

**“THROUGH THE SAME LENS BUT FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE”:
LATINO ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, 1968-1974**

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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August 2010

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ABSTRACT

In the politically charged atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s in the Bay Area of northern California, many Latino and Chicano youth formed multiple and fluid identities influenced by their experiences in schools and community organizations and encounters with adults in their neighborhoods. Throughout this process, institutional structures within the educational system as well as significant developments within the community, including the Black Power Movement, striking United Farm Workers, lawsuits over bilingual education, and busing programs for integration, affected how youth forged ethnic, panethnic, pan-minority, and white identities. This study examines ethnic identity formation for immigrant and native-born school-age youth as well as adults and college-age students by drawing comparisons between the diverse Latino population in San Francisco and the predominantly Mexican-American population in the East Bay. This contrast highlights the complexities within the story of Latino ethnic identity formation and how this identity is often layered and situational depending on the context.

The diverse ethnic and racial make-up of the Bay Area illustrates why a Latino identity cannot always be encompassed under the enormous umbrella of “Latino” or even “Chicano,” as these terms mask differences in identity and experiences for individuals and groups. On one level, this study considers Bay Area Latinos and Chicanos not as a monolith but as individuals with multiple identities who interacted with one another and various outside groups. More broadly, this study illuminates our understanding of the overall experience of immigrant and native-born youth in

education and how students both influence and are influenced by institutions and adults, often establishing more than one identity through the overlapping processes of assimilation, acculturation, and cultural maintenance. Ultimately, by examining student activities inside and outside the schools as well as the actions taken by groups of Latino teachers, parents, and college-age students to challenge the educational system, this dissertation extends out from the Bay Area in that it engages the broader forces that shape public schooling in Latino communities, such as immigration, the construction of *Latinidad*, and youth identity formation, in turn illuminating a more complete understanding of Latino students' experiences as they intersect with educational systems in the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my time at Stanford, I had the good fortune to work with outstanding scholars and mentors. First, I would like to thank Joy Williamson-Lott and David Labaree for providing helpful and necessary support throughout this process. Their insight was critical to my writing, and their critiques were always delivered in a thoughtful and positive manner. I was also very fortunate to have worked with Al Camarillo. The idea for this dissertation first formed in a class taught by Professor Camarillo, and he continued to support me throughout my graduate school career. Leah Gordon also provided me with helpful advice and insight as she filled in on my reading committee. I thank each of these professors for their invaluable feedback and guidance.

Over the years, I also had the chance to work closely with David Tyack and Larry Cuban, two of the great scholars in our field. Their mentoring and encouragement is much appreciated. Sean Reardon and Mike Kirst also provided me with opportunities to conduct research in different fields of education. I am very thankful for having worked with both of them. In terms of my own growth, I benefited tremendously from these experiences and relationships.

I was incredibly lucky to enter Stanford the year I did. The entering class of 2003—“The Aughts”—was truly a special group of people. I was living bi-coastally with my husband at the time, which would have been even more difficult without the friends I found in my cohort. To my history of education buddy, Mike Dunson, congratulations—we did it! To each of you, I know I made lifelong friends, and for that I am very grateful.

Most importantly, I thank my husband Rich. Without his love, support, patience, and editing skills, this dissertation would not have been completed. Most of our marriage has been spent with me in graduate school, but it’s now over, and we can get on with our lives. I love you.

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INTRODUCTION

Before I entered graduate school, I taught for six years in public schools in an area of Los Angeles undergoing significant demographic changes in its racial and ethnic make-up. In the 1980s, the population in south Los Angeles was almost 75 percent African American and 25 percent Mexican American. By my first year of teaching in 1994, those figures had reversed. Over the next five years, an influx of Central American students contributed to an even greater change in the ethnic make-up of the schools. The curriculum, however, did not reflect these shifts in the population, and despite the increasing diversity within the Latino population, African American heritage month, Mexican Independence Day, and Cinco de Mayo were the primary cultural celebrations observed by the school. Considering these limited acknowledgements of diversity and repeated requests from parents to expand the scope of the celebrations, I began to think about how schools can better recognize differences within the racial and ethnic identity of their student bodies as well as what impact a diverse student population may have on the ways in which youth form their own identities.

I also considered how my students' interactions outside the schools affected their identity formation. My second year of teaching, the El Salvadoran soccer federation offered free tickets to a game between the national teams of the United States and El Salvador, and I took three of my students to the match. None of them had ever been to a live sporting event, and they were thrilled to see the action up close. Early in the match, the United States scored, and my students were very excited, jumping up and

down and cheering for the U.S. team. Unfortunately, every time the children cheered, a group of El Salvadoran men sitting behind us yelled at them to root for El Salvador, calling them traitors for not doing so. One of my students was very feisty, and he yelled back that he *was* cheering for his team, America, because that's where he was born. My other two students were a bit more reserved, and the taunting bothered them, particularly the Mexican-American child, as he also felt he was cheering for the team he wanted to win, since one of Mexico's many soccer rivals is El Salvador.

As a non-Hispanic white raised in the suburban northeast, I did not have any experience with diversity within the Latino population. I knew that the experiences and identities of European whites were not to be conflated, because where I'm from no one would consider the backgrounds and cultures of the Irish, Jewish, Italian, etc., to be the same. Yet, here I was, living in southern California, and all Latinos were expected to celebrate Cinco de Mayo and cheer for a Spanish-speaking soccer team over the United States. After viewing first-hand the confusion and fissures curriculum and external pressures can produce in terms of the creation and expression of ethnic identity for youth, I decided to pursue the study of the transmission of cultural and ethnic identity for Latino youth and how students relate to their communities and schools. In choosing to conduct an historical analysis, I chose to examine the heterogeneous Latino population of the Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s and its enormous internal and external pressures on youth in terms of identity formation. I believed the shifting demographics and ensuing identity politics of the Bay Area Latino population to be a harbinger of what many urban areas are experiencing today

and will continue to look to address in the years ahead as immigration from Latin America remains steady.

An analysis of Latino and Chicano ethnic identity formation in the Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s offers a fresh perspective in that the larger community was racially and ethnically diverse and in turn greatly influenced many students' formation and assertion of their own multiple identities. Such a case study demonstrates how groups of Latino youth in a diverse community assert themselves through activism, school politics, and participation in school and community programs as well as how youth identity and culture are formed and maintained within the schools and through school system directives. In expanding the emphasis beyond Mexican-American and Chicano students and broadening the analysis to include youth of Latin American descent in the Bay Area, this study contributes to the literature examining the complicated nature of identity and how this manifests in student activism and participation. Schools as compulsory institutions of attendance offer an ideal setting to look at this identity formation in that this is where the interests of students, teachers, parents, and local leaders intersect, compelling youth to make choices in terms of how they view themselves and how they view their larger communities.

The diversity within the population and exposure to other racial and ethnic groups differentiates this particular Latino and Chicano population from others in the west and southwest and directly contributes to the formation of unique and multilayered identities as Latinos, Chicanos, people of color, whites, or a version of some or all of these identifiers, in addition to youth establishing themselves as active participants in the struggle for educational equality and civil rights. In examining the creation of

multiple identities in the Bay Area during the 1960s and 1970s, this study is organized into four chapters. In Chapter One I provide an exploration of the literature in order to provide a comprehensive framework and context for the study. In order to construct the larger context of the era, background information on the Bay Area and social movements are also included.

In Chapter Two I focus on youth ethnic identity formation in San Francisco, specifically looking at the Mission District where the highest concentration of Latinos in the city lived, representing over twenty Latin American countries. As Latino youth attended integrated schools and interacted daily with those of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, many formed multiple identities and found successes practicing ethnic and panethnic cultural maintenance as well as assimilating to “American” norms transmitted through the schools. Research in this chapter brings to light the successful creation of panethnic, pan-minority, and white identities among youth as they participated in school, community organizations, and political rallies both inside and outside the schools they attended.

In Chapter Three I examine the Chicano and Latino populations of the East Bay, specifically drawing evidence from the cities of Berkeley, Richmond, and Oakland. The Latino population of the East Bay was predominantly of Mexican origin, although other Latin American countries were also represented, many forming their own social organizations. In the East Bay, the Latino population was proportionately smaller than that of San Francisco but no less active in local political groups and organizations created to challenge the education system. Chicano and Latino students in the East Bay also attended integrated schools, affecting greatly how they forged ethnic,

panethnic, and pan-minority identities, and how they related to those of differing ethnic and racial backgrounds.

In Chapter Four I consider the adult and college-age populations in the Bay Area and investigate how their processes of identity formation affected youth attending schools and participating in community organizations. Similar to the youth, many adults formed multiple and fluid identities, although they faced more challenges in sustaining them. This chapter reveals how many Latino and Chicano adults struggled with their own panethnic and pan-minority identity formation, contending with disagreements over cultural nationalism, the process of assimilation, disparities in socioeconomic status, the merits of bilingual education, disputes over resources and busing as these variables impacted how they formed and attempted to maintain multiple identities.

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Theoretical Framework

*There can be no doubt that the Spanish-speaking constitute a clearly delineated ethnic group. But one must also recognize that there is no more heterogeneous ethnic group in the United States than the Spanish-speaking.*¹

In East Los Angeles in March of 1968, in the first major mass protest by Mexican Americans of the 1960s generation, thousands of Chicano high school students staged walkouts to protest the fact that their schools were significantly under-funded and under-resourced.² These walkouts triggered similar actions in Latino *barrios* across the west and southwest, as students took to the streets from San Jose to Kansas City to question everything from the curricula implemented in the classrooms to the food served in the cafeterias to the imposed police presence in many hallways. Identity politics and cultural nationalism were front and center as Chicano youth placed their protest actions within the larger Chicano Movement occurring on college campuses and aligned themselves with the United Farm Workers representing indigent and non-

¹ Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948), 7.

² Throughout this study Latino is used to denote people of Latin American descent, including those from Mexico, Central and South America, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Cuba. The term Hispanic is not used as it is considered by many of Latin American descent to be Eurocentric and is “steeped in controversy and contention.” [David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 217] Latino is more commonly used in the west and is the preferred category among those who embrace a pan-Latin American identification, indicating solidarity across national and ethnic lines. [Nicholas De Genova and Ana Yolanda Ramos-Zayas, *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 19]. When describing the experiences of immigrants of Mexican decent, the term Mexican American is used. Those who came of age during the civil rights and student movements of the 1960s are referred to as Chicano, a highly politicized identity that became popular at this time among youth of Mexican descent who were born in the United States and identified as people of color.

unionized migrant workers.³ Student walkouts also occurred in the Bay Area of northern California; however, these differed from those in Los Angeles where student bodies were almost entirely Chicano and Mexican American with little ethnic and racial diversity. Due to more integrated housing in the Bay Area, Latino and Chicano students attended schools with large white, African American, and Asian American student populations. Furthermore, a significant degree of ethnic diversity existed within the Latino community that included people representing over twenty different nationalities who were further stratified in terms of socioeconomic and citizenship status as well as education levels. These diverse groups of students came together to participate in walkouts and boycotts, demonstrating unity and employing identity politics while downplaying cultural nationalism. This desire to coalesce around broader issues despite cultural differences within the student body as well as the Latino community as a whole significantly contributed to how Bay Area Latino youth self-identified, creating ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority identities for themselves as Latinos and as active participants in the struggle for educational equality and civil rights.

At the same time as the student walkouts, a rising number of immigrants in California along with an expanding role of federal and state authorities in the realm of public education changed how schools served minority students and their communities. The Civil Rights Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Supreme Court's *Lau v. Nichols* decision mandating bilingual education all

³ Ernesto Chávez, “¡Mi Raza Primero!” *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement, 1966-1978* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, and Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso Press, 1989).

directly affected how districts and schools delivered curricula in order to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations that demanded equal educational opportunities.⁴ An important component of many of the federal and state mandates was the classification of students into racial and ethnic groups in order to determine which schools would receive compensatory funds according to the number of “culturally deprived” students enrolled. The government labeled Mexican Americans, American Indians, and African Americans as victims of educational neglect and awarded compensatory education funds to schools to create programs to help students achieve academic success and overcome their “deprivation.”⁵ The imposition of these labels inspired students to publicly assert their identity as youth of color and join the larger student and civil rights movements. For many Latino youth, this process included the formation of multiple, fluid identities as they aligned themselves with different groups depending on the context, inside and outside the schools.

By organizing and participating in community activities and protests as well as writing highly politicized underground newspapers, demanding culturally relevant curriculum, and creating school clubs and outside organizations that represented their interests, Latino students in the Bay Area in the late 1960s and early 1970s established both collective and individual identities while challenging the labels imposed by government officials. Influenced by events and groups around them, such as the rise of Brown Power, the New Left, and the Black Panther Party, Latino youth refused to accept assimilationist programs in schools and imposed government labels and instead

⁴ *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974).

⁵ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” (Washington D.C.: Office of Policy Planning and Research, U.S. Department of Labor, 1965).

sought to allow the process of identity formation to be fluid and dynamic rather than static and proscribed. By looking at the words, activities, and actions of Latino students themselves, this study provides a look at the organic creation of ethnic identity among Latino students and how this intersected with schools and influenced their interaction with their parents and teachers.

Much of the history of education literature dealing with Latinos focuses mostly on Mexican Americans in the southwest, more specifically southern California. Whereas these studies are informative in terms of better understanding the educational experiences of Chicano youth, an analysis of the Bay Area offers unique insight into a racially and ethnically diverse Latino population attending integrated schools and how their experiences affected identity formation. By extending the analysis beyond Mexican-American and Chicano students to include a more widely diverse Latino youth population along with Latino parents, school faculty, and community leaders, this study demonstrates how heterogeneous populations of Latino youth construct and maintain identities both individually and collectively through activism, school politics, and participation in school and community programs. Public schools as compulsory institutions of attendance offer an ideal setting to look at identity formation as the interests of students, teachers, parents, and local leaders intersect, compelling youth to make choices in terms of how they position themselves in their schools and communities.

In order to better understand how Chicano and Latino youth forged their identities as they negotiated the educational system and community organizations, in this study I compare and contrast the majority Chicano and Mexican-American population in the

East Bay with the diverse Latino population of San Francisco, an analysis thus far absent in the literature. By examining Latino youth identity formation both inside and outside the schools and community organizations as well as related experiences of Latino teachers and parents, this study contributes to the research on Latino ethnic identity formation by examining this central question: How did ethnic identity formation take place for Latino youth in the racially and ethnically diverse Bay Area of 1968 through 1974? Corollary questions include: What role did educational institutions and community organizations have in this formation? Do ethnic groups within the Latino identity in the Bay Area coalesce around the idea of “Latinidad”? To that end, for this to occur, must students sacrifice parts of their ethnicity and identity, or can a “Latino ethnic consciousness” be created and sustained while supporting the formation of multiple ethnic and racial identities?⁶

The Bay Area in the 1960s

Throughout U.S. history, people representing different backgrounds and interests in the country have waged struggles against class exploitation, gender and racial discrimination, and unpopular wars. By the late 1960s, in contrast to past protest

⁶ The first academic to label “Latino Ethnic Consciousness” and “Latinidad” as a panethnic identity was Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985). For additional studies on *Latinidad* see Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (New York: Carol Pub., 1996); Enrique T. Trueba, *Latinos Unidos: From Cultural Diversity to the Politics of Solidarity* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Clara E. Rodriguez, *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Tomas Francisco Sandoval, “Mission Stories, Latino Lives: The Making of San Francisco's Latino Identity, 1945-1970” (Ph.D. diss, University of California, Berkeley, 2002); and Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, *Transformations: Immigration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation among Latino Adolescents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

movements, youth played a central role in the push for civil rights, student rights, women's equality, and the end of the Vietnam War. Calls for justice carried through classroom doors on college and public school campuses as youth took to the streets to protest for institutional change.⁷ Groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People created chapters on or near campuses in order to recruit and provide services for youth. Other organizations, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the American Indian Movement, the Young Lords Party, and the Mexican American Youth Organization, to name a only a few formed by students, employed "identity politics" as a foundation for their rhetoric and grew to national status as they challenged discriminatory practices and demanded political and social equality.

The Bay Area served as the center for many of the movements of the 1960s. Leaders of the Free Speech Movement, the Third World Liberation Front, and the Black Panther Party all called the Bay Area home and launched their movements from the diverse campuses and politically active youth organizations in northern California. For local Latinos living in the Bay Area, the layout of their neighborhoods differed from the traditional "barrios" in cities across the southwest and west. In most areas, Latinos lived on the outskirts of cities in "pueblos," which officials eventually annexed and incorporated, creating segregated neighborhoods and relegating residents to lower housing and living standards.⁸ In the Bay Area, Latinos migrating and immigrating in the post-World War II years faced restrictive covenants and

⁷ Muñoz, Jr. *Youth, Identity, and Power*, 1.

⁸ Albert Camarillo, "Blacks and Hispanics in Urban America: Some Comparative Historical Perspectives," Working Paper, series no. 3, 1984, 3 [UCB CSC].

discrimination in housing, yet they were still able to move into the center city areas and live in increasingly diverse areas. This diversity ensured interaction with members of different racial and ethnic backgrounds as the area was home to large African American and Asian American populations and ultimately led to the formation of many integrated groups and shared sense of purpose in challenging hegemonic institutions and racialized policies.

The “protest politics” of the 1960s were more dynamic, progressive, and far-reaching than the previous periods, in turn exerting great influence over high school and college-age students across the country. In specifically considering the impact on the Latino community in the west, the Chicano Movement emerged from the Mexican-American activism that had been taking place across the southwest for decades, the most notable starting point being the founding of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Texas in 1929. The “Mexican-American Generation,” as Mario T. García labeled the founders of LULAC and their activist peers, continued their work for decades through various organizations seeking political, social, economic, and educational equity for Latinos throughout the west and southwest. On the heels of the Mexican-American Generation, the late 1960s brought about the “Chicano Generation,” youth who “resurrected the civil rights struggles of their parents and grandparents” but “rejected earlier themes and goals such as integration, pluralism, and acculturation.”⁹ Instead, the Chicano Generation asserted the right of Mexicans in this country as one of political self-determination and proposed an anti-colonial struggle “rooted in a collective memory of Mexican who had been struggling

⁹ Frances Esquibel Tywoniak and Mario T. García, *Migrant Daughter: Coming of Age as a Mexican American Woman* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 6.

against prejudice since the American conquest during the nineteenth century.”¹⁰

Chicanos sought to directly challenge Anglo institutions and power structures, calling into question 1920s era assimilationist and accommodationist impulses.¹¹ Some of the major events of the Chicano Movement included Denver’s Crusade for Justice in 1966, New Mexico’s Tijerina Alianza Federal in 1967, and the Los Angeles high school blowouts in 1968. The Chicano Movement and its push for cultural nationalism did not sustain itself successfully for more than a few years, but during its short life, Chicano youth felt its influence and participated in great numbers across the west and southwest.¹²

Due to the increasing number of Latino immigrants to northern California as well as the effects of the tumultuous events of the 1960s occurring nationwide, statewide, and locally, the Bay Area from 1968 through 1974 provides a unique opportunity to examine Latino youth ethnic identity formation. By the late 1960s, the Latino population in San Francisco was concentrated in the Mission District, and Spanish-surnamed youth made up approximately 13 percent of the school-age population in the city. The number of Latinos involved in grassroots activism and local organizing continued to increase as the ethnically diverse population protested what many saw as discriminatory city programs and government actions. Across the bay, the Latino population was primarily Mexican American in composition, and by the late 1960s, Latino youth made up approximately 10 percent of the school-age population in

¹⁰ Carlos Muñoz, Jr., “Chicano Militancy in California: A Quest for Identity and Power,” in *Racism in California: A Reader in the History of Oppression*, eds. Roger Daniels and Spencer C. Olin, Jr. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 248.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹² Chávez, “¡Mi Raza Primero!”

Oakland, the largest East Bay city, with slightly lesser percentages in the north East Bay cities of Berkeley and Richmond.¹³ In increasing numbers in both San Francisco and the East Bay, Mexican Americans and Latinos asserted themselves in local politics as they sought a greater voice and improved living and working situations.

Historiography

Much of the historiography in the field of history of education centers on the African American experience, focusing on the fact that schools and their supporters have not historically served minority populations in a fair and effective manner and examining such topics as the fights for desegregation, self-determination, and community control over schools.¹⁴ Confronting racist theories and practices based on widespread and long-held beliefs, including genetic inferiority and cultural deprivation, an arc across the history of African American education extends from an understanding of the educational inequalities African Americans suffer to the agency they employ in seeking equitable educational opportunities. Literature regarding the African American experience is often extended as a framework to represent the history of *all* minority children and their communities' intersection with the public school

¹³ "Progress Report of Study and Action Related to Civil Rights Problems and Compensation Education Programs," Oakland Public Schools, March 31, 1964, 6, File "Oakland Schools Integration," Oakland Public Library, History Room [hereafter cited as OPL HR].

¹⁴ Rubén Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997); Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, and Power*; For examples of work on African Americans and the history of education, see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Meyer Weinberg, *A Chance to Learn: The History of Race and Education in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); and Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004).

system. This practice, however, fails to consider the vastly different experiences Latinos encounter in public schools due to the realities of immigration, language needs, ethnic and racial diversity within the population, and an unclear and inconsistent racial status as determined by the state and federal authorities. Ultimately, the effect of broadening the African American framework to all children of color serves to mute the uniqueness of Latino experience in schools, the effects of governmental policies on Latino communities, and how schools serve as transmitters of ethnic and racial identity for Latino youth. In order to address the need for further exploration of identity formation among Latino youth, this study is situated at the intersection of literature concerning immigration, the construction of Latinidad and a Latino ethnic consciousness, and youth identity and student movements in educational settings.

The Immigrant Experience and Education

The generation of historians writing about immigration in the 1950s typically framed the experience as one of European peasants making the journey across the Atlantic Ocean in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only to arrive in a new world that expected them to shed their European identities and assimilate to American culture and mores.¹⁵ Immigrants were seen as “uprooted” from their homes and communities with historians depicting the process as occurring in a state of crisis as immigrants lost all sense of who they were in order to become “American.”

Historical works of this period primarily focus on the experiences of ethnic whites in

¹⁵ The work of Oscar Handlin is the most influential of this time. See Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: From the Old World to the New* (1st ed.) (London: Watts, 1953).

the urban areas of the Northeast, but the premise of the immigrants' experience was often extended to include all who arrived in America at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite Carey McWilliams's writings about the different experiences of people of color in the West and his suggestion that the West was indeed a "racial frontier,"¹⁶ historians continued to support the "uprooted" thesis and focused on northern cities and ethnic whites as a framework to describe the national immigrant experience.

Maintaining a focus on ethnic whites in the Northeast but challenging the idea that European immigrants were uprooted, revisionist historians of the 1970s and 1980s suggested early twentieth century immigrants were instead "transplanted."¹⁷ Whereas earlier writings describe the immigrant experience as universal and common among those of different national origins, the revisionists opposed this idea with the premise that "not all newcomers behaved in a similar fashion, that varying degrees of commitment to an assortment of cultures and ideologies were evident, and that not everyone faced identical experiences."¹⁸ This generation of historians created narratives that differentiated the immigration experiences of the ethnic and religious groups arriving from Europe; immigrants may have changed their geographic environment, but they retained their native cultures and languages, all the while enriching the American experience for all citizens. These studies broadened the scope and understanding of the immigrant experience by examining the agency and self-determinism practiced by arriving newcomers. Despite the fact that these studies did

¹⁶ Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (rev. ed.) (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964).

¹⁷ John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi.

not allow for differentiation among groups in the West, specifically those of Mexican origin and other immigrants of Latin American descent, these historical works inform this analysis of Latino identity formation in the Bay Area in that they offer insight into how identity is forged among immigrants and their children. In turn, this study contributes to the historiography concerning ethnic white immigrants by emphasizing the diversity of experiences among immigrant groups in the West, and how they formed their ethnic identity in relation to other newcomers to the United States.

While revisionist historians reexamined and expanded upon the understanding of the experiences of European immigrants during the Progressive Era, minority group scholars also challenged earlier work on immigrants that portrayed newcomers as refusing to assimilate. Writing about the Mexican-American experience in the United States, historians created a complex narrative of cultural adaptation and identity formation among Mexican-origin immigrants. What emerges in the literature is a more complete and nuanced understanding of how immigrants interact with those of their ethnic group already residing in the United States, creating something entirely new: the Mexican American.¹⁹ The hyphenated term implies that immigrants adopt an identity at the intersection of their country of origin and America. Although this creation of a hyphenated identity appears similar to that of Irish Americans, Italian

¹⁹ See Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students Por la Raza: The Chicano Student Movement in Southern California, 1967-1977* (Santa Bárbara: Editorial La Causa, 1978); Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (4th ed.) (New York: Longman, 2000); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Americans, Jewish Americans, etc., the experiences between the groups were indeed disparate. During the first half of the twentieth century, war, immigration restriction quotas, and a lack of physical proximity limited contact between European immigrants and their native countries. Cut off from their native cultures and languages, European immigrants created hyphenated identities while intermarrying, assimilating, and “becoming white,” all the while creating new American identities while maintaining certain aspects of their ethnic identities.²⁰ To that end, the experiences differed greatly for Latinos, who maintained more direct contact with their homelands, lived in segregated neighborhoods, and remained “of color” according to many Jim Crow laws across the west and southwest.

As the literature illustrates, Mexican immigrants historically have a special relationship with the United States due to the contiguous nature of the countries and special worker programs established over the years. Since the early twentieth century, outside of a moratorium on immigration during World War II, there has been a continuous flow of immigrants from Mexico to the United States. This steady emigration serves to disrupt the laying down of roots and formation of a collective identity for Mexican Americans, as recent immigrants and longtime residents often live in the same neighborhoods and suffer the same indignities of segregated education, housing covenants, and discrimination in employment, regardless of citizenship status.²¹ For many Mexican immigrants, this situation effectively results in

²⁰ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

²¹ Tomás R. Jiménez, *Replenished Ethnicity: Mexican Americans, Immigration, and Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

slowing the process of becoming a hyphenated American.²² For those Mexican immigrants who self-identify as a hyphenated American, they have managed to do so by maintaining what historian George J. Sánchez refers to as “cultural persistence.” Sánchez writes about how many Mexican Americans create an ethnic identity based upon a transnational, constantly-evolving view of what it means to be Mexican in America. Because ethnicity is not “a fixed set of customs surviving from life in Mexico, but rather a collective identity from daily experience in the United States,” this dynamic identity formation ultimately leads to cultural adaptation and the formation of something different than merely a blend between two worlds.²³ To that end, the literature does not address if this process holds true for those immigrating from the other Latin American countries; indeed, Guatemalan American and Honduran American are not ethnic identifiers commonly used either in historical study or in everyday speech. In considering the process of ethnic identity formation within a diverse Latino population, this study builds on the historiographies of ethnic whites and Mexican-origin immigrants in that it broadens the understanding of the immigrant experience in terms of how ethnic differences and educational institutions affect how youth form their identity and relate to their larger communities, specifically in an educational setting where minority youth typically attempt to form and establish one or more identities.

In turning to the literature on youth ethnic identity formation in the public schools, similar to the general works on the immigrant experience, historians dissect the different educational expectations, achievement levels, and participation of ethnic

²² Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*.

²³ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 7 and 11.

white immigrants in order to better understand how social, political, and economic mobility resulted from their experiences in the American public schools.²⁴ Nationality, socioeconomic levels, and religion as well as immigration patterns and family structures are integral to understanding how students experienced schooling and how they acculturated and assimilated to American norms. To date, the field of history of education neglects to pay the same attention to the Latino experience in the United States. Rather than differentiating for the various nationalities, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds of Latino immigrants, historians focus on Mexican Americans without allowing for the diverse experiences of various ethnic and regional groups from Latin America. This in turn results in a public that understands little of the Latino immigrant experience as it intersects with the educational system. This study bridges these gaps and provide insight as to how Latino youth form multiple and dynamic identities within schools, what effect this process has concerning their own personal experiences, and the corresponding impact on the process of ethnic identity formation for adults and college-age students in their shared communities.

Construction of Identity and Latino Ethnic Consciousness

When considering the construction of race and racial identity in America, a dichotomy of white versus black dominates the historical literature. Historians

²⁴ See Paula S. Fass, *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Joel M. Roitman, *The Immigrants, the Progressives, and the Schools: Americanization and the Impact of the New Immigration upon Public Education in the United States, 1890-1920* (Stark, KS: De Young Press, 1996); Paul C. Violas, *The Training of the Urban Working Class: A History of Twentieth Century American Education* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Pub. Co., 1978); Paul E. Peterson, *The Politics of School Reform, 1870-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and William J. Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grassroots Movements during the Progressive Era* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002).

deconstruct the experiences of immigrants of European origin in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to better understand how they transmuted and formed their whiteness in direct opposition to the label “black.”²⁵ Europeans enduring various forms of discrimination in the United States believed differentiating themselves from African Americans in terms of political, social, and economic behavior would allow for the mobility they had been denied due to their low status “whiteness.”²⁶ As civil rights lawyer Derrick Bell explains, “This renewed politics of otherness not only allowed entire categories of poor whites to develop a powerful sense of racial belonging, but also allowed entire categories of erstwhile nonwhite immigrants (the Irish are the most prominent example) to become white.”²⁷ To that end, for each group crossing the Atlantic Ocean, becoming “white” emerged as “crucial to the politico-cultural saga of European migration and settlement,” allowing the majority of immigrant to eventually successfully assimilate and improve their economic status.²⁸

For Latinos in California, the process of creating a racial identity has historically been less straightforward than that of ethnic whites in the Northeast, although skin color has played a similarly important role. This difficulty can be traced back to the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846-48 when officials signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, granting American citizenship to the residents of the ceded Mexican lands. Despite their “white” status granted by the treaty, many ethnic Mexican citizens of the United States were unable to exercise their rights, facing discrimination as locals labeled them

²⁵ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 8.

²⁶ See David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83.

²⁷ Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 83.

²⁸ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 8.

“colored” and “Indians.” Across the west, *de facto* segregation was the norm, leaving many Mexicans and Mexican Americans in limbo in terms of their racial identity in their new homeland.²⁹ Due to the *mestizo* (racially mixed) background of most Mexican immigrants, many passed as “white” in America and did not suffer the same racism as their stigmatized and darker-complected compatriots. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, government officials in California used such labels as Indian, Hispanic, Spanish-Surnamed, and white to describe the status of Latino immigrants, adding to the complexities involved in the creation of a racial identity. The disparities in how Mexican Americans were treated depending on the color of their skin created a “lure of whiteness,” which may have prohibited Mexican Americans from successfully unifying and forming a cohesive fight for inclusion and parity.³⁰

In 1973, the Supreme Court addressed the racial status of Latinos, delivering the decision in *Keyes v. Denver* and labeling Latinos a “minority” analogous to African Americans.³¹ This case brought to national attention the complicated nature of race and ethnicity for Latinos. Whereas the court declared them a neglected minority, there were also many Latinos who identified as white and wanted no part in the compensatory actions of federal and local authorities. To them, being American meant being white, and they in turn self-identified as white and perceived being “of color” in America as a degraded racialized status, approaching or approximating blackness. To these Latinos, their ethnicity was an indicator of their cultural and linguistic heritage

²⁹ Chávez, “¡Mi Raza Primero!”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹ *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 413 U.S. 189 (1973).

and did not affect their racial status.³² Prior to the *Keyes* case, by the 1960s, this view of whiteness and race did not serve to represent all Latinos as many self-identified as a brown minority engaged in the larger struggle for civil rights and aligned with African Americans and Native Americans.³³ These divisions within the Latino population illuminate the complex nature of identity formation and the disparities in the way government officials understood and labeled Latinos as well as how Latinos understood and labeled themselves, all of which serve as evidence that more research is needed to better understand how Latino ethnic groups construct race and ethnic identities while navigating the racialized environment they encounter upon emigration to the United States.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the broad labels the United States government assigned to Latinos for classification purposes, such as “Spanish speaking non-whites” and “Hispanic,” conflated racial and ethnic identifiers for those of Latin American descent and failed to appreciate the intra-group differences that exist among diverse Latino populations. In emphasizing race and imposing panethnic identifiers, the idea that the process of ethnic identity formation can be self-determined as the “identification by others of membership in a distinct socio-cultural group based on specific national and/or biological characteristics...[including] class, cultural history, psychological identity, or combination of all these things as they occur in a larger environment shared with another group or groups of differing class and cultural

³² De Genova and Ramos-Zayas *Latino Crossings*, 16.

³³ Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

patterns,” is often overlooked in terms of how Latinos themselves form panethnic identities when residing in ethnically heterogeneous communities.³⁴

The dominance of certain Latino groups in geographical areas—for example, Mexicans in Los Angeles, Puerto Ricans in New York, and Cubans in Florida—hinders attempts to explore how Latinos from different ethnic origins living in the same geographic areas interact with one another and what effect this interaction has regarding their political, social, economic, and educational mobility as well as the formation of a Latino ethnic consciousness or pan-Latino identity. There are several case studies in the literature that seek evidence of pan-Latino ethnic identity across groups of different national origins, one of which claims to identify the formation of a collective Latino ethnic consciousness.³⁵ In Chicago in the 1970s, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans attempted to come together to form a Latino ethnic consciousness to contest discriminatory hiring practices in the workforce. For these Latinos, ethnicity was structural and political, and both groups used it to collectively find a resolution to what they perceived to be an employment-related prejudice. In this instance a Latino ethnic consciousness was a situational response to structural conditions that threatened particular class and ethnic interests, resulting in a viable panethnic identity based not on a transplanted cultural heritage but collective action that transcended distinctive national and cultural identities if only for a moment in time.³⁶

³⁴ Margarita B. Melville, “Hispanics: Race, Class, or Ethnicity?” *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16 (1) (spring 1988): 76.

³⁵ Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*. For additional studies see Fox, *Hispanic Nation*; Trueba, *Latinos Unidos*; and Sandoval, “Mission Stories, Latino Lives.”

³⁶ José Calderón, “‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latino’: The Viability of Categories for Panethnic Unity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 19, no. 4 (fall 1992): 37-44.

Despite the findings of a situational Latino ethnic consciousness in Chicago in the 1970s, researchers continue to question whether a master Latino identity could ever exist, and if so, maintain itself for a limited time to achieve short-term goals. Using anthropological and ethnographical research methodologies to better understand how differing groups of Latinos interact with one another and how they feel about sharing a collective identity, two recent studies report little confirmation of the viability of Latinidad in everyday life.³⁷ Finding relationships among Latino groups to be both tenuous and competitive, Nicholas De Genova and Ana Ramos-Zayas describe instances of shared identity between Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago in the 1990s, but not to the degree that a Latino ethnic consciousness ever formed. The authors instead found that the “prospect of community formation among distinct national-origin groups on the basis of a shared sense of Latino identity, [never ceases] to be problematic.”³⁸ Concerning perceptions of Latino authenticity and legitimacy, typically revolving around the axis of citizenship, De Genova and Ramos-Zayas report Puerto Ricans in Chicago considered Mexican Americans to be foreigners and non-citizens, whereas Mexican Americans viewed Puerto Ricans as lazy welfare recipients who did not appreciate their citizenship status. Ultimately, the authors determined the “struggles over hegemonic labeling and efforts at self-representation” too intense to allow for the successful formation of a Latino ethnic consciousness.³⁹

³⁷ De Genova and Ramos-Zayas, *Latino Crossings*, 55.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 and 55.

Similarly, in a study of Salvadoran immigrants in San Francisco in the 1980s, Cecilia Menjivar found little evidence of panethnic alliances between Central American and Mexican immigrants. Menjivar found Salvadoran immigrants to be wary of Latino landlords, preferring to deal in business with ethnic whites. Deep divides among different generations of Salvadoran immigrants also existed, leading to the conclusion that “common nationality does not translate into ethnic solidarity if different waves of immigrants from the same country do not share similar socioeconomic backgrounds or political objectives.”⁴⁰ By these accounts, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion surrounding the label “Latino” and the concept of Latino ethnic consciousness are elastic and often contested even among Latinos.

For the purposes of this analysis, it should be noted that the aforementioned studies involve adults who, generally speaking, are able to select their living and work environments and self-segregate if they so choose. In contrast, most students in the Bay Area were not afforded this choice, and were bound to interact with numerous racial and ethnic groups in their schools. If schools are transmitters of culture and identity, as described by historians Michael Katz and Joel Spring, how did students forge multiple identities in the integrated settings of Bay Area schools?⁴¹ Furthermore, must students sacrifice parts of their ethnicity and identity, or can a Latino ethnic consciousness be created and sustained while also sustaining a pan-minority identity? To date, historians examining Latinos in the Bay Area have focused primarily on

⁴⁰ Cecilia Menjivar, *Fragmented Ties: Salvadoran Immigrant Networks in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 105.

⁴¹ Michael Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Joel Spring, *The Sorting Machine Revisited: National Educational Policy Since 1945* (updated ed.) (New York: Longman, 1989).

college youth at San Francisco State University, the adult-led Mission Coalition Organizing Group, and local struggles over bilingual education, paying little attention to Latino adolescents in the public schools and to the idea of a collective Latino voice bridging different ethnic groups in the school environment.⁴²

Youth Identity and Schools

The current historical literature on the intersection of Latinos and schools in the West focuses on Mexican Americans and Chicanos living in highly segregated rural and urban areas. Educational historians document community struggles over segregation, language instruction, and testing, providing insight into how Mexican-origin immigrants and native-born Mexican Americans reacted to prejudicial actions of school leaders and administrators. Over the past forty years, the historiography has shifted from top-down structural analyses of schools as oppressors and perpetrators of a cultural deprivation model to that of more grassroots, bottom-up accounts of agency and control within Mexican-American communities in the southwestern United States.⁴³ The literature thus far is informative and influential regarding experiences of Mexican Americans and Chicanos, demonstrating how parents and community

⁴² Sandoval, "Mission Stories"; Mark Robert Brilliant, "Color Lines: Civil Rights Struggles on America's 'Racial Frontier,' 1945-1975" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2002); and Jason Michael Ferreira, "All Power to the People: A Comparative History of Third World Radicalism in San Francisco, 1968-1974" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2003).

⁴³ For top-down structural analysis, see Thomas P. Carter and Roberto D. Segura, *Mexican Americans in School: A Decade of Change* (2nd ed.) (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, Princeton, N.J., 1979); Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990). For grassroots accounts, see Rubén Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Henry Joseph Gutierrez, "The Chicano Education Rights Movement and School Desegregation, Los Angeles, 1962-1970" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1990); and Guadalupe San Miguel, *"Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

members seek a voice in determining how schools deliver curricula and how districts institute desegregation plans as a means for Latinos to gain political, social, and economic mobility. Despite employing a bottom-up account of educational history, however, the literature does not address how students experience and internalize curricula and interact with schools as they construct their identity. To that end, bringing greater focus to the diverse ethnic groups within the Bay Area's educational setting better illuminates how Latino students formed their ethnic identities in schools in the contentious and paradigm-shifting era of the civil rights and student movements.

Historians Carlos Muñoz and Ernesto Chávez specifically study Chicano youth identity formation and provide examples of the intersection of Chicano history with educational history in higher education. Examining student activism and protests in southern California that led to the creation of movements pursuing social and political equality in the 1960s and 1970s, these authors emphasize student empowerment on college campuses and in community organizations. As described in their research, students' rejection of assimilation and accommodationism in their search for an ethnic identity ultimately caused their own group identity to diverge as it evolved, leaving fragmented groups unable to unite to achieve radical change. Due to variances in the Mexican immigrant and native-born Mexican-American experiences from region to region along with the uneven racialization of Latinos with respect to the idea of "whiteness," Latino youth were unable to create unified groups and wage successful battles for inclusion and parity.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Chávez, *"Mi Raza Primero!"*; Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, and Power*.

As insightful as the aforementioned research is, these narratives neglect to address the role secondary schools play as transmitters of culture for adolescent Latinos and what this means for the creation of identity in a diverse educational setting. In the Bay Area in the late 1960s and early 1970s, high school youth experienced drastically different learning environments compared to college-age students. Not only did they attend schools with inferior physical resources, but restrictions (often mandated by school administrators) limited their political activity and ability to express nationalist sentiment in turn affecting how they formed their identities in a public space.⁴⁵ By researching college-aged students, Muñoz and Chávez draw conclusions based on a self-selecting group that is generally more educated and of a higher socioeconomic background than the average population. In considering students who are not afforded a choice of curriculum and are required by law to attend the schools provided by the state, this study provides a more in-depth analysis and broader understanding of the process of minority adolescent identity formation by examining how these youth interact with their peers, parents, teachers, and communities.

In addition to considering the disparities between the educational experiences of high school and college-age students and the effects these differences may have on identity formation, immigration status and whether a child was born in the United States also contribute greatly to the process. Studies in the literature demonstrate that children of immigrants born in the United States tend to evaluate their experiences in the new country differently from the immigrant generation by idealizing the “old

⁴⁵ “Chicano Youth and the Struggle for Self-Determination” *Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin* 15, no. 2, October 15, 1971, Chicano Studies Collection, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley [hereafter cited as UCB CSC].

country” without ever having stepped foot in their parents’ native land.⁴⁶ These youth often feel forced to make a choice between maintaining their ancestral culture and assimilating to “white” norms. This struggle is perhaps the most critical task facing children of immigrants while also seeking to develop a positive sense of identity during the difficult adolescent years.⁴⁷ For many of these American born Latinos, “Language inconsistency at home and school, a perceived gap in the status of their parents and the quality of their environment and those of the larger society, and the dangers and attraction of barrio streets create an ambiguity in their ethnic identity.”⁴⁸ Indeed, all of these contribute to a multifaceted process of identity formation, often producing multiple and fluid identities to which youth can relate.⁴⁹

Recent sociological research presents evidence that Latino youth often create multiple identities and affiliations in what some experts consider a “survival strategy.”⁵⁰ In a 2005 study, Hispanic and African American youth in a suburb of New York City, members of different racial and ethnic groups held three types of identity: 1) ethno-specific, identification with their specific national or cultural heritages, such as Dominican or Puerto Rican; 2) panethnic identification, such as with Spanish speaking people with backgrounds from Latin America; and 3) pan-minority, a collective identity shared by Latinos and African Americans as groups accorded subordinate social status in United States society.⁵¹ In this case study, minority youth

⁴⁶ Suárez-Orozco, *Transformations*, 54.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴⁸ James D. Vigil, *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1988), 41.

⁴⁹ Tywoniak and García, *Migrant Daughter*, xiv.

⁵⁰ Trueba, *Latinos Unidos*, 9-13.

⁵¹ Prudence Carter, *Keepin’ It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

successfully created multiple “racial and ethnic identities to facilitate in-group solidarity and to assert various cultural symbols of pride and self-worth.”⁵²

Framework

Examining youth ethnic identity formation among the Latino population in the Bay Area from 1968 through 1974, I primarily employ two frameworks of analysis previously discussed to explore whether Latino youth as well as their parents, teachers, and community leaders created multiple identities. Central to the discussion are Prudence Carter’s findings that youth create several identities during their adolescent years. According to Carter, in addition to an ethnic identity, Latino youth create fluid and dynamic panethnic and pan-minority identities. Equally significant is Felix Padilla’s theory that, whereas Latinos create what Carter found to be panethnic identities, they do so only as a temporary means to an end, thus creating situational and shallow identities that cannot be sustained. In Padilla’s findings, a Latino identity only emerges in time of crisis or direct opposition to government actions and cannot be upheld or cultivated over a significant amount of time.⁵³

In applying these frameworks, it is important to appreciate that limitations arise when studying ethnicity, particularly among such a diverse group as Latinos, and when examining populations in a specific historical context in an attempt to capture how people represented themselves through their writing, speech, and actions. Much has to be considered, including class, cultural history, and gender as well as the fact that identity is not static both in terms of how individuals identify themselves and how

⁵² Ibid., vi.

⁵³ Carter, *Keepin’ It Real*; Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*.

groups interact.⁵⁴ Despite the many variables in what is perceived to be an ethnic group (e.g., class, language, immigration experiences, acculturation, and regional influences both in the United States and countries of origin), it is possible to look broadly at Latino and Chicano communities in the Bay Area in order to draw conclusions about identity formation and corresponding effects on group dynamics, insomuch one understands that these very individuals and groups are constantly blurring boundaries of their identities. As historian Mario T. García observes,

Mexican American and Latino [ethnic experience] is not a simple encounter between the ethnic or subaltern culture and the mainstream or dominant culture...Ethnic cultures and ethnic identity represent multiple encounters both within the ethnic culture and outside it. The result is a synthetic bridging—what Lipsitz refers to as a ‘fusion’ of various subcultures, or in the Latino case a *mestizaje* of cultures and experiences.”⁵⁵

To García’s point, identity is never static, but it is in a state of flux, perpetually reinvented. With this in mind, one must allow for varying and at times even contradictory processes of ethnic and racial identity formation.

⁵⁴ Melville, “Hispanics: Race, Class, or Ethnicity?” 76.

⁵⁵ Tywoniak and García, *Migrant Daughter*, xvi.

CHAPTER TWO

Latinos Unidos, Third World, or Americans?: Latino Identity Formation in San Francisco

Introduction

In December of 1968, separate fights broke out between Latino and African American students as well as between Latino and Samoan students at Mission High School located in the multiracial, multiethnic Mission District in San Francisco. The administration called upon the police to quell the disturbances, an act that resulted in unintended consequences for the school's leaders. When the Police Tactical Squad arrived, students banded together, ignoring previous racial and ethnic divides, demanding the administration pull law enforcement from the campus.¹

Within weeks, the rivalries that had developed between students transformed into "a loose alliance,"² as Latino leaders called for all races and ethnicities to come together to fight the "*real enemy*."³ In a collective challenge to the administration, students at Mission High School staged a walkout just one month later in January.⁴ Hundreds of students continued to press for their demands, staging rallies in Dolores Park, located across the street from the high school. In a school that was almost two-thirds minority students, with the majority-minority being Latino and a drop out rate of almost one-third the student body, Mission High School youth prepared to make demands of the administration and take control of their education. In interviews,

¹ Jeff Jones and Doug Norberg, "Mission Rebellion," in *Student Power, Participation and Revolution*, eds. John and Susan Erlich (New York: Association Press, 1970), 142-146.

² "Mission High Demands," *La Nueva Mission*, May 1969, 1.

³ Jones and Norberg, "Mission Rebellion," 144.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

newspaper articles, and flyers, Latino students stated a need to unite to fight “for a more meaningful life” and demonstrate that “racism [would] not be tolerated.”⁵ The call for unity went beyond the multiethnic Latino student population and extended to the smaller percentages of African-American, Samoan, and Filipino students as well as to white students. One Latino student writing in a local paper stated, “We will unite with brothers and sisters in and out of school and will unite with other movements. We will learn from struggles all over the world.”⁶ Minority students at Mission High School spontaneously bridged ethnicities and races in forging a united front against what was perceived to be an out-of-touch and racist education system.

Student walkouts occurred throughout the western parts of the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but upon closer examination of the incidents in San Francisco, these student demonstrations differed significantly. In the cities of Los Angeles, Denver, and San Jose, for example, the student bodies were almost entirely Chicano and Mexican American. Typically, members of the Brown Power Movement led these protests, which focused specifically on the needs of Mexican-origin and American-born Chicano students. The rhetoric and timeliness of the protests of San Francisco also differed in that Latino students fluidly adopted various identities throughout their speech and actions, and the protests continued for several years, sometimes focusing on curricular goals of their schools and at other times raising questions regarding current events, such as the Vietnam War or the imprisonment of local minority group members. Often, these protests were multiracial and multiethnic as well as cross-generational, and these actions, in conjunction with additional

⁵ Anonymous, “Free the Schools,” *¡Basta Ya!*, November 1969, 4.

⁶ Anonymous, “Mission High News,” *¡Basta Ya!*, January 3, 1970.

grassroots activities such as creating youth organizations and writing underground newspapers, served as a means for Latino youth to assert their own ethnic identities as well as identify with other groups as members of oppressed minority groups. These protests also differed from other walkouts in that Latino students were not necessarily focusing on one ethnic identity; rather, they were representing themselves as simultaneously panethnic and pan-minority.

In this chapter I focus on how the creation of multiple identities by segments of the Latino population demonstrates the complexity in youth ethnic identity formation for those of Latin American descent in San Francisco, where neighborhoods were not as segregated as other areas in the Southwest and multiracial, multiethnic schools were the norm.⁷ Indeed, these youths' employment of panethnic and pan-minority identities is in conflict with the historiography which depicts Latinos ascribing to primarily ethnic identities and identifying as panethnic only when it serves a specific political or economic function.⁸ In order to represent and define themselves as a unified group within the Latino population as well as with other minority groups, Latino students referred to themselves at different points as Spanish-Speaking, Hispano-American, Latino, *La Raza*, Brown, and Third World and less often as American and white. In a city where the Latino population consisted of immigrants hailing from over twenty Latin American countries, Latino youth in San Francisco shared culture, language, values, and worldviews, yet they were also racially, ethnically, socially, and economically diversified, all of which deeply affected how students interacted with

⁷ Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzmán, "Ghettos and Barrios" in *The Mexican-American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, 1970), 271-289.

⁸ Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*.

one another, other minority groups, and the educational institutions they attended.⁹ Ultimately, this diverse and complex context allowed for the creation of multiple and overlapping identities for many Latino youth that were long-lasting and secure in their nature rather than static, short-lived, and reactionary. In this chapter I discuss the formation and employment of these identities and how students navigated the educational system while defining who they were in relation to the environments in which they lived and the schools they attended, specifically by employing multiple identities; those that were panethnic, pan-minority, and white.

San Francisco and the Mission District

Beginning with the establishment of the Mission Dolores Church in the late eighteenth century and through the Gold Rush of the mid-nineteenth century, the Latino population in San Francisco assimilated quickly to “American” ways even while living in a segregated area in North Beach near the shipping ports of the bay often referred to as the “Latin Quarter” and “Chilecito.” Latinos in San Francisco at this time were often identified as “white” and were therefore not legally segregated in schools, and this integration allowed for them to be more readily absorbed into white San Francisco culture. In the early twentieth century, Italian immigrants moved in large numbers to the North Beach area, prompting Latinos to relocate elsewhere. After passing through the South of Market area, a neighborhood known as a port of entrance

⁹ Trueba, *Latinos Unidos*, 22.

for recent immigrants, many moved to the Mission District, the original place of inhabitation of the Spanish settlers in the 1700s.¹⁰

The Mission District is one of the oldest and most diverse neighborhoods in San Francisco and has always been one of the pivotal points of growth and development in the city. Prior to the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the district was an affluent area, due to its relatively warmer weather and space for expansion. After 1906, however, many European immigrants moved into the area, and the district took on a working class feel. The Mission (as it was commonly known) remained a stable neighborhood for ethnic white workers and professional families throughout the 1930s and 1940s, but after World War II, the district joined the Western Addition as a refuge for lower-income people, as freeways, new subdivisions, and easy mortgage credit encouraged movement to the suburbs outside San Francisco.¹¹ These lower income immigrants tended to be Latino, many lacking formal skills for work and facing language barriers and discrimination when they did find work.¹² In terms of employment, typically, men worked in factories and warehouses, and women worked at canneries and clothing manufacturers.

Whereas many of the immigrants prior to World War II were of Mexican descent, Central and South Americans began to outnumber Mexican immigrants as the latter were absorbed into the *bracero* program and migrated to East Bay and South Bay

¹⁰ Brian J. Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and Nonconformist Communities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

¹¹ Judith Lynch Waldhorn, *Historic Preservation in San Francisco's Inner Mission and Take a Walk Through Mission History* (Washington: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1973).

¹² "Mission District," n.d., Alioto Model Cities Grant, Joseph L. Alioto Papers (SFH 5), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library [hereafter cited as SFPL HC].

cities in the northern California Bay Area.¹³ This movement created a majority of Central and South Americans in the Mission District with the largest numbers coming from Nicaragua and El Salvador, mostly due to their countries' ties to coffee manufacturers and the shipping industry. These connections to certain industries as well as social ties led to chain migration and in turn a large Central American population in San Francisco.¹⁴ Liberalized immigration laws in the 1960s also cleared the way for Latinos seeking to leave their war-torn and economically troubled nations.¹⁵ The percentage of the Latin American population in the Mission continued to increase over the years as many European whites moved out to other neighborhoods. In 1950, Latinos were estimated to make up 11 percent (5,530) of the Mission population. By 1960, that number almost doubled to just under 23 percent (11,625), and in 1970, estimates stood at nearly 45 percent (23,183) of the population.¹⁶ According to geographer Brian Godfrey, it was not so much an abrupt racial transformation in the Mission but rather a "gradual ethnic turnover in a long-standing working-class neighborhood."¹⁷ In fact, despite taking on working-class positions, many Latinos immigrating to the United States worked in professional occupations in their native countries, leaving for political rather than economic

¹³ From 1942 through 1964, the governments of the United States and Mexico agreed to the *Bracero* Program in order to legally supply temporary contractor laborers from Mexico to the United States.

¹⁴ Brian J. Godfrey, "Barrio under Siege: Latino Sense of Place in San Francisco, California" in *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America*, ed. Daniel D. Arreola (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 93.

¹⁵ "San Francisco Community Renewal Report, published in 1965," Alioto Model Cities Grant, part III A 5, Joseph L. Alioto Papers (SFH 5) [SFPL HC].

¹⁶ Godfrey, "Barrio under Siege," 87; Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983).

¹⁷ Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition*, 113.

reasons, in turn creating a working class that was underemployed relative to the skills and degrees they earned in their native countries.¹⁸

Due to the lack of redlining housing districts in San Francisco and the relative ease of transportation to other areas of the city and suburbs, Latinos did not suffer the extreme segregation and prejudice imposed in rural and southern parts of California.¹⁹ As one resident reflected on the geographically small neighborhood (only 2.25 square miles), “In the Bay Area, or at least in San Francisco, people lived right next door to each other...It wasn’t like barriers existed.”²⁰ This closeness of the living quarters and the constant intermingling of different racial and ethnic groups allowed for overlap of cultures and traditions as the groups often came together to celebrate, pray, and eat. As a poet from the Mission later described living in the neighborhood, everyone was “trying to escape the assimilation of other cultures, but inevitably blending into this concrete and wooden barrio called the Mission. With the dominance of the English language and values threatening to absorb our Cultura, we adopted, organically, a bit of each other’s cultures so that it would be still more difficult to be swallowed up in this red, white & blue melting pot called America.”²¹ Despite this, tensions did exist

¹⁸ “Mission Development Council Proposal to the Southwest Council of La Raza” n.d., Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 15, Folder 7, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries [hereafter cited as STAN], 3.

¹⁹ Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 212-218. “Redlining” refers to the practice of delineating geographic areas for specific ethnic and racial groups in order to either keep out or contain specific groups. Before this practice was outlawed, the areas most frequently targeted had high African American populations.

²⁰ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 283.

²¹ Roberto Vargas, *Nicaragua, Yo Te Canto Besos, Balas, y Sueños de Libertad: Poems* (San Francisco: Editorial Pocho-Che, 1980), 18.

between groups “because of race, nationality or cultural differences,” which sometimes led to “fights” and “self-segregation.”²²

By the early 1960s, most of the Latino population in San Francisco was firmly concentrated in the Mission District with Latino youth comprising approximately 10 percent of the school-age population in the city and over 25 percent of Mission High School.²³ Administrators and teachers recognized the language and cultural issues that arose in schools for students of recent immigrants and encouraged discussions regarding the implementation of bilingual education and multi-cultural curricula as early as 1960.²⁴ Consensus did not exist on how to meet the needs of Latino students, as some school leaders thought it best to place immigrant students in schools in which they would be in the minority, so that they “[didn’t] have to worry about the peers making fun of them because they are trying to learn.”²⁵ As illustrated by this quote, some educators believed minority youth felt pressured by their peers not to achieve academically, lest they appear too “white.” Beyond this placement strategy, little evidence exists as to how the district responded to the challenge of an increasingly economically, socially, educationally, and ethnically diverse Latino population and what this meant in terms of how Latino youth would interact with one another, other

²² “A Self Portrait of the Greater Mission District in Southeastern San Francisco, Vol. 2” (San Francisco: Mission Neighborhood Centers, Inc., 1960), 10.

²³ “Preliminary Report: Student Life Study Mission High School,” completed by selected members of the faculty under the direction of Marie Fielder (January 1960), San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 53, Folder 5 [SFPL HC].

²⁴ San Francisco Unified School District Board Meeting Transcripts, Vol. 3 (1962), San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 93, Folder 93/3, [SFPL HC]; “Preliminary Report: Student Life Study Mission High School,” 59; “Joint Conference of Racial and Ethnic Distribution in San Francisco Schools,” Human Rights Committee of the City and County of San Francisco and Ad Hoc Committee of the San Francisco Board of Education (August 26, 1965), San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 93 Folder 93/22 [SFPL HC], 31.

²⁵ San Francisco Unified School District Board Meeting Transcripts, Vol. 3, 52 and 53

minority groups, the administration, and their teachers and, in turn, what effect this would have on how they formed their ethnic identity.

Mission High School

By 1969, at the time of the aforementioned clashes and walkouts, the majority-minority group attending Mission High School was Latino, accounting for over 36 percent of the total student body. Elementary and junior high schools in the area were more ethnically and linguistically segregated with Latino students composing the majority of the student populations of the schools in the Mission District.²⁶ As for the San Francisco Unified School District, Spanish-surnamed students made up just over 13 percent of the district (12,102 students), similar to Chinese percentage and about half the number of African Americans.²⁷ Many in the city viewed Mission High School as underperforming due in large part to a 33 percent dropout rate and an over 25 percent absentee rate per day.²⁸ In terms of the numbers for Latino students district-wide, for the 1969-70 school year, the dropout rate for Spanish-speaking students was 23 percent while the rest of the population dropped out at a rate of less than 16 percent.²⁹

Before they became a majority-minority of the student population, many Latino students established themselves as individuals at Mission High School. In the mid-

²⁶ Jones and Norberg, "Mission Rebellion," 142.

²⁷ "Evaluation of the ESEA Compensatory Education Program of the SFUSD, 1967-1968," Stanford Research Institute (March 1969).

²⁸ Jones and Norberg, "Mission Rebellion," 144.

²⁹ Brief Amicus Curiae Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund filed in United States District Court for the Northern District of CA in the David Johnson, et al., Plaintiffs, v. SFUSD, et al., Defendants, July 8, 1971. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Box 657, Folder 7 [STAN], 5.

1950s, Latino boys participated in high numbers on the school's championship soccer teams and in 1954 "Miss Mission" was a Latina.³⁰ Students created the extracurricular Latin American Club through which they celebrated cultural traditions.³¹ There were also Latino youth vying for leadership positions and who were elected to student council.³² In 1962, Ricardo Olivas was the class president and in 1963, Mary Ann Ojeda was the secretary-treasurer of her graduating class.³³ In 1965, five boys ran for student body president, one of them Latino and another African American. The biographies of the five boys printed by the school paper perhaps reveal academic experiences of minority youth at Mission High School. Of the three white candidates, all three planned to attend college after high school, two had a B average and one did not state his grade point average, but he planned on attending University of California, Berkeley. The black student maintained a C+ average and planned on getting a job in radio communications after he graduated, and the Latino student planned on joining the army with a C grade average.³⁴

Despite seemingly high levels of engagement in school activities, by the late 1960s, many Latino students felt isolated and angered by their situation in Mission High School. As one female high school student observed, "*Hay más estudiantes afuera de la escuela que adentro. Porque? No están aprendiendo nada. No enseñan.*" (There are more students outside the school than inside. Why? Because they are not

³⁰ Mission High School Yearbook 1954 and 1955.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mission High School Yearbook 1963.

³³ "Mission High School Graduation Exercises," Mission High School (June 12, 1962), San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 53, Folder 53/7 [SFPL HR]; "Mission High School Graduation Exercises," Mission High School (June 11, 1963), San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 53, Folder 53/7 [SFPL HC].

³⁴ "Quintet of Hopefuls Vie for Presidency," *West Wing Election Edition* January 14, 1965, 1.

learning anything. They don't teach.)³⁵ A male teenager added that he still could not speak English after attending school in San Francisco.³⁶ In a study asking Bay Area Puerto Ricans about their feelings of isolation and engagement, some second-generation youth reported feeling alienated both from Puerto Rican and American culture.³⁷ There were schools in the Mission District attempting to serve the specific needs of the Latino students; for example, Horace Mann Junior High in the heart of the Mission provided students the city's largest bilingual program.³⁸ Overall, however, many Latino youth were frustrated by the lack of student voice in the school, and they felt the administration was out of touch when considering and responding to their needs.³⁹ Along with the cultural changes and phenomena happening in San Francisco and the country in the 1960s, including the Black Power Movement, the Chicano Movement, and the Vietnam War, it was within this context of the public schools in the Mission District Latino and Chicano youth came of age forming their ethnic and racial identities.

The ethnic and racial identities formed among the youth of the Mission District were neither static nor always clearly defined. Some students formed multiple identities and employed them at different times, which allowed for overlap and at times the exclusion of some students, depending on how they viewed themselves and their identity. The three identities of Latino youth that emerge most strongly from the evidence are panethnic, pan-minority, and American. Ethnic celebrations and the

³⁵ *Los Siete de la Raza*. San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1969.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ R.C. Leyland, "Puerto Ricans in the San Francisco Bay Area, California: An Historical and Cultural Geography" (master's thesis, California State University, Hayward, 1980), 81.

³⁸ "Closeup of a Latino School," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 22, 1972, San Francisco Public Library, Mission Branch, Folder "Mission District Education File."

³⁹ "Mission High Unrest—Two Views," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 19, 1969, 5.

conscious creation of an overtly ethnic identity among youth in the Mission District appears to have been a more private process, one reserved for family and intimate affairs. Whereas ethnic identities surely existed, there is very little evidence of public declarations of an ethnic identity in that students did not form ethnic-specific clubs. This is not to say that students did not create identity around their ethnic heritage. For example, the high school newspaper contained numerous articles celebrating Cinco de Mayo and the Cuban and Puerto Rican Liberation Movement. In addition, students at Mission High School created murals in the hallways to celebrate ethnic culture through art.⁴⁰ The following sections are a discussion of these identities and how students expressed themselves via the written word as well as participation in clubs and out-of-school organizations.

Panethnic Identity

In post-World War II San Francisco, older Latino adult immigrants created both an ethnic and a panethnic Latino consciousness in San Francisco simultaneously attempting to preserve transplanted culture and create a new culture in their adopted land through the celebration of public fiestas and the formation of ethnic specific groups, such as Club Social Puertoriqueno, Club los Panamericanistas de San Francisco, and Circulo Hispano-Americano.⁴¹ Despite their parents' participation in ethnic social groups, many younger Latinos attempted to reduce intragroup ethnic

⁴⁰ Gloria F. Arcelona, "Raul Starts 2nd Mural," *West Wing*, May 6, 1975.

⁴¹ "Pan American Society (San Francisco Chapter) Twenty-Fifth Anniversary," 1955, Pan American Society (USA), San Francisco Chapter Papers, Mss41, Box 21, Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library [hereafter cited as UPLIB], 14; "Puerto Ricans in California" (Washington, DC.: Western Regional Office, United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1980).

differences and present public unity by creating clubs and organizations with panethnic names, such as the Latin American Club.⁴² In examining Latino youth organizations in the 1950s and early 1960s in San Francisco, evidence of this unity appears early and often on the pages of school yearbooks from Mission High School with the organizations continuing to grow in terms of student participation and numbers of clubs representing Latino students. As early as 1955, Latino youth created Latin American clubs at Mission High School, with over fifty students participating per semester.⁴³ It was through these panethnic organizations that Latino youth asserted their ethnic heritage and claimed the school as a place where they could come together and create a public space for themselves as Latino youth in a large comprehensive high school in a highly diversified neighborhood.

The creation of a youth panethnic identity in the Mission District among segments of the Latino population, first seen in the 1950s, continued through a time of emphasized cultural nationalism in the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and early 1970s—a movement that may have been stronger in other western cities but was certainly present in the Bay Area in the late 1960s. Despite the national and local focus on Mexican Americans and Chicanos, over the years many Latino students in San Francisco continued to expand the scope of their organizations, creating a “Latino Club” through which students of Latin American countries planned cultural activities and produced Latino performances, such as *¡Fiesta Latina!*, the purpose of which was to “make people aware of the different and vital cultures that do exist in Latin-

⁴² Laurie Kay Sommers, “Inventing Latinismo: The Creation of ‘Hispanic’ Panethnicity in the United States,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 104 (411) (winter 1991), 38.

⁴³ Mission High School Yearbook 1955.

America.”⁴⁴ In addition to clubs celebrating Latino culture, Latino youth also formed “American Latina Unida” and the “Latin American Student Organization,” groups that focused on student achievement by providing information, counseling, and tutoring for Latino youth.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the formation of these high school groups demonstrates an attempt to retain a Latino culture but not necessarily a particular ethnic culture in the public space of school, accomplishing this by extending this culture to include all those of Latin American descent.

In examining the titles of the organizations in which numerous Latino youth participated, appearances seemed to have mattered greatly in terms of the names they chose to represent themselves. Indeed, Latino students in San Francisco appear to have chosen the names of their organizations carefully, creating a panethnic identity even when asked not to do so. An example arises when an outspoken Chicano college student in the Bay Area called for high school groups to drop “the term Mexican-American in favor of the name Chicano” when naming their organizations, and later, going even further, declaring that “in a show of unity all student organizations should adopt one identical name throughout the state, the Southwest, and other areas of the nation where there are substantial numbers of Chicanos, since our movement is definitely of national significance and activity.”⁴⁶ There is no evidence in the data of the specific creation of Chicano youth organizations in San Francisco during this

⁴⁴ David Wong, “Latino Club Grows,” *West Wing*, March 16, 1976, 3; “Song, Dance, Spectacle... ¡Fiesta Latina!” *West Wing*, no month 1969, 2.

⁴⁵ “\$17,000 to Mission Latino Groups,” *New/Nueva Mission*, June 1969, 6.

⁴⁶ Ysidro Ramón Macías, “Un Plan de Political Action for Chicano Campus Groups,” n.d., File “Mexican-American Student Organizations,” [OPL HR], 46.

time.⁴⁷ Ultimately, the college student changed tactics and altered his definition of Chicano to be more inclusive of the Latin American population, writing,

Most people have tended to think of a chicano [sic] in terms of a person who lives in the United States and is of Mexican descent. However, anyone who has ever experienced the barrio thing knows that there are people there who look like, think like, and are in fact, chicanos [sic]. These are people who happen to be of Nicaraguan, Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, etc. descent but also have grown up in the barrio or by being in the U.S. have experienced the problems of being Latino in this country... The time has come when we must examine this word, for chicanismo [sic] is also a philosophy that must include all persons of Latino descent who recognize and are proud of their heritage and who are self-committed to retain their identity against the falseness of assimilation into the anglo-saxon [sic] societal mainstream.⁴⁸

For this Chicano activist, the movement should no longer be limited to those of Mexican descent but must include all youth of Latin American descent.

This adjustment in naming organizations can be seen in the language of some San Francisco Chicanos, who otherwise may have lost inroads into the Latino youth population if they appeared solely Chicano-centric or exclusive of other groups. As one young professor of Raza Studies at San Francisco State University explained,

We identify with the term La Raza as opposed to Chicano because the Mission community is largely composed of people from Central and South America. So, we really play up the term La Raza in the sense that we have pretty much the same culture and we experience the same problems in this country...⁴⁹

⁴⁷ There was a chapter of the Mexican American Youth Organization in the Bay Area, but it appears this was a statewide group and not specific to the city of San Francisco.

⁴⁸ Ysidro Ramón Macías, "What is a chicano?" n.d., File "Mexican-American Student Organizations," [OPL HR].

⁴⁹ This citation references a speech given November, 1973, Editorial, *Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes*, June 1974, 3.

Ultimately, by choosing panethnic titles for their groups, organizers attempted to encourage participation from larger swaths of the growing Latino population in the Mission District.

Outside the Bay Area, *La Raza* represented the shared sense of culture and race between those of Mexican-origin descent. *La Raza* means “the race” or “the people” in Spanish, and Chicanos in the 1960s employed this term to describe those of Mexican origin living in the land of Aztlán, the part of the United States that originally belonged to Mexico but was ceded to the United States in 1848 in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Along with *Chicano*, this term created a unified front as the Brown Power Movement increased in size and influence. In San Francisco, Latino youth leaders also spoke of *La Raza*, but, as previously demonstrated, they did so in a more inclusive manner that transcended ethnic and racial differences and enabled youth to create a panethnic identity around the idea of a shared Latino culture and race. It is this sense of inclusion and the non-situational nature of a panethnic identity, since it was not created in direct reaction to a specific event or issue, which distinguishes the identity formation for many of the Latino youth in San Francisco.

In choosing not to heed the call to change their organizations’ names to those that are Chicano-centric, Latino youth created a solid foundation upon which many of them constructed a strong and long-standing identity in the Mission District and their schools using names that promoted an inclusive panethnic identity. Whereas *La Raza* was a phrase often employed by the Chicano movement to represent those of Mexican origin, Latino youth in San Francisco designated the term “*La Raza*” as a panethnic identifier, one that could apply to all Latinos, and sometimes even include African

Americans and whites sympathetic to the Latino cause. As a local youth organization proclaimed in a distributed pamphlet,

This unity (ethnic solidarity) within the Spanish-speaking community becomes the basic building block and the power base for community development. Ethnic solidarity (here defined as the realization of a common destiny based on common language, cultural values, and historical traditions) is also defined in terms of an individual's own cultural values, whether he be Salvadorean [sic], Nicaraguan, Mexican, etc. *La Raza* is the unity of the different cultures based upon the common language that they all share. This (ethnic solidarity) must function as the underlying strength within this community to motivate individuals to work together for social change.⁵⁰

The idea of *La Raza* as something larger than including just those Latinos of Mexican descent, as was the common definition in Los Angeles and other Chicano-majority cities, unified many Latino youth of different ethnic backgrounds and empowered them with an identity to present to those outside their ethnic communities.

Because some Latino youth living in the Mission District sought to create long-term panethnic identities that were not in reaction to specific events, these identities can be viewed as community forming rather than merely situational and tenuous. Believing *La Raza* to be a term that would unite the people of the community because it encompassed all Spanish-surnamed and Spanish-speaking residents throughout the community, Latino students carefully chose to use this term as one of their ethnic identifiers in various educational, political, and social settings. As perhaps best represented by one local community paper, "We are an integration of various races and cultures, united by a common language and destiny...In the Mission community, 'La Raza' unifies a nationalistic fervor and cultural heritage into the solid and viable

⁵⁰ Pamphlet, *La Raza en Accion Local*, n.d., San Francisco, California, File "Associations San Francisco," [OPL HR], 2.

base needed for dynamic change.”⁵¹ In choosing *La Raza* as identifier, youth indicated that the process was not merely about racial and ethnic identity but also about political power and activism.

Eventually, the use of *La Raza* and the creation of Latino Clubs, such as “America Latina Unida,” in the schools took on a more political focus, viewing the educational setting as the means by which to create a panethnic identity and in turn make gains as a unified group. The groups worked to ensure “better studies, better understanding of our people, and to stop police brutality” as well as “prserve [sic] the great contributions that our Hispano-american [sic] culture has made and continues to make in this country.”⁵² The Mission Development Council, an adult community group representing over one hundred organizations in the Mission District, supported the students’ goals when it stated that “Latin Americans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans, all are united by one common language and spirit. All face the common problems of an inadequate educational system, poor housing, and political and economic powerlessness.”⁵³ The unity created by the students and the support of their parents and community members and the focus on the overall educational and socioeconomic situations in the Mission District enabled the students to create long-term ties based on shared experiences in order to make gains as a panethnic group.

As the definition of *La Raza* expanded, attempts to bridge differences and create better understanding between different Latin American ethnic groups continued to grow in the Mission District. For example, “La Raza Saturday School” was a

⁵¹ Anonymous, “Why La Raza?” *El Jalamate*, January 15, 1972, 1.

⁵² “New Youth Group,” *La Nueva Mission*, February 25- March 17, 1969, 7.

⁵³ “Southwest Council of La Raza First Annual Report,” March 1969, Stan Steiner Papers, M0700, Series 1, Box 20, Folder 2 [STAN], 21.

bilingual, bicultural alternative school offered to Latino children between the ages 5-15. In this school, Latino teachers taught youth to appreciate *Raza* history and culture. For this organization, “‘La Raza’ is a term which encompasses all people of Latin American descent who evolved from the blending of the indigenous population with the European conquerors and the African slaves.”⁵⁴ According to the founders of the program, the education provided would serve as a “bridge between Chicanos and Latinos... We are working to develop a historical perspective on the Chicanos. Furthermore, we want the Chicanos to have a knowledge of Latin-American struggles.”⁵⁵ This two-way street of understanding was viewed as necessary to create connections between the different ethnic groups and may well have contributed to the creation of a panethnic identity among some youth as they were taught these lessons early on in community educational settings.

In addition to the shared political and educational experiences of the Latino students, there existed strong cultural ties to help the panethnic identity coalesce. To do this, students used concerts, performances, and cultural nights to bring together the different Latino groups. For example, Mission High School hosted concerts for the students during which bands played salsa, Spanish rock, and Cha-Cha—musical genres with very different origins; for example, salsa’s roots are Afro-Cuban and do not necessarily represent mestizo Chicano identity. Students wrote favorably about these concerts in the school newspapers, demonstrating no tension between the

⁵⁴ “Estudios de La Raza 1974-1975,” San Francisco State University [UCB CSC], 14.

⁵⁵ Ana Arana, “‘Raza en Accion’ Means Self Help,” n.d., microfilm, 3 and 4.

differing styles of music and what they potentially represented.⁵⁶ Another example of incorporating different cultures to create a panethnic identity can be seen when the Ethnic Theater Workshop chose to produce a bilingual play about rebellion in Spain in 1476, a topic that resonated with the entirely Latino cast of students.⁵⁷ Parents and teachers were also involved in the creation of these cultural events, sponsoring events such as “Latin American Night” at a Mission District junior high school. This event featured the theme “Getting to Know You...Better,” encouraging students and their families to participate in cultural activities in order to overcome their perceived differences.⁵⁸

In addition to these events conducted in the schools of the Mission District, the celebration of the Mexican holiday Cinco de Mayo became a driving force behind a public display of unity in the form of panethnic celebrations in the neighborhood. Cinco de Mayo is the Mexican day of celebration, recognizing the Mexican defeat and expulsion of the French in 1862. Despite the fact that the holiday is specifically about Mexico’s triumph over France, Latinos in the Mission District chose this day to represent all Latinos as a cause for celebration throughout the district, and, in 1966, the Spanish-Speaking Citizens Foundation started the annual Cinco de Mayo/Latin American Fiesta Parade which took place in the Mission District.⁵⁹ Even if everyone in the Mission was not aware of the historical significance of Cinco de Mayo, it quickly became an important day of celebration for the Latino population. An article

⁵⁶ Sommers, “Inventing Latinismo,” 43; Kelly Lenhart, “Dancin’ in the Streets—A Celebration of Our Struggles,” *West Wing*, October 12, 1977; “From Cha-Cha to Rock Greats Latin Club Dancers,” *West Wing* April 30, 1969, 2.

⁵⁷ “The Sheep Well,” *West Wing*, March 24, 1971.

⁵⁸ San Francisco Unified School District Newsletter, Vol. 39, no. 18, January 15, 1968, 14.

⁵⁹ Sommers, “Inventing Latinismo,” 41.

in a local Spanish/English newspaper describes how the word was spread regarding the holiday:

Children anticipate something is happening, but what? “What’s happening?”... “There’s going to be a parade!”... “For what?”... “I don’t know! Someone said something about the ‘Cinco de Mayo’”... “Que es eso?”... “It’s some kind of Chicano holiday.”... “OH!!! Hey, do you know what the Cinco de Mayo is???? No...how about you, Juan? No... who really cares!! I do and you should too!”⁶⁰

The author of the article continues by discussing how Cinco de Mayo is an historic moment in the history of “all Raza people because it ended centuries of foreign control and domination and returned Mexico to her people.”⁶¹ This sentiment was also evident in an earlier article written for the Mission High School newspaper, in which one student wrote,

The defeat of the French army of May 5, 1862 symbolizes the fact that *nosotros los Mexicanos*, Chicanos and all *Raza*, cannot be overcome by force, political oppression or any kind of movement to destroy our spirit and desire to be free!
¡Libre!... We are a people with a beautiful culture that started with our Indio ancestors and is today and shall forever continue to move forward with the struggle of our people, *La Raza De Aztlan!* ¡Nuestra tierra Linda! ¡Yo soy Chicano Y orgulloso de mi raza! ¡Que viva El Cinco De Mayo! ¡Que viva La Raza libre!
¡Que Viva!⁶²

Rather than dilute the panethnic identity created in the schools and neighborhood by celebrating different days throughout the year, many Latinos chose to come together and create a large public display of their cultural ties and unity via the celebration of a traditionally Mexican holiday.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, “Cinco de Mayo????” *El Jalamate*, June 9, 1972, 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶² Raul Martinez, Letters to the Editor, “Cinco,” *West Wing*, May 6, 1975, 2.

At the same time many Latino youth chose how to self-identify and create multiple group identities, external groups also attempted to label and classify Latino students based on their notions of what a Spanish identity should encompass and what it meant culturally to be Latino. Throughout its reports, the San Francisco Unified School District consistently used “other white” and “Spanish-surnamed” to identify Latino youth; in relying simply on last names, the district mistakenly labeled some students as something other than Latino as not all Latino names sound “Spanish.” Ultimately, this method of identity served to ignore or incorrectly designate students, allowing for their specific educational needs to go unaddressed and to possibly create confusion around which students were indeed Latino and what this might have meant in terms of the students’ experiences in the public schools, both academically and socially. In terms of how white teachers interacted with Latino students, inappropriate categorization resulted in negative experiences for at least some of the students. As one Salvadoran resident of the neighborhood later reflected, “I also faced prejudice from white people. I had a social studies teacher who asked me if people back home wore loincloths and carried bows and arrows. Everyone assumed we were Mexican.”⁶³ In turn, this lumping of students as something broadly Latino may have led to more unity among students and an increased desire to create a “Latino” space in the schools and neighborhoods.

In addition to the district’s mislabeling many students and potentially subverting their identity, the non-Latino student body of Mission High School as well as the cultural shifts in youth culture of the 1950s may have contributed to the creation of a

⁶³ Ricardo Sandoval, “Time and Again,” *San Francisco Focus* (December 1994), San Francisco Library, Mission Branch, 80

unified panethnic identity due to the way society labeled Latinos. In a poll taken at Mission High School in the late 1950s in which students were asked to name the group who was responsible for giving the high school its “worst name,” 28 percent of the responses named those of Latin American descent. Students used very unflattering terms to describe these “trouble-makers,” including: big hair and punky shoes; act tough; drink and fight; dress sloppy; chip on the shoulder; rowdy; drink; flunkout; pachukos [sic] from the Mission; only think about sex; and carry knives and steal.⁶⁴ More than likely, these stereotypes necessitated that Latino students unite to defend and define themselves on their own terms. Rather than allow non-Latino students to choose their identities based on ethnic, racial, and class characteristics, some Latino youth created a counter-panethnic identity while also presenting themselves as individuals athletes, school leaders, and academics as previously demonstrated by their participation in student government, extracurricular ethnic clubs, and school sports teams.

The evolution of the panethnic Latino identity adopted by many youth in the Mission District took place over the years of continuous immigration and success of their parents in finding jobs and economic security in the Bay Area in the post-war era. The identities created by the youth in the years leading up to the Student and Brown Power Movements in the late-1960s were flexible and layered as the students employed a panethnic identity among others to create cohesion and unity as a minority group in a large diverse city. In the 1960s, as identity politics intensified and outside events influenced school-age youth to a greater degree, an event occurred in San

⁶⁴ Fielder, “Preliminary Report: Student Life Study Mission High School.”

Francisco that would have a tremendous impact on how Latino youth identified themselves as well as how they related to other minority groups. In this section of the chapter I explore the effects of the event on the formation of a panethnic identity among Latino youth in San Francisco.

Early in the morning, on May 1, 1969—the day jailed Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton was set to be released from prison—two white police officers stopped seven Latino youth to question their activities as they were moving electronic equipment between their car and an apartment in the heart of the Mission District.⁶⁵ An argument ensued and quickly escalated, leaving one of the officers shot and killed by the other officer’s gun. Within two days, police arrested and charged six of the high school and college-age Latinos; one escaped, and the police did not find him until years later. Of the seven young men, the one who escaped was the only one born in the United States. The others were Central Americans who had immigrated as adolescents with their families, all spending time in the public schools in San Francisco. A few of them had run-ins with the law prior to this incident, others attended college or were thinking of applying, and one was still in high school. Within a week of their arrest, the young men became known as “Los Siete de la Raza” (The Seven of the People or Race), and community organizations formed to help with their defense as well as to provide community services, such as tutoring and providing breakfasts to school-age children. After remaining in jail for eighteen months during which they endured a long and drawn-out trial, the jury acquitted the six young men of any wrongdoing, and they

⁶⁵ It is not known if seven youth were present at the time of the incident, since the surviving officer and witnesses often changed their stories. Regardless, arrest warrants went out for seven named youth, despite the fact that affidavits were signed attesting to the fact that two of them were not in San Francisco County at the time of the incident.

were released. While the young men were incarcerated, the Bay Area witnessed an intense campaign for and display of unity between Latinos and people of color.⁶⁶

Similar to other geographic areas at the time in which isolated incidents or specific discriminatory acts provided opportunities for oppressed groups to unite and form an identity in opposition to the perceived enemy, the trial of *Los Siete* provided a “spark to unite the people of the Mission into block voting, block action, to take a definite stand when and where it is needed.”⁶⁷ Certainly the negative treatment of the young men by the press, calling them “Latin hippie types” and “hoodlums,”⁶⁸ affected how youth viewed themselves in relation to the white authority figures and law enforcement in San Francisco and how they identified themselves as a unified group in opposition to these adults and institutions. That said, unlike events in other areas, e.g., the call for affirmative action in the hiring practices of Latinos in Chicago, *Los Siete* occurred along a continuum of the creation of a panethnic identity among youth, perhaps serving as a focal point but neither as the impetus nor the end to the successful creation of a panethnic identity.

For many high school-age Latino youth in San Francisco, the trial of *Los Siete* provided an opportunity to voice their distrust of the educational system as well as come together as an ethnic group for a political cause. As one resident described the event, “It created a cohesive movement and it became a catalyst for many individuals

⁶⁶ “Historical Background of the Mission and Closeup of Youths,” n.d.. Charles R. Garry Legal Files, BANC MSS 2001/66 c, Ctn. 11, Folder “Martinez, #93036,” The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley [hereafter cited as BANC].

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Basta Ya! The Story of Los Siete de la Raza* (San Francisco, CA: Research Organizing Cooperative of San Francisco, 1970).

to become organized and become very vocal.”⁶⁹ Prior to this, the panethnic identity of Latino youth in San Francisco centered mostly on cultural ties and mutual celebrations. The events of *Los Siete* and the community group organized around the trial provided a space for Latino youth to unite and make demands for educational and institutional change. The attention paid to the events also provided a platform for students to vocalize their unity as Latinos and verbalize their experiences in the public schools. As one student described a typical scene at Dolores Park, across the street from Mission High School,

And you know what most of these hundred people are? They are Latinos. Why are they in the park? Because they have been smoking grass...And why have they been smoking grass? Because the school don't teach them nothing that is relevant to them, that they can say 'This is my own.' I was in the fifth grade and they used to teach us about the old culture of the United States, and they used to have square dances...*square dancing*...you know, in Mexico we never do *square dancing*. In the schools they teach us how to do the jarabi tapatia...Butt when we come here they teach us square dancing. And they don't teach us anything about our culture, or any of the things that are part of us. In this country, they alienate us from our culture.⁷⁰

The young men on trial also spoke of this alienation as well as how teachers tracked their learning in school and placed them in vocational classes. They continue by explaining that since all of them recently immigrated to the United States, often teachers and students alike treated them as foreigners who did not “understand what they were saying” and called them Mexicans, despite their Central American heritage.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Emily Gurnon, “Enduring Legacy of ‘Los Siete’,” *San Francisco Examiner* April 30, 1999, 1, 16, 17.

⁷⁰ *Basta Ya! The Story of Los Siete de la Raza*, 12.

⁷¹ “La Raza Doesn’t Need a Crutch...It Needs a Stick to Swing,” *Basta Ya!*, June 1970, 6 and 7.

The trial of *Los Siete* and the activism it spurred inspired Latino youth in San Francisco and beyond. Many disenfranchised youth felt for the first time that they held a public space to express their needs and disappointments with the structures with which they interacted on a daily basis. For many Latinos, the trial and vindication of the young men allowed them to “feel proud of being Latino.”⁷² That said, the events of *Los Siete* also exposed some divides within the Latino community in San Francisco. While most of the Spanish-speaking population in San Francisco was from Central and South America, many Chicanos held leadership positions, both in community and campus organizations, perhaps due to being longer established with stronger networks throughout the area and the state. Whereas some Chicanos were very supportive of *Los Siete* and what they represented to the community, others did not participate as enthusiastically in the defense of the young men, some viewing them as representing the worst of the youth in the neighborhood. As one of the young men on trial described the situation, “One problem especially is with the Chicano Movement, which is just strictly from Mexico...All they see is people from Mexico and nobody else. This is bad because they are alienating themselves.”⁷³ Ultimately, these divides did not necessarily splinter groups or hinder the activism surrounding *Los Siete*, but they did raise questions around the sustainability of a panethnic identity, specifically among the older population.

⁷² Emily Gurnon, “Enduring Legacy of ‘Los Siete’,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 30, 1999, 1, 16 and 17.

⁷³ “Basta Ya!” *The Movement*, November 1969, 9.

Pan-minority Identity

In late 1968, as previously discussed, Latino and African-American students came to blows in the halls of Mission High School. The administration called the police, only to find that the animosity that existed between the two groups turned on the administration and law enforcement once they arrived on the scene. For some, the initial incident demonstrated severe racial strife at the school. This belief, typically held by the media and school administration, overlooked how quickly students came together and how they maintained this unity for a sustained time afterward.

Additionally, this misconception ignored the previous successful work of youth and community groups to bring different races and ethnicities together and create a pan-minority identity. In an interview several years after the incident a student confirmed the exaggerated level of this view when he reflected on race relations in the school, “Looking back, it was nothing compared to racial violence in other high schools in other cities.”⁷⁴ This context is important because although it may appear that the students’ unity was situational and a reaction to an immediate cause, students united because of the foundation built beforehand and the understanding that they needed to come together if they wanted to benefit individually and as a community. As one Latino high school student succinctly framed the situation, “Why do we fight among ourselves? Let’s get out of this slum.”⁷⁵

San Francisco was primarily a quadri-racial city, with significant representation of four racial and ethnic groups (white, African American, Latino, and Chinese) and

⁷⁴ Lon Daniels, “Mission High Remembers the Good Old Days,” *San Francisco Examiner*, October 17, 1977, 8.

⁷⁵ Bill Moore, “The Spanish Minority: Self-Help Movement in Mission,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 20, 1969, 5.

smaller percentages of other populations (Filipino, Japanese, Samoan, etc.). Due to the diversity and the relatively small geographic size of the city, schools in San Francisco were more integrated than in other large urban areas.⁷⁶ Whereas the Mission was increasingly Latino, sizeable percentages of other races and ethnicities also attended the schools, creating a diverse student body and the opportunity for students to interact with and be influenced by other racial and ethnic groups. Unlike adults, who can self-select and choose to attend ethnically-centered clubs and religious institutions, youth in San Francisco typically attended integrated schools, and this deeply influenced how they formed their own identities.

Despite the diverse setting and the efforts of students and community groups to come together, divides and issues did exist between different groups, and it was not uncommon for students to self-segregate in social settings around the school. In describing the park across the street from the high school, one resident reflected, “The different racial groups had their own territory staked out. Blacks in one corner, Latinos in another, whites in another, and the Filipinos and Samoans over there.”⁷⁷ However, many students also realized they needed to reach out to one another, communicate, and find common ground if they were going to “survive.”⁷⁸ Over time, this sustained sense of a need for survival and shared experiences contributed to the creation by many of a flexible and fluid pan-minority identity, which enabled Latino youth interact with their peers in a productive way and discontinue the practice of self-

⁷⁶ “San Francisco: A City in Crisis,” A Report to the Churches and Synagogues, Sponsored by the San Francisco Conference on Religion, Race, and Social Concerns, San Francisco, a city in crisis: a report to the churches and synagogues, BANC MSS 70/83 c [BANC], 11 and 12.

⁷⁷ John Burks, “School Racial Clashes Eased,” n.d., San Francisco Public Library, Mission Branch, File “Mission District Education.”

⁷⁸ Ibid.

segregating by communicating more “beautifully” with one another.⁷⁹ As one student wrote in an underground newspaper, “Our strength is our unity... We will unite with brothers and sisters in and out of school and will unite with other movements. We will learn from struggles all over the world... Our strength and our unity will develop from mutual support, common action and a basic desire to serve the people and build self-determination.”⁸⁰

Although students formed alliances and organized entire student-body walkouts immediately following the fights at Mission High School, the administration thought it best to separate the students by race and ethnicity and hold assemblies to determine their needs as distinct groups.⁸¹ They also isolated and suspended many of the leaders of the movement while maintaining a police presence on campus, which only increased the activism and intensified the unity of the students. Despite the attempts to create division, hundreds of Latinos and African Americans successfully presented themselves as one group—Third World students—in order to make demands of the administration. Appreciating the parallels in their academic experiences at Mission High School, and in San Francisco in general, including high dropout rates and low achievement scores, the students demanded improvements be made so all minority students could succeed academically. Included in these demands were: “freedom and power to determine the destiny of their school”; “full enrollment in the school to all people”; all “police, special agents, and racist teachers” be restricted from school premises; all students that have been expelled or suspended be reinstated; student

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Anonymous, “Mission High News,” *¡Basta Ya!*, January 3, 1970.

⁸¹ “Mission High Demands,” *La Nueva Mission*, May 1969, 1 and 6.

court by a jury of their peers; no grades; and “justice and peace.”⁸² Specific to the curriculum of their school, the students demanded the creation of Black and Latino history, music, art, and literature classes as well as ethnic studies and bilingual programs.⁸³ According to one student activist, racism “creates competition between students” and divides and conquers minority youth, and in order to overcome this, students must unite as one group to fight the discriminatory system.⁸⁴ The united and well-organized students found support in their community, as Henry Cruz, chairman of the Mission Coalition Education Committee, stated in an interview, “the community is supporting the demand, and we are prepared to mobilize the whole community if nothing is done to begin implementing these demands.”⁸⁵

Latino students’ openness to reaching across both ethnic as well as racial divides when creating their identity may be supported by the idea that “race in the west is a cultural and historical invention more than recognition of biological fact.”⁸⁶ Perhaps the students’ conception of what was black and white in America did not correspond to the traditional black-white binary upheld in the southern and northeastern parts of the country. In contrast to many Latino immigrants before them, many Latino youth in San Francisco at times chose to identify their struggle and their needs with those of African Americans, rather than whites with whom they also attended schools in the city. As one older Latina activist in the city noted, “impatient young often equate limited political leverage with too much stress on non-violence. They look at the

⁸² Anonymous, “Mission High News,” *¡Basta Ya!*, January 3, 1970.

⁸³ Memorandum from Joe Johnson to Mike McCone (Mayor’s Office), February 6, 1969, Joseph L. Alioto Papers (SFH 5) [SFPL HC].

⁸⁴ Anonymous, “High School Student Union,” *¡Basta Ya!*, October 4, 1969.

⁸⁵ Ron Maskowitz, “17 Demands By Mission High Group,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1969, 1.

⁸⁶ Richard White, “Race Relations in the American West,” *American Quarterly* 38 (3): 399 (1986).

militant blacks and discard the old quiet, mild-mannered ways.”⁸⁷ That said, the Black Power Movement more than encouraged many Latino youth in San Francisco to take action as a separate ethnic group, but also suggested that students join forces in protest as well as form community and school organizations in order to forge alliances and create a pan-minority identity within their neighborhoods.

The events of the *Los Siete* trial also contributed to the creation of a pan-minority or Third World identity among Latino youth in the Mission District. Whereas this event may appear to have created a situational identity in reaction to a specific incident, the presence of a pan-minority identity was due to the efforts of community groups organizing youth of color prior to the events, and this pan-minority identity continued to exist beyond the extensive trial proceedings. As previously mentioned, the six young men put on trial in the case were of Central American descent. This may have contributed to the fact that in early efforts to rally support Latino activists in San Francisco faced some difficulty and hesitancy seeking help for the young men’s defense from Chicano groups.⁸⁸

Strongly believing in a pan-minority identity, the Black Panthers were one of the first groups to support *Los Siete*, suggesting Huey Newton’s lawyer, Charles Garry, represent them in court. They also provided support in the form of a column in the Party newspaper updating the young men’s situation as well as mentoring the newly formed organization “*Los Siete de la Raza*” as to how to create its own newspaper, raise funds, and provide programs for the neighborhood. Panther leaders also spoke of

⁸⁷ Mildred Hamilton, “The Women of La Raza: Part 2,” *San Francisco Examiner*, August 31, 1970, 22.

⁸⁸ Jorge Mariscal, “Left Turns in the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975,” *Monthly Review* (2002), available from <http://www.accessmylibrary.com>.

the young men at rallies and connected them to the larger context of wrongfully imprisoned people of color in the Bay Area. The Panthers viewed the case as one of police brutality, a cause all people of color should get behind, and not a specific case of injustice to Latinos. One African American student from Berkeley enthusiastically pledged his support (and a small financial donation) to the plight of *Los Siete*, believing their causes overlapped writing,

Dear Brothers, This contribution of \$5.00 is awfully meager!! I know it can do so very little in defense of your lives!! However, as a relatively poor Black-American, this amount was all I could send at this time. I will definitely make all efforts to send more money, and I will follow the court proceedings [sic] as closely as possible. I wanted to write to express support for you, and the Brown community. I know that there have been and still are many ill-feelings and hatreds between the Brown and Black communities. From experience, I know many Chicanos/Latinos view Blacks in the same manner as do whites; Blacks too on some occasions express their dislike of Brown-Americans for stereotypic reasons. I can only hope that basic understanding, mutual respect, and then true friendship and love will develop eventually between Brown and Black people in the U.S. Until that time I will try to expand my own consciousness and those of the people I come in contact with to evaluate the conditions in Brown community, and compare them to the ones under which [sic] other 3rd world people are living. Buena Suerte, hermanos Viva la Raza!! With respect + love, Dwight Scott⁸⁹

Although it is difficult to fully determine how directly the *Los Siete* trial shaped a pan-minority identity among youth, evidence demonstrates that many viewed the plight of the young men as a universal cause, one that could serve to draw parallels and create awareness between different minority groups. A flyer for a walkout at Mission High School described the student action as “support of los siete [sic], of the Soledad Brothers and all other brothers and sisters that are in prison for struggling to liberate

⁸⁹ Letter from Dwight Scott to Los Siete, n.d., Charles R. Garry Legal Files, BANC MSS 2001/66 c, Ctn 11, Folder #9399,” [BANC].

their people.”⁹⁰ By walking out in support of Latino and African American prisoners, youth in the Mission District vied to create a Third World consciousness, similar to that witnessed on many local college campuses at the time, which was borne out of a shared sense of experience and identity within a diverse ethnic and racial community.

In fact, prior to and throughout the time students created coalitions in the schools and protested police brutality in the *Los Siete* case, many Latino youth adopted a pan-minority identity in working together with other youth of color in local organizations formed to better their neighborhood and provide a platform for a youth voice. Two groups that directly put these ideas of unity into practice were the Mission Rebels and the Real Alternatives Program (RAP). The federal government funded the Mission Rebels through grants, and the program provided a place for ownership and participation for minority youth. Youth chose the name Mission Rebels because they were “rebellious against the lack of opportunity in jobs, in education; the lack of opportunity to express ourselves.”⁹¹ RAP was a vehicle for direct-action as youth distributed free breakfast programs to over two hundred Third World children every day in the Mission District.⁹² Minority youth participated in these programs, believing the Mission District was a Third World community where people were unable to make ends meet and help was needed if the neighborhood was going to improve. For this, the community looked upon the groups with pride, viewing their work as necessary to address racial and ethnic divides. A sense of cohesion served as a point of pride for the community as one local resident reflected, “Problems over ethnic and racial

⁹⁰ Flyer, n.d., Mission High School History Room.

⁹¹ Tom Emch, “Mission Rebels, Revisited,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, February 14, 1971, 6., San Francisco Public Library, Mission Branch, File “Mission District History.”

⁹² Anonymous, “Free Breakfast,” *New/Nueva Mission*, August 1, 1969, 1.

integration in the heterogeneous Mission District has [sic] not arisen in the Mission Rebels in the 2 years of the Mission Rebels' existence [sic].”⁹³ Overall, both organizations helped numbers of Latinos and African Americans transcend ethnic and racial differences by providing occasions to work side-by-side in the community in an effort to increase opportunities to succeed educationally and economically.⁹⁴

Furthermore, some Latino and African-American youth came together to form pan-minority groups because they felt “without a place and powerless.”⁹⁵ According to an adult mentor, minority youth were “unsatisfied, unsuccessful, and unworthy,” and they often turned to the destruction of themselves, their peers, and the “society” they felt did not offer means for self-fulfillment.⁹⁶ Not merely wanting to participate in local ethnic affairs, these youth wanted “communication with youth of different cultural backgrounds” and to bridge what they perceived to be barriers between the ethnicities and races.⁹⁷ Rather than allowing others to label them as “criminals, delinquents and hoodlums,” they would “self-identify in the struggle for survival” and “join hands to unite.”⁹⁸ In practicing self-determination in a multiracial, multiethnic setting, unified youth presented their needs and identities as overlapping and intertwined.

In creating opportunities for youth to participate more directly in action for change in the Mission District, Latino youth in these community organizations expressed their

⁹³ “Operation Opportunity Request for Refunding on Local or City Wide Basis March 1, 1968 through March 1, 1969,” A-3, Oscar Burdick Collection of Letters and Miscellaneous Relating to the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s, 1966-1979, MSS 99/196 c, Box 1 [BANC].

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ “Mission Area Youth Council Community Relations Committee,” *Mission Area Youth Council*, August 10, 1971 [UCB CSC], 1.

pride in being Brown as well as belonging to a larger pan-minority identity. These minority youth placed themselves in opposition to a white power structure, using imposed identities to strengthen their bonds and create a pan-minority identity, “We even call each other ‘nigger’ and ‘spick’ just to show how stupid the words are; words invented by the white man that we’re supposed to get mad at.”⁹⁹ Some critics claim the groups did not challenge structural inequalities, merely rehabilitating youth within the system, perhaps creating “*Tio Tacos*” and “Uncle Toms.”¹⁰⁰ They believe adults manipulated the youth, perhaps producing contrived and insincere gains and identities. The pamphlets created by the Mission Rebels, a group with two boards of directors, one youth and one adult, each with the power to veto the other, paint a different picture—one of empowerment and an environment in which youth serviced youth with a “specific and definite voice.” For this diverse group of over six hundred local youth, the key words were “FREEDOM and RESPECT!” In this context, youth created a space where they did not have to conform to rules that were not of their making, and they did this in an open and accepting setting where they could work with their peers of different races and ethnicities in their shared neighborhood.¹⁰¹

American or “White” Identity

Absent from much of the literature on ethnic identity formation for Latino youth is the creation of a “white” or American identity. The loss of an ethnic modifier (e.g., shifting from “Mexican American” to “American”) is a progression witnessed in many

⁹⁹ Emch, “Mission Rebels, Revisited,” 6.

¹⁰⁰ “Youth in the Liberation Struggle,” *People’s World*, January 24, 1970, 9.

¹⁰¹ “Mission Rebels in Action,” n.d., Oscar Burdick Collection of Letters and Miscellaneous Relating to the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s, 1966-1979, MSS 99/196 c, Box 1 [BANC].

European groups as they assimilate and acculturate to their new homeland. The process of “identificational assimilation,” when immigrants lose their hyphen and become “American,” is less frequently examined in Latino populations.¹⁰² Perhaps due to the ethnic, racial, educational, and economic diversity within the Latino community in San Francisco, an American identity based on assimilation and a resistance to an ethnic identity emerged among youth. Although youth did not consistently discuss assimilation in student-produced newspapers and pamphlets, it is certainly worth examining, both because of the influence of the process as well as the fact that it might have occurred more silently than what emerges from the evidence.

If students did not always employ the term “American” or “white” to label themselves in the public sphere, there exist glimpses of students distancing themselves from the panethnic and pan-minority identities adopted by many of their peers. For example, when asked by a reporter how she enjoys school, a Spanish-surnamed girl “objects to being buttonholed by a chicano [sic] organization on campus, telling her she should sign up ‘because it’s for La Raza,’ and chiding her because she cannot speak Spanish.” She continues by asking, “Can I help it if we only speak English at home? I don’t like it when these people jump on me.”¹⁰³ For this student, her peers defined the concept of being Latino too narrowly, and she felt unable to conform to and accommodate their framework.

In areas in which resided a more homogeneous Latino population, this way of thinking may have served students in helping them unite against a cause or place

¹⁰² Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

¹⁰³ John Burks, “Balboa High’s ‘Loose Structure,’” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 15, 1972, 30.

themselves in the larger social, educational, and political structures. For San Francisco, however, this type of labeling may have disenfranchised some students as they may not have related well to students from different backgrounds. Specifically, as Latino and pan-minority identities emerged, students who did not view themselves as poor, dark-skinned, non-English speakers may not have felt a part of the vision and identity put forth by their peers, and a lack of flexibility within the definitions appears to have kept them from fully participating in and sharing experiences with these groups.

The female student quoted previously was not alone in her inability to speak Spanish. Concerning Latino youth in the Mission District, school records highlight a disparity between students labeled bilingual and Spanish-surnamed.¹⁰⁴ This gap in the numbers could also be attributed to the district failing to place Spanish-speaking students in bilingual classrooms, but the situation appears a bit more complicated in that there may have been many Latino students in San Francisco who did not speak fluent Spanish. In an open letter to the community, a local Spanish/English newspaper placed the blame on Latino parents: “Many of us in the process of assimilating into the ‘american [sic] way of life’ refuse to teach our native tongue, Spanish to our children...It is our responsibility and duty to pass on to our children their culture and not to assimilate into the giant melting pot of AMERICAN CULTURE.”¹⁰⁵ Some adults supported the creation of a tutorial program designed to help the Mission’s

¹⁰⁴ “Office of Integration Status Report,” January 1975, San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, California, San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 96, Folder 4 [SFPL HC].

¹⁰⁵ Anonymous, “The Latin Home,” *El Jalamate*, August 25, 1972, 1.

grade school children mediate the learning process they encountered in the schools, since they were “becoming too assimilated and refuse to speak Spanish.”¹⁰⁶

Even when schools provided support for Latino students, evidence emerged of students questioning their own identity when attempting to place themselves in a system that stressed acculturation and assimilation.¹⁰⁷ For example, as one teacher observed of students enrolled in Buena Vista Elementary in the Mission, a school that provided bilingual support when needed,

One of the Chicano children interviewed referred to the other Chicano children as dirty Mexicans. Several students showed a negative reaction to the word Chicano and insisted that they were white even though it was explained to them that many Chicanos were white. When asked how they felt about speaking Spanish, several of the children responded negatively. They saw no need for it and were glad they did not have to learn Spanish in that particular school. Those children at Buena Vista that already spoke English did not have to learn Spanish.¹⁰⁸

Several assumptions exist in this observation, including that the children were indeed Chicano and had been taught a Chicano identity in their homes—both assumptions are tenuous at best in San Francisco at this time. Additional examples exist of administrators and teachers taking note of students’ desires to disassociate from their Latino heritage and Spanish Language. In a report put out by the Latin American Teachers Association, teachers discussed the students’ rejection of the labels “Chicano,” “Brown,” and “Spanish Speaking,” and how this affected their learning

¹⁰⁶ Ana Arana, “Raza en Accion’ Means Self Help,” n.d., microfilm, 3 and 4.

¹⁰⁷ For an analysis on the negative impact the processes of assimilation and acculturation had on Latino and Chicano students, see Thomas P. Carter and Roberto D. Segura. *Mexican Americans in School: A Decade of Change* (2nd ed.) (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, Princeton, N.J., 1979).

¹⁰⁸ Josefina López, “Casa de la Raza,” unpublished paper [UCB CSC], 8.

and community building.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, in assessing a specific program targeted for Spanish-speaking students, district officials stated,

Last year it was reported that one Mexican girl improved her attitude toward Spanish-speaking peoples as a result of a visit to Sonoma to see some early Spanish contributions. More and more has there been opportunity for pupils to identify with members of their own racial and ethnic background and to learn of the contributions to the American scene.¹¹⁰

The primary assumption is that the desire to learn English and assimilate was a universally negative process for Latino youth, a belief that does not allow for much flexibility in terms of how these youth experience the process of self-identifying. Yet, despite some of the constraints placed by both adults and youth on the process of ethnic identity formation, the student voice representing the assimilation process continued to emerge. Whereas the following quote certainly does not speak for all Latino students in San Francisco, it must be noted as an assertion of an hyphenated American identity, one with a specific loyalty to the United States, written in a public space. After Latino and African-American students presented a list of their demands to the Mission High School administrators, the following letter to the editor appeared in the student-run newspaper:

I have been in Mission High School for two years and have never experienced what is called Latino demands. All Spanish speaking students and Spanish-American, Mexican-American, and other Latin American people, who have respect for one another and for that they have in the United States should not lower themselves by making foolish demands. In America, the Latin people have every

¹⁰⁹ Thelma Barrios de Beason, "Memories of the Organization of Latin-American Teachers," unpublished paper, July 28, 1971 [UCB CSC]; "Do we see through the same lens but from a different angle?" *El Jalamate*, April 28, 1972, 1; John Burke, "Balboa High's 'Loose Structure'," *San Francisco Examiner*, February 15, 1972, 30.

¹¹⁰ "State Compensatory Education Program," June 1965, San Francisco Unified School District Office of Compensatory Education, San Francisco, California, San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 89, Folder 4 [SFPL HC].

opportunity to build themselves up to the extent of their capability. He will later be proved a man in life by what he himself does. I am a Spanish-American and I respect this United States which I call my own country, and for what it stands for.¹¹¹

The expressions of an American identity among many Latino youth complicate the narrative of the assertion of panethnic and pan-minority identities in that assimilation and acculturation must be considered as part of the process of identity formation for a heterogeneous Latino population in a diverse environment in which integration occurred more naturally than in comparable geographic areas.

Conclusion

In considering the writing and actions of Latino youth in San Francisco in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a layered complex process concerning the creation of identity emerges among the student population. In broadening the analysis beyond Mexican-American and Chicano students to include youth of Latin American descent in San Francisco, this work examines the complicated nature of identity, specifically through student activism and participation. Rather than clearly define themselves as belonging to one ethnic-origin group or fully assimilate by calling themselves “white,” many Latino youth navigated their environment by creating and employing multiple identities at different points in time. Contrary to previous belief, however, these panethnic, pan-minority, and American identities were not merely situational, shallow, and tenuous; rather, they were long-lasting, fluid, and appear secure in nature as students used these building blocks to create a space for themselves in a multiethnic, multiracial urban environment.

¹¹¹ Bill H.G, “Letter to the Editor,” *West Wing*, no month 1969, 3.

CHAPTER THREE

“Get up from under your cactus”: Latino and Chicano Identity Formation in the East Bay

Introduction

On September 16, 1969 (Mexican Independence Day), Chicano, African American, and white students in the northern California city of Richmond, located just east across the bay from San Francisco, walked out of their schools both to protest what they considered an inferior education as well as show support for the grape pickers strike led by César Chávez in rural California. They accomplished the former by abandoning their mid-day classes for an organized march through the streets of Richmond and the latter by entering a local Safeway grocery store and smashing grapes supplied by non-unionized farms. In contrast to walkouts occurring across the state around the same time, high school students, not local college students or adult community organizers, took the initiative in organizing the event by writing leaflets and determining the direct action of the demonstration. Specifically, for this planned event, Chicano students organized the boycott to focus on the educational issues facing Chicano students and the labor issues of Mexican-American farmworkers, with African American and white students participating in great numbers. As one observer noted of the strategies employed, “The idea that this was part of a planned nationwide action helped bring the reality of a brown liberation movement home to the many students. By making Safeway...the target, there was support from large numbers of black and white kids. This unity was a big step in schools that last spring were the

scene of heavy racial fighting.”¹ This display of unity through the act of students of different races and ethnicities coming together and boycotting was one of many that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the East Bay cities of Richmond, Berkeley, and Oakland. These boycotts, which Chicano students both successfully led and participated in as part of larger “student of color” protests, were just one example of how Chicano and Latino students created opportunities to diminish racial and ethnic divides and join in solidarity to question the education system as well as form multiple identities as they presented themselves to the larger community.

Similar walkouts occurred in many cities throughout the southwest and California during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The most well known walkout occurred in East Los Angeles in 1968, when ten thousand Chicano students took to the streets to protest inadequate educational resources, with smaller walkouts in Denver and San Jose, among others. In the northern California East Bay, where many protests included African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and whites, student demonstrations differed significantly from other student walkouts taking place in high schools across the western United States. For example, in Los Angeles, Denver, and San Jose, the schools’ student bodies were almost entirely Chicano and Mexican. Typically, these protests were led by college-age members of the Brown Power Movement and focused on the needs of Mexican-American students. Furthermore, in addition to the multiracial and multiethnic walkouts in the East Bay, Chicano students also staged separate protests focused solely on Spanish-speaking students’ needs, in effect creating two overlapping movements. In contrast, in San Francisco, students also

¹ Doug Monica, “latinos walkout,” *The Movement*, November 1969, 19.

walked out of their schools in protest, but they did so largely as “Third World” (pan-minority) youth, not necessarily as members of specific ethnic groups. During the walkouts and boycotts in the East Bay, many Chicano and Latino students fluidly adopted ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority identities throughout their speech and actions, largely depending on the circumstances and the desired outcomes of the protests. When participating in protests centered on the needs of Spanish-surnamed students, cultural nationalism and pride in one’s ethnic background dominated the rhetoric; when uniting with those of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, students emphasized pan-minority identity politics.

In order to represent and define themselves as a unified group within the Latino population as well as alongside other minority groups, at different points Chicano and Latino students referred to themselves using such terms as Chicano, Spanish-Speaking, and Raza as well as Brown and Third World.² This chapter examines how many Chicano and Latino students in the East Bay organized themselves across multiple ethnic and racial groups in order to create secure and meaningful identities, first as Chicanos and then as members of multiethnic, multiracial minority groups, as they challenged the educational system and questioned what they considered oppressive policies. Ultimately, these multiple and fluid identities allowed for the creation of a more inclusive Chicano collective identity as well as the formation of more sustainable and productive relationships with other minority group members in the East Bay.

² In 1968, the Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State University led a campus-wide strike for ethnic studies programs. Groups participating included, but were not limited to, the Afro-American Student Association, Mexican American Students Confederation, Asian American Political Alliance, Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor, and Native American Students Union.

The creation of multiple identities demonstrates the complexity in youth ethnic identity formation for those of Mexican and Latin American descent in the East Bay, where neighborhoods were not as segregated as other areas in the West and Southwest and where multiracial, multiethnic schools were the norm.³ Indeed, the situational employment of ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority identities is in conflict with the historiography in which Latinos ascribe to primarily ethnic identities and seem to identify only as panethnic when it serves a specific and concrete political or economic function. In a city where the Latino population consisted primarily of those of Mexican-origin but also included Puerto Ricans and Central Americans who lived together in diverse neighborhoods and attended integrated schools with lower socioeconomic status whites, African Americans, and Chinese Americans, identity creation for many high school-aged youth was a fluid and elastic process, allowing for significant overlap between identities. Whereas Latino and Chicano youth in the East Bay within their own ethnic groups shared culture, language, values, and worldviews, they were also racially, ethnically, socially, and economically diversified, all of which deeply affected how students interacted with one another, other minority groups, and the educational institutions they attended. These circumstances created meaningful interactions among students from different backgrounds, all of which greatly influenced Chicano and Latino youth identity formation in northern California East Bay cities.

³ Grebler, Moore, Guzmán, “Ghettos and Barrios.”

The East Bay

World War II and its conclusion witnessed the massive expansion of the job market in the northern California East Bay Area in turn creating a population boom in what were once considered sleepy suburbs of San Francisco. As a result of this influx of immigrants and migrants, postwar-Oakland and its neighboring cities sought to develop not as a “second city” to San Francisco but the “center of a dynamic metropolis” across the bay.⁴ Through boosterism and aggressive business and advertising campaigns, city managers sought to promote the mixed urban/suburban appeal of the East Bay as an “industrial garden,” since the expansion of ports and industries and housing during the war and in the postwar era brought much growth to the area.⁵ For new arrivals to the East Bay, concentrated areas of industry, commerce, and port facilities provided many alluring options for Latinos to migrate from the inland farming communities of the Central Valley of California. Owing to the tremendous job and housing opportunities in the period from 1940 through 1950, the non-white population in the area increased eight-fold.⁶ This statistic most likely indicated the increased African American population, particularly since those of Latino descent were considered white at the time, but it still speaks to the larger changes in the demographics regarding the overall number of minority residents.

After World War II, Latinos and Mexican Americans began to form community organizations, recognizing the needs of a quickly growing population. Statewide,

⁴ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶ Humans Relations Survey in Oakland, California Prospectus, February 16, 1954, California Federation for Civic Unity Records, BANC MSS C-A 274, Carton 3, Folder “Miscellaneous and Reports,” [BANC].

established Mexican-American activist groups such as the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), Community Service Organization (CSO), and GI Forum as well as Latino groups such as the Orden Fraternal de Hijos de Puerto Rico organized Oakland chapters with significant local participation. Many of these groups were both social and cultural organizations serving to welcome and provide services to new arrivals in addition to offering a forum to discuss of local politics and the needs of Spanish-speaking groups. It was through these groups that Mexican Americans and Latinos asserted themselves in local politics as they sought a greater political voice along with improved living and working situations. Although the East Bay's Latino population was predominantly Mexican American, and these organizations were mostly focused on the needs of those of Mexican origin, numerous Puerto Ricans and Cubans also lived in the East Bay due to increased job opportunities and return migration from those who had ventured to Hawaii in search of work. Many of these Latinos joined the Mexican-centered groups as well as formed their own ethnic groups as a source of ethnic and panethnic community and activism.

Upon migrating to the East Bay, most Latinos lived in the “flats” of cities, or what were considered lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods ringed by “the hills” where wealthier white populations resided. In Oakland and Berkeley, the flats were located to the west of the hills and closer to the ports of the bay. Bungalow houses and a proletarian feel permeated the areas where a mix of commerce, industry and residence coexisted.⁷ After the War, as Latinos moved into and near these neighborhoods, they encountered local demographics not typical to California cities—

⁷ Self, *American Babyon*, 4.

high diversification and integration, where African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and whites all lived next door to one another. In the post-War years, these neighborhoods were “home to a rich range of laborite, community, civil rights, and eventually black liberation politics” all of which influenced Latino and Chicanos living in the areas.⁸ In reflecting upon his experiences living in Oakland during the 1960s, David Hilliard, an African-American co-founder of the Black Panther Party, referred to Oakland as “intra-racial” instead of multi-racial, like New York City, because of the integrated communities and coexistence of the diverse population.⁹

Resulting from increased migration numbers throughout the East Bay during the 1960s, the Spanish-surname population in East Bay schools doubled in size to almost ten percent of the overall student body by 1970. This rapid increase in the population certainly came to the attention of school officials as administrators and teachers recognized the language and cultural issues that arose in schools for immigrant students and children of recent immigrants. These factors led to discussions regarding the implementation of bilingual education and multi-cultural curricula as early as 1963.¹⁰ In terms of the students they served, many district leaders viewed Mexican-American children as facing “low self-esteem,” an “inability to identify with the culture,” and a “lack of motivation.” They believed there existed “no magic formula to solve issues,” but administrators felt the “district must show some interest in, concern

⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁹ Quoted from interview between Jason Michael Ferreira and Robert Alvarado in Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 284; David Hilliard, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 68, quoted in Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 284.

¹⁰ “Educators Plan Race Seminar,” *Oakland Tribune*, August 21, 1963 [OPL HR].

for, and dedication to all youth.”¹¹ Despite what might be considered dubious intentions, Oakland Latinos took advantage of this attention from the district and asserted their voice and place among the residents of the city both culturally, through public cultural celebrations and sporting events, and politically, sending Spanish-surnamed representatives to discuss educational policies regarding English language learners and intergroup relations as well as to protest policies regarding school district board member selection.¹²

The strong assertion of a Latino voice and a demand for programs recognizing their specific language needs led to victories for Latino youth in the creation of educational programs and altering district policies. In terms of the former, in 1966, the Oakland school district sought to improve its education program for Spanish-speaking students by including,

special programs and planning for these pupils. The programs will be aimed at improving language skills in both Spanish and English, developing a feeling of pride in bilingualism and in the Spanish heritage, utilizing the Spanish-American cultural background as a source of interest and motivation, providing special curricular materials which emphasize the contribution of Mexico and Spain to the development and culture of Western United States, especially California.¹³

¹¹ “Progress Report of Study and Action Related to Civil Rights Problems and Compensation Education Programs,” Oakland Public Schools, March 31, 1964, File “Oakland Schools Integration” [OPL HR].

¹² “Oakland Program to Salute Mexico,” *Oakland Tribune*, August 28, 1958, File “Fairs and Festivals” [OPL HR]; “Educators Plan Race Seminar,” *Oakland Tribune*, August 21, 1963 [OPL HR]; “Oakland Public Schools,” Office of the Superintendent, Oakland Unified School District [OPL HR]; “Cultural Diversity and the Oakland Public Schools,” In-Service Program for Administrators and Supervisors, August 29, 1963 [OPL HR]; “‘One-Area’ Board Accusation: Mexican Group Hits School Representation,” *Oakland Tribune*, March 13, 1963, File “Oakland Schools Board of Education July 1959” [OPL HR]; Bob Umphress, “Open Enrollment ‘Loophole’ Studied,” *Oakland Tribune*, April 20, 1966, File “Oak. Schools Enrollment” [OPL HR], 6.

¹³ “Quality Education in Oakland: Guidelines for Improving Educational Opportunity,” February 1966, File “Oakland Schools History” [OPL HR].

As for district policies regarding the hiring of Latino teachers, “in a bow to another of the city’s minorities, Director Alan A. Lindsay requested letters be sent to the Mexican-American groups in Oakland to seek their advice on recruiting Spanish-speaking teachers and counselors.”¹⁴ Despite these gestures, Latino and Chicano students in the East Bay often felt mistreated by the educational system, specifically due to a large tracking system that assured their “failure” and created “dropouts.”¹⁵ Many believed testing bias and poor advice from counselors restricted their options, limiting them to vocational tracks rather than college preparatory classes—a belief around which Latino, African American, and lower socioeconomic whites would later coalesce and use as a backdrop to identity to formation.

By the mid-1960s, out of Fruitvale and other central Oakland neighborhoods as well as south Berkeley rose two of the most controversial political ideologies to emerge in the nation at this time: “a black power politics of community defense and empowerment and a neopopulist conservative homeowner politics among whites.”¹⁶ Both emerging ideologies influenced Latinos in their quest to gain resources and political power in the volatile neighborhoods of the East Bay. By this time the census no longer considered Latinos “white,” and their status as a minority group highlighted their needs as an underserved, lower socioeconomic status population. In turn, this often pitted Latinos against the wealthier whites and even African Americans as they sought compensatory programs and funding to address their children’s needs as belonging to a separate language and ethnic group in the public schools. As for the

¹⁴ Umphress, “Open Enrollment ‘Loophole’ Studied,” 6.

¹⁵ “Minority Finds Tracks Are Traps,” *Oakland Tribune*, August 18, 1968, File “Oakland Schools Racial Prob., 1962-1978” [OPL HR], 15 and 18.

¹⁶ Self, *American Babylon*, 1.

Civil Rights and Black Panther Movements, many Latinos joined the demand for more resources and political power, sometimes joining forces with African Americans and other times finding themselves in direct competition for the same funds. How these movements affected local politics and distribution of funds, specifically those from the War on Poverty, in conjunction with shifting attitudes and relationships among Latino and Mexican-American adults influenced how Latino and Chicano youth interacted with one another and those of different racial and ethnic groups, all of which affected how they created their own ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority identities.

Ethnic Identity

The late 1960s witnessed the rise of the Chicano national movement, beginning in Los Angeles and quickly spreading throughout rural and urban areas in the west and southwest. Similar to the Student Movement's rejection of adult authority figures and the Black Panthers' questioning of the strategies of the older and more established National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Council, many Chicano youth questioned and rejected the identities "Mexican American" or "white" adopted by their parents and previous generations of Latino activists and instead coalesced around the ethnic identity Chicano, or those of Mexican descent born in the United States.¹⁷ Even with the emergence of a strong ethnic identity, the formation of fluid, layered identities occurred in the diverse and integrated neighborhoods of the East Bay, reflecting the influence youth experienced through the daily interaction with members of different

¹⁷ Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969).

ethnic and racial groups in the halls of their classrooms and on the streets of their cities. This section examines how some Chicano youth in the East Bay formed and asserted their identity as a unified ethnic group, followed by additional sections providing discussions of the creation of panethnic and pan-minority identities.

As early as 1959, Chicano and Latino youth organized social and cultural ethnic clubs in their schools. In a self-evaluation submitted to the California Association of Secondary School Administrators, McClymonds High School of Oakland listed a Puerto Rican Club and a Social CSO (a Mexican-American community group) Teen Club among the organizations serving the student population.¹⁸ This assertion of ethnic identity challenged the notion that all Chicano youth experienced an “identity-crisis” which is difficult to overcome “during adolescence when they are demanded by education system to conform to the life pattern of the Anglo majority.”¹⁹ Contrary to this statement, segments of Chicano and Puerto Rican youth in the East Bay prioritized the assertion of ethnic identity in the public arena, ensuring they would neither assimilate nor abandon their culture in the hallways of the public schools. That said, the focus in this chapter on a Chicano ethnic identity as opposed to additional Latino (Puerto Rican, Cuban) ethnic identities results from a lack of evidence of the formation of sustained ethnic organizations in the high schools.

In considering the larger political and social context of the 1960s, it is not surprising that a strong Chicano identity was formed among youth of Mexican descent in the East Bay. Indeed, much of the influence of the Chicano nationalist movement in

¹⁸ “Report of Self-Evaluation of McClymonds High School,” The California Association of Secondary School Administrators in Application for Accreditation, April 1959 [OPL HR], 10.

¹⁹ Hilario H. Contreras, “The Chicanos’ Search for Identity,” *Con Safos* 2:5 (1970): 26 and 27.

Los Angeles and Denver spread among college campuses, including those in the East Bay. College students at University of California, Berkeley, St. Mary's College, California State University, Hayward, and the Peralta Community Colleges, to name a few, consistently reached out to high school and junior high school students in order to increase awareness of the growing "Brown" student movement in the west and southwest. By 1968, the assertion of an ethnic identity evolved beyond social and cultural clubs, with high school and middle school Chicano students in the East Bay staging walkouts, creating underground newspapers, and presenting their educational issues to the school boards and superintendents of their districts, much of which students "geared to the interest of Chicanos, not Spanish, but Raza," because they "were no longer Mexican-American or hyphenated [sic] Americans." For these students, "the idea of Chicanismo became real, chicanismo became an everyday word," and they "began demanding all things that related to being Chicano."²⁰

For the movements of the 1960s, participants emphasized self-determination as the necessary ingredient for success, and the Chicano nationalist movement did not differ. Refusing to be labeled by others, many Chicano youth questioned their parents and older activists as well as the larger political and educational structures by putting forth a strong ethnic identity as they made demands of the systems in which they felt trapped and exploited. Chicano groups refused to succumb to an oppressive education system, instead declaring that the "system has failed to defeat us or destroy our identity."²¹ Viewed in the larger context of the activism and identity creation of the period, the examples of the Black Panther Party and Los Angeles Brown Berets

²⁰ *Speak Up, Chicano*, 1970, Fremont High School, Oakland, California, microfilm.

²¹ Arlene Eisen Bergman, "Oakland Brown Berets," *The Movement*, December 1968, 19.

greatly influenced northern California Chicanos who were determined to organize both for their own self-defense as well as to create an environment in which they could be “Chicano.” One former youth leader of the Brown Caucus of the Peace and Freedom Party explained that he left the Party, because even though he learned a lot about politics from the experience, he could not relate to the teachings as a Chicano. For this Chicano youth, “All these meetings were divorced from the streets. We had to build our own organization rooted in the community.”²² This disjointed assertion of identity led youth to form groups that encouraged the creation of a “collective” identity and allowed for a “vomiting of the soul” during sensitivity sessions, so Chicanos could talk and “bear [their] scar[s] to a fellow Chicano” and form a firm and long-lasting identity.²³

For many, the new Chicano identity for youth of the late 1960s formed around the search for solidarity and “collective solutions” as they sought to redefine the “brown” struggle for equal rights.²⁴ Raised in an environment where the system labeled them “white” but treated them as outsiders, Chicano youth leaders called upon their peers to strengthen their ethnic identity and recognize the effects of racism. In an underground Brown Beret newspaper, Chicano youth declared that racism was not just “white against black,” in effect challenging their peers,

But carnales, how about white against brown? Brown, that means you. How about the racism against LA RAZA?...We’re always depicted as a short, fat, dirty man with a moustache. These commercials help build stereotypes against us...It’s time LA RAZA stands up and say YA BASTA! It’s time we united and work for our liberation. Carnal, get up from under your

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

cactus and show the establishment you will not be oppressed any more. Unite with all your people and work to gain our liberation. Carnal, one day we will finish the revolution and they may see us under that sombrero sleeping, but they'll never know what's going on underneath it.²⁵

For many Chicano youth of the East Bay, emphasizing self-determination and defining the struggle as ethnically and racially motivated, laid the foundation for the creation of a strong ethnic identity.

Not limiting themselves, significant numbers of Chicano youth agitated for justice and asserted their unified ethnic identity in various venues. For example, Chicano youth in the East Bay successfully led a boycott to briefly close a restaurant for harassing and refusing service to Chicanos.²⁶ As reported by a local paper, at least twenty participants picketed and demonstrated at a local hamburger establishment, demanding to speak with the owner. The Brown Berets of Richmond provide additional examples, including supporting University California, Berkeley students striking over grapes, protesting the shooting of a local Chicano by the police, boycotting local grocery stores, donating to the Third World Liberation Front and La Huelga, campaigning for Chicano candidates, and backing Fremont High School students' demands. As the members of the Berets believed,

We will continue to do ourbest [sic] to come to the aid of our people in every possible way, because that is what we are here for. We understand that we will be called names and criticized maybe even by our own chicanos. This will not discourage us from the duty we have taken upon ourselves.²⁷

²⁵ "Ya Basta!" *Hijos de Zapata*, April 18, 1969, 1 [UCB CSC].

²⁶ Agustín Garza, "Chicanos Close Restaurant—Charge Racism," [OPL HR], 3.

²⁷ "Los Brown Berets," 1 and 2.

By presenting themselves as disciplined, dedicated, and steadfast in their unified ethnic identity, a core group of Chicano youth created a solid foundation for years to come upon which they continued to question and confront the political and educational systems in which they participated.

For Chicano youth at two high schools in the East Bay, controlling the media emerged as a strategy to convey their message of a strong ethnic identity. In order to do this, they sought to create platforms from which they could speak to the public and assert a new Chicano identity to their community and the power structures they believed to be in opposition to their goals. To accomplish this, Chicano students at Oakland Technical High School enrolled in a media class in order to “control the media sufficiently to expose our real intents and ideas...[and] guide the materials and not have them imposed upon us.”²⁸ At another high school, students in bilingual classes produced their own Spanish-language newspaper in order to discuss issues that directly affected them as second language learners as well as to discuss social and athletic events at school.²⁹

On a larger scale, the East Bay chapter of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), similar to the rhetoric of the Brown Berets, questioned Chicanos, “Are you light enough to ‘pass for white’?? Or are you dark enough to have to admit that you are Mexican? The point is that half of us are perplexed about who we really are.”³⁰ In addressing the difficulties of identity formation for those of Mexican

²⁸ *Chicano City*, Chicano Media Class, Oakland Technical High School, Oakland, California, 1972/73, microfilm, 1.

²⁹ *La Neta*, April 10, 1975 [UCB CSC]; *La Neta*, May 1, 1975 [UCB CSC]; *La Neta*, June 13, 1975 [UCB CSC].

³⁰ “M.A.Y.O.,” *Ahora*, March 1968 or 1969 (?), [UCB CSC], 3.

descent—on the one hand schools labeled them white, but on the other hand teachers and administrators often treated them as members of an inferior cultural group and blamed the students for not assimilating³¹—the group stated one of its purposes was to “present the real image of the Mexican-American.”³² MAYO sought to turn high school students into “well informed participants in today’s active generation” by uniting them around “the problems [they] face[d].”³³ For MAYO and many Chicano youth, this meant actively asserting a strong Chicano identity by controlling the messaging and exposing the negative beliefs about Mexican Americans as a “grand hoax” and a “blatant lie.”³⁴

In another act of self-determination, a group of East Bay Chicano college students established the Ford Foundation funded college center “*La Causa*” in several local high schools. Created as a resource for Chicano youth and run by local community members, organizers described *La Causa* as a “community-based college information center” and an “alternative to the existing educational institutions which are not providing an equal opportunity for a quality education for Spanish-surname students.”³⁵ The center’s “youthful, dynamic, imaginative, and forceful” high school participants did not merely seek information regarding college enrollment and financial aid opportunities; instead, they participated enthusiastically in the center’s creative writing and art contests, often writing about and expressing their pride in their

³¹ Editorial, “M.A.Y.O.,” *Ahora*, March 1968 or 1969 (?) [UCB CSC], 1.

³² “M.A.Y.O.,” *Ahora*, March 1968 or 1969 (?), [UCB CSC], 3.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Editorial, “M.A.Y.O.,” *Ahora*, March 1968 or 1969 (?) [UCB CSC], 1.

³⁵ *La Causa Newsletter* January 1969, File “Mexican American Student Organizations [OPL HR], 2.

Mexican heritage and Chicano identity.³⁶ As one student stated, “I wrote the poem for the contest—about the Mexican American movement which is molding my life right now. I have to stand apart from the rest of the mass of people and find myself first and evaluate.”³⁷ Another poem by a student involved with the political group MAPA conveyed a more externally influenced motivation,

In this country
For chicanos on the move
Being aware
Means
Being aware
Be aware
Beware!
Honky³⁸

In creating environments where students could articulate their pride in their ethnic identity as well as learn about the process for college enrollment, segments of the Chicano youth population practiced self-determination as they challenged the educational system to recognize their needs as a strong and united ethnic group.

As demonstrated by the Richmond walkout discussed in the opening of this chapter and witnessed by the similar walkouts that took place across the East Bay during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chicano students created opportunities to unite as an ethnic group and took to the streets in order to protest their schools. Youth groups, such as the Brown Berets, MAYO, and Chicano Student Unions, organized their peers and focused on the needs of Chicano students as they related to the educational systems. Students from these groups confronted school boards and administrators as they demanded Chicano counselors and curriculum experts in the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁷ “Student Center,” n.d. File “Mexican American Student Organization La Causa” [OPL HR].

³⁸ *Oakland MAPA Newsletter*, April 1968, File “Mexican American Newsletters” [OPL HR].

schools, an end to “racist IQ tests” and tracking, Chicano food in the cafeterias, an increase in the number of Chicano teachers and Chicano studies classes, and improved retention programs for Spanish-speaking students.³⁹ Chicano youth also requested larger educational services that would benefit all Spanish-speaking students, such as bilingual classes and announcements sent home in Spanish.⁴⁰ In emphasizing the need for teachers with whom they could relate, one junior high school student wrote in an underground newspaper, “I feel that Hamilton needs more Chicano teachers because most Chicano students feel that people of the same race would have a better understanding and there fore [sic] communicate easier. Chicano teachers will encourage and want to encourage their own people to make better in their education life.”⁴¹ These students believed it was “about time that the Chicano speaks up,” and that it was up to them to expose the fact that they did not choose to drop out of schools, but rather schools pushed them out, because they refused to accept “racist bullshit.”⁴² The students tailored their demonstrations and demands both for the school district leaders as well as their own parents, demanding action from the latter and appealing to the injustice of paying taxes to support a “bunch of racists who are using your money to throw your *hijos* out of school.”⁴³

Some Chicano youth, rather than attend classes in a school system they viewed as racist, chose to enroll in the short-lived alternative school *Casa de la Raza* in

³⁹ “Escuelas”, 1976, Centro de Accion Social Autonomo Papers, M0325, Box 21, Folder 10 [STAN] Escuelas; Joe Cardona, “Chicanos at Dewey” *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 1970 [UCB CSC], 2; Flyer, September 16, 1970, File “Mexican American Social Movements School Protests” [OPL HR].

⁴⁰ MAPA Meeting Minutes, November 18, 1969 [OPL HR]; “Superintendent Meets Chicanos,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, December 1970 [UCB CSC], 8.

⁴¹ *Simón-Ese* November 1972, La Raza Student Union, Hamilton Junior High Oakland, California, microfilm.

⁴² Mario Ortiz, “Letter From a Student” *La Voz del Pueblo*, Supplement, February 1970 [UCB CSC], 6.

⁴³ Ibid.

Berkeley.⁴⁴ In the early 1970s, as part of a federal experimental education grant, Berkeley Unified School District funded two new schools—Black House and *Casa de la Raza*—to address the needs of minority youth in the city. For interested Chicanos, *Casa* provided the opportunity to teach a Chicano-centric curriculum delivered by Latino teachers. Students performed poetry celebrating their culture and discussed hurtful stereotypes they encountered in the public schools. In one classroom, a *Casa* teacher provided the opportunity for Chicano youth to “kill” the stereotypes and act out their frustrations in a physical manner by drawing a “stereotypical Mexican” and then “tear it up, step on it, do anything they wanted to it.”⁴⁵ As one student reflected, this act made her “feel good,” while allowing for the exploration of a positive cultural identity in a public school environment.⁴⁶

Students attending *Casa* did not have to be Chicano. As noted one observer, “one of the most popular students at La Casa was reported to have been an Anglo boy who learned his Chicanismo from the Barrio.”⁴⁷ The school’s community viewed all students as “united in La Raza cultural values...[and] all were in a sense Chicanos when one gets rid of the Gabacho concept of what a Chicano is.”⁴⁸ In creating a spirit of “La Familia,” *Casa* staff and parents supported students and brought relevant curriculum and Spanish language to their classrooms.⁴⁹ To that end, bringing Spanish to the *Casa* classroom quickly became controversial, as many of the Chicano youth

⁴⁴ Casa de la Raza was open for two academic years, 1971-1973. In 1973, the federal government stated the school created segregation and ordered the school to immediately close.

⁴⁵ López, “Casa de la Raza,” 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁷ “Editorial on La Casa de la Raza,” *The A.M.A.E. Alternative Schools Newsletter*, October 31, 1973 [UCB CSC].

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; “Confrontation with Dr. Foster,” audio recording, January 21, 1971, The Comunicación Aztlán Archive, RP007 R1, The Freedom Archives, San Francisco, California.

did not speak Spanish fluently enough to receive instruction in the language. As the director of Casa noted,

A good percentage of these young people speak no Spanish, an unfortunate circumstance that may not be entirely their fault, because, in the past, they have suffered the problems of identity and have often found little opportunity to study the language formally. However, the opportunity exists now to learn Spanish, but they do not seem to be very interested in doing so. This attitude is carried on and reflected by many of our Chicano students.⁵⁰

Indeed, this reality complicated the nature of relationships between the adults and Chicano youth at *Casa*, since many of the students were neither fluent nor interested in gaining fluency in what many teachers and administrators considered the most important identifier of a Latino identity.

For Chicano youth born in the United States and not necessarily fluent in formal Spanish, language complications existed in classrooms outside of *Casa* as well. Considering Spanish-language fluency integral to a Latino identity, but lacking the foundation to speak formal Castilian Spanish, other Chicano youth sought to have a variation of Spanish taught in schools they were comfortable speaking—a Chicano Spanish.⁵¹ In many of their protests, when Chicano youth demanded “bilingual education,” they wanted it to reflect how they spoke and the dignity and pride they felt in their heritage.⁵² Often, however, this created conflict between “el joven Chicano

⁵⁰ Federico A. Sanchez, “Looking Back on Chicano Thought,” unpublished paper, n.d., Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 55, Folder 1 [STAN], 3.

⁵¹ “Vato Dictionary,” Jefferson High School, Oakland, California [UCB CSC].

⁵² “Reasons for these Demands,” *El Aztlan*, Chicano Student Union, Fremont High School, Oakland, California, 1969(?), microfilm, 5.

and the Spanish teachers,” highlighting generational differences among youth and the adults in their lives.⁵³

Despite these complications affecting bilingual instruction at *Casa*, many schools in the East Bay successfully implemented and executed bilingual programs, which benefited Spanish-speaking students. These programs primarily supported students born abroad, as teachers conducted bilingual classes in a structured fashion using formal Spanish language teaching techniques. Overall, these classes helped immigrant students “feel at home” while learning academic content knowledge.⁵⁴ Similar to the generational issues previously discussed, these successful bilingual classes for Latino youth brought to light the differences in experiences of many first- and second-generation Latinos in the East Bay, which may have affected how Latino and Chicano youth viewed themselves differently in creating their identities. As one Chicano bilingual teacher in an elementary school noted of the differences among his students’ levels of self-esteem, “first-generation children...were quite Mexican with a rather stable self-concept and second-generation children...were very confused about what Chicanos were and had low self-concepts.”⁵⁵ It is difficult to imagine that the complicated issues of bilingual instruction did not affect identity formation as well as how students interacted with their teachers, parents, and administrators in the schools.

It was not uncommon to find differences and even divisions between youth born in Mexico with less-assimilated families and those born in the United States with more exposure to English and American culture. Many Chicano youth who asserted a strong

⁵³ John A. Chávez, “El Lenguaje del Joven Chicano,” *Mundo Hispano*, October 29, 1970, 7.

⁵⁴ “New Designs,” *El Velador*, July 1974, 4.

⁵⁵ López, “Casa de la Raza,” 7.

ethnic identity in public found it difficult to understand those of the same ethnic background who did not identify with the “brown” cause. One East Bay Chicano youth questioned Mexican Americans who try to “pacify” whites by “repeating, over and over again that we are not discriminated against, and the poverty in our communities is because of laziness.”⁵⁶ Yet, despite these strong feelings, the author finds it in his or her heart to forgive these people their transgressions, because “they’re still my people.”⁵⁷ For others, however, Chicanos who were “brown,” either because of skin color or ethnic heritage but did not identify as such might have been too influenced by their surroundings. As one Chicana observed about her city,

Richmond is very different from L.A. or places that have alot [sic] of Chicanos. Richmond has about 500 chicanos, half of them live up in the hills and think they know about the struggle and are against it. They’ve been with the gabacho too long. I’m not saying that all are that way, but most of them are. I think the ugliest thing to see is a Chicano that thinks he is white.⁵⁸

For many Chicano youth, a brown person identifying as white was anathema to the cause and could not help advance the larger agenda of a Brown Power Movement.

This intraethnic struggle was common among Mexican Americans and Chicanos searching to create a space for themselves in their schools as well as in the larger civil rights movements. Chicano students claimed pride in their ethnic heritage and drew on their strength to stand up and “beat gabachos.”⁵⁹ Many of these youth held little respect for those who did not participate in the movement and chose to go “along with

⁵⁶ Anonymous, “M.A.Y.O.,” March, 1968 or 1969, 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tina González, “A Chicana Speaks,” *Hijos de Zapata*, April 18, 1969, 3 [UCB CSC].

⁵⁹ “Centro de Cambio,” audio recording, April 29, 1972, The Comunicación Aztlán Archive, RP 017 R1, The Freedom Archives, San Francisco, California.

whites.”⁶⁰ As one student reflected on her experience at *Casa* and her own ethnic identity formation,

a lot of Chicanos think that to get into the working world they have to act white, and that’s one thing I refused to do and I think it’s because I went to Casa...I wouldn’t open to my own race, to my own culture as I am now. I would be completely white-washed. It opened my eyes, it opened my ears, it opened my heart...⁶¹

For many Chicano youth, ethnic identity formation indicated a larger commitment, one that was reflected in a group dynamic and a strong feeling of “carnalismo or brotherhood for one another”—an identity clearly separate from that of a Latino influenced by the “gabacho.”⁶²

In addition to rejecting their peers who were not sufficiently “brown,” a number of Chicano students questioned the motives and decisions of adults who seemed less than supportive of their ethnic identity formation. Underground newspapers spoke of “tio taco” staff members of schools who would not address the needs of the Chicano community as well as adults who did not provide support for Chicano youth beat up and jailed by the police.⁶³ These Chicano youth rejected the lack of support shown by Latino parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. One student stated that Chicano youth

must reject those teachers and administrators who get those positions just because they are Brown. We need teachers and administrators who have the ability to create something for La Raza in school and in the community... The parents too must be

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Francisco Javier Hernandez, “Schools for Mexicans: A Case Study of a Chicano School” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1982), 123.

⁶² *Speak Up, Chicano*.

⁶³ Clarice Tanuri, “Problem,” *Hijos de Zapata*, June 1969, 2 [UCB CSC].

organized just as we must be. Our fathers and mothers must join us in the political area so that when we demand anything, be it a social demand or a political demand, we will be effective...⁶⁴

These students created a strong ethnic identity and made demands of the adults in their lives for the support of their choices, leaving little room for excuses or alternative identity formation by parents, teachers, and community members.

Within the broader Spanish-speaking communities inside schools, it is possible that some of the Chicano rhetoric of “La Raza” and “Chicanismo” was rejected by other Spanish-speaking students. For example, in a high school in Oakland enrollment was consistently low in a Chicano studies course taught in the school. A Chicana student publicly pleaded for higher attendance rates, not understanding that all Spanish-speaking students might not be interested in attending the class. As she wrote in an underground student newspaper,

Why is it Hermanos? Were you only interested in being Chicanos when it was the fad, or when it's convenient to be called a Chicano? Or are you truly of the race? We have been given the chance to learn about our ancestors, our past cultures and ways, yet only a handful have taken the class. The class is not only for Chicanos but Latinos, Puerto Ricans, and any other race interested in learning the truth!!!⁶⁵

It is the final sentence that stands out as making assumptions about her audience and perhaps the larger student body. In a different student newspaper written several years later, two students openly questioned Chicano protesters by satirically writing that those striking (*revolucionarios*) “have no idea what they are protesting.”⁶⁶ This

⁶⁴ *Speak Up, Chicano*.

⁶⁵ Marta Topete, “The Chicano History Class,” *Chicano City*, Chicano Media Class, Oakland Technical High School, Oakland, California, 1972/73, microfilm, 2.

⁶⁶ Miguel Gaitán and Jesus Iñiguez, “La Huelga,” *La Neta*, April 10, 1975 [UCB CSC], 2.

questioning of students' ethnic identity points to the lack of an homogenous identity and perhaps a healthy debate among Chicano and Latino students.

Panethnic Identity

A Chicano ethnic identity dominated the narrative of the “brown” youth movement in the East Bay during the late 1960s and early 1970s, due in no small part to the large majority of Mexican-descent Latinos living in the area at this time. Youth of Mexican descent proudly aligned and integrated themselves with the growing Chicano nationalist movement popular on college campuses, seeking a voice and creating a public platform from which to claim their identity as one in opposition both with the power structure, made up of mostly whites and a few African Americans, as well as their parents of the “Mexican-American Generation.”⁶⁷ Despite the presence of a powerful and widespread Chicano identity, Latinos in the East Bay were not only of Mexican decent; Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South and Central American also lived in the area. A large American Indian population also existed in the East Bay, and Chicano youth often viewed this group as part of their struggle and identity as “half breeds” both rejected by and oppressed by the system due to their mixed heritage and darker skin color.⁶⁸ In considering the diversity in the population and the similarities of their experiences, in addition to their ethnic identities, many Chicano youth also formed a panethnic identity based on a shared Latino culture and “*Mestizo*” (mixed Indian and European) ancestry, an identity used to represent all Spanish-speaking and

⁶⁷ García, *Mexican Americans*.

⁶⁸ “May Month of Protest,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 1970 [UCB CSC], 2; “Soy Chicano” *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 1970 [UCB CSC], 8.

“brown” youth in the struggle for a public voice and identity in a system designed in their eyes to encourage assimilation.

Officials in the East Bay, similar to Anglo leaders in other western cities, regarded a panethnic identity as one inclusive of Mexican as well as European Spanish culture, but not Latin American. In seeking to improve its instructional program for its Spanish-speaking students, Oakland school administrators created programs specifically aimed to address the students’ bilingual needs and develop pride in their Latino heritage. This was accomplished by implementing curricular materials that emphasized the contributions of Latino to United States history and celebrated the “Spanish-American” cultural background.⁶⁹ On the one hand, the inclusion of the emphasis on language skills and ethnic pride is worthy of note. On the other hand, a Euro-centric curriculum demonstrates a lack of understanding by district officials regarding the diverse Latino cultural backgrounds and various ethnic heritages of their students. Ultimately, local libraries and cultural centers allowing for greater input from Latino community members surpassed the schools in providing a diversity of celebrations and educational materials, contributing to the creation of a panethnic identity among East Bay Latinos by hosting Puerto Rican and Peruvian cultural nights in addition to traditional Mexican festivities.

Attending integrated schools and living among a heterogeneous Latino population, many Chicano youth in the East Bay considered the brown liberation struggle to include “the masses of brown people in our occupied land,” indicating that oppression

⁶⁹ “Quality Education in Oakland: Guidelines for Improving Educational Opportunity,” February 1966, File “Oakland Schools History” [OPL HR].

does not discriminate, and so neither should they.⁷⁰ As a flyer calling for a demonstration against the schools declared, “*Chicanos, Latinos, Portorriqueños, La Raza de Bronce sufrimos las mismas injusticias para ellos todos somos ‘spics’*” “*!A La Calle!*”⁷¹ Another student published a poem addressing it to Chicano, Puerto Ricans, “Indio[s],” and “Metizo[s] in the call to join together in the struggle.⁷² By calling for unity and creating an environment of inclusivity and camaraderie, segments of Chicano and Latino youth identified as one group and presented themselves in opposition to the school system and the larger power structures surrounding them. Certainly, the environment of the East Bay did not pre-determine this unified identity as unavoidable or even imminent as other geographic areas, such as Chicago, witnessed divisions within their Latino populations with groups often failing to unite because of either cultural or class differences.

For many Chicanos and Latinos, and indeed members of other minority groups, the idea that the power structure attempts to divide and conquer those who are disenfranchised and poor became a rallying point in their attempts to unite disparate racial and ethnic groups. Specifically, Chicano youth leaders did not want the movement to be limited to those of Mexican descent, believing instead that alliances and a unified identity would be the only means to challenge the system successfully. These same leaders believed building unity did not necessarily mute their ethnic identity; rather, they were creating additional layered, simultaneous identities. As one Brown Beret wrote, “This doesn’t mean we forget our culture and history, for these

⁷⁰ *Hijos de Zapata*, June 1969, 5 [UCB CSC].

⁷¹ Flyer, Chicano Studies Resource Demonstrations and Protests 1971-1973, CS ARC 2009/1, Carton 13, Folder 13:9 [UCB CSC].

⁷² *El Barrio*, Oakland, California, microfilm, 1970(?).

are proud things that are a part of us. But we should not say to a latino [sic] brother 'I'm chicano [sic], and since my culture is different, we have no common struggle, no common enemy.'"⁷³ Another Chicana challenged her Chicano peers as well as other Latinos to learn about their shared role in the struggle when she publicly denounced for not attending a Chicano history class in great numbers, "We have been given the chance to learn about our ancestors, our past cultures and ways, yet only a handful have taken the class. The class is not only for Chicanos but Latinos, Puerto Ricans, and any other race interested in learning the truth!!!"⁷⁴

Despite the lack of a national or even statewide Latino panethnic identity upon which to model themselves, East Bay Chicano and Latino youth movements sought to create multiple and fluid identities, successfully navigating and challenging the system which they found to be oppressive, emphasizing assimilation over the assertion of ethnic and racial pride. In creating a panethnic identity, Latinos and Chicanos were not responding to specific discriminatory acts; rather, they sought to unite against the power structures and institute organizations as sources of strength and leverage for their assertion of a unified identity. To that end, similar to their peers in San Francisco, the creation of strong ethnic or Chicano identities did not preclude youth from choosing panethnic or even non-ethnocentric names for their organizations. The college center *La Causa*, present on three East Bay high school campuses, and Fremont High School's student group *Latinos Unidos* serve as examples of what may have been deliberately inclusive or non-ethnically named groups.

⁷³ "Movement Under Attack," *Hijos de Zapata*, June 1969, 5 [UCB CSC].

⁷⁴ Topete, "The Chicano History Class," 2.

Motivation may be difficult to determine, yet similar to their peers across the bay, high school students in the East Bay did not appear to heed the call to change all student organization names to those reflecting solely a Chicano heritage. At one point, an outspoken Chicano college student in the Bay Area called for high school groups to drop “the term Mexican-American in favor of the name Chicano” when naming their organizations. He later went further, declaring “in a show of unity all student organizations should adopt one identical name throughout the state, the Southwest, and other areas of the nation where there are substantial numbers of Chicanos, since our movement is definitely of national significance and activity.”⁷⁵ Soon after, realizing students were not changing the names of their organizations *en masse*, the same student changed tactics and altered his definition of Chicano to be more inclusive of the Latin American population, writing

most people have tended to think of a chicano [sic] in terms of a person who lives in the United States and is of Mexican descent. However, anyone who has ever experienced the barrio thing knows that there are people there who look like, think like, and are in fact, chicanos [sic]. These are people who happen to be of Nicaraguan, Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, etc. descent but also have grown up in the barrio or by being in the U.S. have experience the problems of being Latino in this country... The time has come when we must examine this word, for chicanismo [sic] is also a philosophy that must include all persons of Latino descent who recognize and are proud of their heritage and who are self-committed to retain their identity against the falseness of assimilation into the anglo-saxon [sic] societal mainstream.⁷⁶

In reality, the East Bay had too diverse a Latino population and too dynamic a sense of identity to label themselves in such a restrictive manner, instead choosing the term *La*

⁷⁵ Macías, “Un Plan de Political Action for Chicano Campus Groups,” 46.

⁷⁶ Macías, “What is a chicano?”

Raza in many cases to represent a panethnic identity. This differs from areas that were primarily of Mexican descent, such as Los Angeles and Denver, and could use “Chicano” as a primary identifier. What resulted in the East Bay was a multifaceted Chicano and Latino movement throughout which identity existed as layered and fluid rather than static and exclusive. Ultimately, in choosing not to change their organizations’ names to ones more Chicano-centric, instead using names that promoted panethnic inclusivity, Latino youth created basic building blocks of identity upon which they constructed a strong and long-standing identity throughout the East Bay and in their schools.

Pan-minority Identity

In the 1960s, Mexican-American leaders in California encouraged Latinos to work with African Americans by joining the civil rights movement to create a unified group in opposition to discriminatory practices and laws. Chicano youth heeded the call, and in 1968, the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) organized a statewide conference for youth to “discuss relationships among Chicano groups, relationships between Chicano groups and black groups, and relationships with the brown caucus of the Peace and Freedom Party” with the stated goal to “bond all militant and progressive elements into some loose federation.”⁷⁷ Specific to the East Bay, some students spoke directly to the existence of positive relationships between different racial and ethnic groups. As one Fremont High School student explained when asked about interracial relations among the student population, “The Mexicans and Negroes

⁷⁷ “Young Chicanos Planning Conference,” *Oakland MAPA Newsletter*, n.d., Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 14, Folder 10 [STAN], 8.

get along pretty good until the whites come in.” He continued by asserting that when problems did exist between “Negroes and Mexican Americans,” the administration and the teachers were to blame.⁷⁸ In a separate article one year later, when asked about starting an interracial club to foster understanding between different groups, a Latina junior high school student responded, “I don’t see why all these problems should worry us so. We’re all the same on the inside.”⁷⁹ At this time, as Mexican Americans statewide bemoaned the lack of unity between Latinos and African Americans—in 1970, Ruben Salazar, the well-respected *Los Angeles Times* journalist who was killed by the Los Angeles Police during an anti-war demonstration, wrote of the “growing distrust between Mexicans and Negroes”⁸⁰—the East Bay witnessed a desire among groups of Chicano and African-American youth to unite and relate to one another as minority group members.

The unity presented by some East Bay youth and the creation of a pan-minority identity took place against a radically different backdrop from an earlier era. By the mid-1960s, changing demographics and shifting attitudes in the East Bay reflected a population that was no longer of the same mindset of the 1940s and 1950s generation—a generation that envisioned an erosion of racial segregation through “liberal politics, protest, and legislation.”⁸¹ Whereas this perspective did not necessarily disappear, another arose alongside it, that of inner-city “as a colonized

⁷⁸ “Justice for Juveniles: Interviews with Members of the Juvenile Justice Committee,” *The Flatlands*, September 11-24, 1966, 2 and, 3.

⁷⁹ *Oakland MAPA Newsletter*, October 6, 1967, Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 14, Folder 10 [STAN].

⁸⁰ Ruben Salazar, “Chicanos Would Find Identity Before Coalition with Blacks,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 1970.

⁸¹ Self, *American Babylon*, 212.

place from which the black nation...could fight for and win liberation.”⁸² The failure of the War on Poverty and other federal programs fueled this rising Black Nationalism and the emerging movement of solidarity and self-determination as well as the ensuing feeling of defensiveness of the community to outside forces.⁸³ Within this context, however, the “[Black] Panthers never adopted a separatist language or line, believing that alliances with sympathetic anticolonial whites, as well as Chicanos, should remain a fixture of the black liberation movement.”⁸⁴

This inclusive and radicalized attitude certainly affected Latino and Chicano youth as they interacted daily with young African Americans and witnessed their growing confidence and assertive methods as they challenged the power structures of the East Bay. To that end, this influence may have led to some anxiety among Mexican-American leaders, as one stated:

A good many of the leaders, especially the younger ones in the movimiento, are much more influenced by Black culture and Black militancy, than by the idea of Mexican cultural revival. It’s apparent in their mannerisms, in the language they use, in the music they listen to, and in their guarded and self-conscious admiration of militant Black heroes.⁸⁵

This concern may have been raised a little too late, considering Mexican-American leaders in the East Bay had a history dating back to the late 1950s of working with African Americans to question local school district practices and decisions. Indeed, this shared history of working together in the Bay Area served as a model for other

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 219.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 225.

⁸⁵ Federico A. Sanchez, “Looking Back on Chicano Thought,” unpublished paper, n.d., Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 55, Folder 1 [STAN], 3.

cities. In an interview published by the Brown Berets of Richmond, Corky Gonzalez, the famed leader of the Chicano student movement in Denver, answered a question about the potential alliance between Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, “In many areas...there are issues which are important to black and Chicano and other minorities and to whites...In those areas, coalitions come about very easily, like in San Francisco and Oakland. Everyone knows who the enemy is.”⁸⁶

In the mid-1960s, Latino and African-American adults formed ad hoc committees, boycotted, and preached a motto of “unity of the whole community” when confronting school districts over what they perceived to be inadequate educational opportunities and services provided for their children.⁸⁷ Latino and Chicano children participated in these events and worked side-by-side with African Americans in the East Bay. These interactions certainly affected how they behaved and formed their identity as minority youth in the United States. Fostering diversity within their community groups and attending integrated schools allowed Latino and Chicano youth to put aside ethnic and racial differences with other minority groups and create meaningful alliances and a substantive pan-minority identity without having to abandon their ethnic culture or assimilate to a “white” America.

Chicano and Latino students of the East Bay spoke proudly of their integrated schools and the relationships these environments helped foster. They considered their situation as different from students in Los Angeles in that they attended diverse schools and lived in integrated neighborhoods. One female Brown Beret noted, “Richmond is very different from Los Angeles or places that have alot [sic] of

⁸⁶ “Corky on Unity,” *Hijos de Zapata*, June 1969, 2 [UCB CSC].

⁸⁷ Juan Lopez, “Chicano Parents Act for Peace,” *People’s World*, April 14, 1973.

Chicanos.”⁸⁸ Students considered their interethnic and interracial relationships as well as their shared identities as integral to their experiences as Latinos as well as minority group members. In a contest-winning essay reflecting on “Americanism,” a junior high school student wrote,

I think the colors stand for the different kinds of people. Red is the color of the Mexican-Americans, Indians[,] [sic] Spanish and Italians. White is for the white people like the English, Dutch, and French. Blue stands for the color of the Negroes and Africans. I like all the colors on our flag; red, because I am Mexican-American; white and blue, because my friends are white and black...If the flag stands for being united, why do people call names at other people who are different looking? United means joined together, so let us all be together and have peace in our land.⁸⁹

For many minority youth, positive relationships and a sense of unity among different racial and ethnic groups formed the foundation upon which they could challenge the generally accepted norm of ethnic and racial strife among different groups.

Building on the positive relationships established across racial and ethnic lines, East Bay Latino youth groups successfully confronted school administrations and district leaders as well as owners of local businesses as members of ethnic groups and as members of pan-minority groups, as demonstrated by the Richmond strike discussed in the opening of this chapter. Chicano students organized the walkout in Richmond in 1969, with the two-fold goal of organizing the entire student body to walk out (whites and African Americans included) and to boycott a local grocery for buying grapes from non-unionized farms. The former act challenged the school for not serving the needs of its minority students, and the latter linked to the larger Chicano

⁸⁸ González, “A Chicana Speaks,” 3.

⁸⁹ “Lockwood Student Enters Americanism Essay Contest,” *Urban Education*, April 1971 [OPL HR], 7.

movement. Several months prior to the walkout, a Brown Beret in Richmond put out to the call to his peers to “unite to defeat the oppressor!”—a call that was heeded by hundreds of students.⁹⁰ This demonstration of interracial unity and coordination certainly deserves notice, but perhaps ever more so due to the fact that “this unity was a big step in schools that last spring were the scene of heavy racial fighting.”⁹¹

In addition to the Richmond walkouts, throughout the East Bay during this time, students walked out of their schools and made presentations to administrators and school boards both as belonging to separate Chicano-led groups and as members of groups representing multiracial, multiethnic organizations. Two examples of the latter were the Oakland Education Coalition and the Associated Students Union of Oakland, both of which were off-campus organizations made up of representatives from all high schools in Oakland. In these groups, students of all races and ethnicities came together in the East Bay to work with adult groups in the community as they prepared to present their demands to school leaders.⁹² These multiple coalitions, multiracial organizations as well as Chicano-centric groups (MAYO, Brown Berets) enabled students to present their needs as ethnocentric, specific to Spanish-speakers, as well as in the larger context as they pertained to students of color with a pan-minority identity. As “Chicanos,” students asked for more Chicano counselors and teachers in the schools, Chicano food in the cafeteria, and bilingual education in the classrooms; as members of the “Third World,” they called for a diminished police presence on the campuses, more equitable disciplinary codes, an emphasis on minority contributions to

⁹⁰ Fausto, “everyone unite,” *Hijos de Zapata*, June 1969 [UCB CSC].

⁹¹ Monica, “latinos walkout,” 19.

⁹² “The Oakland Education Coalition,” *Oakland MAPA Newsletter*, n.d., {OPL HR}, 2.

American history, and more special education classes, among other demands.⁹³ In presenting different sets of needs and maintaining a strong alliance with all students of color in the East Bay, Chicano students called for the larger goal of all students standing “together and fight[ing] the racism in our school and show[ing] any member of the school system or anyone who deals with it that racism will not be tolerated.”⁹⁴

The pan-minority identity created by youth in the East Bay not only centered on racial and ethnic identifiers, but there were students who also considered class when uniting and identifying themselves as a unified front. This view allowed for the creation of alliances with white students of lower socioeconomic status, many of which participated in the walkouts and attended classes focused on the needs of minority students. As one Richmond Brown Beret noted, it was not enough to be white in Richmond, but you must also be of high socioeconomic status to get good education. In other words, poorer whites were in the same boat as many people of color.⁹⁵ Bringing this shared experience to light, an underground student newspaper printed two plays about labor struggles and the exploitation of land and workers by rich white “*patrones*.” In these plays, white characters protest alongside the brown, black, yellow, and red characters as they seek to organize and present their demands to the bosses. In the dialogue created by the students, workers openly discuss their

⁹³ Bev Mitchell, “Student Demands-Price is Key Issue,” *Oakland Tribune*, December 8, 1968, File “OAK. Schools General 1960-69” [OPL HR]; Bev Mitchell, “School Board to Tackle Demands,” *Oakland Tribune* December 9, 1968, File “OAK. Schools General 1960-69” [OPL HR]

⁹⁴ “Reasons for these Demands,” 5.

⁹⁵ Margarita Ramos, “Unequal Education,” *Hijos de Zapata*, June 1969, 6 [UCB CSC]; For more on the tensions between different racial and ethnic groups in Richmond and the struggles over integration in the schools, see Lillian B. Rubin, *Busing and Backlash: White against White in a California School District* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).]

economic status, and this brings them together as oppressed minorities.⁹⁶ As demonstrated by the inclusion of lower socioeconomic status whites, the elasticity of the identities created by Latino and Chicano youth in the East Bay helped students successfully navigate environments in which they worked closely with other ethnic and racial groups while also creating platforms to specifically focus on their needs as Spanish-speakers, with many forming strong and long-lasting ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority identities along the way.

Conclusion

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chicanos and Latinos in the East Bay were racially, ethnically, socially, and economically diversified, yet many also shared culture, language, and values, all of which deeply affected how youth interacted with one another, members of other minority groups, and educational institutions. Rather than clearly define themselves as belonging to one ethnic-origin group or fully assimilate, many Chicano and Latino youth successfully navigated their integrated schools and neighborhoods by creating layered and fluid identities, identities that were elastic and could be employed at various times. In order to achieve this, youth formed these dynamic identities both as groups and individuals, often depending on such factors as citizenship and socioeconomic status as well as language needs and skin color. Specifically, there existed an awareness among some Chicano students that identity creation for them must not only be ethnically centered; rather, if they were to successfully integrate themselves within their environments without sacrificing parts

⁹⁶ Untitled Student Plays, *Chicano City*, Chicano Media Class, Oakland Technical High School, Oakland, California, 1972/73, microfilm, 3-5, 10.

of who they were, they also needed to form panethnic and pan-minority identities. Ultimately, the strength and stability students found in creating these multiple identities allowed for the creation of alliances with other ethnic and racial minority groups and in turn allowed for stronger long-term relationships and a greater understanding of how to work together in order to make gains participating in unified ethnic and racial movements.

CHAPTER FOUR

“We must learn to live together”: Latino and Chicano Adult Identity Formation

Introduction

In the late 1960s, across the Bay Area many Latino youth successfully formed multiple and dynamic ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority identities as they united to confront hegemonic institutions and perceived discriminatory policies in their schools and communities. Simultaneously, Latino adults and college-age students struggled to do the same. In 1966, Latinos and African Americans in the East Bay formed an *ad hoc* committee in order to address the disparities they believed existed between their children’s educational resources, facilities, and coursework as compared to those of white students also attending public schools in the Oakland Unified School District. Together, parents and community members led a boycott and set up alternative Freedom Schools to teach children about civil rights, the labor movement, Negro history, Mexican Americans in California, and discrimination in education, employment, and housing.¹ The goals of the *ad hoc* committee were to “draw the attention of the entire community to conditions in the school system” and “show the School Board that we are united in our demands for a decent education in the flatlands, and that we are ready to act together to get necessary changes made now.”² Among their many demands were fair disciplinary procedures, free hot lunches, equal resources, more “negro [sic] and Spanish-speaking counselors,” reduced class size, an

¹ Anonymous, “Boycott Baby Boycott,” *The Flatlands*, October 8-21, 1966, 5.

² “Ad Hoc Committee Demands A Fair Share for Flatland Schools” n.d. [OPL HR].

end to segregation, and community control over anti-poverty funds.³ The boycott successfully achieved many of its goals and opened a productive dialogue between community members and district administration. Perhaps, more importantly, the action improved upon and strengthened panethnic and pan-minority alliances among Latino and African-American adults in the East Bay.

A little more than ten years after the boycott, an East Bay Spanish newspaper conducted a poll of residents regarding relationships among Latinos and whether or not unity existed in the community among those of different ethnic backgrounds. In marked contrast to the togetherness displayed by the *ad hoc* committee, Latino respondents discussed how envy and ego prevented unity, adding that individuals created their own successes and did so without support from their neighbors and community members. Two Central American respondents specifically felt that Mexicans were able to come together for a cause, but other Latino groups were unable to successfully put aside their differences and overcome their competitive natures to be happy and live together peacefully.⁴ In reflecting on the negative views of unity within the community, a follow-up survey revealed that many Latinos thought it was important for them to imagine themselves collectively as “Spanish people” and not individuals from specific countries believing this would benefit future generations, since as one woman stated, “*la union hace la fuerza* (unity creates strength).”⁵

Around the same time the surveys were conducted, Latinos and African Americans across the Bay Area found themselves on opposite sides when debating busing for

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Pulsando La Opinion,” *Progreso Latino*, febrero 1978, 6.

⁵ “Pulsando La Opinion,” *Progreso Latino*, marzo 1978, 6; “Unidad Entre Latinoamericanos?” *Progreso Latino*, marzo 1978.

integration. Many Latinos felt plans put forth for integration would disrupt bilingual programs they had fought so hard to have implemented, and many African Americans believed that by not busing for integration the schools would remain segregated at unacceptable levels. A third group perspective also emerged, arguing this debate detracted from creating pan-minority alliances through which Latinos and African Americans could present a unified front as groups with cohesive and mutually beneficial demands. To the latter group, the debates presented a clear example of how the white bourgeoisie successfully “divide and rule” the area’s minority groups.⁶ In a short period, both internal and external factors exerted pressures on panethnic and pan-minority alliances that had been so carefully cultivated among different racial and ethnic groups in the Bay Area, leading many to doubt if shared identities could be created and sustained among those of different backgrounds.

During the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, the Bay Area witnessed much turmoil and change—politically, socially, and economically. Statewide and national occurrences such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Farm Workers Strike, the Free Speech Movement, the Chicano Movement, and immigration reform as well as local events such as the creation of the Black Panther Party, the Third World Liberation Front strike, and the trial of *Los Siete* greatly influenced how members of different ethnic and racial groups interacted with one another. In a geographic area not dominated by one racial or ethnic minority group, identity formation for Bay Area Latinos was a fluid and flexible process, one that could shift depending on local events and was often complicated in nature as Latinos sought to create and sustain

⁶ “Busing and Bilingual Education: A Fight for Equality,” 1976, Bert N. Corona Papers, M0248, Box 39, Folder 33 [STAN].

relationships among disparate populations by finding commonalities in their experiences and cultural heritages.

During these tumultuous times, Latino youth created multiple identities that were long-lasting and concrete, self-identifying as ethnic (Mexican, Chilean, Salvadoran, Chicano), panethnic (Latino), pan-minority (brown, Third World), and American. Whereas these youth formed identities while navigating multiethnic, multiracial urban neighborhoods and attending highly integrated schools, their Latino and Chicano parents, teachers, and community organizers did not experience the same process of identity formation nor were their experiences necessarily in concert with how the youth viewed the process of identity creation. Although Latino adults were aware of and openly discussed the need to come together and unite for the purposes of confronting a school system that routinely failed their children, and despite early successes in doing so, they encountered difficulty in consistently putting aside their ethnic and racial differences in order to form long-lasting panethnic and pan-minority alliances.

For all immigrants and their descendants, regardless of their country of origin, educational levels, or socioeconomic status, identity formation in the United States is a complex process, particularly when constructed in highly diverse settings in which there exist varying expectations of assimilation and acculturation, both externally and internally imposed. In the two previous chapters examining process of identity formation among high school students in the Bay Area during this period, evidence reveals how Latino and Chicano youth formed flexible and layered identities that were employed at different times depending on the situation and the environment. This

chapter examines how Latino and Mexican-American adults successfully formed multiple identities, yet these differed from those of the high school age youth in that instead of forming fluid, long-lasting identities across racial and ethnic lines, adults tended to create more tenuous interethnic and interracial relationships while maintaining a focus on ethnic-centric goals revolving around needs based on educational resources and cultural nationalism. Often, adults in the Bay Area focused more of their attention on demanding bilingual and bicultural education and maintaining ethnic identity in turn narrowing their identity and alienating themselves from other racial (non-Spanish-speaking) and ethnic (Spanish-speaking but those not as focused on language and nationalism) groups as well as illuminating generational differences between adults and college-age students and the younger Latinos and Chicanos who more successfully created strong and long-standing panethnic and pan-minority relationships.

Background

The make-up of the Latino population in the Bay Area differed from the Spanish-surnamed populations in other rural and urban areas throughout California. The most significant difference being that the Bay Area Latino population, specifically in San Francisco, was more ethnically diverse and not a majority Mexican origin as were most Latino neighborhoods throughout the state. The East Bay population was a majority Mexican origin and Chicano, but well-established Puerto Rican and Cuban populations also lived in Oakland and Berkeley. In examining the demographics more closely, three additional noteworthy differences emerge. First, Bay Area Latinos were

more formally educated than their counterparts living in other major cities in the state. In a 1970 survey of the median number of years of schooling completed by persons over twenty-five years of age, Spanish-surname residents in the Bay Area averaged one more year per school completed than the Latino population in any other city in the state. In fact, Bay Area Latinos averaged 11.3 years of schooling, whereas the state average for those with Spanish surnames was 9.7 years. Both in the Bay Area and as a state average, Latinos trailed whites and nonwhites in years of schooling, but in the San Francisco-Oakland area, the gap was much closer than in the rest of the state.⁷ Second, Latinos in San Francisco and the East Bay lived in diverse and integrated neighborhoods, something not typical in a state where Mexican-origin immigrants and Mexican Americans most often lived in highly segregated areas. Researchers surveying the residential segregation of Mexican Americans across the southwest found that out of fifteen major cities in California, the Spanish-surnamed populations in San Francisco and Oakland were the second and third least segregated from Anglos, respectively.⁸ Third, Latino immigrants to the Bay Area in the 1950s and early 1960s were generally of higher socioeconomic status than their counterparts in other areas, many having worked in professional fields in their native countries before immigrating to the United States.⁹ The demographics shifted following changes in the immigration laws in the mid-1960s, allowing for the arrival of Latinos of lower socioeconomic

⁷ “Californians of Spanish Surname: Population, Education, Income, Employment.” (San Francisco, CA: State of California, Agriculture and Services Agency, Department of Industrial Relations, Fair Employment Practice Commission, Division of Fair Employment Practices, 1976).

⁸ Grebler, Moore, and Guzmán, “Ghettos and Barrios”; Sacramento was the least segregated city in California for Spanish-surnamed residents. See Anne M. Santiago, “Trends in Mexican Origin Segregation in the United States, 1970-80” (paper presented at the 1991 Annual Meetings of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Cincinnati, Ohio, August, 1991).

⁹ James Stirling, “Nicaraguans in San Francisco: A Pilot Study,” (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 1964).

status and less formally educated than those arriving previously. These significant differences in the Latino population of the Bay Area as compared to those of other geographic areas certainly influenced how groups interacted with one another as well as how they viewed their identity as they struggled to establish themselves in their new homeland.

In the Bay Area, more integrated neighborhoods generally indicated more diverse schools, places of worship, employment locations, etc., all of which allowed for increased and frequent interactions between different racial and ethnic groups, leading to relationship building and the formation of alliances. Reflecting on the close living quarters from his youth in the Mission District and the unity this created, one Latino stated, “We’re crammed into two square miles in the city. And because we’re all packed in, we don’t have the luxury of forming barrios—a Cuban barrio, a Chicano barrio. We’re forced to learn to live together, so we’re developing a new subculture that’s a mixture of all Latino cultures.”¹⁰ This integration allowed for exposure to different cultures and backgrounds, which led to the creation of shared identities out of common experiences. Often, this identity was pitted against the forces of assimilation and acculturation of the dominant Anglo culture, which “threaten[ed] to absorb [their] Cultura,” and so they “adopted, organically, a bit of each other’s cultures...”¹¹ It was this attitude and the close living quarters which led to the initial successful creation of panethnic and pan-minority identities among Latinos in the Bay Area during the 1950s and 1960s.

¹⁰ Sandoval, “Time and Again,” 87 and 92.

¹¹ Vargas, *Nicaragua, Yo Te Canto Besos, Balas, y Sueños de Libertad*, 18.

Forming Multiple Identities

Creating Ethnic Identity

The number of Latinos immigrating to the Bay Area continued to increase in the post-World War II era, prompting the formation of social groups and community organizations representing their interests as ethnic groups. On both sides of the bay, Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Central Americans organized soccer teams and established mutual aid societies both to cater to their needs as recent immigrants as well as provide a space to celebrate their national cultures. Mexican Americans turned their attention to politics and created local chapters of statewide and national political organizations, such as the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), the Community Service Organization, and the GI Forum, although many viewed these groups as weak and having minimal influence, particularly in San Francisco, as Mexican Americans were the minority Latino ethnic group in the area.¹² Despite lacking some of the influence and political power other ethnic groups may have held elsewhere in the state and the nation during this time, Latinos from the Bay Area created strong ethnic identities as they attempted to both blend into their new homelands as well as retain their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Creating Panethnic Identity

Reflecting the diversity within the Spanish-speaking population, Latinos in the Bay Area also created panethnic groups, such as Panamericanistas Club, *Círculo Español*, *Círculo Hispano-Americano*, and *El Buen Vecino* (The Good Neighbor)

¹² Cecilia Rosebury, "Will Spanish-speaking people drive ahead? Green light for bilingual education," *People's World*, September 9, 1967, Stan Steiner Papers, M0700, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 1 [STAN], 11.

serving to bring different ethnic groups together and represent themselves as a unified group.¹³ These organizations were both social and political, hosting dances and cultural events as well as taking up issues of employment, unions, foreign affairs, and education. Leaders viewed their purpose as not only to help create networks and provide space for Latinos to congregate but also to teach newcomers English and help them learn the ways of their new country. As one Latino stated, recent immigrants were “endeavoring to fit [themselves] to the American way of life. English is the language of [their] Country. If [they] kept on using the Spanish language [they] would defeat [their] own purpose.” In terms of a panethnic identity, he continued by explaining that they called themselves “Spanish-American,” because they “embrace[d] *all* [emphasis added] people from south of the border.”¹⁴ This twofold approach to assimilating linguistically while also maintaining a strong Latino culture demonstrates the desire of Latinos to achieve success in their new homeland while also strengthening their ties to those with whom they shared linguistic and cultural traits.

Along with the formation of a panethnic identity in the Bay Area, there was also a strong dedication to learning American culture and mores. In order to do this, some Bay Area Latinos in the 1950s considered it important to keep their ethnic identity removed from the public sphere. For example, there were those in San Francisco who did not encourage the celebration of Mexican Independence Day as they believed this “confuse[s] our young generation, they don’t know whether they are Mexicans or

¹³ “Pan American Society (San Francisco Chapter) Twenty-Fifth Anniversary,” 1955, Pan American Society (USA), San Francisco Chapter Papers, Mss41, Box 21, Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library [hereafter cited as UPLIB], 14.

¹⁴ “Officers Reports,” February 1951, United Latin Americans of America, Inc., San Francisco, California, California Federation for Civic Unity Records, BANC MSS C-A 274, Carton 1, Folder “Untitled,” [BANC].

Americans.”¹⁵ These Latinos believed that such celebrations persisted in “maintaining the old traditional language and customs of their country” without realizing the “harm they are doing to their American children.”¹⁶ In general, there was a feeling that these types of celebrations should be conducted privately and serve as a source of pride within Latino groups and should not override the assimilation and Americanization of the children. To be sure, not all Latinos felt this way, and these types of beliefs would serve as a source of division among Latino groups in the years to follow.

In the East Bay, a panethnic identity emerged among Latino leaders in the post-war era, even with most Mexican-origin residents living in the area. Upon returning from overseas after serving in the armed forces, Jimmy Delgadillo, a Mexican American who was active in local organizations, joined the African American East Bay Democratic Club so that he could learn from their successful organizing techniques and strategies. In 1959, Delgadillo worked with Bert Corona, a prominent Mexican-American leader and public intellectual, to organize the Latino community and encourage residents to question city policies regarding the education provided and treatment of East Bay Latinos. According to Delgadillo, specific ethnic groups did not confront these issues alone; rather, “Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans began building institutions to provide basic services to the Latino community.”¹⁷ After several years of organizing through disparate ethnic groups, Latinos in the East Bay

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Aurora Levins, *The History of Latinos in West Oakland: Community Narratives* (Berkeley, CA: Latino History Project, 2000) [OPL HR].

formed the Mexican American Unity Council in the early 1960s.¹⁸ By 1964, however, Latino participants decided to change the name to the Spanish Speaking Unity Council (SSUC) in order to demonstrate the more inclusive goals of the organization.¹⁹ From an initial core of local activists, the SSUC expanded its membership to include numerous organizations and serve as an umbrella group for the area. The SSUC invited groups of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds to join its council, creating a singular group to represent “a broad cross section of raza [sic] from youth to adults, from militants through traditionalists and from low socio-economic through high socio-economic levels.”²⁰ In addition to changing its name to a panethnic identifier (“Spanish Speaking”), SSUC expanded its long-term goals to include the improvement of the socio-economic condition of “Hispanic and other low income communities” by improving the overall socioeconomic environment of Oakland.²¹

Similar to SSUC in the East Bay, in 1964, Latinos in San Francisco formed the Spanish Speaking Citizens Foundation, a group founded to “elevate the economic, social, educational and cultural level of ‘*Los Olvidados*’ (The Forgotten Ones).” This group worked with over one hundred local Anglo business, professional, and civic

¹⁸ Memo from Arabella Martinez Springer, Executive Director of the Spanish Speaking Unity Council Summer Youth Program, July 9, 1970, File “Youth Programs” [OPL HR].

¹⁹ The group was formerly incorporated in April 1968. “Southwest Council of La Raza First Annual Report,” March 1969, Stan Steiner Papers, M0700, Series 1, Box 20, Folder 2 [STAN], 21-24.

²⁰ Some of the groups the SSUC invited were: Association of Latin American Women, Circulo Internacional Peruano, Club Guadalajara, Club Social y Cultural Mexicano de Oakland, Organizaciones Latino Americanas, Cursillos de Cristiandad en Espanol, East Bay Spanish Speaking Citizens Foundation, Filipino American Political Association, Frente Foundation, Latin American Supplementary School, Orden Fraternal de los Hijos de Puerto Rico, Latino Peace Officers Association, Progressive Black Business, and Professional Women, Inc. See “Profile of the Spanish Speaking Unity Council” n.d., File “Spanish Speaking Unity Council” [OPL HR]; Memo from Arabella Martinez Springer, Executive Director of the Spanish Speaking Unity Council Summer Youth Program, to all NYC Coordinators and Work Supervisors July 9, 1970, File “Youth Programs” [OPL HR].

²¹ “Profile of the Spanish Speaking Unity Council,” n.d., File “Spanish Speaking Unity Council” [OPL HR].

leaders who came together to help Latin Americans succeed economically in San Francisco. Together, they sought to create a job center and provide English classes, so as to address the problems of *Los Olvidados* and find a balance between “maintaining cultural traditions” in their homes and “living the American way of life.”²² To accomplish these goals, leaders brought together over sixty local organizations, encouraging Anglos and Latinos to work together and solve the problems facing the community.

To be sure, not all panethnic groups assembled as smoothly as these. In 1967, David Florence, a recent transplant to the Bay Area from New Mexico, set out to establish a chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), an organization founded in Texas in 1929, dedicated to the protection of Latino civil rights and advocacy. Local leaders supported the group, but it took more than a year for participation to increase and the chapter to become established and active in local politics and events.²³ For many, it seemed as if the diversity of the Latino population would prohibit the success of LULAC. Rachel Arce, the leader of the San Francisco chapter in the early 1970s, admitted that after being raised in Texas, she had never seen Central Americans before, and communication problems had occurred between the groups. These issues, however, did not discourage Arce from reaching out to her Spanish-speaking neighbors to create unity and establish a successful chapter of LULAC in the Bay Area. To many Latinos, the press created the illusion of ethnic division; however, to many Latinos, “minorities [had] the right to disagree,” and this

²² Will Stevens, “Return from Oblivion—SF’s ‘Los Olvidados’,” *San Francisco Examiner*, March 23, 1965, San Francisco Public Library, Mission Branch, 4.

²³ *League of United Latin American Citizens*, San Francisco Council 2008, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Box 70, Folder 22 [STAN].

did not indicate by any means large-scale distrust and the inability to unite for larger causes.²⁴

In addition to working to improve the economic and political environments for Latinos in the Bay Area, panethnic groups turned their sights toward addressing inequities in the public schools serving their children. In 1963, local Latino leaders and MAPA challenged the fact that the Oakland Unified School District allowed school board members to be elected at-large rather than from specifically carved out districts, thus creating a board consisting of a majority of wealthy white (conservative) members. At this time, the Oakland district was seven percent Latino, and the community asserted its voice regarding underperforming students and under-resourced schools. In addition to increased representation on the board, Latinos desired more counseling and the earlier implementation of Spanish language instruction in the elementary schools.²⁵

Throughout the Bay Area in the 1960s, Latino leaders joined forces and questioned the quality of the academic services provided to their children as well as the relevance of the curriculum taught in the schools. In early 1967, a group of “Spanish-American persons” picketed the school board office in San Francisco alleging “discrimination in the employment of professional personnel and failure of the board to develop programs to meet the unique needs of the Spanish-American students.” Among their demands, the group called for comprehensive educational projects to be developed in the Mission District, the recruitment of more minority group members as teachers,

²⁴ Dexter Waugh, “Lesson: Muscle Equals Power,” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 20, 1972, 1 and, 18.

²⁵ Anonymous, “‘One-Area’ Board Accusation: Mexican Group Hits School Representation,” *Oakland Tribune*, March 13, 1963, File “Oakland Schools Board of Education July 1959” [OPL HR].

Americanization programs in elementary schools (in addition to the ones already in junior and high schools), and a focus on the language needs of Spanish-speaking children.²⁶ Although the school board promised to meet with representatives to discuss their grievances, two years later, this was not sufficient, and Latinos in San Francisco organized “Latinos Speak Out,” a conference dedicated to discussing the educational needs of Latino students.²⁷ To a number of parents and students, the situation for Latino students had not improved since the boycott, and the community and the board needed a dialogue to address the larger issues facing youth in the public schools. As demonstrated by the words and actions of local leaders and parents, there existed a strong sense of a panethnic identity in that different Latino ethnic groups united in their protests emphasizing their common needs as a Spanish-speaking minority.

In addition to forming panethnic organizations and uniting to challenge the treatment of their children by the public education system, Latino adults in the Bay Area attempted to bring youth together under a panethnic umbrella by creating groups and schools that catered to their needs as Spanish speakers and members of a minority group. As a local youth organization proclaimed in its pamphlet,

This unity (ethnic solidarity) within the Spanish-speaking community becomes the basic building block and the power base for community development. Ethnic solidarity (here defined as the realization of a common destiny based on common language, cultural values, and historical traditions) is also defined in terms of an individual’s own cultural values, whether he be Salvadorean [sic], Nicaraguan, Mexican, etc. La

²⁶ “The Spanish-American Community of the San Francisco Bay Area: A Staff Report to the Commissioners.” (Washington, D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1967), Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 15 Folder 9 [STAN], 10 and 11.

²⁷ “Latinos Speak Out: A Community Plans for Action,” program at Mission High School, San Francisco, California, February 15, 1968 [OPL HR].

Raza is the unity of the different cultures based upon the common language that they all share.²⁸

This same organization viewed its purpose as “to unite Chicano-Latino” people through self-determination, because “through UNITY, Raza people can attain for themselves the right to be heard.”²⁹ In order to achieve this, adults needed to instill awareness in Latino youth of the benefits of education and create incentives for them to work together become “active and effective.”³⁰

In the East Bay, where the Latino population was more homogeneous than that of San Francisco but still encouraging of the creation of a panethnic identity, many adults often worked outside of the education system to meet the needs of Latino and Chicano students. They accomplished this by creating both alternative and complementary school sites to those offered by the public education system. Latino adults set out to establish environments in which youth could both learn about and celebrate their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as those of other Spanish-speaking ethnic groups. In addition to Saturday language schools at the public library for students of all ages and pre-schools for the younger children, Chicano parents in Berkeley applied pressure to the school board and received funding for “Casa de La Raza,” a two-year experiment in community-controlled public schooling for Spanish-speaking students in the East Bay.³¹ Initially, confusion arose as to whether or not Casa was intended solely for Chicano students, but an unpublished brochure stated, “Casa will include

²⁸ Pamphlet, *La Raza en Accion Local*, n.d., San Francisco, California, File “Associations San Francisco,” [OPL HR], 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

³¹ Francisco Hernandez, “Cultural Pluralism, School Governance, and the Chicano Community,” in *Perspectives on Chicano Education*, eds. Tobias and Sandra Gonzales (Stanford: Chicano Fellows Stanford Students, 1975), 91; López, “Casa de la Raza.”

not just Mexicans, but also Puerto Ricans, Central and South Americans,” to clear up any misconceptions.³² To be sure, the primarily Chicano staff emphasized Chicano culture in the curriculum, but the focus remained on a bilingual-bicultural curriculum, a need the Latino community viewed as universal to “La Raza Community.”³³ Encouraged by their parents and supported by a Latino teaching staff, Chicano and Latino youth engaged in a learning process that incorporated a panethnic identity as integral to the success of the students and the larger Latino community.

Creating Pan-minority Identity

In the 1950s, Mexican-American leaders in the Bay Area collaborated with African Americans by participating in local political groups and grassroots organizing around educational issues. Mexican-American veterans returning from service and those migrating to the area from rural areas worked with African Americans to confront perceived injustices, and many of them did this by collaborating directly with local African American political groups. For example, after returning from serving overseas in World War II, the aforementioned Bay Area Mexican-American leader, Jimmy Delgadillo, joined the African American East Bay Democratic Club so that he could learn from their organizing techniques. Delgadillo stated that this experience enabled him to become “savvy about electoral politics and NAACP style campaigns,” skills that he would later apply to organizing in the Latino community by working with MAPA.³⁴ Another example of a Latino working directly with African Americans to

³² López, “Casa de la Raza,” 105.

³³ Ibid., 107.

³⁴ Levins, *The History of Latinos in West Oakland*.

challenge discriminatory practices was Evelio Grillo, a “black Cuban” raised in Tampa who moved to Oakland as an adult. Grillo worked with African American and Latino groups in the East Bay, using his Spanish-speaking abilities and knowledge of both African American and Latino cultures to allow him to work more freely and productively with both groups in performing outreach and organizing.³⁵ The work of these two men and the alliances they helped facilitate across racial and ethnic lines formed a foundation for a pan-minority identity in the Bay Area.

Despite evidence of Latinos and African Americans working together to challenge policies and practices they perceived to be unjust, a government report released in the early 1960s claimed that “Negro-Mexican relations in the Bay Area [are] complex and not easily portrayed,” and that “Mexicans are unable to mobilize grassroots sentiments to work with other minority groups and must rely on a few upper-echelon spokesmen as their leaders.”³⁶ The report continues by stating that African Americans resented the lack of participation by Mexican groups and viewed them as tending to “benefit from negro protest efforts, while Mexican groups are not often deeply involved in challenges to white dominance.”³⁷ The report concludes, however, that although a potential resentment and competition between the two groups for jobs and living space existed, it was surprising how “few clashes they have had” and “if they could work together, they would be quite a force.”³⁸ The report appears misleading to a degree in

³⁵ Evelio Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American: A Memoir* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2000).

³⁶ Wilson Record, “Minority Groups and Intergroup Relations in the San Francisco Bay Area,” (Berkeley, CA: University of California Berkeley, Institute of Governmental Studies, 1963), 34.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34 and 35.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

that there is no mention of the success these two groups found in uniting while confronting discriminatory politics and practices.

In addition to the pan-minority alliances created by leaders in the Bay Area, in the early 1960s there was a statewide call for Latinos and African Americans to recognize their similar plights and support one another as they challenged prejudice and discrimination in California. As a gesture of unity, and possibly as a response to the statewide call, Herman Gallegos, a prominent Mexican-American educational leader in the Bay Area, issued the following statement:

Our Negro minority relations are consistently good in...the Bay Area where we keep close contact with Gibson, Grillo, and Rumford. We have not been faced with any problems because we have not competed for any elected positionns [sic] and have agrred [sic] on issues. We must conciously [sic] seek Mex-Am and Negro alliances to avert problems created elsewhere. We must continue to meet to find out how we can put ourselves together.³⁹

To that end, as a still relatively small minority population in the Bay Area, Latino leaders felt it necessary to work with established African American groups and provide support when their causes overlapped. As one prominent local leader stated, “We have no place else to go but into loose coalition with the blacks and other poor minority groups.”⁴⁰ Indeed, this relationship benefited both groups as African Americans enlarged their base for challenging the system, and Latinos gained expertise in grassroots organizing including publishing articles in the local African

³⁹ “Address by Mr. Herman Gallegos, Former National President of the CSO,” December 6, 1964, San Jose, California, Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 14, Folder 11 [STAN]; Sam Kushner, “Mexican-American and Negro leaders chart state alliance,” *People’s World*, May 16, 1964, Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 14, Folder 8 [STAN], 12.

⁴⁰ Bill Moore, “The Spanish Minority: Self-Help Movement in Mission,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 20, 1969, 5.

American paper to publicize their cause, thus providing a larger platform from which to present their positions to the community. Although the pan-minority alliances among groups of Latino and African American adults did not prove to be as sound and strong as those of youth as this chapter demonstrates, productive and positive pan-minority actions and organizations did emerge and cannot be overlooked when considering how Latino adults created identity and considered their interracial relationships during this time in the Bay Area.

Cracks in Identity Formation

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century in California, government officials and providers of public services used many different labels to distinguish those of Latin American descent, such as Indian, Spanish-speaking, non-white, and white. The ever-changing categories into which officials placed Latinos greatly impacted the complex process of identity formation. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a shift in demographics, the growth of coalition building, and the implementation of bilingual education and desegregation plans, all greatly affected how Latino, Chicano, and Mexican-American youth and adults created and forged their identities and how they viewed themselves as members of ethnic, panethnic, and pan-minority groups. Due to the lack of continuity in terms of the identifiers assigned, Latinos were often divided when they self-identified, choosing identities depending on a group's and an individual's country of origin, place of birth (i.e., abroad or in the United States), socioeconomic status, race, and education level. Additional factors contributing to ethnic identity formation included the racial, ethnic, and economic

diversity of the neighborhoods in which they lived as well as the perceived levels of discrimination they experienced.

Latino youth in the Bay Area attended integrated schools and many participated in local community groups that attracted people of various races and ethnicities, thus ensuring interactions with those of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These experiences influenced them to move more comfortably between multiple identities, finding it possible and even beneficial to create flexible identities that allowed them to navigate the education system and their own lives as they aligned themselves with various ethnic and racial groups. At the same time, Latino and Mexican-American adults and Chicano college students also appeared to create multiple identities, yet these may have been more tenuous than those of the youth. Whereas ethnic identities among adults appeared solid and long-standing, panethnic and pan-minority identities may have gained strength when focused around specific events and weakened when issues such as cultural nationalism, socioeconomic status, bilingual education, and educational resources took precedent over forming alliances and shared identities. Despite the divides that arose within panethnic and pan-minority relationships, many Latino adults and community leaders continued to attempt to create coalitions and build on the past success of bringing together different ethnic and racial populations by finding commonalities in their experiences and cultural heritages, yet the results were not always successful due to the varied expectations and demands of the different groups.

Cultural Nationalism and Identity Politics

Throughout the west and southwest, two of the driving ideologies behind the Chicano movement were cultural nationalism and identity politics, both of which were reflected in the call to recover native roots, speak Spanish, and emphasize an indigenous culture. In Mexican-origin dominant areas, such as Los Angeles, Denver, and San Jose, many Chicano youth responded to the movement with enthusiasm, often influencing the adults in their lives to participate in protests and express their ethnic pride in the public sphere. Participation in political groups, large-scale boycotts of educational institutions, and the organized challenges to the curriculum in schools demonstrated a declaration of Chicano cultural nationalism and a demand to be heard. Similarly, Latino youth and adults in the Bay Area also participated in boycotts and direct challenges to the educational system, but cultural nationalism played a less prominent role in the initial organizing strategies; furthermore, the concept of ethnic identity may have served to weaken protest efforts. Indeed, for many Latinos in the Bay Area, the identifier *La Raza* more accurately represented their “*gente*” (people) rather than specific ethnic titles.⁴¹ Due to the diversity within the Latino population, particularly in San Francisco, nationalism was not necessarily ethnically focused; rather, a Latino panethnic identity more generally served to convey they were “not caucasian [sic],” in turn resigning Latinos to be more accepting of others.⁴² This sentiment, however, did not find a foothold throughout the entire diverse Latino population in the Bay Area, and despite the strong foundation Latino groups

⁴¹ Editorial, *Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes*, June 1974, 3; Pamphlet, *La Raza en Accion Local*, n.d., San Francisco, California, File “Associations San Francisco,” [OPL HR], 2.

⁴² Ferreira, “All Power to the People.”

established by creating a panethnic identity, divisions emerged among the adult Latino population in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During the post-World War II era and into the 1960s, many Latino adults decided to create a panethnic identity participating in both social and political groups as well as successfully forming alliances to challenge unfair educational practices and demand recognition from local school boards regarding the special language needs of Spanish-speaking students, placing their identity directly in the context of a struggle for power. Despite the goodwill among the different ethnic groups, divisions in the coalitions began to show by the late 1960s, and the first debate regarding the unity of the Latino community in the Bay Area took place in the public sphere. Using public development funds allocated for educational purposes, a local college in the East Bay established “Educacion Para Adelantar” (EPA), an adult school to help Spanish speakers learn English and prepare for and find employment. Within one year of the program’s founding, the Oakland Economic Development Council, Inc. (OEDCI), a predominantly African American group overseeing the administration of public monies, rescinded EPA’s funding despite its success and popularity among recent immigrants. Without doubt, this action upset Latino groups because the program provided a necessary service, but a greater controversy quickly emerged among the Spanish-speaking community as Latino community leaders directed much of their anger over the cuts specifically at two Latino board members, Pete Montoya and Jesus Galindo. Vocal Latinos felt the men inadequately represented the needs of the Spanish-speaking community, publicly calling them “traitors.” The cuts eventually led

to protests by youth and adults and the emergence of visible divisions within the panethnic Latino community.⁴³

Around the same time as the controversy over the funding of the EPA program arose, the city of San Francisco elected by an overwhelming margin the first Latino to the school board. Upon his victory, the district's newsletter initially referred to the newest board member, David Sanchez, as "Mexican-American," but a follow-up announcement changed Sanchez's ethnic descriptor to that of "Latin-American," perhaps to make him more appealing to the predominantly Central American Latino population.⁴⁴ In a ceremony celebrating Sanchez's first year of service, the master of ceremonies, commenting on the city's diversity stated, "We are no longer Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Salvadoreños, or Peruvians—We are Latins."⁴⁵ Whereas many observed the election of a Latino to the school board as a panethnic success, not all Latinos in San Francisco believed Sanchez represented their needs, some even going so far as to claim that Sanchez was a "so-called brown [person] who won't even wipe [his ass] unless [the mayor] tells [him] that is the right time to do so."⁴⁶ In April 1974, one hundred sixty-four participants at a conference held by the Latin American Teachers Association (of San Francisco Unified School District) and the National Educational Task Force de la Raza signed a petition to replace David Sanchez on the board of education with a "Spanish Bilingual San Franciscan of Latin-American

⁴³ Anonymous, no title, *Epasodios*, June 1968 [OPL HR], 2.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, no title, *San Francisco Unified School District Newsletter*, November 11, 1968, San Francisco Unified School District Records (SFH 3), Box 3, Folder 14 [SFPL HC].

⁴⁵ Anonymous, "Festival for David Sanchez," *New/Nueva Mission*, March 1969, 2.

⁴⁶ "Interview with Roger Alvarado and Oscar Rios of the Central Comite para defender 'Los Siete de la Raza'," *El Pocho Che* 1, no. 1 (July 1969).

descent.”⁴⁷ This public condemnation of Sanchez as a Mexican American who was considered incapable by some representing the Latino population in the Mission district illuminates the growing rift among the different ethnic groups in the Bay Area.

In the early twentieth century, several thousand Puerto Ricans settled in the Bay Area; some returned from Hawaii after their labor contracts expired and others migrated directly from Puerto Rico. Almost immediately, they established a close-knit community represented by several social organizations.⁴⁸ Over the years, in both San Francisco and the East Bay, Puerto Ricans worked closely with African American organizations, such as the Black Panther Party, as well as with other Latino groups, addressing political and social issues affecting their populations.⁴⁹ By the 1970s, however, resentment emerged as many Puerto Ricans perceived that African Americans had “better and more” opportunities than they did, and, that as Puerto Ricans, organizations specifically overlooked them when trying to fill positions with Latinos, preferring instead to hire Chicanos.⁵⁰ Many Puerto Ricans felt that the schools and politicians conflated their needs with those of the general Spanish-speaking population, whereas they viewed themselves as a unique ethnic group with distinct characteristics and specific educational needs. These actions drove a wedge between

⁴⁷ Letter from Julio Jácamo, President LATA to Mayor Joseph Alioto, May 6, 1974, Joseph L. Alioto Papers (SFH 5) [SFPL HC].

⁴⁸ John Dumitru and Richard F. Salisbury, *Adjustment of Immigrant Spanish-Americans in San Francisco: A Pilot Study* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Department of Anthropology, 1960); Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Greenwood Press, New York, 1968), 45.

⁴⁹ Victor M. Rodríguez, “Boricuas, African Americans, and Chicanos in the ‘Far West’: Notes on the Puerto Rican Pro-Independence Movement in California, 1960s-1980s,” in *Latino Social Movements: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*, eds. Rodolfo D. Torres and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 1999), 82.

⁵⁰ “Puerto Ricans in California.” (Washington, DC.: Western Regional Office, United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1980), 18.

many Puerto Ricans and other Latinos as the former felt their differences were deemed irrelevant, which in turn made them even less willing to “give up their identity” lest they become “nonexistent” in the Bay Area.⁵¹

Chicano cultural nationalism may have found traction in Mexican and Chicano dominant areas throughout the west, but as evidenced by the response of segments of the Puerto Rican population in the Bay Area, many Latinos in San Francisco and the East Bay were not as receptive to the movement, resenting the divisions identity politics created among the different ethnic groups. Whereas “Chicanismo” was a progressive step forward in identity formation, at times it also undermined gains made in forming panethnic identities.⁵² Some Chicano activists in the Bay Area envisaged this potential drawback to identity politics and in turn changed their message to youth when trying to engage them in the political and social struggle for justice. As one local Chicano college student wrote:

...there are definite advantages to cultural nationalism, i.e. the development of Chicanismo, but at the same time there are inherent dangers which should always be kept in mind...Chicanos must recognize that cultural nationalism is not a political ideology but a cultural awareness factor that is useful in uniting our movement...Chicanos must also guard against becoming so obsessed with cultural nationalist ideas that they start displaying manifestations of racism towards other ethnic groups. Rigidity is something which has historically been inherent in nationalism.⁵³

Throughout the 1970s, as Chicanos wrestled with how to expand their ethnic views to be more inclusive, many Latino youth as well as adults in the Bay Area embraced the

⁵¹ Ibid., 18.

⁵² Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students por la raza: The Chicano Student Movement in Southern California, 1967-1977* (Santa Bárbara: Editorial La Causa, 1978), 13.

⁵³ Anonymous, no title, *El Pocho Ché* 1, no. 2 (April 1970).

panethnic identifier *La Raza*, which indicated a shared culture and race among those of different ethnicities.

In response to the divisions emerging between Latino groups in the Bay Area, community leaders set out to confront the issues directly and provide organizations in which different ethnic groups could socialize as well as engage in political activities. In San Francisco, for example, the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO) brought together dozens of local groups in order to unite and collectively fight for “social justice for all the people: black, brown, white or any size, shape or color.”⁵⁴ On the less political side, *Casa de Bellas Artes*, an artist collective, hosted events, exhibits, and workshops, celebrating community pride in a “multiethnic identity.”⁵⁵ The organizers desired to “awaken, involve, and transform our community...[and] to fulfill that goal we are developing very dynamic [sic] and flexible programs that may be instrumental in the creation of a multi-ethnic Community Cultural Center in the Mission.”⁵⁶ In light of these positive interactions and other instances of Latinos working together across the Bay Area for the betterment of the collective group, many remained hopeful of the potential success of panethnic unity. As one member of the Oakland chapter of MAPA optimistically wrote,

It is indeed heartening to see ‘Mi Raza’ getting into some pretty serious hassels [sic], muddle through them and settle them in a spirit of fraternity and good feeling. Maybe we are learning to overcome the awful Spanish heritage of envy and pride.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ “The Mission Coalition Organization,” San Francisco Public Library, Mission Branch, Folder “Mission District History,” 2.

⁵⁵ *Boletín/Newsletter Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes*, Abril 1970 [UCB CSC].

⁵⁶ *Boletín/Newsletter Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes*, Octubre/Noviembre 1971 [UCB CSC].

⁵⁷ Anonymous, no title, *Oakland MAPA Newsletter*, March 30, 1970 [UCB CSC], 3.

Despite this positive outlook, Latino adults in the Bay Area during this period continued to struggle with the formation of a solid panethnic identity, in many cases allowing identity politics to enter the schools and negatively affect how Latino students, teachers, and administrators interacted with one another.

Throughout the Bay Area, a common demand among Latinos protesting and boycotting the schools was the hiring of more Chicano and Latino teachers to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of the Spanish-speaking population. Acknowledging the paucity of Latino teachers in the schools, districts actively sought to hire more Chicanos and Latinos. The University of California at Berkeley provided a local resource through a program called the Latino Project, which was specifically created to train and place young Latino college graduates in area classrooms with high concentrations of Chicano and Latino students. According to one intern, the children became proud and confident around their Latino teachers.⁵⁸ The same students were also comfortable enough to correct the Spanish and question the identity of their teachers, as another intern reflected,

It was good to know that I was being accepted by my students; I am not a Latina, but a Chicana. Thus, I speak more pocho than Spanish. The latino [sic] students were often having to correct my Spanish. They would also cringe at the thought of my taking pride in calling myself a Chicana. In their respective countries the word had an objectionable connotation.⁵⁹

Fortunately, these differences did not result in tensions between the students and teachers; rather, the mutual respect created a positive learning environment for

⁵⁸ Barrios de Beason, "Memories of the Organization of Latin-American Teachers," 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 9.

students who sought instruction from those with whom they shared linguistic and cultural traits.

The relationships between the younger Latino Project interns and the older, more established Latino teachers, however, were not as amicable and mutually beneficial with trouble arising between the groups almost immediately. As one Chicana author of a report detailing her experiences in the Latino Project described,

there were many incidents, in which, if any of us showed any signs of individualism by letting our hair grow, speaking Spanish in the faculty room, giving the Mexican hand shake, or calling ourselves Chicano or Chicana instead of Latino, it was immediately interpreted as militancy on the part of the Latino Project Interns.⁶⁰

The author believed the veteran teachers were not happy with schools bringing in Latino interns, because “as far as they were concerned there were already enough,” going so far as to assert that the Project produced “inferior, unqualified, and inexperienced teachers.”⁶¹

The divisions created among the teachers certainly related to how different generations of Latinos and Chicanos self-identified and viewed their experiences with class, race, and ethnicity in the Bay Area. As one Chicana intern explained, the interns considered themselves different from “old line Latino teachers, and administrators, who came up the line by saying, ‘gracias, gracias for everything’—and whose only claim to glory is that they did it the hard way, or on their own.”⁶² These interns had the goal of reaching out to students in order to provide a better and more culturally relevant educational experience. Indeed, their brashness and their strong ethnic and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 7.

minority identities may have been too aggressive for the older, more acculturated Latinos. Cultural differences between the Latino groups may have also affected relationships between the teachers and interns. One intern described a growing rift between a Puerto Rican intern and his Mexican-American master teacher, over the fact that the intern believed she resented the Latino Project staff for emphasizing their heritage and acting like “Latinos,” noting that the teacher “refused to be called or viewed as anything but an American teacher. (American was her word for not making herself a second-class citizen.)”⁶³

Throughout the Bay Area, identity among Latino and Chicano adults was complicated, and consensus was difficult to find. In an article describing “The Women of La Raza,” the *SF Examiner* interviewed several local female community leaders and organizers as to their preferred ethnic identifiers. The only consensus was that there was no consensus. Whereas the term Chicano insulted one woman, two others felt they could tolerate the word, but they preferred Mexican American. Another woman stated, “Nobody objects to the term ‘La Raza’ because there is no focus [sic] on color. It is not brown power, or any color power. It is the power of the people—La Raza.”⁶⁴ Despite these differences in opinion, the women agreed that poverty and discrimination were major problems, and, regardless of how they labeled themselves and their own ethnic backgrounds, they needed to find a way to work successfully with Latino youth.

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁴ Mildred Hamilton, “The Women of La Raza: Part 1,” *San Francisco Examiner*, August 31, 1970, 19 and 22.

By the mid-1970s, however, these divisions became too great for large numbers of Latino adults to secure a long-lasting panethnic identity. As one local Spanish newspaper editorialized, Mexican American and pro-Latino groups in the Bay Area had lost their focus and had stopped fighting for the reasons they were formed. The editorial continued by stating that groups were too political and divided by individual interests, and this in turn led to group in-fighting as well as disagreements across groups. The column ended, however, on a positive note stating that the political conscience of the community had awakened and potential still existed for overcoming their divisions.⁶⁵ Despite these divisions and resentments among Latino adults, Latino and Chicano students continued to socialize and learn together in the public schools, forming clubs and sports teams in order to construct some degree of a panethnic identity in the fabric of the public schools.

Socioeconomic Status

In examining the emerging divisions among the various ethnic groups in the Bay Area, the experiences and expectations of those of different socioeconomic status and class must be examined as possible causes of strife in terms of the effect on the Latino adult population. Prior to the liberalization of immigration laws in the 1960s, Latino immigrants to the Bay Area were generally well-educated and belonging to the professional class. A study of Nicaraguan immigrants to San Francisco found that “skilled craftsmen with trades that are in demand in the United States were appealed to by the prospects of economic gain, while professional people came chiefly because of

⁶⁵ Editorial, *La Joya*, Marzo, 1973 [OPL HR], 2.

dissatisfaction with existing conditions.”⁶⁶ This same study found that there was “little evidence of unskilled laborers or farmers coming to the United States, possibly because they lacked the money necessary to make the move.”⁶⁷ Certainly, these trends did not hold for all Latino immigrants to the Bay Area, as not all Central and South Americans were wealthy and educated, and Mexican Americans migrating from the rural central valley of California were generally of lower socioeconomic status and less formally educated. In the wake of the changes enacted in the immigration laws, the latter groups of less wealthy and poorer immigrants increased in number in turn perhaps creating potential divisions among the economically and socially diverse groups.

Even as some Latinos successfully forged a panethnic identity by creating both political and social organizations through which they challenged discriminatory policies and practices and hosted cultural events to demonstrate shared heritages and backgrounds, divisions over issues of trust and understanding between different class groups emerged. At times, these rifts made it difficult for organizers to successfully bring people together for extended periods of time as different ethnic groups argued over who should serve in leadership positions and what exactly should be the focus of various groups. As previously discussed, LULAC took several years to firmly take hold in San Francisco, and even then it remained a small organization taking on very specific issues regarding adult education. MAPA, the most prominent among statewide Latino pressure groups, also had difficulty establishing itself in San Francisco. In describing the local chapter, one leader stated, “The Spanish-speaking

⁶⁶ Stirling, “Nicaraguans in San Francisco,” 5.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

community in San Francisco lacks leadership, unity and political organization.

[MAPA] is less strong here because San Francisco's Mexicans are a minority within a minority; most of the city's Latins are from Central American countries, and...tend to look down upon Mexicans as 'common laborers.'"⁶⁸ A local community activist reiterated this sentiment by stating that Mexican Americans, a minority in the Bay Area, were not like other groups in that they were more financially limited than the average Latin American, and this disparity of wealth and means makes it difficult for them to relate to one another.⁶⁹

The issues over class and the inability of different groups to identify with one another extended to organizations engaged in the struggle for educational equality and the improvement of resources and programs for Latino youth. At times, it appeared difficult for Latino adults to overcome their differences and benefit from uniting as a Spanish-speaking and Spanish-surnamed population. Often, groups established ad hoc committees within their organizations so that each ethnic group had representation. The MCO in the Mission District felt it necessary to take such steps when attempting to bring residents together to challenge the inferior educational system provided for their children. Organizers reserved seats on the executive committee for the different nationalist groups in an attempt to overcome the fissures created between those with "middle-class interest and cultural identity and the needs of the poor."⁷⁰ To that end, perhaps it was difficult to overcome these differences when organizations presented

⁶⁸ Rosebury, "Will Spanish-speaking people drive ahead?" 9 and 11.

⁶⁹ "Aiding the Libraries to Meet the Needs of the Spanish Speaking Population," Workshop No. 4, August 15, 1968, File "Bay Area Reference Center" [OPL HR], 25 and 28.

⁷⁰ Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 117.

members of different ethnic groups in such a way that might be deemed unflattering or even divisive. For example, a pamphlet promoting *El Colegio de la Mision* (The Mission College), a semi-autonomous publicly and privately funded Latin-oriented night school, described enrollees as both “South and Central American enthusiasts who need to further their academics” and “Mexican [American]...drop-outs who come to the college with a renewed appetite for the classroom.”⁷¹ This description highlights the differences in the attendees’ backgrounds while making broad generalizations about their motives and previous experiences.

For someone like David Sanchez, the San Francisco school board member, as a Mexican American with a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, it may have been difficult to fully understand and represent the needs of recently arriving Central Americans. He may also have had trouble relating to Mexican immigrants who had less formal education and were unfamiliar with America’s public school system. In calling for his removal, Latinos in San Francisco clearly demonstrated their lack of trust in his abilities, but in demanding that he be replaced by a “Spanish Bilingual San Franciscan of Latin-American descent,” Latinos made a larger statement, one that may be interpreted as a community divided over how to best to meet their needs as a panethnic group.⁷²

Certainly, many Latinos acknowledged the challenge in “see[ing] their problems through a single lens and from the same angle,” specifically when considering how diverse the Latino population had become and how “apathy and alienation” silenced

⁷¹ *League of United Latin American Citizens News*, June 1974 [UCB CSC], 43.

⁷² Letter from Julio Jácamo, President LATA to Mayor Joseph Alioto, May 6, 1974, Joseph L. Alioto Papers (SFH 5) [SFPL HC].

so many.⁷³ Yet, despite these apparent divisions and difficulties engendering distrust among those of different economic and educational backgrounds, throughout this period Latino individuals and groups continued the call to unite and present a panethnic identity. For many, it was a matter of shifting their perspective when considering their background and past experiences in their native countries and how their situations changed upon arrival in the United States. In other words, not all groups immigrated for the same reasons, some being drawn to the United States for economic opportunities and other being exiled or forced out of their countries due to the political climate. Cuban immigrant teachers in the Bay Area provide an example of a group that was economically better off than other Latino groups and may have initially had difficulty relating to the needs of their students and peers. Yet, as one Chicana teacher noted of her colleagues,

Slowly, even the more conservative of our group, the Cubanos, began to see that our strength as a people, would come only through the unity of La Raza. It was not that the Cubanos did not believe in the betterment of our people, but it was just that many of them were refugees and children of one time wealthy families in Havana, and they were simply a little disillusioned with revolutions.⁷⁴

The Chicano teachers credited the successful creation of a Latino identity among the panethnic staff for allowing them to unite and seek a solution together, rather than remain fractured and fail the students and the Latino community.

⁷³ “Do We See Through the Same Lens But From a Different Angle?” *El Jalamate*, April 28, 1972 [OPL HR], 1-3.

⁷⁴ Barrios de Beason, “Memories of the Organization,” 9.

Bilingual Education

In the late 1960s, in addition to navigating growing movements for identity politics and cultural nationalism and negotiating divides over the differences in experiences of those of varying socioeconomic status, the struggle for bilingual education emerged as a potential source of contention in the Latino community of the Bay Area. Many Spanish-speaking adults shared the belief that “Language is not merely a tool of communication; it is also a tool of perception, a way of seeing the world...By suppressing a child’s native language, the schools are suppressing his culture perception of the world around him.”⁷⁵ A vocal segment of the Latino community believed schools should implement bilingual and bicultural education programs, both to provide equal access to educational content and to ensure cultural maintenance for Spanish-speaking youth. Instead, adults witnessed inadequate bilingual programs in the public schools, producing what they felt were “many children [who] are not fluent in either language,” and that such children who were “caught in the middle [would] need special compensatory training if they [were] to realize their full potential.”⁷⁶ Convinced their children were not only underachieving in schools and experiencing linguistic discrimination, many adults believed that by not learning in Spanish in the classroom their children were losing contact with their home lives and families.

In May of 1967, California passed a state law permitting bilingual education in public schools when considered educationally advantageous to students, and in August

⁷⁵ López, “Casa de la Raza,” 20.

⁷⁶ Angelina Rodarte, “Chicano Education,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 1970 [UCB CSC], 5.

the San Francisco Unified School district adopted the principle of the new state law.⁷⁷ Over the course of the next several years, districts across the Bay Area implemented bilingual programs in targeted schools in order to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking populations. By 1974, the bilingual education movement secured a victory when the Supreme Court of the United States decided in *Lau v. Nichols* that schools failing to provide bilingual education for those in need would be considered discriminatory against English language learners and must include bilingual education in their academic programs.⁷⁸ Whereas the implementation of bilingual programs and the recognition by state and federal governments that the language of instruction greatly impacted access to academic content, neither the decision nor the people advocating for bilingual education addressed the reality of how to successfully teach bilingual education when many students neither spoke Spanish nor necessarily wanted to learn to speak Spanish in the classroom.

Even though many Latino and Chicano youth in the Bay Area did not speak fluent, academic Spanish, groups representing Latino adults and Chicano college students continued to pressure districts to strengthen bilingual and bicultural programs in the public schools. The stated aim of these programs was to help Latino students identify with the education system and improve their self-esteem by preserving their native language and empowering students to achieve success in the system. Latinos viewed language as “not just an instrument for communication and learning...[but] it is also a total way of thinking, feeling and acting...It is a door which teachers can open to

⁷⁷ Rosebury, “Will Spanish-speaking people drive ahead?” 9.

⁷⁸ *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974).

youngsters so that they can see and live and be a part of two cultures—one society.”⁷⁹

Yet, it is difficult to open that door when students are not fluent in Spanish and may not have been as motivated to learn as vocal activists would have preferred. As one Latino professor in the East Bay noted:

A good percentage of these young people speak no Spanish...However, the opportunity exists now to learn Spanish, but they do not seem to be very interested in doing so. This attitude is carried on and reflected by many of our Chicano students.⁸⁰

In promoting the implementation of bilingual programs, the question as to the logistics of teaching Spanish to monolingual students and whether it would have been more beneficial to emphasize the bicultural aspects of the program that arose, leaving many to ponder how to successfully implement programs to potentially unreceptive students.

Opening its doors in 1971, *Casa de la Raza*, an alternative Chicano K-12 school in Berkeley, perhaps best embodied the controversy over teaching a bilingual program to predominantly monolingual Latino students. *Casa*, as it was known, was a school for over one hundred Chicano and Latino students who chose to receive an education in an alternative setting staffed by an all-Chicano instructional team. *Casa*'s stated aim was to be a fully bilingual school, but as the director noted, there existed a large problem for a bilingual school in which many of the students were not bilingual and many of the older ones were “turned off to learning Spanish.”⁸¹ For parents, the prospect of speaking Spanish was a big reason they sent their children to *Casa*, which

⁷⁹ “BABEL: Bay Area Bilingual Education League” n.d. [UCB CSC], 2.

⁸⁰ Federico A. Sanchez, “Looking Back on Chicano Thought,” unpublished paper, n.d., Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 55, Folder 1 [STAN], 3.

⁸¹ Clementina Almaguer, “Alternative Chicano Educational Programs in California” in *Chicano Alternative Education* (Hayward, CA: Study Commission on Undergraduate Education of Teachers, Southwest Network, 1974), 42.

the federal government closed after only two academic years. Responding to questions about how they felt about the school's bilingual program, sample answers included: "You're a Mexican, you gotta know your language;" "...to maintain our identity with dignity;" "...for our children to be part of ourselves;" and, "It saddens me to see a Mexican youth who cannot speak or understand Spanish."⁸² Students, however, were less certain about their language needs and what the role of the school should be in teaching Spanish. As one student reflected, "it was really the parents who wanted the kids to learn Spanish," and he did not specifically "remember any of the kids saying that they wanted to learn Spanish."⁸³

Whether or not students in the Bay Area fully believed in the benefits of bilingual education in the classroom or if they sought this type of instruction in order to improve their academic success is unclear from the evidence documenting their protests and boycotts. One indication as to many students' lack of desire for complete bilingual education is that in six student-led protests taking place in different high schools throughout the Bay Area and for which records exist, demands made to school leaders did not include bilingual education. Instead, the students focused their efforts on the creation of ethnic studies classes, the hiring of more Latino teachers and counselors, the removal of police from campuses, and the serving of Latino food in the cafeterias. To many of these youth, placing an emphasis on bicultural education, including Chicano and Latino studies classes, took precedent over bilingual classes, as this would contribute greater to their academic success and increased self-esteem. To be sure, a number of Chicano and Latino youth in the Bay Area supported the

⁸² López, "Casa de la Raza," 109.

⁸³ Ibid., 110.

implementation of bilingual programs alongside bicultural programs, believing a bilingual program would alleviate the academic challenges of high dropout and low graduation rates of Latinos in high schools; yet, it is difficult to say they considered bilingual education as important a contribution to their identity formation as did many of the adults in their lives.⁸⁴

There were Latino adults in the Bay Area to whom the answer to the bilingual needs of youth and a way to maintain a strong ethnic and panethnic identity was to teach an Americanized version of Spanish in the schools. This solution recognizes that Latino youth born and raised in the United States mostly likely speak a different version of Spanish taught in the schools, and in order to validate their experiences and language needs, teachers and administrators should accept the “distinct” Spanish spoken by youth and encourage their bilingualism in “Spanenglish.”⁸⁵ To some adults, however, teaching a different form of Spanish to students was a disservice that contributed negatively to the formation of Latino youth identity, and this idea caused a rift within the panethnic Latino community. Those who were pro-bilingual education believed that the problem did not stem from the bilingual programs but from the fact that students were too assimilated and refused to speak Spanish in turn blaming both the education system and parents for not emphasizing the benefits of bilingual education. The director of a local community group noted that Latino students “forget about their culture and some of them end up refusing to speak Spanish...Also, many children become culturally confused when their Raza culture clashes with that of their

⁸⁴ “Richmond Component,” n.d., Richmond School District, Richmond, California [UCB CSC]; MAPA Meeting Minutes, Nov. 18, 1969, File “Mexican American Politics” [OPL HR].

⁸⁵ John A. Chávez, “El Lenguaje del Joven Chicano,” *Mundo Hispano*, October 29, 1970, 7.; Dr. Carlos Monsanto, “Pato Feo,” *El Bohemio Magazine* 2(19) (July 1972).

Anglo teachers.”⁸⁶ Another community activist observed a bilingual classroom in the Mission District and witnessed low self-esteem she believed was a direct result of a poorly implemented program:

One of the Chicano children interviewed referred to the other Chicano children as dirty Mexicans. Several students showed a negative reaction to the word Chicano and insisted that they were white even though it was explained to them that many Chicanos were white. When asked how they felt about speaking Spanish, several of the children responded negatively. They saw no need for it and were glad they did not have to learn Spanish in that particular school.⁸⁷

To adults supporting bilingual education in the schools, it was not sufficient to teach Spanish-speaking students in Spanish, but rather all Latino and Chicano students should have the option to learn in the native language of their ancestors. Anything less would leave youth confused as to their ethnic and panethnic heritage in turn diminishing their pride and self-esteem as Latinos. These strong views directly challenged the belief of many immigrants and native-born Latino adults that to participate in the American Dream and succeed in the United States students needed to learn English and become “American.”

Los Siete de la Raza

In the late 1960s, a violent incident took place in San Francisco between Latino youth and white police officers, resulting in the creation of panethnic community groups as well as Latino/African American alliances to better challenge the

⁸⁶ Ana Arana, “‘Raza en Accion’ Means Self Help,” n.d., microfilm, 3 and 4.

⁸⁷ Children at Buena Vista that already spoke English did not have to take a bilingual class. López, “Casa de la Raza,” 8.

“establishment type oppression both in the streets and at the polls.”⁸⁸ Early in the morning in San Francisco on May 1, 1969, two white police officers stopped and questioned several Latino youth in the Mission District regarding their activities. Later, one of the police officers would claim the boys were engaged in what appeared to be suspicious actions, moving electronic equipment from a parked car to a nearby apartment. An argument ensued and quickly escalated, leaving one of the officers killed by a bullet fired from the other officer’s gun. Within two days, police arrested and charged six college-age Latinos; one escaped and was not found until years later. The boys became known as *Los Siete de la Raza* (The Seven of the People/Race), and after remaining in jail for eighteen months—a time during which the trial captivated the Bay Area—the six Latino youth were acquitted of any wrongdoing.

As the trial ensued, the Bay Area witnessed an intense campaign of support for the young men and a display of unity between people of color in the Bay Area. The Black Panther Party—a group stressing pan-minority identity from its inception—was one of the first organizations to support *Los Siete*, offering \$25,000 along with Huey Newton’s lawyer to represent them in court. The Young Lords, a Puerto Rican activist group, and the Students for a Democratic Society, a predominantly Anglo college-based student group, also pledged their support for *Los Siete*. As Black Panther Party leader Bobby Seale explained, “We’re not talking about how the courts affect black people. We’re talking about the Mexican American brothers, too, and the Puerto Rican brothers and [also] poor white people. We’re talking about everybody.”⁸⁹ The Panthers

⁸⁸ “Historical Background of the Mission and Closeup of Youths,” n.d.. Charles R. Garry Legal Files, BANC MSS 2001/66 c, Ctn. 11, Folder “Martinez, #93036,” [BANC].

⁸⁹ “Seale Explains United Front” *Guardian*, July 12, 1969.

continued to support *Los Siete* throughout their trial, offering additional legal and monetary aide as well as providing a column in their newspaper for updates regarding trial proceedings. To many of the young Latinos attempting to galvanize their community behind the defense of *Los Siete*, the support provided by the Panthers was invaluable. As one organizer later reflected, “We were forming an organization that was very different from other Latino groups in the Mission, since it was founded on political and social principles rather than cultural nationalism and civic pride.”⁹⁰ By working with Latinos, the Panthers established a pan-minority alliance and offered a framework for viewing the plight of *Los Siete* as affecting all people of color in the Bay Area.

For many of the Latinos uniting with African Americans in the defense of *Los Siete* as well as the defendants themselves, the pan-minority alliance and formation of a united identity was a new experience, one that provided an opportunity to re-evaluate their perceptions of those of different racial groups. As one of the young men on trial explained,

We have learned a lot from the black people, too... We have learned from the many tactics they have used in the struggle. The Black Panthers have helped the movement for Los Siete a lot. They have done this because they have realized that they're not the only ones who are oppressed, because we are oppressed in the same manner.⁹¹

The father of one of the defendant's echoed this sentiment while speaking at a conference for the group United Front Against Fascism, stating, “It is very important

⁹⁰ Donna Amador, “The Third World Liberation Movement and the Rise of Latino Power,” in *The Whole World's Watching: Peace and Social Justice Movements of the 1960s & 1970s*, Berkeley Art Center, ed. (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Art Center Association, 2001), 85.

⁹¹ *Basta Ya! The Story of Los Siete de la Raza*.

that we recognize that a strong union of the people is necessary.”⁹² Upon their acquittal, one of the boys specifically acknowledged the support provided by Bay Area African Americans, writing in a local flyer, “we—both Black and Brown people—have reached a higher level of camaraderie and brotherhood...In celebrating our victory, our hearts are filled with much more happiness at knowing that Black and Brown people are now truly united in the vanguard. POWER TO THE PEOPLE! ¡QUE VIVA LA RAZA!”⁹³

In the immediate aftermath of the incident between the young men and the officers, Latino college-age youth in San Francisco formed a panethnic community organization, *Los Siete de la Raza*. Having recently begun the process to start a panethnic community group based at San Francisco State College, the students merely shifted their focus to rallying support for *Los Siete* while also providing services to local Latino youth. The goals of the organization were to free *Los Siete*, educate the public about the oppression of Brown people, and work among minority people to create self-determination and unity.⁹⁴ To that end, for many in the Latino community, the publicity provided by the trial enabled them to create unity among minority youth and address inter-racial issues that had arisen over the years:

Right now the sorts of things the organization is working on (Los Siete de la Raza) are, first of all, getting some unity between all the various gangs in the Mission. Young blacks and browns, Philipinos [sic], Indians and Samoans are moving on each other over such immediate issues as who’s going to get the few jobs [the mayor] has thrown out for the summer. The key to

⁹² “Habla Señor Martinez” *The Black Panther*, August 2, 1969.

⁹³ Rodolfo Martinez, “Our Black Brothers and Sisters,” mimeo, n.d., Charles R. Garry Legal Files, BANC MSS 2001/66 c, Ctn. 11, File “Press and Publicity” [BANC].

⁹⁴ Yolanda Lopez, personal collection, “LOS SIETE DE LA RAZA,” quoted in Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 305.

organizing the young people in the mission is seen as building an awareness of the need for unified action against the real enemy.⁹⁵

Los Siete de la Raza acknowledged the need to create a strong panethnic identity, which would depend on Latino youth identifying with the overwhelming problems facing the Spanish-speaking residents of the Bay Area. In order to accomplish this, organizers sought panethnic support to establish free breakfast programs, medical clinics, and legal defense services providing aid to all Latinos in need.⁹⁶

Despite the attempted outreach and documented successes of the organization *Los Siete*, the adult Latino community in the Bay Area did not consistently support the young men and the group created to support their cause. Some Latino adults viewed the defendants as hoodlums and hippies due to the fact that several of them held previous juvenile records based on run-ins with the law. Even considering the important racial implications of the case, others thought it best not to politicize the issue and let the justice system run its course.⁹⁷ To some of the Latino organizers and defendants, the perceived lack of unified support from the Latino community could be attributed to the fact that the young men of *Los Siete* were Central American at a time when Mexican-American groups held the most influence in the public sphere of the Bay Area. Indeed, when Chicanos from San Francisco set out across the west and southwest to raise funds to support *Los Siete*, only two Chicano groups offered help,

⁹⁵ “Basta Ya! Los Siete de la Raza,” *The Movement*, August 1969, 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Ferreira, “All Power to the People.”

and even then it was not much more than symbolic words of support.⁹⁸ As one of the young men on trial noted of the divisions between the ethnic groups, “One problem especially is with the Chicano Movement, which is just strictly from Mexico. With Chicanos, you know, if you’re white, sometimes you can’t talk to them guys. All they see is people from Mexico and nobody else. This is bad because they are alienating themselves.”⁹⁹ Ultimately, despite the efforts of Bay Area Latinos to use *Los Siete* as a catalyst for a panethnic identity, the group failed to overcome ethnic divisions and disagreements concerning “militant” attitudes of participants, causing members to disband in 1973.¹⁰⁰

Struggles over Resources and Busing

Notwithstanding the successes of the coalitions formed by many Bay Area Latinos and African Americans in the early 1960s—alliances that continued through the decade and the case of *Los Siete*—tensions between the groups emerged in 1968, as issues over equity in the dispersal of public resources and busing for desegregation strained what many considered to be a pan-minority identity growing in strength. Most often, the issues that arose focused on the premise that the needs of Latinos differed from those of African Americans, forcing Latinos to organize separately in order to challenge and make demands of the system. As previously discussed, Latino and African American youth, perhaps due to the fact they attended integrated schools and

⁹⁸ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 294; Mariscal, “Left Turns in the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975.”

⁹⁹ “Basta Ya!” *The Movement*, November 1969, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Juan Gonzales, “San Francisco’s Mission District: Part I,” *Latin Quarter* 1(4), 21-25 (July/August 1975).

participated in neighborhood community groups together, often overcame these differences and presented a united front with a shared identity. Whereas many Latino and African American adults successfully created pan-minority coalitions, divisions among them arose more often, placing greater strains on their relationships, which, ultimately, resulted in a more tenuous and situational pan-minority identity.

The first public dissension between Latinos and African Americans in the Bay Area occurred in 1968 when Latinos accused African Americans of defunding important public programs set up to serve the needs of recently arriving Spanish-speaking immigrants and their children. Specifically, the previously mentioned Oakland Economic Development Council, Inc. (OEDCI), a group with a majority of African Americans on the board, voted to cut the funds for a popular language and job preparation night school for Latino adults. Despite the progress made to unite African Americans and Latinos, this action converted “racial unity and harmony” into “distrust, division, and conflict.”¹⁰¹ In cutting money to the school, Spanish-speaking groups charged African American (and the two Latino board members who also consented to the cuts) with discrimination in funding and paternalistic involvement in their internal affairs. African American leaders responded by claiming that Latinos discriminated because their programs were “limited to participation by a single ethnic (language) group.”¹⁰² Following the decision to defund the adult school, the OEDCI also cut funds to a high school college recruitment center located on several campuses in the East Bay. Local Chicano college students started *La Causa* in order to improve

¹⁰¹ “Street Academy Project Plan,” Bay Area Urban League, Inc., April 23, 1971 [UCB CSC], 27.

¹⁰² Mary Pinotti, “Spanish-Speaking Faction Charges Poverty Council Bias,” July 31, 1968, File “Catholic Voice” [OPL HR].

recruitment and retention of Latino high school students and aid them in the college application process. Similar to the previous cuts, groups of Latinos in the East Bay reacted strongly to the actions of the board, and the divisions deepened between the groups.

To be sure, not all Latinos agreed with the decision to take the fight between racial groups public, believing this would further divide the groups and create long-lasting damage. As one local religious leader stated, “For, if there is no unity of purpose, it takes more time to arrive at goals. If we fight among ourselves, we cannot challenge the ‘Anglo’ power structure.”¹⁰³ Indeed, in response to the actions of the OEDCI and the public rebuke by Latino groups, the Oakland MAPA president authored a letter calling for unity and a focus on the more important issues at hand—the power over many resting in the hands of a few,

I am tired of seeing the Mexican-American poor and humble people in Oakland subjected to the whims of an all Black executive board who claims to be acting on our behalf. This is an open indictment against “fatherly” types... Those organizations who insist on receiving their token allowance and fatherly control will suffer the consequences of shame. All the OEDCI organizations should be experiencing the shame that the Executive Board has brought upon them by allowing it to divide the Mexican American Community and dividing the Mexican-American efforts from the Black. Please do not continue to ignore these divisions. This was caused by the representatives of the poor while the representatives of the rich sat back and realized their work had been done for them by their opposition.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Open Letter to the Oakland Community,” Mexican American Political Association, October 19, 1968, File “Mexican America Politics” [OPL HR].

The author took care not to place blame on entire communities and exacerbate the situation, rather calling into question both Latino and African American leaders for failing to withstand the divisive strategies of those in power. On a similar note, in an African American East Bay newspaper, the following quote appeared in an article describing the tensions arising between racial groups,

The 'Spanish Community' is fighting the 'Black Community,' we are told the 'Black Community' is fighting the 'Spanish Community' yes [sic], we are told. Just who is telling us that it is the poor Blacks or poor Spanish people. NO, it is the vultures who are living off the backs of both the Poor Blacks and Spanish.¹⁰⁵

The author concluded the article by stating that the communities “need to wake up and say NO MORE and really unite.”¹⁰⁶

Throughout the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the calls for unity between African Americans and Latinos in the Bay Area continued as the previous coalitions forged between the groups felt the strains of a growing Latino population with increasing demands for resources and public programs. As Latino groups became more diversified economically, politically, and culturally, the need for additional public programs grew often setting groups against one another as they fought over limited resources. In addition to the controversies over the OEDCI funds, the disbursement of federal money provided by the Model Cities program led Latinos to believe once again that African American controlled boards once chose to neglect their needs and

¹⁰⁵ Bill Lowe, “Oakland Games” *The Flatlands*, July 22-August 13, 1968, 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

programs, favoring instead those that served primarily African American neighborhoods.¹⁰⁷

Responding to the increasing tensions between groups of African Americans and Latinos, in 1970, the African American superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District established the Polyethnic Advisory Committee, a group “empowered to develop curriculum related to the various ethnic groups and serve as a channel of communication to [the superintendent’s] office in matters of concern in education for each ethnic community.”¹⁰⁸ Leaders in the Latino community, however, believed these powers meaningless if they were limited to “advisory” capacity, and in a group vote, they decided against participating on the panel, in effect, signaling to the superintendent that his proposals did not go far enough.¹⁰⁹ To some Latinos in the Bay Area, the strategies and beliefs of the Civil Rights Movement no longer applied to their situation. To be sure, many Latinos and African Americans shared in the limitations of poverty, but the manifestations and problems of identity were distinct to each group, in that one was forcibly brought to the United States and the other arrived looking to better their lives. To the author of an article in a Spanish-language newspaper, this distinction left African Americans searching for their identity, whereas Mexican Americans maintained their culture and language, allowing them to practice cultural maintenance while also assimilating and acculturating.¹¹⁰ To the author, African Americans and Latinos had outgrown their need for one another, and

¹⁰⁷ Bob Distefano, “Chicanos Vs. Model Cities” *Oakland Tribune*, August 28, 1971.

¹⁰⁸ “Chicanos Reject Polyethnic Committee,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, December 1970, 8 and 9.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Celia S. Heller, “Chicano es Bello,” *La Prensa*, May 2 1970, 4.

separate movements better served their purposes in challenging the system as distinct ethnic and racial groups.

In San Francisco, the movement to use busing for integration purposes caused the first rifts between African Americans and Latinos to emerge publicly. In the early 1970s, a decree issued by the courts declared San Francisco Unified School District *de facto* segregated and called for the immediate implementation of a desegregation plan. The district created a citizen advisory council that set about to propose changes to school boundary lines in order to bring about more balance in demographics of the schools. Upon the presentation of various plans, concerns arose among Latino groups that Spanish-speaking students would be bused away from their neighborhood schools, decreasing the number of students receiving bilingual education and language support. To these parents, bilingual and bicultural education took precedent over integration, as many believed the Mission District was already integrated.¹¹¹ A vocal group of active Latino community members held reservations that the citizen advisory committee was only advisory in name, i.e., holding no real power to effect change, and that the predominantly African American and liberal white group had “no real interest in brown children.”¹¹² At the same time, African Americans in San Francisco expressed the concern that Latinos insisted on bilingual education programs in

¹¹¹ “La Raza Caucus Position Paper on the April 28, 1971 Court Order for Integration of San Francisco Public Schools,” Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Box 657, Folder 6 [STAN], 1; “La Raza Caucus Position Paper on the April 28, 1971 Court Order for Integration of San Francisco Public Schools,” Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Box 657 Folder 6 SF/70/171 Johnson, David v. SFUSD [2 of 2] Series Legal Programs/Litigation/SF Numeric Case File [STAN].

¹¹² Stephen S. Weiner, “Educational Decisions in an Organized Anarchy” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1972), Table IX-9 “Interview Data from Latin Non-Participants in the CAC,” 291 and 292.

neighborhood schools to ensure the continuation of segregation throughout the city.¹¹³

While groups made presentations of proposals for integration and vocalized their concerns over the ramifications of busing for desegregation, proponents of unity between the groups called for minority groups to ignore the “divide and rule” strategies employed by the “bourgeoisie,” who were responsible for “posing these two just demands of busing and bilingual education in opposition to each other.”¹¹⁴

Despite the tensions created over the allocation of resources, the proposals for busing, and the divergence of the very foundation of their identity formation, numerous Latino and African American adults throughout the Bay Area continued to build on the relationships forged in the 1960s, challenging those who questioned the veracity and strength of their coalitions. A test of the public unity of African Americans and Latinos presented itself in 1973, when Chicano parents pulled their children from the Oakland schools and took to the streets to protest violence in the schools and the disparity in the educational resources allocated to majority white schools as compared to predominantly minority schools. The protest included a boycott, the creation of alternative schools, and a march of over fifteen hundred adults and youth to the board of education building. Almost immediately, rumors surfaced that Latinos were boycotting against Blacks, and leaders from both groups quickly intervened to dispel these myths. As reported in a local newspaper, at a meeting of teachers, parents, students and the principal at Hamilton Junior High, one “angry black

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Busing and Bilingual Education: A Fight for Equality,” 1976, Bert N. Corona Papers, M0248, Box 39, Folder 33 [STAN], 9.

parent” expressed that “this racial thing is actually being blown up too much.”¹¹⁵ At the same meeting a Latino parent agreed, believing that the “root problem” was the “oppressive system,” and the “only solution is the unity of the whole community.”¹¹⁶ Teachers, parents, counselors, and students admitted confrontations arose between oppressed minorities, but just as often there were problems within ethnic groups—particularly between native born and immigrants; however, as one local leader suggested, because minority groups were similar to the World Champion Oakland A’s, made up of players “*de todos colores y de todos tamaños* (of all colors and sizes),” problems would occur, but that did not detract them from the larger goal of “raising the issue of violence and irrelevant education,” and making “demands [that would] benefit all students regardless of their color or national origin.”¹¹⁷ In addition to promises for bilingual and bicultural curriculum in specific schools and increased involvement for the Latino community in the implementation of demands and the resolution of violence in the schools, the district aided the parents in forming the Multi-Ethnic Group Coalition to “determine how to bring the students together and study and remove the conditions that led to the [recent] events.”¹¹⁸ Around the same time as the boycott, the regional director of the NAACP reiterated the necessity of unity between African Americans and Latinos and commended the work the groups accomplished together in the past. Looking to the future and responding to a dinner

¹¹⁵ Juan Lopez, “‘We must learn to live together...’: Chicano Parents Act for Peace,” *People’s World*, April 14, 1973.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

invitation for the annual San Francisco LULAC chapter, the director offered his support for the Latino organization,

During these past few years, we have grown closer together through our coalitions formed in support of various civil rights and civil liberties actions. This cooperation must be continued and expanded. I will continue my efforts towards developing a united front of our companion organizations against oppression and the denials of equal opportunities in our society.¹¹⁹

Outside pressures and struggles over competing interests contributed to the challenges facing Latinos and African Americans in the Bay Area in creating a pan-minority identity. Yet, despite occasional setbacks and disagreements among the various coalitions, African American and Latino leaders maintained contact with one another and encouraged their respective communities to consider their plights as intertwined, resisting the divisive effects of competition and a narrow vision of progress to detract from their accomplishments as a unified group.

White and American Identities

Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, government and local officials employed many different terms to describe the “race” of Latinos when identifying them for the purpose of the census and for enrolling children in public schools. The identifiers Spanish, Indian, White, Spanish-Americans, Spanish-surnamed, Mexican, and Other Whites all appeared in official documents describing the Latino population with many older residents favoring the term “white” and the privileges this label could afford them. By the 1960s, however, with the rise of the

¹¹⁹ Letter from Leonard H. Carter, Regional Director, to Mr. Shone Martinez, District Director LULAC, April 17, 1973, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Region I, Records, BANC MSS 78/180 c, Carton 13, Folder 13:58 [BANC].

Chicano and Civil Rights Movements, large numbers of Latino youth called for the dropping of the “white” label and the acceptance of identifiers representing their indigenous roots, such as Brown, *La Raza*, Chicano, and Third World. As discussed throughout this chapter, many Latino adults embraced this change and encouraged the creation of panethnic and pan-minority identities based on a shared sense of an identity different from that of “whites.” That said, not all Latinos accepted labeling themselves “of color,” and some instead sought to maintain a “white” identity based either on the color of their skin or their levels of assimilation and acculturation to American norms. These diverse views of race and ethnicity demonstrated the complicated nature of identity formation often creating divisions within the Latino population in the Bay Area.

In a report issued by the federal government examining the experiences of Mexican-Americans in the southwest, researchers observed “most Mexican Americans seem not to identify with any one single overriding problem as Americans. Though they know they’re somehow different, many still cling to the idea that Mexican Americans are Caucasian, thus white, thus ‘one of the boys’.”¹²⁰ In support of this assertion, after a local paper in San Francisco published an article describing three criminals in a case as “a white bandit,” “a black man,” and “a Mexican American,” the local chapter of the GI Forum (a Mexican-American veterans association) raised the question, “Aren’t Mexicans white men?”¹²¹ To the advocacy organization, raising the

¹²⁰ “Stranger in One’s Land,” Clearinghouse Publication No. 19. (Washington D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1970), 3.

¹²¹ “The Chronicle Labels Bandits!” *The Forumeer*, February 1969, Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Box 13, Folder 3 [STAN], 2.

issue of nationality incited discrimination unnecessarily against a group that should have been considered white, not “Mexican.”

To the generation of Latinos and Chicanos fighting for equality and justice in the 1960s, labeling themselves white allowed for a collective denial of the inequities they faced due to their “brown” skin. This label also left children confused as many rejected their culture, heritage, and language while “run[ning] around trying to pass themselves off as white.”¹²² To advocates of using panethnic and pan-minority identities, these youth would grow up and become “Chicano Perdidos,” Latinos who raise children who “don’t read or write in Spanish and...are prone to deny any knowledge of being Spanish Sur-name.”¹²³ Whereas “brown” Latinos resisted outright rejecting their “white” peers, because “they [were] still [their] people,” tensions arose between the groups, making it difficult to maintain panethnic and pan-minority identities when segments of the population vocally rejected these labels.¹²⁴

Troubling to many Latinos was how those who rejected panethnic and pan-minority identities would relate to Latino children in the public schools and how they would interact with and advocate for the community once in positions of power. Many Latinos, both parents and teachers, believed that Latinos who achieved and advanced to administrative levels had the potential to be “Latinos in name only,” and would refuse to help the Spanish-speaking community given the opportunity. To the Latinos attempting to create panethnic and pan-minority identities, Chicanos who attained positions of power often “fall in line unknowingly with racist system, and then the

¹²² “Lies, Lies, Lies, Lies, Lies, Lies!” *Basta Ya!* , 3 de enero, 1970, 2.

¹²³ “El Chicano Perdido,” Mexian American Student Confederation Newsletter, November 24, 1968, File “Mexican American Student Organizations (MASC)” [OPL HR],

¹²⁴ Anonymous, no title, *Ahora*, March, 1968 or 1969.

community has to fight them too.”¹²⁵ In addition to creating a sense of distrust within the Latino community, leaders feared that “Chicano teachers and administrators [who] behave like Anglos once they enter the schools” would “talk about Anglo culture patterns and try to inculcate them in the children.”¹²⁶ Indeed, many believed these types of Latinos were “white brainwashed,” and they questioned if they were “replacing white faces with brown faces and continuing the present social system.”¹²⁷ As previously discussed, many Latino teachers and administrators identified with panethnic and pan-minority advocacy groups in their school districts, encouraging students to take pride in their heritage and culture as members of minority groups thereby creating a stronger sense of community. That said, Latino adults who rejected ethnic and racial identities and embraced a solely “white” identity created tension within the community and caused many to worry that their actions would have negative effects on Latino youth.

Conclusion

In the years following World War II and continuing through the next two decades, the Latino population in the San Francisco area continued to increase at a rapid rate, as newly arriving immigrants and migrants settled in great numbers on both sides of the bay. The port of San Francisco became home to many Central and South Americans following the coffee trade and arriving to work in the shipping industry, while the East

¹²⁵ Francisco Hernandez, “Cultural Pluralism, School Governance, and the Chicano Community,” in *Perspectives on Chicano Education*, eds. Tobias and Sandra Gonzales (Stanford: Chicano Fellows Stanford Students, 1975), 90.

¹²⁶ Gloria Chacón and James Bowman, eds. “The Recruitment, Channeling, and Placement of Chicano Teachers.” (Southwest Network and Study Commission on Undergraduate Education and the Education of Teachers, 1974), 18.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20 and 26.

Bay cities of Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond attracted predominantly those of Mexican origin—populations either newly arrived from across the border or those migrating from the rural central valley of California who were leaving the farming life behind. Prior to changes in the immigration laws of the mid-1960s, Latino immigrants in the Bay Area were more formally educated and of a generally higher socioeconomic background than the average Spanish-speaking household; however, within a few years, the newly enacted changes in the laws affected the make-up of the population, and newly arriving Latino immigrants and migrants were generally less educated and less economically secure than those already settled in the area.

The shifting demographics and the heterogeneity of the Latino population, with over twenty countries represented greatly affected how Latinos interacted with one another as members of diverse ethnic groups as well as how they related to those of different racial backgrounds. Living in highly integrated neighborhoods, Latinos frequently interacted with people of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, often finding it beneficial to establish positive relationships and join community organizations together. Similar to Latino and Chicano youth in the Bay Area, numerous Latino adults and college students used their experiences with those who were different from them to create panethnic and pan-minority identities as they formed coalitions to contest unjust policies and practices and make demands for change; however, perhaps because government programs such as public schools cannot force adults to integrate like they do student populations, Latino adults were unable to sustain the panethnic and pan-minority identities they created, allowing such factors as cultural nationalism, bilingual education, socioeconomic status, struggles

over resources, and assimilation challenge the very identities many actively sought to establish. Despite the weakening of panethnic and pan-minority identities in the Bay Area, Latino leaders continued to attempt to forge relationships among the varying ethnic and racial populations by finding commonalities in their experiences and cultural heritages while simultaneously encouraging their children to do the same.

CONCLUSION

*Ethnicity is not something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught and learned; it is something dynamic, often unsuccessfully repressed or avoided.*¹

In a *Newsweek* article addressing the “problems” of immigration in the United States, a study by Harvard economists states that Mexican immigrants are largely concentrated in low-wage jobs requiring minimal education, and their children fare little better.² The study goes on to present alarming statistics of large wage gaps, increasing high school dropout rates, and low college attendance as evidence of low academic achievement among Latino youth and their parents. Despite the questions this study should raise about unequal educational opportunities for minority groups, the author of the *Newsweek* article accepts the economists’ dismissal of discrimination as a significant factor contributing to the statistics and instead suggests that Latinos simply do not choose to achieve academic success. The negative consequences of dichotomizing skills versus desire are increasingly evident in a society that explores few productive and culturally sensitive pedagogical solutions to remedy the issues schools and communities face. Rather, a general public unaware of the vastly different circumstances—political, economic, and social—Latinos encounter upon immigrating to the United States continues to compare them to ethnic white immigrants of one hundred years past and wonders why Latinos cannot achieve the same success.³ This

¹ Michael M.J. Fischer, “Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 195, quoted in Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 15.

² Robert J. Samuelson, “The Hard Truth of Immigration,” *Newsweek*, June 13, 2005, p. 64 and 65.

³ In the same edition of *Newsweek*, a letter to the editor compares Mexican immigrants to Irish immigrants of the turn of the century, stating that “the wave of immigration from Mexico, unlike the

lack of consideration for differing immigrant experiences further emphasizes the need for a more thorough examination and analysis of education and immigrant Latino culture and identity in the United States.

Within the identity of Latino, there are multiple races, ethnicities, and cultures. The groups that have received the most attention in the literature are Puerto Ricans in New York, Mexican Americans in the Southwest, and Cubans in Florida. The stories of the assimilation and acculturation of these groups amidst much racism and segregation is well documented, examining how these groups persevered and maintained their cultural identity while often became hyphenated Americans. The hyphenated term implies that groups adopted an identity at the intersection of two ideas, one being their country of origin and the other being America (e.g., Mexican American, Italian American). The idea, however, is more complicated, and identity formation is more nuanced, particularly for Latinos. Often they are labeled Hispanic or Latino, and this is intended to capture an entire culture in its name, ignoring the massive differences in language, politics, food, etc. across Latin America—differences very much recognized within the Latino population. For these reasons, it is important to consider how the Latino identity has emerged from within a heterogeneous, often times conflicted, community.

In *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader* many leading researchers on Latinos and education contribute essays in which they grapple with the failures of public

Irish wave of the 19th century, reflects its almost complete disregard for U.S. immigration law.” Tom Webster, Letters, *Newsweek*, June 13, 2005, p. 18-19.

education in meeting the academic needs of Latino students.⁴ It is encouraging that a section of the book is devoted to the history of Latino education, yet more careful research and analysis is needed. An increased number of critical discourses and analyses that engage the broader forces that shape public schooling in Latino communities, such as immigration, construction of Latinidad, and youth identity, is necessary if we hope to better understand how Latino students experience education in the United States. Greater historical research will contribute to a more specific analysis of the transmission of cultural and ethnic identity formation for Latino students and how they ultimately relate to their communities and schools. By exploring the uniqueness of Latino immigrants' experiences as well as connecting these experiences to the complex and often contradicting nature of education discussed in the historical literature, we can more fully comprehend how Latino students and their parents use resistance and grassroots activism as well as a "Latino Ethnic Consciousness" in their struggle for equal schooling and the formation of ethnic, pan-ethnic, and pan-minority identities. By contextualizing events, issues, and thematic concerns shaping the experiences of Mexican Americans and Latinos in the Bay Area as they relate to regional and national trends in education and youth activism, this study hopes to contribute to the ongoing efforts toward improving educational opportunities by increasing the awareness of the methods by which Latino students relate to schools and forge multiple identities through the overlapping processes of assimilation, acculturation and cultural maintenance.

⁴ Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutiérrez, eds. *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

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The Black Panther
Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes Newsletter
Catholic Voice
El Bohemio Magazine
El Jalamate
El Pocho Ché
El Velador
Epasodios
The Flatlands
Hijos de Zapata
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