanton Wortham, meanwhile, pointed out class rank in his study of rural Mexican-American students; one year, every student in the top ten of the graduating class were girls. Lopez looked at classroom engagement and grades, also discussing discipline and the adversarial relationship boys developed with school security officers. Ferguson, likewise, focused largely on discipline. For my research, I tried to encompass as many of these factors as possible, settling on an analysis that integrates discipline, classroom academic progress and patterns in standardized test scores.

While Blacks and Latinos remain quite distinct ethnic groups in terms of history, they are often lumped together like this because they tend to live in the same or similar low-income urban neighborhoods, and similar gendered stereotypes pervade the experiences of students from both groups. John Ogbu’s (1998) ubiquitous article that classifies immigrants into “voluntary” and “involuntary” categories would distinguish between the two on the grounds that Black students are living a legacy of oppression and ancestors who were forcibly brought here, while Latino students, especially immigrants, are newer to America and therefore have more positive relationships with school.

The problem with Ogbu’s analysis in this instance is that, as Portes and Rumbaut (2000) documented, immigrant youth quickly become racialized in American society, particularly in the kind of urban environment in which the students in my study live. Students in inner-city schools tend to “reflect a process of socialization in which second-generation youths attending inner-city, mostly minority schools learn to apply to themselves the labels with which their native peers identify - Hispanic, Latino, Black,” etc. instead of identifying with their national origin. In these situations, color becomes more important as an identifying factor, incorporating young students into the “racial gradient” in the U.S. that prescribes “the darker a person’s skin is, the greater is the social distance from dominant groups and the more difficult it is to make his or her qualifications count.” (47) The students in my study are nearly all of Caribbean origin (Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic), and many have dark complexions that place them quite far down the “racial gradient” that Portes and Rumbaut describe.

This process of racialization is experienced differently by male and female Latino youth. Prudence Carter's interviews with Black and Latino adolescents showed that Latino boys were far more likely to identify with their Black peers and their culture than Latinas at the same school were. These males demonstrated what Carter calls a "pan-minority identity," suggesting that they, in some circumstances, identify as being a minority before identifying with a national origin or even an ethnic group. Girls in Carter's study, however, tended to scoff at this behavior from their brothers and peers, wondering why they felt the need to "act Black." One girl interviewed criticized her brother for identifying as Black, while she "described herself as Hispanic and Dominican, though later she would speak in terms of collective solidarity with Blacks." (121)

Male Latino students are also often grouped together with Black youth in terms of stereotypes about crime. Certain studies treat the two groups nearly the same, because they are both equally persecuted by law enforcement. Victor Rios' research on the mass incarceration of Black and Latino boys, for instance, does not distinguish between the two in its investigation of police and societal expectations for the two groups (Lecture 2/21/13). For these boys, the combinations of either Blackness or Latino-ness with masculinity triggers stereotypes of aggression, anger, and danger. These stereotypes manifest themselves through "stop and frisk" type policies, and the kind of racial profiling Rios describes, in which law enforcement treats young Black and Latino boys as criminals from a very young age. This treatment, Rios says, causes the youth to act more like criminals. Such stereotypes and policies spill over into school, and I saw them in the classroom I studied in often unexpected places.

This pan-minority identity and treatment between Black and Latino males led me to apply some studies on Black males in school to this project, namely Ann Ferguson's *Bad Boys*. Her analysis and others like it were useful because much of the criminalization of boys she reported is also happening in similar ways to Latino students - often enough that Rios and other scholars like Lopez refer to patterns of criminalization happening to "Black *and* Latino males" as opposed to one or the other.

But, as the girls in Carter's study maintained, the two groups should not be conflated in all circumstances, despite these similarities in social standing in some situations. In my study as well as Carter's and others', Latino students demonstrate a complex relationship with their Black peers, and each occupy a unique space in the social structure of a school.

Gender and Latino School Success

While still focusing mainly on adolescents, many more studies hone in on the question of how gender affects school success within the context of being Latino. These studies provide a jumping-off point from which I develop my research questions: they show how Latinos are seen as criminals, and Latinas are seen as sex objects, starting around age fourteen. These classifications lead to both genders having low status as students, but girls' presence in school is not seen as threatening the same way boys' is. This contributes to females staying in school longer and having more success therein.

In light of the female-favoring patterns of achievement that emerge in these studies, I wonder when in the schooling process such patterns begin, and what can be done to make school access more equitable at all stages. Using the findings of these studies as a guide, I set out to investigate whether gender disparity was present in Latino second-graders, and the extent to which it resembled that in Latino adolescents.

Nearly all these studies point to stark differences between Latino and Latina attitudes towards school as a means of partially explaining the disparity in achievement, again underlining a sense of agency in adaptive strategies among the students that runs counter to Ogbu's ideas. A study by Stanton Wortham published in 2000 points out that, contrary to Ogbu's predictions, males and females from comparable backgrounds (and often from the same families) use different adaptive strategies in navigating school. Linda Grant adds, "students of certain race-gender configurations may be nudged towards certain forms of gender identities, but outcomes are always uncertain. Students choose among competing forms and innovate novel responses in forming gender identities and the gender regime of schools." (92)

Many of the rural Mexican-American boys in Wortham's study aspired to blue-collar work and did not see school as a useful means of gaining better-paying employment, while girls were motivated to pursue school in order to gain independence from domestic obligations, which were thrust more heavily upon them than their brothers. This led to a certain stigma becoming associated with boys who did well in school: those who did well were inclined to hide it, while there was no similar pressure on girls. Wortham's study is unique because it deals with rural Latino students whose communities are largely agricultural and factory-based, compared to most studies in the field that focus on inner cities. While there were many differences between students' experiences in these studies according to location, research focused on inner-city schools corroborated the finding of this stigma.

However, for researchers for Lopez and Carter in the inner city, male achievement stigma was not always because the boys' aspirations were focused on work that did not require schooling. Quite conversely, in fact, Carter found that nearly all the Black and Latino students that she interviewed believed school was a reliable way to get ahead in life. However, in her study as well as Lopez', boys tended to seek and receive more validation from street culture and athletics than from academics. Most of the males Lopez interviewed did not want to do well in school, and those who did do well tended to hide it, while girls bragged about good grades (104). For these males, it is not so much that they see school as useless for their aspirations as that they feel rejected from the school system - they would like to have access to it but do not see a way in.

Much of this feeling of rejection comes from boys' differential treatment by school officials. Studies by Carola Suárez-Orozco and Nancy Lopez on the school experiences of Latino boys and girls find that boys have more run-ins with discipline and security than girls do, whether or not they are warranted. Prudence Carter and Ann Ferguson also take note of this trend, and point at the influence of stereotypes of Black and Latino males: society often perceives them as angry, aggressive, or

threatening. This leads school officials to treat them with more suspicion than they do females.

Lopez reports a telling conversation with school security officers at the high school where she is researching. In this exchange, the officers are quick to classify female disputes as benign, and cast male students as the problematic ones. (74) Ferguson's entire study centers on this question of discipline in schools, finding that Black males are vastly overrepresented in the disciplinary system. While her study focuses on Black students and not Latinos, her results are informative because many of the same forces are at work that characterize both groups of boys as criminals (as described in the previous section on pan-minority identity formation).

Lopez also outlines the different stereotypes associated with Latinos versus Latinas. While young Latinos are characterized as dangerous by both school security and New York City law enforcement, the women are often seen as sex objects. One young woman reports seeing women being "checked out" by police officers as they are patrolling the neighborhoods, as well as receiving sexual comments herself from law enforcement. (36)

Julie Bettie also points to early realization of sexuality as a defining characteristic of the working-class Latina girls in her study (2003). Among the girls in her study, sex was something that happened at a young age, and having babies in high school was not frowned upon. Bettie says the fact that the working-class Mexican-American girls at this school had more babies than any other ethnic/class group was "wrongly perceived by white preps (and some school personnel) as a difference in sexual morals between racial/ethnic groups." (72) Rather than a difference in morals, Bettie points to a difference in lived experience: for girls on the vocational track, there seems to be no convincing reason to postpone parenthood. Pregnancy does not cause their poverty, although it may exacerbate it.

For Latino students, gender intersects with race in ways that affect girls' and boys' school experiences differently. Both groups are not taken seriously as students, but in distinct ways: boys are seen as dangerous, which leads school officials to (consciously or subconsciously) drive them out of the school system, while Latina girls' early adulthood and sexuality is seen as harmless. The girls are not expected to do as well as white girls, nor take college prep track classes, but their presence in school is accepted in a way that males' is not.

Familial Expectations by Gender

It is not only schools who have different expectations of Latinos and Latinas. The two genders tend to hold different roles within their family structures, to the effect of boys having more freedom and girls having more responsibility. Portes and Rumbaut assert that "teenage girls are more likely to conform to parental expectations and to experience the challenges of the external environment differently than their male siblings." (64) For immigrant girls across ethnic groups, this trend affects their language acculturation, self-image and academic achievement.

In Latino families in particular, it is often the case that sons are expected to contribute to the

family income, while girls are expected to contribute more to the household. Bradley Levinson's 2001 study put the gender difference for the Mexican students he studied this way: the boys choose between school and early employment, while the girls choose between school and early marriage. Other studies overwhelmingly corroborate the idea that girls report having more domestic duties like cooking and childcare than their brothers do (Suárez-Orozco 2004, Valenzuela 1999, Waters 1996).

In this vein, girls in some areas are highly motivated to pursue school as an escape from domestic obligations. Bettie described these domestic obligations as sometimes welcome for the working-class Mexican-American girls with whom she worked: many of these girls had already "chosen" between school success and domesticity in the form of motherhood. Bettie posits, however, that there was never very much choice for these girls - that they would have been on the vocational track regardless of their motherhood status.

Stanton Wortham's study outlines the ways in which boys are pressured to be breadwinners for the family from an early age. The American Council on Education's report on the gender gap cited boys' responsibilities to contribute financially as a major factor in their lagging behind girls in the classroom. One student Wortham profiled, José, worked in a factory in addition to going to school, and gave most of his earnings to his mother. In his community, the vast majority of Latino men would work blue-collar jobs in factories, and this was José's plan as well. Finishing high school is not imperative for such jobs, and José began to disengage.

José's blue-collar aspirations, however, are generally not as salient among students in urban settings (where most of the studies on Latino students, including mine, take place). This is one example of how race, class, and place intersect to complicate questions of racialized gender in school. Because of the dominant industry in Havertown, where Wortham's study took place, Latino boys saw factory work as the best way to make money to help support their families, as they saw as their duty.

In urban settings, males' need to earn money often takes riskier turns. One young man in Carter's study reported making between \$250 and \$400 a day selling drugs on the street; he said he had quit selling at the time of the interview, but his story was not uncommon. Familial pressure on males to contribute to family finances can have an impact on their attitudes towards school - it is difficult to turn down the money of a legitimate job or of dealing drugs for something like school, whose financial returns are far down the road, if they seem to exist at all.

Thus, the differing familial pressures and expectations for male and female Latino immigrants has also been found to have a strong impact on their school performance. Because things like employment and marriage are still quite far off for the second graders in my study, I was skeptical going in as to whether these gendered pressures would be salient for elementary school students. While these life milestones are not looming as closely as they are for older students, I found they did still have an impact on student interactions, and found a review of research on this topic to be an informative addition to studies against which I would test room 380's behavior.

Race and Gender in Elementary School

While most of the available research on gender, school success and Latino students has focused on high schoolers, my research centers on elementary school - particularly, second grade. This means that while I have a body of research to draw from in terms of influences of gender and being Latino, age enters as a complicating factor in my study. Before starting my research, I wondered how aware eight year old students would be of their own race and gender, and that of those around them, and if such things would have a serious effect on students' experiences. I quickly realized these things did, indeed, profoundly shape the way students interact with teachers and classrooms in a manner specific to the students' age; the way the teacher in my classroom interpreted students' behavior and academic performance may be seen as a parallel precursor to gendered patterns that have been found in Latino high school students. Some studies on the influence of elementary-aged cognitive development on students' understandings of race and gender help illuminate how these processes work.

As Hilliard and Liben's study demonstrated, young children are heavily influenced by the level of gender salience in their classroom, and their performance of normative gender roles closely follows the leads set by their teachers. Also central to the discussion of gender roles in elementary-aged children is the notion of "different cultures" - the idea that there is "boys' culture," which exists separate from and in opposition to "girls' culture." (Thorne 1993, Eliot 2011) Lise Eliot's 2011 study *Pink Brain / Blue Brain* describes girls' culture as emphasizing verbal negotiation, intimacy, and teacher approval, while boys' fosters physicality, competition, and disregard for authority. (153) According to Eliot, this stems from the fact that at the age children enter kindergarten, boys are naturally worse at sitting still and focusing than girls. At this age, "five and six year old boys are less verbal, less skilled at drawing and writing, and less able to sit still and control their voices in an elementary-school classroom" (171)

Eliot is using psychological research to support the different-cultures theory, asserting that schools are not equipped to serve the developmental strengths and weaknesses of young boys, thus giving girls an advantage in the classroom from the moment they enter it. Programs that have focused on giving boys extra support in reading, she says, have been able to bring them up to equal levels with girls within two years. (201) Thorne criticizes the different-cultures theory, however, both because it fails to account for within-group variance in gender performance, and also neglects the effects of race and class. She gives the example of Jesse, a girl who is one of a few racial minorities in the school she researched, and also able to cross gendered barriers in class and on the playground. In this way, Thorne begins to explore "inequalities as multiply-determined and intertwined," examining each aspect of a person's identity within the context of the others. (Marx Ferree 2009, p 7)

In addition to school readiness, children's conceptions of gender as a concept and of themselves as gendered beings are also closely tied to their stage in development. While Hilliard and Liber's study showed the impressionability of very young students in terms of conceptions of gender, Martin and Ruble's 2004 study mapped children's phases of "rigidity" in their understanding of gender,

or how fixed they believe gender stereotypes to be. This study built off theories of cognitive development from Piaget and Kohlberg, contributing to a body of literature known as “gender-schema theory,” which holds that children need only a basic grasp of gender cues to “motivate [their] behavior and thinking.” (67) The researchers followed children over a course of six years, found a nearly universal pattern of children reaching peak rigidity at age five or six, followed by a dramatic upswing in flexibility around age seven or eight. That is, students entering kindergarten had fixed ideas of what males and females can do, and then around second or third grade children begin to increase their “gender flexibility,” or the belief that either men or women can do anything. The rigidity they found in kindergarteners is perhaps exacerbated by the “gender intensification” of school that Thorne describes; she says school underlines the already existing perceived differences in girls and boys, which causes a deeper divide between the two.

In a similar vein to Thorne, Amanda Lewis points out that elementary schools create a unique situation in terms of race as well, calling them “one place where groups who often have little contact come together.” (190) Just as the structure of classrooms can highlight differences in gender, they can point out differences in terms of racial performance as well. In Lewis’ 2003 study, she examined how elementary-aged students already had a conception of racialized behaviors. One fourth grader she interviewed asserted that a difference between Black and White people is that Black people don’t let things go - “things” being the instigation of physical fights. He had learned these race-based differential patterns in conflict style, Lewis says, “from his interactions with peers and adults at [his school].” (172) The book is filled with similar instances of young students having a well-developed sense of behavior and expectations based on race. In a particularly striking example, one boy stated that he wanted to go to prison before he went to college, because all Black males have to go to prison at some point, and it made more sense to him to get it out of the way before college. (54)

Lewis also documented racism among the young students. After an instance of name-calling, one Black teacher went around the room of mostly Latino first graders, asking what each of them thought of Black people. Nearly all the other students affirmed that they did not like Black people either, saying they “stink” or are “loud.” (53) Interestingly, these students were unable to reconcile these prejudices associated with Black people with their conflicting love for their Black teacher. This suggests that in first grade, children are perhaps not at a stage where they can easily connect their lived experiences to the prejudices they have learned.

These studies support Ms. A’s belief that young girls are better equipped, socially and cognitively, to succeed in school than young boys are. Eliot’s study concludes, “compared to their female counterparts, five and six year old boys are less verbal, less skilled at drawing and writing, and less able to sit still and control their voices in an elementary-school classroom” (Eliot 171). When children enter kindergarten, girls are at a distinct advantage learning to read. But, if boys receive the extra support they need (which, the authors say, they often do), they may catch up within a few years (201).

This finding is critically important for low-income schools. The school the finding is based on

implemented an excellent reading program that brought boys up to the same level as girls, but to implement such a program required extra staff and training. Schools like Warner, whose finances and personnel are already stretched, would likely struggle to provide the extra support that would be required to equalize girls and boys in reading. So, if it is indeed true that an early achievement gap in reading is not fixed by cognitive fate, and can be remedied by giving boys extra support at the right stages, the schools where the gap will remain significant are schools that can't provide that extra support because of budget and staff restraints.

Overall, the literature on this topic suggests that children absorb, process and reconstruct information about gender and race in ways that affect their behavior in class. My research draws on several aspects of this body of literature, applying the different-cultures theory and its critiques to the students in my study, in their particular racial, gendered, and geographic location.

Chapter 3

Learning at Warner

Warner Elementary

Warner Elementary School and the attached community center are nestled in one of Boston's most dangerous neighborhoods. The immediate area is largely residential, made up of two-family homes, a small housing project, and small businesses - many of which advertise their services in Spanish or Vietnamese as well as English. While the neighborhood is lively and well - populated, crime statistics betray a robbery rate more than four times that the state average, and a rate of violent crimes about twice the state average (clrsearch.com). The area has a reputation for being unsafe; it is a common problem at Warner that substitute teachers will sign up for a day's work, then fail to show up when they realize what neighborhood it is in.

Students at Warner reflect the area's demographic. The neighborhood is a haven for Vietnamese and Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants, who, along with the longer-established community of Black residents, contribute to an elementary school of 40% Black, 39% Latino, 17% Asian, and 3% White or mixed students. 87% of these K-5 students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and the school provides free breakfast as well. 43% of the student body is classified as English Language Learners, and these students are placed in either Vietnamese or Spanish Sheltered English Immersion classrooms, which are conducted in English by teachers who speak the students' native language. The goal of the SEI program is to eventually mainstream students into "unsheltered" classrooms, with peers of all backgrounds. Nearly all students classified as "Hispanic" or "Asian" on school records were currently in the SEI program, or had been at some point.

In the 2011-2012 school year, Warner failed to accomplish “Adequate Yearly Progress” as defined by the No Child Left Behind act. Of the 8 school years on record, Warner has made AYP on third grade English Language Arts MCAS scores only one year (‘04), and 3 years in math (‘04, ‘08, ‘10). During each one of these “successful” years, as defined by NCLB, progress was met by the school as a whole, but never by each individual subgroup.

Race, Ethnicity and Academics at Warner

Academic achievement and behavior at Warner break down along racial and ethnic lines. Because I only spent serious time in the Spanish SEI classroom, I cannot speak firsthand about what went on in other classrooms. However, standardized test scores and teachers’ comments show that there are (and are perceived to be) stark differences between the three main racial and ethnic groups at Warner: Black, Latino and Vietnamese students.

Interestingly, the hierarchy of student academics according to test scores differ from teachers’ opinions of who are the “worst” students to have in class. This is the first instance I will discuss of teachers separating their impressions of students’ behavior from their academic performance; I will later discuss how a similar pattern emerges when it comes to gender. The Vietnamese students were more or less unanimously considered the best behaved and most disciplined academically - they had the highest test scores, and teachers often spoke of them as being more desirable to have in class than the other groups. The “best” kind of student was considered to be one who followed directions, did schoolwork at home, and did not cause disruptions in class. The Vietnamese students were often held up as exemplars of this ideal.

In terms of test scores, Black students scored consistently ahead of Latinos, even though both remained far behind the Vietnamese students. However, insofar as teachers’ impressions are concerned, the Spanish SEI students were considered a more desirable group to teach than the mainstream group (made up overwhelmingly of Black students). It was generally thought that there were more violent or “seriously worrisome” behaviors in the mainstream classes. Regardless of how true this is, impressions like this on the part of teachers can be important in forming their expectations of students, which can have a profound effect on student behavior and performance. These impressions also have implications relating to gender: Prudence Carter’s finding that Latino boys relate more closely to Black students than Latinas do could mean, if it holds true in this context, that teachers associate Latino male students with the worrisome behavior linked to Black students. In the following two sections, I will outline in more detail how standardized testing and behavior break down according to ethnicity, and the effects therein.

Standardized Testing

While standardized tests are by no means a perfect measure of achievement because they often

measure test-taking skills rather than critical or analytic ones, they are useful in this instance for looking at general trends of how well the school is serving different groups of students. By highlighting where and to what extent any score discords arise, these data help examine systemic gaps in different students' access to education.

In 2012, MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) score differences between the ethnic groups in third grade reading and mathematics were stark. I use the third grade scores because second graders do not take MCAS, so third grade provided the most comparable set of data. MCAS scores are broken down by ethnic group on the school's annual No Child Left Behind report card, which reports the percentages of each group of students who scored in each of the four grading categories: Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement and Warning.

According to this report card, students identified as "Asian" (who are almost exclusively Vietnamese immigrants) performed best by a large margin in both reading and math. Black students trailed behind, and Latino students scored lower still. In reading, 50% of third graders identified as Asian scored in the Proficient category, with 6% of Asian students scoring in Advanced (n=16). In contrast, 16% of Latino students (n=37) and 17% of Black students (n=54) landed in the Proficient category, with no students in Advanced. For math, a startling 38% of Asian third graders scored in Advanced with a further 44% in Proficient, while only 5% of Latino students scored in each of these categories, and Black students placed 8% of students in Advanced and 13% in Proficient (NCLB 2012 Report Card - See Appendix C).

As we can see, Vietnamese students did significantly better on both the reading and math portions of the test, despite having the same language barrier as students in the Spanish SEI program. Unfortunately, the school does not keep track of how many students taking tests each year have already "graduated" from the SEI program into mainstream; it would be significant if large numbers of Vietnamese students were graduating to mainstream and thus demonstrating they have a full working grasp of English. But my impression is that this is not the case: third-grade classrooms are still mostly segregated. The second grade mainstream classes are made up almost 100% of Black students, and between my two stints in the school only 3 students from Ms. A's 2012 Spanish SEI class had graduated to mainstream for the 2013 school year, suggesting that language is not a sufficient explanation for the discrepancy in test scores.

Ms. A actually thought Vietnamese students had an advantage in written tests in general, because they tended to have more patience and diligence with individual, written tasks, while her students were more vocal and collaborative. Ms. A said that when the SEI students are tested to see how their language skills have improved, her students always do better on the oral portion, and the Vietnamese students excel at the written part. Again, having not spent time in the Vietnamese classes I cannot directly compare, but it did seem to me as though Ms. A's students' test scores did not reflect their academic capacity. Upon arrival, I was surprised at most of the students' English fluency, and questioned whether many of them needed to be in the SEI program. Many of the students'

conversational English is indistinguishable from that of a native speaker's. But I soon realized their reading and writing is far below grade level, and their ability to read and interpret directions on tests often hurts their performance even if they know the material.

This pattern became clear during a grade-wide math test administered during my fieldwork. The concepts were things Ms. A's class had been working on for a few weeks: skip counting, telling time, etc. I had seen the students work through similar problems on worksheets before going over them as a whole class. Most of the students were able to consistently arrive at answers in this setting. But when the test, which was standardized across the second grade, was given out, even the highest-performing students struggled to decipher and fully answer questions they had answered many times before. Most of these mistakes were due to misinterpretation of directions - for example, nearly every student missed a problem that instructs the student to give two ways to make 83 cents with dimes and pennies. Nearly all the students know how to do it in theory, but either don't read or don't comprehend the directions well enough when reading silently to complete the problem as it is asked - many make 83 using different coins, or only give one example. The gap between students' ability when given oral directions, and that when given written ones proved to be quite large. If the Vietnamese students do indeed have the opposite problem, as Ms. A says, this could be one contributing factor to the discrepancies between the Vietnamese and Spanish speaking students on test scores, despite their both having a language and cultural barrier.

This is one potential factor that I was able to observe: it is clear to me that there are many other factors that affect this difference in test scores that were beyond the scope of my study and would warrant further research. Since my primary focus was gender within the context of the Latino community, I did not spend time in other classrooms for the purpose of comparison, and therefore cannot speak more specifically to why the Vietnamese students had the most school success, although it is a fascinating question. For my purposes, which are contextualizing the Spanish SEI students within the school, the most important part of this section is how it relates to the next point: how Latino students are considered "better" students than their Black peers despite having lower test scores.

Teachers' Impressions

Teachers and students alike are well aware of the race-based patterns in achievement and behavior. During one second-grade teachers' planning meeting, several jokes were made to the effect that the Vietnamese SEI class is better behaved and more academically oriented than the other classes, and that the rest of the second grade cannot be expected to compete. The Vietnamese SEI teacher, Ms. T, was telling the rest of the team about a recent attempt to play a 3rd-grade level math game that second grade teachers were supposed to introduce to their students. Mayhem ensued, she reported, as students jumped at the relative freedom of playing a game while she tried to enforce the game's educational value.

“If YOUR kids went crazy, can you imagine my class?” One teacher of a mainstream classroom said (second-grade mainstream classrooms are mostly Black, with a few SEI students who have “graduated” from the language program). She shook her head, “NO WAY”.

Later that same meeting, the teachers were looking at the top scores of the online math activities that students could complete. The more a student played, the more points he or she accumulated. A different mainstream teacher commented to Ms. T, “they’re probably all your kids!” The whole table laughed, apparently in agreement that the Vietnamese students are the only ones playing math games at home.

The students are aware of these distinctions as well. During lunch one day, Ms. T told Ms. A and me a story about her students’ reactions to moving classrooms. Even though it was just a geographical switch and the makeup of the class would remain the same, some of the Vietnamese students expressed anxiety that they would be in classes with Black students. These students demonstrated internalized racial prejudices similar to the Latino students in Lewis’ study. Later, Ms. A explained,

“The Vietnamese SEI kids are pretty openly wary of the Black kids - there’s a lot of racial tension at the school with the neighborhood being so diverse, and they pick it up at home and bring it here.”

In another conversation, Ms. A expresses her relief at being the SEI Spanish teacher because the behavior issues, while still salient, are not as severe as in the mainstream classes. She describes an incident last year in one of the mainstream second-grade classrooms in which a student purposefully exposed himself to the class while the teacher was writing on the board.

“That kind of thing doesn’t happen as much in the SEI classes,” she says. “I think the kids are so busy trying to figure out English that they’re not thinking about acting out in ways like that. Also, even though this whole neighborhood is pretty rough, the areas where the Black kids tend to live are worse - they get exposed to a lot more messed-up stuff.” Later, she adds, “to get up and move yourself and your family to a new country, you have to have a certain level of motivation. A lot of times, I think these kids’ parents are more present than some of the kids in the mainstream classes, who have been in these neighborhoods for so long and who can be more wary of the school systems, because they don’t feel like the schools are institutions that should be trusted.”

This analysis echoes recent literature on the “immigrant paradox,” a phenomenon in which first generation students do better in school than their native born peers from the same ethnic group. These researchers attribute the achievement discord, in part, to a more optimistic attitude towards school among first-generation immigrant students, much in the same way Ms. A ascribes the less grave behavior issues in her classroom to a more positive attitude towards school among her students and their families.

Intersections Within SEI Spanish

The position of Ms. A’s students within the school regarding attitudes towards race and ethnicity

sets the stage for an examination of gender roles. As Richard Morris points out in his study, *Unexpected Minority* (2005), privilege and experiences may be influenced by any number of combinations of race, gender, ethnicity, class and place. These factors are interconnected, and attention to one or a few of these factors warrants consideration of how the others are influencing its construction. Morris gives the example that Black women can “go places” career-wise that Black men cannot, because Black masculinity is associated with violence in a way that Black femininity is not. Ms. A’s students are no exception: their identities and experiences are informed by a dynamic combination of these factors, as well as others.

Since I chose to focus this study on race/ ethnicity and gender, class does not get as much attention as I would like. While commentary on class does not take the forefront of most of my discussions, however, I would like to acknowledge that its influence is present in all of them. In focusing on race/ethnicity and gender I necessarily sacrifice the level of detail to which I can report on class, but do not wish to diminish its importance.

Gender and Academics in SEI Spanish

I have outlined the ways in which the Spanish SEI students at Warner occupy this unique space of being at the bottom of the academic hierarchy (at least according to standardized tests), but somewhere in the middle in terms of reputation with teachers. But in addition to this positioning in the school, Ms. A’s students are also situated among over a thousand other Spanish SEI students in the Boston Public School district.

With this sample size, real patterns can be seen relating to gender and academic achievement. While standardized test scores are an imperfect measure of student achievement, in this context they demonstrate district-wide patterns that would otherwise be murky. Figure 1 shows the percentage of students within the Spanish SEI program who scored in each test category: Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Warning. Percentages for Warner are rough because the sample size is only twenty-five students. Those numbers are included largely for comparison. But real patterns emerge at the district level: between male and female students, there is negligible difference in test scores for the Math section ($p = .15$), but girls are doing significantly better on English Language Arts ($p < .01$). (See Appendix A for statistical methods and raw data.)

Figure 1: MCAS scores grade 3 Spanish SEI, 2011

Source: school records

Math	A	P	NI	W	English Language Arts	A	P	NI	W
% male	0	7	53	40	% male students	0	7	40	53

students SEI Spanish at Warner (n = 15)					SEI Spanish at Warner				
% fem students SEI Spanish at Warner (n = 10)	0	10	30	60	% fem students SEI Spanish at Warner	0	20	30	50
% male students SEI Spanish districtwide (n = 569)	3	22	40	34	% male students SEI Spanish districtwide	1	15	53	31
% fem students SEI Spanish districtwide (n = 459)	7	20	35	38	% fem students Spanish SEI districtwide	2	20	55	23

This pattern is in keeping with Eliot's and others' finding that girls are better readers than boys at this age. SEI Spanish students at Warner hold more or less the same pattern that can be found districtwide, suggesting that Warner is indicative of academic patterns in the district as a whole.

Implications of Ms. A's Class in Context

While my study takes place in a microcosm of racial, ethnic, and gendered relationships in school, it does not occur in a vacuum. As I have outlined in this section, Ms. A's classroom is situated within a school that has particular assumptions and expectations about students, within a neighborhood with its own set of expectations, within a district that defines economic and academic patterns. Students take cues from all sources, internalizing these varied and often conflicting sets of expectations and attitudes from the adults, peers, and institutions in their lives.

As demonstrated by Rist's research, teacher's expectations regarding achievement have a direct effect on how the student will perform. All these expectations impact the student's sense of his or her "possible selves," the options for which are "made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context." (Markus and Nurius 1986 p 954)

Within the school, the Spanish SEI students are sandwiched into a place in which they are at the bottom of the school academically, but are able to feel superior to the Black students because the teachers consider them "better students." Like many schools, Warner displays student work on the hallway walls. Ms. A says she is often concerned about the implications of the clear difference in work quality between her students and the mainstream classes. During lunch one day, she points out a series of reports on species of animals that the mainstream second-grade class next door has done. The

writing is clearly at a higher level than most of her students are performing, and she says such a research project would be impossible in her class because so many students still struggle with basic reading comprehension. Ms. A is concerned that her students see things like this and feel insecure because they recognize their work is not as advanced. I do not doubt that this could be happening, but I did not observe anything that gave clues as to how aware the students are of this discord.

Students' impressions of the hierarchy of behavior and being a "desirable student," however, was easier to observe. The Vietnamese students' wariness of potentially being in class with the Black students is telling. Some particularities of Ms. A's class also influenced the messages about behavior that her students were receiving. In contrast with the two mainstream teachers on the hall (both of whom were Black), Ms. A hardly ever raised her voice. The teacher next door, Ms. B, can often be heard yelling things like, "You don't know this math because you're lazy and haven't been studying", or, once, "I'll clock both your heads together if you don't stop!"

Both the Black mainstream-education teachers had a reputation in the school of being "scary" and had a harsher demeanor in dealing with students, while Ms. A's teaching style was more focused on cultivating a democratic and equal classroom. These patterns are in keeping with findings about Black adult-child sociolinguistic styles and Black students in the classroom. Annette Lareau, in her investigation of the effects race and class on family interactions, found that low-income Black parents spoke to their children more curtly, leaving less room for questioning than middle-class parents (both Black and White) did. "Rather than extensive negotiation, these parents use directives and, when necessary, threats of physical punishment." (107)

Ms. A believes in her teaching philosophy, but she worries about the implications and propriety of it. While both the mainstream teachers are from the area where the school is located, Ms. A grew up in the suburbs in a South Asian family. Despite sometimes reportedly passing for Latina, Ms. A knows that her students are growing up in a very different home culture than she did, and expresses anxiety about adequately providing the kind of culturally relevant pedagogy Sonia Nieto describes.

"Sometimes I wonder if I'm doing the right thing by being like this," she said. "For example, the Library teacher is Dominican, and it really bothers me the way she yells at the kids, but she knows better than I do how to speak to Dominican kids in a way that they'll listen, that's more similar to how they interact with adults at home." Her impression was that at home, her students were interacting with adults in ways that were more similar to the poor Black families in Lareau's study than to Ms. A's interactional style. She believed she was doing the best she could for the students, but worried at times if it was what was most effective.

Ms. A also sometimes sent students into Ms. B's room when they were continually acting out - Braulio was sent over one day after being constantly disruptive on the carpet. As this is the only real contact Ms. A's students might have with mainstream students during a school day, it would be easy for them to associate Black students (and teachers) with trouble. This practice, coupled with the constant aural and visual reminders of Black students getting in trouble, created the impression for students that

the Black children were more troublesome. If Carter's finding that Latino students identify more with Black peers than Latinas, this could be a big contributor to young Latino boys developing oppositional identities towards school more than their female counterparts.

Ms. A's Classroom: Gender, Behavior, and Achievement

Race Among the Students

Room 380 sat within this conglomeration of factors kneading at students' identities. During the time I was there, Ms. A's class had 18 students - all of the second-grade SEI Spanish students at Warner. There were 10 girls and 8 boys, to which Ms. A attributes the calmer class atmosphere than last year, when the class consisted of 7 girls and 12 boys. To me, it is unclear whether the class is more under control because her classroom management skills have improved since last year (her first year) or indeed because of the perceived girl-heavy gender breakdown.

The students all come from families that speak Spanish at home, except one girl whose mother enrolled her despite the fact that they speak mostly English. (She is slated to move to mainstream next year, and should have been this year as well.) Of the rest of the students, one was born in America but is often in between Santo Domingo, DR and the States. The rest were born in either the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico, with one student from Guatemala and one from Honduras.

While all these students are classified as "Hispanic/Latino" in school records, there is a huge amount of racial diversity within the class, which brings tension along with it. Lopez' study noted serious, often violent tension between students of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent in high school. At the high school level, such conflicts are often tied to gang activity. Although gang activity is not yet salient in Ms. A's class, the tension is still poignant. Even within students from the same country of origin, there is a lot of variance in how they appear, and students are aware of the implications of looking a certain way.

Ms. A explained one day, "Take a girl like Alyssa, who's from the DR but has light skin and hazel eyes, and put her next to Pilar, who's also from DR but is really dark. Alyssa thinks she's better - she knows what it means. There's so much loaded history in the DR from sharing a border with Haiti and wanting to distance themselves from the Haitians - hair texture is a huge thing. I always try to avoid mentioning it when the girls come in with their hair straightened, so I don't reinforce the idea that straight hair is better than textured, "black" hair. But they get that idea from their families a lot of the time, and it's hard to keep it from permeating into the classroom. Alyssa can be really mean, and the racial thing can fuel that."

In Alyssa's case, it seemed to me as though she thinks she is superior to a lot of the other students for reasons other than race as well. She was infamous in the classroom for rushing through her work because she thought she was smart enough to not have to work hard. She was in the top of the

class in reading and math, and often flaunted it. Ms. A gets at this idea in her last sentence - she did not think it was solely race that made Alyssa treat Pilar badly, but recognized that race is a complicating factor that some students used as ammunition when convenient.

Pilar's hair was often scrutinized by other girls in the class as well. On one bathroom trip, I overhear another girl say to Pilar, "*Es duro, tu cabello!*" or, "Your hair is hard!" The girl's tone implied that it wasn't a benign observation; she had her eyebrows knit in a way I'd seen before, when she had gotten in trouble or was fighting with a classmate. It was meant as an insult.

Behavior and Discipline

As I have described, behavior issues and their punishments were generally considered less severe in Ms. A's class than in the mainstream classes. But that is not to say discipline is not meted out in Ms. A's class - as I have mentioned, the patterns emerging from discipline in the classroom proved to be illuminating with regard to gendered stereotypes. The main form of rule enforcement is the public system of the clip stick: students move the clip with their name up and down the color-coded yardstick according to behavior infractions. Next to the clip stick, there is a poster outlining consequences associated with each color: yellow is a warning, orange a time-out, red a phone call home, blue losing a privilege and purple leaving the class. At the end of each school day, students are expected to color in the day on their "behavior calendar" according to the color on which they end up. Calendars are pasted into homework folders, and include a space for parents to sign each night. Failure to procure a signature usually results in a direct move to yellow the next morning. Students only moved one color at a time - more severe misbehavior did not mean moving to a more dire consequence. At times, chronic misbehavior was met with removal from the classroom into Ms. B's room, and at one point José ended up on an in-school suspension after landing on orange or red for several days in a row.

During my time, the lowest a student ever moved was red, and Ms. A did not follow through on the phone call. I noticed, also, that sometimes when a student was on orange, Ms. A was less likely to move their clip for infractions that, on a first offense, would have warranted a move. It seemed as though the stakes become higher for each move down - simple repetition of a bad behavior would not always warrant downward moves as quickly as one might think. One instance in particular sticks in my mind: Braulio and José were both being exceptionally disruptive one day while they were both already on orange, and instead of moving them to red or blue, she sent Braulio to Ms. B's room and threatened to call José's mother (which worked in sobering him). Ms. A relied consistently on the clip stick to a certain point, but sometimes used different methods for the worst behavior infractions. While it was the main form of discipline in the classroom, a look at simply the number or frequency of moves does not tell the entire picture, as a single clip move could denote a number of different misbehaviors. My analysis relies on number and frequency of clip moves for comparing between genders, but when I move into the case studies, description of each clip-worthy incident becomes more important.

Behavior and Gender

I kept detailed track of clip movement for the time I was in the classroom, making note each time a clip was moved of whose it was, what color they moved to and why. The most common infractions by far proved to be talking, calling out or being otherwise disruptive. Patterns based on gender also came out: while girls collectively misbehaved more often, individual boys who acted out did so repeatedly and to a more severe degree. This pattern did not become apparent until I tallied up the number of infractions; before I did so, I had the impression that boys misbehaved more. When I asked Ms. A what her impression was (without telling her my findings), she reluctantly said that she thought boys acted out more, saying, "I'd like to think it's roughly equal, but I imagine boys do." (phone interview 2/21/13)

But the class as a whole is much calmer than last year's class, she says, which she attributes to the different gender breakdown this year. This year's class is 10 girls and 8 boys, while last year's was 7 girls and 12 boys - that 4-5 student swing makes a huge difference, she says.

While there must be more to the story than this, the fact that this is Ms. A's interpretation is significant insofar as it reflects her views on gender differences. She describes herself as constantly thinking about gender dynamics, and says she often consciously tries to counteract gender stereotyping. For example, she encourages students during free play, who tend to segregate themselves by gender, to mix it up by suggesting that they play with other toys that are typically "for" a different gender. She also says she tries to avoid telling girls they are pretty so as not to reinforce the idea that girls are supposed to be pretty and not smart.

In light of this kind of hyper-awareness, that Ms. A attributes the shift in dynamics to the girl-heavy gender breakdown is significant. Paradoxically, however, she makes this analysis, but also asserts that the biggest behavior problem in her class this year is "girl drama" - that the girls are mean to each other, often threatening to hurt one another. So, while she does attribute the relative docility of this year's class to the higher proportion of girls, she is not suggesting that girls don't come with behavior issues. Her analysis implies that girls misbehave as well, but they have their own set of "drama."

While certain students had their clips moved regularly down to yellow for misbehaving, Ms. A made a conscious effort to praise those students when they did something well. Several students had their clips moved down most frequently: Braulio, José, Alyssa, Anya and Carla were the five students who had to move their clips more than five times during my two weeks (counting multiple moves in one day - for example, one day José made it down to red because he moved three times: this counts as three moves).

Overall, boys had 24 clips moved down, while girls had 27. This means girls and boys are committing clip-worthy infractions at about the same rate: the girls' slightly higher instance can be attributed to their higher numbers. However, these 24 moves for boys are distributed between only four

students, while the girls' 27 moves are spread out between nine of them. Every girl in the class except one had their clip moved down at least once, with the most moves being seven (Alyssa). In contrast, each boy whose name appears on this list had at least four infractions, and José had twelve.

These numbers are significant because, without inspection, they give the impression in the classroom that boys are misbehaving more than girls. It is not surprising that Ms. A and I both had the impression that boys misbehave more often, because those who did run into classroom law had a higher number of infractions, and they were more severe, thus leaving a stronger impression.

But in reality, half the boys in the class did not commit any infractions, while all but one girl did. The key is that most girls who acted out only had one or two instances during my fieldwork - not enough to make an impression. Boys, on the other hand, when they did act out, did so frequently and repeatedly, which makes their infractions seem more pervasive. This pattern also makes it easier to pick out male "problem students," which makes it seem as though boys are causing more problems, even though the problem behavior may only be attributable to a few male students.

Many previous studies on gender and Latino students have pointed to Latino boys having less favor with teachers and school officials because they are "scary" or "threatening." (Lopez, Suárez-Orosco, Flores-González) Before beginning my work in the classroom, I wondered whether this would apply to second grade students, and decided it probably wouldn't because the students are still so clearly children, and are not physically imposing as high school or even middle school students can be. However, these behavior patterns suggest that within room 380, boys are giving the impression of being bigger behavioral threats than they actually are, because when they do act out they do it with more frequency and on a larger scale than girls do.

In this sense, boys do begin to give the impression of being "scarier" than girls at a young age, which sets them up for an oppositional relationship with school officials from the start. The patterns of misbehavior in room 380 fed the teacher's expectation that boys cause more trouble (at least the angry, disruptive kind) than girls do. This expectation, bolstered by perceived support from patterns in classroom discipline, then contributes to notions of Latino boys being rowdy, aggressive, and difficult to teach. These expectations will continue, despite the fact that a closer look at the data shows that girls, collectively, are causing just as much trouble in the classroom.

Achievement and Gender - Reading

Ms. A tracks students' academic progress, in part, through charts on the walls that plot scores on reading progress tests. The charts are anonymous, identifying students by "Student 1, Student 2, etc.," but in the version below I have filled in code names. This chart shows students' reading progress over the course of the year. The colors signify whether a student has done very well (green), is getting there (yellow), or needs more work (red), and are taken from the original chart as Ms. A assigned them at her discretion. For each month, Ms. A set a goal for students at a certain number of words per

minute - these goals are much lower than the standard second grade goal of 72 words per minute. Her unofficial goal is to have 25% of the class reading at the standard grade level by the end of the year.

	October. Goal = 10wpm	November. Goal = 15 wpm	December. Goal = 20 wpm	January. Goal = 25 wpm	Improved
1. Anya	58	41	67	84	26
2. David	19	29	29	30	11
3. Wendell	45	45	61	60	15
4. Vinnie	16	22	38	32	16
5. George	4	17	12	30	26
6. Amanda	82	82	74	102	20
7. Raúl	12	20	19	21	9
8. Angelina	50	77	79	96	46
9. Braulio	2	2	4	6	4
10. José	15	18	20	32	17
11. Catalina	4	16	16	16	12
12. Guillermo	2	12	12	9	7
13. Alina	9	21	17	27	18
14. Carla	2	20	14	13	11
15. Ofelia	0	0	0	9	9
16. Pilar	0	10	7	6	6
17. Ariana	21	30	30	37	16
18. Alyssa	61	66	78	69	8

On this chart, a close look at the numbers highlights gender-based patterns. In October, for example, eight students were below Ms. A's goal of 10 words per minute (and all but three were below the standard second grade goal of 57 words per minute at the beginning of the year). Of these eight students, five were female and three were male, counting the Spanish-dominant girls. However, if you extend the cutoff to look at all the students who were below 20 words per minute, the girls remain the same, but all but one of the boys join the list. Of all the boys in the class, Wendell was the only one above 20 words per minute at the beginning of the year, and this could be helped by the fact that he is repeating second grade. All but one of the students above 20 were girls.

The awarding of sticker colors on this chart is a complex business. I do not wish to assign too much importance to it, but it is worth noting that Ms. A did not have a scientific system for deciding when a student was in the yellow zone versus red or green. On several instances, students who met the goal were still assigned yellow, and at other times students who were not quite there were given yellow anyways. In October, both José and Raúl exceeded the goal of ten words per minute, with 15 and 12 words respectively, but were given yellow stickers - in Ms. A's eyes, they were not quite there. Vinnie, however, was given green for his 16-word score, only a word more than José. The same thing happens to José again in November: his score of 18 for a 15-word goal gets him yellow. However, Raúl ends up on the other side of things when his 19-worder that falls short of the 20-word goal in December earns yellow as well.

This information alone is not strong enough to make conclusions about each boy's role in the classroom, but taken in context of the classroom dynamic, it does help illuminate patterns relating to the boys' performances of masculinity and Ms. A's responses therein. José and Raúl are effectively foils for one another, both behaviorally and academically. José acts out more than any other student in the class, but does well academically, while Raúl gives the impression of being focused by being well-behaved, but actually struggles with schoolwork quite a bit. It is interesting, then, that she gave them both yellow stickers in October for scores that exceeded the goal provided, yet in the next months continued this practice only for José. I do not know how intentional this practice is, but even (or especially) if this color-coding was subconscious, it suggests she was holding José to higher academic expectations later in the year, by saying his exceeding the goal by three words was just "OK."

If this was the case - that Ms. A was consciously or subconsciously holding José to higher standards - it suggests that she also was able to decouple academics from behavior. This could be significant in terms of teacher expectations shaping students' perceptions of self and visions of possible selves. If Ms. A indeed holds José in high academic esteem, making a conscious effort to communicate these high expectations could go a long way to counteract the feedback he is getting daily about his behavior. José and Raúl's stories are featured in the next chapter's case studies, in which I will flesh out the ways each of their experiences in school are affected by the racialized conceptions of masculinity that are implicit in their schooling.

Ms. A cautions against taking the reading scores at face value, because some of them are a

better reflection of the student's English ability than their reading ability. However, more gender-based patterns still emerge that warrant analysis, even when attention is paid to English proficiency as a complicating factor.

There are three students in the class who Ms. A describes as "Spanish-dominant." This means they consistently ask for instructions to be repeated in Spanish, and answer questions asked in English in Spanish. These three students: Pilar, Carla and Ofelia, are all girls. Carla is in the middle of being tested for hearing trouble; teachers suspect she is having trouble learning English because she can't hear correctly. Ofelia just immigrated to the U.S. a few months ago, while Pilar has been here for about a year and speaks English sometimes. For her, it seems as though she relies on Spanish (or Spanglish, more often) out of comfort rather than necessity: she understands everything and will speak in English if asked, but will always default to Spanish.

These three girls got unsurprisingly low scores in reading at the beginning of the year. One tenet of the Structured English Immersion model is that reading tests are given only in English, so a new student may receive a score of zero even if they know how to read in Spanish. This jumps out to me as a flawed system, but to analyze it in detail would stray too far from my focus. Research is inconclusive on gender differences in language acquisition, so this system that rewards quick English learning more than actual reading does not seem to harm or benefit one gender more than another.

While reliable records are not available that tell exactly when each student arrived in the U.S., the rest of the students in the class have been here at least long enough that they are conversationally comfortable in English, both casually and academically. Many conduct side conversations in Spanish or (more often) Spanglish, but respond to Ms. A in English.

Conversational fluency, however, should not be confused with academic fluency. Only three students are up to the mainstream benchmark of 72 words per minute mid-year. These three students (Anyia, Amanda, and Angelina) do not display observably stronger verbal skills than their English-dominant peers - in fact, Anyia uses Spanglish more than most students do. For Anyia, using Spanglish seems like a stylistic choice: switching to Spanish mid-sentence does not mean she doesn't know how to say it in English, but rather she is choosing to express herself in Spanish. She is more than capable of speaking completely in English when she wants to, but will often construct mixed sentences when talking to me directly instead of to the whole class, when she speaks English, or to a friend, when she speaks Spanish.

So, a student's stage of verbal language proficiency necessarily has an effect on their reading score, but the relationship is not as straightforward as one might imagine. Girls are collectively reading at a higher level than boys even though three female students are not proficient in English.

It has been well documented that girls tend to do better than boys in reading (Eliot), so this pattern in room 380 is not entirely surprising. The fact that girls in this classroom are still, on average, outperforming boys even with all the students' varied backgrounds is further support for the idea that girls are cognitively better equipped to learn to read than boys are. But Eliot's study also asserts that if

boys are given the proper support, they can close the gap between their ability and that of their female peers. While evidence does suggest that second-grade boys are at a developmental disadvantage in terms of reading ability, I believe the conditions in this classroom exacerbate that gap rather than narrow it.

Achievement and Gender - Math

Math scores in the classroom are tracked in a similar fashion: a chart on the wall announces progress from the beginning of the year through color-coded stickers. This chart does not include the actual scores, so it is not as informative to copy here, but some information from it does offer insight into the class.

There are three students who have not failed any math tests: José, Vinnie and Alina. This is unexpected because José and Vinnie are very different types of students: José gets in trouble more than any other student in the class, and Vinnie's name only ever came up for clip movement when he moved up to black for quietly doing his work. Alina is in the middle of the road behavior-wise: she moved down to yellow once and up to black once.

In addition to not failing any tests, José and Alina both had four "excellent" (coded green) scores: the most any student received. Anya, Angelina and Braulio also had this many excellent scores. Angelina, like Vinnie, is extremely well-behaved. She is the one girl who was never asked to move her clip down; Ms. A moved her up to black twice after she had been working efficiently all day. However, Anya and Braulio are both in the top two students of their gender for number of behavior infractions. Anya's case will also be elaborated upon in Chapter 4, with attention to what allows her to act out so frequently, yet still be among the top academic students.

Chapter 4

Challenging Assumptions: Identity Formation in Room 380

Over the course of my twelve school days observing in room 380, patterns began to emerge regarding discipline, achievement, and gender. Overall, contrary to my expectations before I started, behavior and frequency of discipline proved to be a poor predictor of academic achievement for both male and female students. However, behavior and academics did not interact in the same ways for both males and females. I have outlined the differences between boys' and girls' collective behavioral and academic patterns, but this approach does not provide a close enough look at what can affect individual students' experiences, since there is still so much variation within genders, as Thorne and others have noted. (Thorne 1993, DiPietro 1981, Jacklin 1991)

The case studies that follow demonstrate a few ways in which students in Ms. A's class performed "misbehavior" in ways that both reacted to and informed Ms. A's gendered expectations. In this context, I use "misbehavior" to mean behavior that Ms. A judged to be worthy of a clip move. While boys and girls acted out at an about even rate, the ways in which each individual misbehaved, along with the whole-class patterns of misbehavior, shed light on how boys begin to become criminalized in the school system (Ferguson, Lopez, Flores-González) and girls become "simultaneously engaged and oppressed" (Lopez 13).

While Ms. A said she always tried to be aware of the effects of gender in her classroom, the ways in which she reacted to certain behaviors and interpreted some information suggested that she had a subconscious bias toward the idea that males are aggressive and angry, while females are often victimized but can be catty. These views of Latino second graders may be seen as a precursor to the types of masculinity and femininity that have been described in urban Latino high schoolers. For girls, Ms. A's impressions parallel the female performance Julie Bettie describes in the working-class Latina high schoolers she studied: these girls are more overtly sexual and social, and challenge the kind of "school-sanctioned femininity" that the middle-class white girls in her study tend to perform. The idea

that Latino boys are angry can also be seen as preceding the patterns that Lopez and Flores-González put forth in their studies. Ms. A's interpretations of José's story in particular suggest that she holds these biases more deeply than she might admit, and these expectations come through in the classroom.

A look at these cases suggests that individual students are indeed performing misbehavior in a gendered way: that is, boys and girls act out in distinct ways that tend to conform with gendered and racialized expectations. This tendency is not prescriptive, however - many of the same behaviors could be seen across genders, and the actual difference in performance is often subtle. Girls and boys would often get in trouble for the same behavior - most commonly, speaking out of turn. Gender by no means determined exactly how a student would act. In fact, there were many instances of different-gender students performing the same behavior in the same way. However, when it came to how Ms. A interpreted the behavior and formed an opinion of the student, there existed more "male" (read: angry), and more "female" (read: nagging) ways to do things like speak out of turn.

These behaviors both reflect and perpetuate the expectations that the school system and Ms. A place on these students. While young students' gender identities are heavily influenced by their environment (Ferguson, Lopez, Wortham), they also actively participate in the formation of gender as a social construct through "play" and "acting", thus "doing gender" (Thorne 5). Students in Ms. A's class "did" gender through the different ways in which girls and boys performed the same type of misbehavior.

However, the fact that not all the students in the class displayed gendered behavior at all times is consistent with previous findings that most students do not display overtly masculine or feminine behavior, but the dominant social groups in a given setting do tend to perform more stereotypically gendered roles (Thorne 93). In room 380, this is not only true of the dominant social groups, but also of those students who dominate the class' discipline records.

The first two students profiled below offer examples of the ways in which boys and girls acted out, and the similarities and differences therein. Their narratives also outline the discord between behavior and academic achievement - both the first two students got in trouble frequently, but are above average academically. Their stories offer insight into how Latino boys and girls are beginning to be sorted into academic and behavioral routes by teachers' expectations and interpretations of their behavior, but also how their unique situation at this age allows them to simultaneously rebel against and deeply engage with school. This latter point holds promise in terms of understanding better ways to keep students engaged in school, even when they may display some worrisome behavior. Throughout the first two examples, Alyssa (a third student) is used as a foil for both students in various ways; although she does not have her own section, she is also a central piece of the classroom's story.

The third profile, Raúl, offers a counterpoint to the first two narratives. Raúl has the opposite problem from the first two: he is angelic according to the clip stick, but lags behind academically. His narrative examines what happens to the "missing" half of the boys in the class - the ones who never show up in the discipline records. I argue that his case is just as or even more troublesome than José's,

precisely because his disciplinary history does not make him look like a student at risk of dropping out. However, just as the institution of the classroom does not condemn him with downward clip moves, nor does it validate him as a member of the classroom with upward ones, which also serves to slowly expel him from the school system.

I include the fourth study, David, as another example of a student who slipped under the clip-stick radar. He does not stand out behaviorally nor academically, yet his development of gender identity demonstrates how a second-grade student may challenge the assumption of a male-female binary by picking and choosing aspects of behaviors coded both feminine and masculine.

José

As far as discipline goes, José looks like the worst student in the class. With twelve clip moves during my observation period, José put other misbehaving students to shame. The student with the next most offenses was Alyssa, with seven. More than just having a higher number of individual offenses, José also had a tendency to get on downward spirals: his twelve moves were not evenly dispersed over my time in the classroom. Rather, once he got in trouble the first time, he often continued to act out until his clip was moved down to orange or red, which was uncommon for most students in the class. Only four students moved to orange when I was there, and José did so most frequently (four times). No other students made it to red (the third offense, warranting a phone call home) at any point, while José did so twice. This numerical breakdown means that, of the six days on which he was disciplined, there were only two days on which he moved to yellow and then stopped. Every other time, he continued to act out and was moved to orange or red. This pattern reflects the larger classroom trend of boys acting out more severely than girls, even though the two genders collectively earned clip moves at about an even rate.

Despite his disciplinary record, José was doing well academically. In reading, José scored comfortably above Ms. A's goal of 25 words per minute on the January test: at 32 words, he is the seventh-highest reader in the class of eighteen. While seventh might not seem impressive, it should be noted that Wendell was the only boy ahead of him. José has improved seventeen words per minute since the beginning of the year, putting him at sixth in the class for improvement, which suggests he is engaged in the class enough to be learning at a decent rate. In math, student scores are also tracked on a chart on the wall with a system of color-coded stickers. According to this chart, José is one of only three students who have no "fail" scores on a math test (represented by a red sticker). Indeed, he is one of only five students who had more than half "excellent scores" (green stickers). Interestingly, Anya and Braulio are also among the five highest-achieving math students, and are also in the top five students for instances of clip movement.

Ms. A's opinion of José is complex. On my first day observing, she began to explain him to me. "I broke him on a steady diet of praise," she said. "At the beginning of the year, he had a serious

attitude. On the first day of school he was actually rolling his eyes at me. But I talked to the school psychiatrist about it, and he told me José is just a really anxious kid. I never thought of it like that - after that, I saw him differently and better understood how to deal with him.”

Now, he has a special “compliment notebook” that he can put stickers in every time Ms. A gives him a compliment on his behavior. He gets a small sticker for small-scale good behavior, but a big one for times when he does something nice for another student, because Ms. A thinks that is what he needs to work on most. Now, with the compliment notebook, she says, he is much better behaved. Even though he is still disciplined more than any other student, at the beginning of the year he would “throw a fit” if he wasn’t called on every 2 or 3 students. He would slam his hands down on the desk and pout. (fieldnotes 1/3/2013)

It is significant that Ms. A was surprised at the school counselor’s description of José as “anxious,” rather than just angry, as she had thought. That she initially classified the nature of his misbehavior as anger is in keeping with findings of studies that suggest boys (especially Black and Latino ones) are seen as aggressive and intimidating in schools, and are disciplined more often and more severely because of it (Lopez, Flores-González, Ferguson). This is not to say that Ms. A disciplines José without reason; if anything, she let him get away with things a few times by not actually calling his mother on days when his clip was on red, and by giving him extra warnings before she moved his clip. But she does hold this conception of his behavior as “angry,” which necessarily affects the way she interprets his actions.

One example of both a seemingly intense outburst from José and Ms. A’s occasional lenience with him is as follows. José was coloring with a pencil while Ms. A was talking, and she pulled the pencil out of his hand from her space right in front of his desk. “Am I going to have to do this every day?” she asked. He made a sneering face, crossed his arms and snapped, “*Yo no sé!*” Ms. A gave him a hard look but did not move his clip. (fieldnotes 1/9/13)

Ms. A does not describe José’s behavior as “angry” simply because he is male; of the five boys who acted out frequently, she only referred to José and one other boy this way. Anger, for her, is not a quality that necessarily comes with being male and Latino, but is one possible mode of expression for a student with these identities. In contrast, Ms. A did not describe any of the girls who were frequently disciplined as “angry,” but rather as “attention-seeking.” Both José and Alyssa, for example, have their clips moved mostly for speaking out of turn. However, in the same initial conversation in which she described José as “angry,” she described Alyssa as a “diva” who “doesn’t get enough attention at home” (as Alyssa reportedly self-described). (fieldnotes 1/3/13) However, she also described José’s behavior at the beginning of the year as being defined by a tendency to sulk when he was not called on often enough; such a negative reaction to not getting enough attention could also be described as attention-seeking behavior. Even so, Ms. A chose to focus on the aspects of José’s and Alyssa’s behavior that fit with gendered expectations of Latino students: that boys are aggressive and uninterested in school, and girls are dramatic and social (Lopez, Suarez-Orozco, Bettie).

Ms. A's interpretation and classification of these students' behavior, however, is understandable: while they commit the same types of offenses in the classroom, the two students are performing the offenses in gendered ways. While José was more likely to cross his arms and huff like the scene just described, Alyssa's outbursts were more often to call out the answer or to tell a peer what to do, acting as more of a maternal, "helping" figure. (Grant) Some of her downward clip moves were for not doing her work, because, Ms. A said, she feels as though she does not need to work because she is already smart. (fieldnotes 1/8) Ms. A does not criminalize Alyssa by describing her as "angry" (implying "dangerous" [Ferguson, Lopez]), but rather casts her outbursts as more benign by calling her a "diva."

In both these students' cases, Ms. A mentioned the students' home lives as influences on their behavior. These interpretations of causality reflect important parts of her expectations (conscious or otherwise) about gender and behavior. In discussing José, Ms. A explained that she suspects his father is emotionally and/or physically abusive, saying she became suspicious after meeting José's mother. She described his mother as "timid and nervous," and said that having grown up herself in a household where patriarchy reigned, she recognized the demeanor of a woman who fears her husband. She also believed José's behavior towards her and the other students reflected his father's behavior towards him and his family. For example, one day José instructed Ms. A to get him a pair of scissors. Ms. A feigned outrage and told him to get them himself. Then, turning to me, said, "I wonder where he gets that idea to be domineering - he must see it somewhere. It makes me nervous." (fieldnotes 1/18/13)

Another interesting aspect of José's behavior is that he often demonstrated concern over the implications of other students' behavior. One day, he announced to nobody in particular that "you'll get moved to yellow if you don't have your crayons, because that's what Ms. A said yesterday." (fieldnotes 1/10/13) He made this assertion without prompting, or even anybody seemingly listening, in the middle of morning work. A few days later Ms. A dismissed students from the carpet back to their seats in groups, a normal occurrence in the classroom, by first sending all the students wearing white. As students shuffled around, José yelled out, "Anya, you're not wearing white!" This is in keeping with Thorne's description of boys' culture in that boys are more concerned about making and keeping track of rules, but also more concerned about breaking them.

This behavior, while reflecting understandings of "boys' culture," also has complicated implications with respect to theories of Latino males' resistance to the oppression of schooling. Lopez describes Latino adolescent males' low academic performance as willful and political: men express their resentment of the school system by disregarding rules and putting no effort into earning grades. José, at times, demonstrated a deep understanding of, and concern for, the classroom rules and norms, which suggests he was not acting out because he lacked regard for the rules. His behavior, then, was willful in the same way older Latino males' was in Lopez' study. But unlike his older Caribbean counterparts, José wanted to please the teacher and put effort into his schoolwork.

Anya

Anya, with five clip moves, was the second most frequently disciplined girl in the class (the most being Alyssa with seven). Her most common infractions are chatting with Pilar, and being disruptive. Like José, Anya is at the top of the class academically. She maintained the third-highest reading scores all year, and had several “excellent” scores in math as well.

One day, Anya came back into the classroom from her reading class in another teacher’s room because she forgot something, and Ms. A had her move to yellow because she had reminded her before she left to make sure she had all her materials. This was the only time I saw Ms. A ask a student to move his or her clip because of being irresponsible or forgetful - one day, she threatened to move clips if students didn’t bring their crayons to class, but did not actually go through with it.

Later, Ms. A explained that Anya was forgetful at the beginning of the year and used to get anxious about it. One day in September, she forgot her whole backpack. She is still spacey, said Ms. A, but now they have set up systems for her to remind herself - upon closer inspection, I notice the illustrated list taped to her desk of everything she needs to remember each day.

Ms. A attributes Anya’s spaciness to the fact that she lives with her father and teenage brother, and neither of them check to make sure she has everything together. Anya was often hanging out in the hallway near the office at the end of the day, waiting for her dad to pick her up after most students had gotten on buses or picked up. The day before she forgot her reading materials, her behavior calendar was not signed as it should have been. She said her dad got home too late to sign it.

Ms. A told me she is concerned about Anya’s living situation because she has no female role models, and because she worries about her being around her teenage brother and his friends, implying that they might abuse her in some way. Ms. A also describes Anya as “innocent” in that she does not involve herself in the “girl drama” that goes on in the classroom. As an example, Ms. A told me that Anya wanted to be friends with Pilar, but one of the other girls in the class told her she couldn’t be Pilar’s friend if she wanted to remain friends with another girl. Ms. A said she told her, “I think you should be friends with everybody,” and Anya responded, “I know! That’s what I thought!” (fieldnotes 1/8/2013) Alyssa, again, serves as a foil: Ms. A told me Alyssa often makes fun of Pilar because she has dark skin and textured hair, while Alyssa has a lighter complexion and hazel eyes. The girls are both Dominican, but Ms. A says Alyssa feels superior because of her complexion and often flaunts this perceived racial superiority by acting as though she knows more about school than Pilar.

In this instance, Ms. A uses race to interpret Alyssa’s behavior when there is no overt mention of it. While I did overhear several instances of Pilar being targeted for her hair texture, I also got the impression that Alyssa felt as though she needed to boss around most students in the class. She also moved to yellow one day for booing and giving a thumbs-down when another student was sharing her work. (fieldnotes 1/4) It seemed to me as though this behavior did not have so much to do with a sense of racial superiority as with, perhaps, a racialized expression of the “helpful,” maternal female gender

role - similar to the one that Linda Grant found in her research with young Black girls (1992). Alyssa, however, took the role past the point of being helpful and into the realm of being offensive.

Another time Ms. A moved Anya's clip to yellow was for yelling into the classroom from the hallway - she was trying to tell Alyssa that a teacher needed her. Later, Ms. A told me, "I'm being hard on Anya today, but she's secretly one of my favorites."

The fact that Ms. A's instinct regarding Anya's frequent disruptiveness is to classify it as "innocent" spaciness, and to shift blame to her male-dominated household, is reflective of the expectations Ms. A tends to have for males and females. While Ms. A does not dichotomize feminine as "good" and masculine as "bad," she does assign certain characteristics to each gender. For example, she paradoxically attributes the better behaved class this year to there being more girls than last year, yet cites the biggest behavior issue as "girl drama." (fieldnotes 1/3) This analysis implies that girls have a better sense of how to act in school than boys do, but are catty and mean to each other.

Anya occupies an in-between space in the classroom: Ms. A interprets her behavior as feminine, but Anya does not fit in with most of the girls in the class. During choice time, most of the girls clump in a corner playing with small whiteboards, but Anya and Pilar are consistently off somewhere else. Anya is feminine in her innocence and perceived sweetness, yet her shortcomings as a student are more masculine (being disorganized, talkative and disruptive, yet not participating in "girl drama.") Her misbehavior stops short of being interpreted as angry; she ends up with what Ms. A sees as a favorable trade of feminine misbehaviors for the more benign masculine ones. Occupying this uniquely gendered space has allowed Anya to form a strong relationship with Ms. A - social capital that will become invaluable as she moves through school. While Ms. A does pay special attention to José in attempts to regulate his behavior, she still treats him with suspicion and constantly questions his motives - he does not enjoy the same benefit of the doubt that Anya does.

Raúl

The critical counterpoints to José's narrative in this classroom are those of the boys who are "hidden" in the discipline records. As explained in Chapter 3, half the boys in the class had their clips moved down four or more times, leading to a roughly equal number of male and female total infractions. However, this means half the boys in the class (four of them) did not have their clips moved down at all.

Raúl is one of these boys. The only time he showed up in my behavior record was the one time he moved up to black at the end of the day. Ms A moved him up after asking me, as she did on several occasions, if there were any students she thought deserved to move up to black that day. "Particularly if there are any boys you've noticed," she said. Ms A described herself as "constantly looking through a gendered lens" - as being perhaps hyper-aware of gender stereotypes. This is one way she told me she tried to equalize what she perceived as male overrepresentation in downward clip moves (fieldnotes 1/10/13, interview 2/22/13).

She knew the nature of my research - that I was keeping track of clip moves with attention to gender - so it is possible that my presence made her pay closer attention to issues like this. However, I got the impression that she tended to consciously (sometimes to the point of artificiality) resist gender stereotypes outside my presence as well. On my first day, she told me about how she tries to avoid telling girls they are pretty and boys they are strong so as not to reinforce stereotypes. She said she is particularly aware of girls' hairstyles, and the implications of commenting on a trip to the salon. When a girl comes into school with her hair relaxed or braided in a complicated way, the other girls often fawn over it because hair is a way of showing economic status, said Ms A. She normally tries to make a comment like "your hair looks different!" instead of saying it looks "pretty", which would imply that it did not look as pretty naturally (fieldnotes 1/3/13).

Taking into account these examples of how Ms A approaches gender in her classroom, it is likely that her consciously looking to elevate boys was not a huge departure from how she normally approaches the clip stick. She moved Raúl on this particular day because he had been "working hard without stopping" - a common way for both male and female students to earn an upward move (fieldnotes 1/18/13).

Despite his spotless behavior record, however, Raúl was struggling academically. His reading scores were stagnant between November and January: he remained around twenty words, which was below Ms A's January goal of 25. Out of seven math tests, he received one "excellent" score, two failing, four in the yellow "OK" zone (see Appendix). When I asked Ms A which students she would recommend to repeat second grade, she included him in a list of four students. (fieldnotes 1/8)

Raúl is notable because of his lack of noteworthy behavior. Along with the three other boys who did not receive any disciplinary sanctions, he hardly showed up in my field notes at all. One other boy who never had his clip moved down, Vinnie, was also moved up to black once. Wendell moved to black twice, and Guillermo once, for a total of five male clips on black. On the female side, by contrast, there were eight girls who moved to black at least once, and thirteen total upward moves (meaning that most of them moved twice).

In terms of rewards for good behavior in this classroom, the gender divide is even more stark than with bad behavior being punished by downward clip moves. Twice as many females were rewarded with a move to black than males were, with almost three times as many total moves to black for girls than for boys (compared to the nearly equal numbers of downward moves for punishment).

That boys are so underrepresented on the black section of the clip stick suggests that boys either were not performing the behaviors that warrant rewards in the classroom, or that it was not being recognized when they did perform those behaviors. Because Ms. A went out of her way sometimes to move boys up, it is unlikely that she is consciously ignoring boys behaving well. A more likely explanation is that the ways in which boys behave well are not as much on Ms. A's radar.

Ms. A values students being helpful towards one another above most other "good" behaviors. This is evident in José's compliment notebook, as well as the patterns of upward clip moves. Students

who moved up did so because they were ready quickly, working quietly, or had done something helpful for another student. Ms. A told me at one point that she often uses the “being ready quickly” clip move in order to motivate other students to hurry up, but that being helpful towards one another was something she really wanted to foster in the classroom. (fieldnotes 1/18)

As outlined in my Chapter 2 section about familial expectations, Latino immigrant families tend to put more onus on their daughters for domestic obligations; helping around the house, taking care of siblings, etc. It is quite possible that gendered behavior in room 380 is reflecting this gendered expectation that students may have at home. Without having interviewed families or done research in homes, I cannot say for sure that this is the case here, but previous research overwhelmingly suggests that this is a trend among immigrant families, especially those with Latino roots. (Portes and Rumbaut, Wortham) Bettie (2003) and Grant also point out Latina and Black (respectively) girls’ tendency to enter adult roles earlier than their White peers.

I see these effects through Alyssa’s constant concern about what other students are doing, and her urge to regulate them that led Ms. A to label her “attention-seeking” and other students to complain about her being “bossy.” (fieldnotes 1/3) Alyssa’s case is Other girls performed this as well; one day, Wendell finished his work and proceeded to sit in his seat, spaced out. Amanda, who sits next to him, turned and with knit eyebrows chided, “You’re just gonna sit there?! That’s boring! That means you don’t like to do anything. That means you don’t even like to help your mother.” (fieldnotes 1/15) Amanda’s incredulity at Wendell’s perceived laziness reflects the Latina expectation of being responsible and “helpful.”

Girls in room 380 benefitted from the system of rewards because Ms. A put more emphasis on helping peers and being ready quickly than anything else; these are both behaviors that Latina girls are socialized to perform from a very young age. This system causes boys like Raúl to become neglected in terms of institutional recognition. Raúl is focused, cooperative, and works hard, but is seldom recognized. This lack of recognition arguably works to expel him from the system just as much as José’s oppositional relationship with authority does, and this is what sets him and José apart from Anya. While Anya misbehaves significantly more than Raúl does, she has, in Ms. A’s approval, access to second grade and a future in schooling that Raúl might now.

David

David tears through his three math problems that are assigned for morning work, solving them with abandon. Once finished, he grins at me, raises his hand, and asks for more.

“This was easy!” he says. I haven’t seen him excited like this before - normally, he’s more reserved. I’m also intrigued by the fact that he’s so proud of his schoolwork; everything I’ve read about Latino masculinity in high schoolers has trained me to expect boys to hide it when they do well in school. Many of the girls in Lopez’ study flaunted their achievement and bragged when they got good grades.

They demanded challenges from their teachers, while male students tended to be quiet about good grades that they did receive, suggesting that academic achievement was more valued for females. (104) Accordingly, I went into my fieldwork with an eye out for whether this pattern held true in Ms. A's class.

The attitudes Lopez found in adolescent males are quite far off from David's view of schoolwork. He is eager to show me, Ms. A, and his peers that he is "getting smarter" at math, telling me he has been practicing with his grandmother (fieldnotes 1/11). For him, there are no inhibitions about achieving in school - indeed, he goes out of his way to show off how quickly and accurately he has completed his work, and how easy he found it.

Ms. A also urges me to pay attention to the ways he interacts with his peers: often, during free time, he chooses to play separately from the rest of the boys. One day during my observations, he spent time working on a princess-themed puzzle by himself for a bit before hesitantly trying to join the rest of the boys playing blocks on the carpet. He complained to Ms. A that they wouldn't share with them, and she asked whether he had asked them to share. When he said no, she called out, "David wants to play with the blocks, is there anyone who wants to share with him?" José responded quickly, shouting, "David, you can play over here if you want!" David had also separated himself from the rest of the boys during choice the day before, choosing to play alone with a classroom aide rather than with his peers.

On pajama day, David came to school wearing a Justin Bieber-themed pajama set clearly meant for girls. "He's my favorite singer!" he told Ms. A, when she complimented him.

David demonstrates more of a flexible conception of gender roles (as Martin and Ruble describe: see Chapter 2) than his peers seem to, if we define "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors as they have been classified by Ms. A's expectations. The expectations in room 380 that make it easier for girls to succeed align with Carter's findings about identity as well. Her interviews with Black and Latino adolescents reveal a bias towards the idea that doing well in school (and adopting the identities necessary to do so) is a female thing. One young man she interviewed said that a male would never buy into the school system enough to adopt the speech and behavioral patterns endorsed by the white, middle-class culture that the school system embodies - only females do this. Attitudes like this are likely contributors to boys like those in Lopez' study hiding it when they do well in school.

It should not be assumed that these attitudes are also present in elementary school simply because they pervade in high school; David's case demonstrates that elementary aged students' conceptions of race and gender are complex and dynamic. According to Martin and Ruble's study, David's flexible conception of gender stereotypes (that allow him to wear girls' clothes and play with "girls' toys" like the princess puzzle) are somewhat typical of eight year olds. But most of the class seems to be elsewhere in their development of gender conception; the class does divide along gender lines, both in terms of who chooses to play with whom, and in performances of misbehavior. During choice time, the genders self-segregate: usually boys on the carpet with blocks and legos, and girls in a corner with whiteboards. The only exceptions are that sometimes Anya and Pilar play with whiteboards separate

from the rest of the girls, or David will play alone or with a teacher. David's flexibility makes him the exception in this class.

Something to consider is that many studies based on gender have examined the attitudes of students who are in the dominant racial and cultural group. Both Thorne and Carter point out that theories of gender culture are often based on white, middle-class students, and the patterns do not hold true for students who do not fit that description. The same could apply to Trautner's psychological study: the trajectories of flexibility and rigidity that he found in his subjects may not hold for the students in Ms. A's class, in their particular socioeconomic position. That is to say, the fact that the gender gap is more pronounced for Black and Latino students suggests these students may have a more rigid conception of gender roles than white students do; the two phenomena are likely symptoms of the same larger structures that criminalize and expel male students of color from school systems.

David largely disregards these norms and achieves moderate success in the classroom. He met Ms. A's goals on all of his reading tests, and did not fail any math tests - overall he performs at an average level academically. He does not cause disruptions in class, but nor does he keep quiet like Raúl. Like most students in the class, he is eager to earn approval from Ms. A, and seems to be experimenting with ways to do so. His behavior challenges the idea of different cultures, and underlines different options for identity formation that exist for students at this age.

Implications

In room 380, the types of behaviors that were punished and rewarded were unintentionally and implicitly gendered: both the frequency and severity with which certain students acted out, and the way Ms. A interpreted these actions aligned with certain ideas about Latino students and gender. While this was not done in a way that necessarily cast feminine as positive and masculine as negative, the behavioral expectations and discipline system favored females. All students were expected to be helpful towards each other, something valued in conceptions of "girls' culture" and, moreover, in Latino family expectations for girls. But these behaviors could also be performed in negative ways, as Alyssa often did; Ms. A described these negative feminine behaviors as "diva-like" and "attention-seeking." This iteration of misbehavior, however, was considered more benign than the more aggressive, "male" ways of acting out that José often (but not always) demonstrated. Students' performances of misbehavior did sometimes fall into the characterizations Ms. A expected, but often very similar behavior was simply interpreted differently based on the gender of the perpetrator.

The clip system also theoretically favors girls because of its publicity, but whether or not this applies to students this age is unclear. Literature on "girls culture" and Latina relationships with school systems suggests that it is much more acceptable for girls to seek approval from school officials and teachers. However, students like David openly challenged the idea that Latino boys tend to resist schooling, and all students in the class sought approval from Ms. A and other adults. José's narrative

particularly complicates this conception, because while he performed in some ways that were oppositional, he took schoolwork seriously and responded heartily to praise from the teacher, suggesting he was indeed looking for validation from school and teachers.

The publicity of the clip system may also be working to reinforce gender stereotypes that, at this age, are not as true as they may seem. Being able to see who gets in trouble for what is likely to put social pressure on students, exacerbating any existing influence to either behave well or behave badly according to gender. Children this age often favor activities that they perceive as more gender appropriate, regardless of the content of the activity. (Martin and Ruble). Therefore, the pattern of boys getting in trouble repeatedly could lead other students in the class to further associate bad behavior with boys and good behavior with girls.

These narratives show how the cycle of students' behavior and teachers' expectations in room 380 contribute to boys being criminalized and girls being domesticated, despite Ms. A's best efforts to make it otherwise. Students navigated the expectations in ways they saw fit, choosing, as Grant puts it, "among competing forms and innovat[ing] novel responses in forming gender identities." Students' performance of misbehavior was gendered in some ways, but did not adhere as closely to gendered expectations as older students' behavior reportedly does. Misbehavior was also not necessarily a challenge to the school system; some students who misbehaved often also "bought into" schooling by valuing and responding to academic success and approval from the teacher.

Chapter 5

Conclusions: What This Means and What We Can Do

I set out to examine the ways in which conditions in an urban second-grade classroom might be affecting the gendered achievement gap among Latino high school students. After spending time doing participant observation in a class of first-generation Latino students in a racially diverse school, I found that the students in this classroom were interpreting cues about race and gender identities in ways that

fulfilled, yet constantly challenged teacher and societal expectations for their behavior and academic achievement. While some patterns, like girls acting maternal and boys acting angry, followed trends found among adolescents and the teacher's expectations about each gender, these patterns were nowhere near absolute. However, students' impressionability at this age suggests that maintained exposure to stereotyped expectations will encourage them to conform more and more to those expectations as they move through the school system, leading to the more rigid gender roles that Latino adolescents embody.

I expected there to be differences in the girls' and boys' behavior and academics in second grade, but did not think that the boys in room 380 would be seen as "threatening" as much as Latino adolescents are, since they are still children. As it turned out, the boys in this classroom still conjured these racial and gendered stereotypes for teachers, despite conscious attempts to work against these prejudices. Boys' misbehavior was often seen as a confrontation to school authority, while girls' was seen as more benign self-absorbedness, despite the fact that nearly every student engaged in and wanted approval from school, unlike many urban adolescents.

My research holds with previous studies' findings that Latino boys and girls experience school differently: that boys go through a process of criminalization and expulsion, while girls experience an acceptance yet objectification by the school system. I identified some possible seeds of this pattern in my second grade classroom: girls give the impression of being better behaved, which leads teachers to continue interpreting their behavior as benign, while some boys act out and are classified as "angry," as other males are neglected. One unexpected finding with strong implications is that of the "invisible good boy" archetype that Raúl's case represents. The fact that boys who behave well are not rewarded in the same way as girls are is an under-examined way in which Latino boys may be pushed out of the school system.

Going through school with these expectations upon them will likely have the effect of making young Latino male students behave more and more like what they are perceived to be: criminals who do not belong in the school system. Young students are particularly susceptible to clues about race and gender, and the information they receive in second grade holds weight in terms of who they see themselves becoming in relation to school. Channels should be created through which teachers can offer feedback on behavior and academics separately - the two are not closely linked at this age, but do become more so later on. If students like José are excelling academically but receiving the majority of their teacher feedback about their negative behavior, it could lead them to identify more with a "troublemaker" or "street kid" identity (as Flores-González calls it) down the line.

The patterns of behavior and achievement I have highlighted can be useful in continuing to describe and work against the systemic inequalities in our school system. The influence of Latino student identity and experience in elementary school upon their performance in high school is an under-explored field, and one that holds great promise in its power to help educators understand how to better work towards student success across racial, ethnic, and gendered lines.

With the data collected in this study, only educated guesses can be made about how exactly the trends observed in second grade will affect each individual student as he or she continues through the school system. A longitudinal study would be useful in answering this question more completely. Further clarification could also be made through studies that examine classrooms like this one in direct comparison with other classrooms in the same school, or with classrooms with similar racial/ethnic makeups in different neighborhoods. Class is a complicating factor that, without a point of comparison, I was unable to adequately address through this research. Another interesting path for future research is examining how SEI Spanish students' identities are affected when they "graduate" into mainstream classrooms.

My research suggests that teachers need to be more deliberate in dispersing their attention among students, and in holstering their formation of gender and race-based stereotypes. In classrooms like the one I studied, the class dynamic can give the impression of reinforcing some of these stereotypes, such as boys being more troublesome, but a closer inspection of data works against these assumptions. Teachers have the power to work against the racialized and gendered patterns that emerge here and in high school by offering students multiple ways to experience "success" in the classroom, validating the nearly universal second-grade desire to engage in school, and recognizing the multitude of ways in which young students experience and express race and gender.

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Appendix A

Raw Data and Statistical Methods from Chapter 3

3rd Grade ELA - District	M	F		3rd Grade Math - District	M	F
Advanced	6	9		Advanced	29	31
Proficient	86	90		Proficient	126	93
Needs Improvement	302	255		Needs Improvement	230	159
Warning	175	105		Warning	193	175

3rd Grade ELA - Warner	M	F		3rd Grade Math - Warner	M	F
Advanced	0	0		Advanced	0	0
Proficient	1	2		Proficient	1	1
Needs Improvement	6	3		Needs Improvement	8	3
Warning	8	5		Warning	6	6

I conducted a chi-square test for statistical significance to determine whether there was a significant difference between male and female test scores. Since the sample size at Warner was so small, I did not run the test for those numbers, but only the district-wide ones.

The tests for the district yielded a p-value of less than .01 for ELA, and about .15 for Math, suggesting that there was a significant difference between male and female scores for ELA, but not for math.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Interviews with Ms. A were conducted informally in the classroom over the course of my fieldwork. Many times, information came out of organic conversations, although I did sometimes ask explicit questions. Because of the nature of our conversations, this is not meant to be an exhaustive list of exchanges we had, but rather to give a sense of the types of questions I asked.

These are some of the questions:

If you had to make a judgement call, would you say girls or boys act out more frequently?

Which students would you recommend repeat second grade?

What is [student]'s home life like?

Why did you choose to arrange desks that way?

How is [student from last year] doing in third grade?

Why do you think he/she behaves that way?

Appendix C

No Child Left Behind Report Card 2012