SECOND GENERATION CHICANAS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
EXPERIENCES OF RACE AND GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS

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Abstract

of

SECOND GENERATION CHICANAS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EXPERIENCES OF RACE AND GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS

by

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The present study explores the experiences of sixteen second generation Chicanas with racial and gender based microaggressions at Sacramento State. Microaggressions are subtle, covert, and often unconscious forms of discrimination that demean and/or invalidate an individual’s identity or lived experiences because of their position within a marginalized community. The study identifies the types of microaggressions experienced, reactions to these, coping mechanisms developed, and the effects microaggressions have on the participant’s identity. Intersectional and multi-racial feminist frameworks are utilized to provide an analysis. By means of in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, three forms of microaggressions were uncovered: environmental microaggressions, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Through these microaggressions, discriminatory ideologies that negate and invalidate the lived experiences of these Chicana participants are reproduced at an interpersonal level. However, these microaggressions provide the participants further understanding of their situated lives in multiple narratives and marginality and fuel to become agents of change.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Todd Migliaccio

_______________________
Date

iv
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................................ v

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................ 1
   Purpose of Study ................................................................................................................................. 2
   Definitions .............................................................................................................................................. 2
   Theory .................................................................................................................................................. 4
   Importance of Study ............................................................................................................................ 5

2. LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................................................. 8
   Chicanas/os in Context .......................................................................................................................... 8
   Gender and Race as Systems of Oppression ...................................................................................... 12
   Microaggressions ................................................................................................................................. 18
   Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................................................... 27
   Effects on Identity ............................................................................................................................... 39
   Summary ............................................................................................................................................. 41

3. RESEARCH METHODS ............................................................................................................................. 43
   Participants ........................................................................................................................................... 44
   Data Gathering .................................................................................................................................... 46

4. RESULTS .................................................................................................................................................. 47
   Primary Socialization ........................................................................................................................ 47
   Experiences with Primary and Secondary Schooling ......................................................................... 50
Types of Microaggression Experiences ................................................................. 54
No Direct Experiences with Microaggressions .................................................... 65
Reactions to Microaggressions ........................................................................... 65
Effects of Microaggressions ............................................................................... 67
Coping with Microaggressions ........................................................................... 74
University as a Space for Empowerment .......................................................... 76
Summary ............................................................................................................ 78

5. DISCUSSION .......................................................................................................................... 81
The Reproduction of Discriminatory Ideologies ................................................ 81
Utilizing the Margin as a Space for Empowerment and Change ..................... 93
Concluding Thoughts .......................................................................................... 97

Appendix A. Consent Forms ............................................................................... 100
Appendix B. Interview Protocol ......................................................................... 101
References .......................................................................................................... 102
Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

Identity is a mechanism by which individuals are able to navigate the many institutions they are a part. As they interact with members of their own community and those of other communities, individuals utilize their identity as a guide of their social location. As we move through our social and environmental interactions, we are affected by the myriad of images, messages, and structures that surround us. Our identity therefore has the capacity to change and evolve. With each new experience, the image that we hold of ourselves can be either reinforced or challenged by members within and outside our own communities. However, for those individuals who are part of marginalized groups, it is the images presented by dominant groups that can present the greatest challenges to their identity. Individuals within these marginalized and historically underrepresented groups must learn to navigate this reality as they attempt to reclaim their selves and liberate their consciousness from the propensity of judging one’s self through the lens of the dominant group (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solorzaro 2009).

Members of subordinate racial and gender groups, such as second generation Chicanas, must on a daily basis attempt to make sense of their lived experiences, and must contend with normative models, images, and representation against which they measure themselves and others. This process can be clearly seen within an institution of higher education. For many Chicanas who are pursuing a higher education, the university setting can become a location in which normative images and representations can cause defeat and disenchantment, or ignite a fire that pushes them to succeed and establish a stronger sense of identity. The lives, experiences, and identity of second generation Chicanas pursuing a higher education can be seen as being shaped by the multiple systems and institutions in which their lives are situated.
PURPOSE OF STUDY

The goal of this research is to provide further understanding as to how second generation Chicanas are affected by their environmental, historical contexts, and, more importantly, by their everyday interpersonal interactions. This investigation seeks to understand second generation Chicanas within the context of higher education. Particularly, this study will identify subtle and covert forms of discrimination known as microaggressions, the coping mechanisms employed by the participants, and the effects of these experiences have upon second generation Chicanas view of their own identity and social location.

DEFINITIONS

The term Chicana can be defined as women with at least one parent of Mexican descent (Hurtado 2003; Reyes III, Valles, and Salinas 2011; Segura 1997). While this label will be utilized within this study as a signifier of racial/ethnic identity, it is important to also note that this term also has political and cultural undertones. The term Chicana has roots within the Chicano movement of the 1960’s and arose as a political and ideological term to describe the shared cultural, political, and historical experiences of Mexican-Americans and their allies (Blea 1992). According to Zavella (1997:45), Chicana designates pride in one’s “Pre-Columbian heritage…the importance of celebrating our mestizo racial and cultural mixtures,” rejection of colonization, and the acknowledgement of a history of racism by the United States toward people of Mexican descent. The label of Chicana has also come to indicate a celebration of hybridity and a “restitution of self, a self that was constructed in the interstices” (Hurtado 2003: 24).

Second generation refers to individuals born in the United States with at least one parent born outside of the country (Farley and Alba 2002; Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994; Zhou 1997). Second generation individuals have lived most, if not all, of their lives in the United States, were
educated in classrooms where English was the primary language, and are fluent in English regardless of the parents’ native language (Farley and Alba 2002). Though Chicanas live within two distinct cultural narratives, many resist ascribing to one narrative or another and attempt to find some sort of balance as they exist and communicate within multiple narratives (Reyes III et al. 2011). Nevertheless, many Chicanas experience debilitating covert and overt attacks on a daily basis for being gender and racial/ethnic minorities. These assaults are known as microaggressions.

Microaggressions are the constant and ongoing everyday reality of subtle verbal, behavioral, and environmental insults and putdowns experienced by historically marginalized groups (Sue 2010; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, and Esquilin 2007; Yosso et al. 2009). Though they can be produced consciously or unconsciously, microaggressions communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative insults, whose cumulative effect can contribute to low self-esteem, internalized self-hate, and confusion (Sue et al 2007; Yosso et al. 2009). Three types of microaggressions have been identified by previous research: microassaults (intentional derogatory verbal and nonverbal attacks), microinsults (intentional or non-intentional insensitive putdowns of an individual’s racial heritage and/or identity), and microinvalidations (intentional or non-intentional remarks that diminish or negate the realities and lived experiences of people of color and women) (Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007; Yosso et al. 2009).

Because of their covert nature, microaggressions often go unnoticed or are brushed off as inconsequential incidences. When confronted with the incident, recipients of these aggressions are limited in their reactions. Individuals can either confront the aggressor and risk being written off as overreacting, or disengage and have the aggression accumulate and/or become internalized (Sue 2010). When microaggressions go unchallenged, perpetrators of these aggressions remain
ignorant to the effect their actions and words have on others and consequently stereotypes, prejudices, and systems of oppression are perpetuated.

The accumulation of microaggressions experienced by individuals can have significant and damaging effects. The effect of these accumulated aggressions can lead an individual to doubt their abilities, their self worth, and can cause emotional and physical stress. For second generation Chicanas who may have experienced discrimination throughout their life, experiencing microaggressions within the university setting—a place that is seen by many as a safe space that provides an avenue for advancing ones social location—can be overwhelming and demoralizing. For second generation Chicanas, microaggressions not only perpetuate established stereotypes of women and racial minorities, but also add another layer to the challenge of managing an identity that is situated between two countries and two cultures: the Unites States and Mexico.

**THEORY**

Analyzing the lived experiences of second generation Chicanas through the perspective of Intersectionality, and the theoretical frameworks of Multi-Racial Feminism and Symbolic Interaction would provide a more accurate picture of the dynamics of living within the intersection of multiple systems, how these individuals develop their identities within this context, and how this knowledge can be utilized as a tool for liberation. While there is substantial work that addresses the link between racist and sexist ideologies to institutional discrimination, there are few studies that address how discriminatory ideologies are reproduced and sustained at the interpersonal level (Blea 1992; hooks 1981, 1984, 1990, 2004; Solorzano, Allen, and Carroll 2002). The discrimination that occurs within institutional settings, such as a college or university, is validated by the effect of micro-level exchanges between groups and individuals
(Solorzano et al. 2002). Through the frameworks of Intersectionality, Multi-racial Feminism and Symbolic Interaction, one can take a look at both the larger context in which second generation Chicanas reside as well as their individual thought and behavior processes.

**IMPORTANCE OF STUDY**

While the work in microaggressions has been predominantly focused on the experiences of racial/ethnic groups in the fields of counseling, the media, and education, little work has been conducted on microaggressions of gender and even less on individuals that are situated within multiple narratives, such as second generation Chicanas. “The complexities of identity development are not fully captured without attention to multiple and intersecting identities and the contexts in which identities are constructed and negotiated” (Jones 2009:287). Providing an analysis that brings more than one system of oppression into play provides a richer and more accurate picture of the historical and personal experiences of second generation Chicanas.

Furthermore, an analysis of this kind that is situated within the context of an institution of higher education allows us to not only add to the growing research on the subject of microaggressions and this population, but also to understand how micro-level discrimination impacts the future of the Chicana population. As members of the fastest growing and largest minority group within the United States, Chicanas have the potential of greatly affecting and changing the institutions and structures of this country. At our present time, higher education has become a primary means through which Chicanas are able to obtain valuable resources and cultural capital so they may make changes to and within social institutions. To understand the micro-level forms of discrimination within institutions of higher education and how these affect the lives of second generation Chicanas provide us a the understanding of how current university
policies, procedures, and overall campus climate negatively affects this population, but also how it can be utilized to assist in the groups’ success and prosperity.

Moreover, an analysis that focuses on racial and gender identity and how they develop and change allows us to understand how individuals manage the established ideologies of their society, and how marginalized individuals, such as second generation Chicanas, react toward them. These reactions are then a consequence to the current “relationship of individuals and groups to intergroup structures of dominance and oppression” (Ferdman and Gallegos 2001:32). An analysis of this kind can provide the foundation for our communities to be more willing to engage in dialogue that breaks down barriers to coalition building.

Acknowledging the real consequences that Chicanas face as a result of racial and gender microaggressions provides a clearer depiction of Chicanas and the context in which they live. To deny a space for the voices of marginalized groups is to deny their experiences and to send the message that their successes and struggles are inconsequential. If one speaks from a privileged perspective, the biases and prejudices that exist within the researcher must be acknowledged as the researcher is one platform through which representations of marginalized groups are created and validated. The relationship between the researcher and respondent also establishes a power dynamic that usually situates the researcher within a dominant position and a respondent in a subordinate position. For the voices of marginalized groups, such as Chicanas, to be heard and acknowledged, a polarized relationship cannot persist. Those who wish to explore issues within marginalized groups must humble themselves to the realities faced by these groups and move forward with this new understanding in mind. The hope is that this study will elucidate how microaggressions have the power to impact and change the identities of second generation Chicanas.
This research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What forms of microaggressions, if any, are experienced by second generation Chicanas within the classroom and on the university campus? (2) How do these women immediately respond to microaggressions? (3) What messages do these acts of discrimination communicate? (4) How do these women cope with these aggressions? (5) How do these women see themselves within the context of their racialized and gendered selves?
Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

CHICANAS/OS IN CONTEXT

To begin an analysis of the experiences of second generation Chicanas, one must first look at the structural conditions that have shaped their experiences. Specifically, rather than looking at the group and individuals in isolation, the material historical conditions must be examined. Beginning with this historical context provides a greater understanding as to how “stereotypes [become] hegemonic, and how Chicanas have become marginalized and invisible in the popular, political, and scholarly discourses” (Zavella 1991:76). To begin an analysis in this manner, provides researchers a more honest and grounded understanding of Chicanas as a whole individual.

The history and relationship between Mexico and the United States has been one of conflict, conquest, and struggle. Much of this history, however, has been predominantly neglected, marginalized, and made invisible, much in the same way as the lives and experiences of its people (Martinez 1993; Morin 2004). In the early 1800s, the United States set course to dominate the whole of the Western Hemisphere. This was made palatable through the use of racist ideology, such as Manifest Destiny. This ideology set the belief that the United States and its citizens had the divine right of territorial expansion based on their supposed racial superiority. The federal policy that provided justification for this ideology and U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere was the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which validates U.S. presence and domination over the Americas. Furthermore, the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine of 1904 legitimized not only the use of armed force by the United States to remove European threat from Central and South America but also ensured that it could use force to gain privileges for American corporations (Morin 2004).
These policies set the stage for U.S. domination over Mexico. In 1848, with the end of the U.S.-Mexico War and the passage of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States absorbed into it what is now California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado (Glenn 1985; Morin 2004; Perea 1997; Zavella 1991). As the United States took this land, it reduced the indigenous populations to “agricultural peons and wage laborers” (Glenn 1985:90). Following the U.S.-Mexico War, those that were brought into this new country were forced to labor in intensive and menial work such as construction of railroad tracks, factory work, and farm labor (Blea 1992). To ensure dominance over Mexicans, the United States imposed upon this population a foreign language and culture, and restricted the rights of Mexicans through legislation (Morin 2004; Zavella 1991). Mexicans throughout the Southwest were also segregated within education, work, and public facilities (Martinez 1993). In more recent times, anti-immigration initiatives such as California’s Proposition 187 of 1994, which limited or denied undocumented immigrants access to social welfare benefits, were implemented and have consequently further exacerbated the already deplorable conditions of Mexicans (Perea 1997).

Similar experiences have taken place within the educational system. As early as 1916, discriminatory policies within the educational system throughout the nation placed those children who spoke Spanish and those with Spanish surnames in segregated schools (Espino 2008). By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these programs of “Americanization” stripped Mexican Americans of their culture and language, enforced so called “American values,” and perpetuated a racist system (Espino 2008; Yosso 2006). The Europeanizing Mexicans was so successful that even to this day it can be deemed deviant to question or be critical of the premise (Blea 1992). Additionally, it was within this epoch that it became evident that Chicanas resided in two separate lives: in public spaces they adhered to the new laws, policies, and norms of the United States, but within their homes they adhered to the norms and practices of their culture. To grow up in this
time, as it is now for many second generation Chicanas, was to be part of a struggle between “what was taught at home and what was taught in school, for their mothers were of a different generation, a different country, a different historical period” (Blea 1992:53).

In the current century, Latinas/os are still among the most underrepresented group in higher education. Between the years 1990 and 2000, the Latina/o population in the United States increased by 25 percent. Within this same time period, however, the percentage of the Latina/o population over the age of 25 that had a college degree only increased by 6.1 percent (Espino 2008). Furthermore, while the Latino/a population grew to encompass 16.7% of the total U.S. population (52 million) in 2010, and is projected to reach 30.2% of the U.S. population (132.8 million) by 2050, only 13% of Latinos 25 or older had a bachelor’s degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). In California, although Latinas/os encompass 37.6 percent of the state’s population, this percentage is not represented within the education system of the state (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Though Chicanas/os are the largest ethnic group within the Latina/o umbrella label and represent 66.9 percent of the population, Chicanas/os have the lowest level of educational attainment (Espino 2008; Yosso 2006). “Out of every 100 Mexican American elementary school children, 44 will graduate from high school, 7 will graduate with a Bachelor’s degree, and less than 1 will earn a doctorate” (Espino 2008:28-29).

The situation is further exacerbated within and around the classroom. Chicana/o students at all levels of the higher education system can experience frustrations with the lack of overall support of the staff and faculty. While many community college students have the goal of transferring to four year universities, lowered expectations of success by counselors and faculty play a part in “cooling out” (Yosso 2006:100) those aspirations. This can result in high levels of stress for these students as they are pushed to reaffirm their intelligence and value. Moreover, many school’s curricula are based upon deficit models that perpetuate negative, stereotypical
images of Chicanas/os and their communities (Espino 2008). Yosso (2006:110) states that the educational system has been structured in such a way as to “racially segregate, linguistically marginalize, push out, and discriminate against Chicanas/os.” The paradigm that is put forth within the educational system is one that is Eurocentric and promotes this to be the only truth (Espino 2008). This overall campus climate contributes to educational inequalities experienced by Chicana/o students (McCabe 2009).

For Chicanas, their path of higher education is further riddled with the challenge of shifting stereotypical images that have been perpetuated within and outside of academia (Escobedo 1980). Solorzano (1993) found that while all the students in his study were exposed to discrimination during their undergraduate and graduate studies, women encountered greater discrimination than their male counterparts at each of the educational points. Many of the women expressed a great concern about the overt and covert forms of sexism they experienced. Chicana students, in particular, experienced more frequent discrimination from faculty, staff, and administrators than other students. These experiences, in turn, made the students question their abilities to succeed in their programs and their value within academia. Similarly, the Chicana scholars interviewed by Yosso (2006b) also express experiences of devaluation. One scholar in particular stated that she noticed that many of the faculty within her academic program tended to treat Chicanas a bit differently “as if [they] should be cleaning their office, not going to their office hours. Or [being] watched with suspicion and questioned about their business on campus” (Yosso 2006b: 132).

It is within this context that second generation Chicanas are located. Their indigenous ancestors and current brothers and sisters, both in Mexico and in the United States, are subjected to conditions a subordinate position in society. They are seen to be less than or even inconsequential. Second generation Chicanas exist between both their indigenous past and their
“American” present and within two systems that inherently oppress their truth and lived experiences. To examine the experiences of Chicanas within institutions of higher education that integrates multiple systems of oppression helps researchers understand how this group’s identity as a member of multiple communities can evolve and shift.

GENDER AND RACE AS SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

When looking at who an individual is, one can see that their gendered and racial selves stand within systems of oppression that materialize in overt and covert forms of discrimination. These two systems produce dichotomous categories justifying social hierarchies (Collins 1986; Collins 2003; Glenn 2002). Rather than being complementary, these categories are inherently opposed to one another and unstable (Collins 1986). Therefore, these categories repress “variability within each category and exaggerating differences between categories,” where one category is seen as dominant and “normal” while the other is seen as subordinate and “problematic” (Glenn 2002:13). The development of hierarchies as a result of this value placement provides for organization according to “relations of domination and subordination” (Sandoval 1991:11). Those who are deemed as dominant (normative) actors are able to then frame the discourse and views of subordinate groups.

Because of the propensity of particular representations and images being utilized to define certain categories and groups of people, these become generalizations. These “master narratives” (Espino 2008:14) form the dominant culture and thus structures of our society in order to maintain and reproduce their power, while at the same time further subjugating those communities at the margins. These images become what Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2009:65) calls “instruments of power,” which normalize racism and sexism, frame our everyday interactions, and take its form without the use or threat of force in varying locations (Glenn 2002; Vasquez
In internalizing such narratives, individuals, even those who are negatively affected by them, reproduce these same narratives in their daily interactions.

The master narratives of what a racialized and gendered person looks like have denied the lived experiences of women of color. As Collins (2003:597) stated, “What appear to be universal categories representing all men and women instead are unmasked as being applicable to only a small group.” Chicanas, as well as other women of color, have been left out these narratives: men of color are seen as the universal racial subject, while white women are seen as the universal gendered subject (Glenn 2002). Those in power frame the discourse and views of subordinate groups. The ideology of color-blind racism that emerges is utilized as a political instrument to organize difference (Bonilla-Silva 2010).

In speaking of hegemonic ideologies, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) states that for their position to be maintained, dominant groups create and reproduce ideas that reaffirm their power. Prevailing ideas of focusing around issues of race and gender have become so insidious that conceptualizing alternatives has become quite difficult to conceptualize for members of dominant and subordinate groups. There is a need within hegemonic power to garner the support from members within dominant and subordinate groups in order for these ideas to proliferate and function appropriately. Collins (2000:203) furthermore states that the greatest power of the “hegemonic domain…lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies.”

For subordinate groups, such as Chicanas, negative normalized images and representations established by dominant groups perpetuate and reproduce such power dynamics at both the institutional and interpersonal levels. Through a culture deficit model at the institutional level, Chicanas are relegated to dilapidated housing, intensive labor work, and inadequate health care services and educational resources (Talavera-Bustillos 1998). Such a theory, however, is a
different version of “blaming the victim,” and supposes that the culture of Chicanas that is the true hindrance to their professional goals (Zavella 1991). The reinforcement of stereotypes can build a foundation for lowered expectations that produce self-fulfilling prophecies for students. The constant exposure of these master narratives can lead Chicanas along many paths. She can internalize and reproduce these narratives; ignore and look the other way; or she can transform these narratives to demonstrate the realities of her own lived experiences and that of her communities (Espino 2008).

Race

Race is a social construction that has been shaped throughout history by institutional and representational processes (Saxton 1990). The racial formations that have emerged are a result of relations of power that are unequal and disproportionate (Barajas 2009; Pulido 2006; Solorzano et al. 2002). Laura Pulido (2006:22) asserts that “the idea of racial groups and race itself is rooted in attempts to assert control over particular populations in order to enhance the position and well-being of others.” The rise and dominance of the notion of race and the reality of racism stem from its rationalization within religion as the “divine origins of white Christian civilization” and later within science as European thought shifted and “racism assumed the form of a scientific doctrine” (Saxton 1990:15).

The institutionalization of racism justifies and rationalizes the conquest and exploitation of other countries and peoples. “The notions of biological difference and, more specifically, the corollaries of biological inferiority and superiority gave conquering forces ideological tools to dehumanize their victims and legitimate their actions” (Pulido 2006:22). Within the context of the United States, the dominant ideology that has emerged is one that is dichotomous in nature: the Black/White paradigm. This binary excludes marginalized groups such as Chicanas/os from taking part in this discourse. Because Chicanas/os do not fit within this paradigm, their lived
experiences are marginalized, ignored, or seen as insignificant (Ferdman and Gallegos 2001; Perea 1997). While this paradigm may be a preferable perspective to help situate Latinas/os, the experiences of Latinas/os are dynamic, varied, and complex and cannot be deciphered with a simple explanation. Furthermore, the phenotypic variety that exists within the Chicana/o community does not fit adequately within this paradigm. While Chicanas/os have challenged and risen above these black/white categories, these same categories continuously impact their lives (Ferdman and Gallegos 2001). The established racial-binary paradigm permits established stereotypes (e.g. insignificant and culturally deficient) of Chicanas/os and undercut attempts by this community to equality (Perea 1997).

This paradigm has become normalized to the extent that its inequalities are not only seen within the institutions of our society but are also at an interpersonal level. That which guides our racial relations at the micro-level largely depends on our notions of what a particular racial group looks and acts like. Many Americans thus perpetuate and reproduce racism in believing that these inequalities and differences represent essential or natural divisions within the human species, “even though their definitions were constructed according to a particular social, political, and cultural contexts” that are subject to change (Glenn 2009:11-12). The fact that these ideologies are still prevalent within our society indicates how deeply entrenched such ideologies are and alludes to their utility in “shaping contemporary power relations” (Pulido 2006:22). To change such a paradigm, then requires an expansion in the definition of racism that provides space and voice for the histories and lived experiences of other people of color, particularly those that were first subjugated to racialization projects, e.g. indigenous people (Perea 1997).

**Gender**

Like race, gender is also a social construction that emerged out of an unequal power dynamic that has been transmitted by both institutional and interpersonal processes. The ideology
that has emerged is one that places females in a subservient position to males. The overall lack of value for women in this society provokes the oppression of women, and demonstrates devaluation of their bodies and their societal contributions (Blea 1992). Since approximately the nineteenth century, caring for the emotional and physical well being of others, or “caring labor,” has been considered to be the model form of “women’s work” within the United States (Baker and Feiner 2009:41). The cult of true womanhood during this time became an ideal that women, as a result of their inherent biological characteristics, were meant to remain in the household and were unsuited for participation within the public sphere, e.g. wage labor and school (Baker and Feiner 2009; Kimmel 2008). Women became socialized to the seclusion of the private sphere—the home, procreation and child rearing, passivity, and attending to a male’s needs—while men are socialized to the public sphere—wage labor, education, violence, assertiveness, and political institutions. As a result, much of female socialization and education is constructed around the pursuit of marriage and its expectations (Goldman 1914).

Within the discourse of gender difference and gender inequality, biological explanations within gender are often given great weight (Kimmel 2008). The biological explanation provides justification for the subjugation and exploitation of females. Consequently, patriarchal policies, structures, and principles devaluate women and consider them intellectually and emotionally inferior to men, awarding men power over women (Lorber 2010; Sue 2010). It is this power that reproduces gender differences and inequalities within social structure and interpersonal relationships (Lorber 2010; Kimmel 2008). Within this structure, women are not expected to be part of the labor market directly, but indirectly as consumers. Their role as consumers depresses their position within the labor market, further devalues them, and maintains their dependency on males as the traditional wage earner (Blea 1992; Glenn 1985; Lorber 2010).
The pervasiveness of these devaluing messages makes clear to women the type of roles and behaviors they are expected to uphold as well as the inequalities that are produced. The legitimization of such values by institutions further allows individuals to continue to believe in the breadwinner/housewife dynamic, though this model may not reflect the reality of their daily experiences (Kimmel 2008). In the event that women do voice and/or act on their discontent, patriarchal ideologies provide the needed foundation for men to make women seem foolish or deviant to further discredit their social positions (Blea 1992). Furthermore, within primary socialization women are provided a framework that is utilized as a guide in the development of a socially acceptable identity (Cooper, Grotevant, and Condon 1983). This process requires a critical look at oneself and at society simultaneously, while also shifting as new elements are added to the equation (Cooper et al. 1983).

The gender paradigm is one that does not provide space for the voices of women of color, as the cult of true womanhood positions white, middle-class females as the ideal. As Glenn (1985:102) has stated, “a definition of womanhood exclusively in terms of domesticity never applied to racial ethnic women” as women of color did not have the luxury of only staying in the home to tend to their family. Within this definition of womanhood, Chicanas can only be understood within a single social category, which restricts an analysis of gender roles solely to the family (Baca Zinn 1980). The reality is that the social location of Chicanas rests within multiple institutions and systems, but also within multiple cultures. Within the labor market, Chicanas had to work for wages because the men within their communities were unable to earn living wages (Glenn 1985). This led to working a double-shift: work outside of the home for wages as their first shift then tend to their families and home as their second shift. In their homes, Chicanas continue to live within contradiction as they may receive mixed messages from parents and family relatives: girls are expected to, on the one hand, uphold traditional female roles focused on
the family and home; on the other hand, are pressured to excel in their studies and to aspire for collegiate and professional careers (Segura 1993).

As a consequence to the stress associated with their social contexts, some Chicanas step outside of their prescribed gender roles. While this action may be seen as deviant, Chicanas may utilize this action as a means to challenge their marginalization and attempt to take control of their own lives. On the other hand, to not step outside of their prescribed roles may signal their repression and their acceptance of a way of being that is defined by another’s standards. This acceptance may make Chicanas feel that they are powerless to change their positions (Blea 1992). It is by understanding her historical, generational, and social context that we can more accurately understand how her experiences affect her “process of identification” (Zavella 1991:78).

**MICROAGGRESSIONS**

Although there has been great progress within civil rights since the 19th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act, both overt and covert discrimination are still widely ongoing. As the United States shifts away from tolerating overt and direct acts of discrimination, the nature of discrimination has changed to one that is more covert, subtle, indirect, and ambiguous that is now built into cultural and social norms (Capodilupo et al. 2010; Rivera et al. 2010; Solorzano et al. 2002; Sue et al. 2007; Sue et al. 2008). Given this, the dominant societal perception is that minorities and women are doing much better, discrimination is declining, and that society is quickly approaching equality among all groups (Sue et al. 2007; Sue et al. 2008). Though overt forms of discrimination may be on the decline and greater protections may be afforded to subordinated groups, covert acts of discrimination are still widespread. The subtle and ambiguous nature of covert discrimination makes it more difficult to track and ameliorate. The
greatest challenge then becomes to have people be willing and open to engage honestly about discrimination and “mak[e] the invisible visible” (Sue et al. 2007a:281).

**Racial Microaggressions**

Coined by Chester M. Pierce (1977:65) with his work in analyzing discrimination against African Americans, microaggressions are seen as “[t]he chief vehicle for proracist behavior… [and] are subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges…” Microaggressions have become so pervasive and automatic within our everyday interactions that they are often dismissed as being innocent and harmless (Sue et al. 2007b). Members of marginalized groups, e.g. Chicanas, are subjected to countless microaggressions on a daily basis by the media, friends, teachers, and coworkers (Solorzano et al. 2002). The nature of microaggressions impedes the acknowledgement that the personal biases and prejudices of senders of microaggressions reproduce a detrimental environment for marginalized groups (Rivera, Forquer, and Rangel 2010; Solorzano et al. 2002). Consequently, microaggressions can be quite damaging because they attack one’s self-esteem, harvest anger and frustration, and create inequalities by denying marginalized groups equal access and opportunity to education, employment, and healthcare (Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007b; Sue et al. 2008).

Research on microaggressions has been primarily focused within racial relations, describing the relationship between sender and recipient of the aggressions, classifying their everyday manifestations, deconstructing their hidden messages, and exploring their consequences (Huber and Cueva 2012; Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007b; Sue et al. 2008). However, much of this work has not taken into consideration the historical context between groups and generational differences that result in varying experiences. To explore the wide array of microaggressions experienced by marginalized groups and the historical dynamics between marginalized and
dominant groups provides space for greater understanding as to the effects to the identities of members of marginalized groups (Sue et al. 2007b).

Microaggressions can be conveyed verbally, nonverbally and environmentally. Environmental microaggressions are the “numerous demeaning and threatening social, educational, political, or economic cues that are communicated individually, institutionally, or socially to marginalized groups” (Sue 2010:25). These types of microaggressions are powerful as they are reproduced through symbols and inaccurate representations within television, music, film, and the education system (Sue 2010). Additional forms of microaggressions include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. This taxonomy of these three forms of aggressions and their distinct subthemes was first developed by Sue et al. (2007b). Microassaults are more likely to be conscious and purposeful and are communicated through environmental cues, verbalizations, or behaviors, e.g. telling and laughing about racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual-orientation jokes, or deliberately serving a White customer before a person of color. Microassaults are the most similar to the racism, sexism, and heterosexism prior to the civil rights era (Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007b; Sue Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, and Rivera 2008).

Microinsults are messages that transmit insensitivity and stereotypes, demean an individual’s racial, sexual, and gender identity, and are subtle and commonly unconscious aggressions. Some common themes of microinsults include ascription of intelligence, second-class citizen, pathologizing cultural values and communication styles, and assumption of criminal status (Sue et al. 2007b). Microinvalidations are those communications that exclude and deny acceptance of the thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences of marginalized groups. Themes within microinvalidations include alien in one’s own land (the perception of being a perpetual foreigner in the country one was born in—Asian Americans and Latinos are most likely to experience such microinvalidation), color-blindness, the myth of meritocracy, and denial of
personal racism (Rivera et al. 2010; Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007b, Sue et al. 2008). Both microinsults and microinvalidations specifically attack the self-esteem, beliefs, and identities of marginalized groups.

When experiencing a microaggression, many people of color state they have the feeling of being attacked, disrespected, and experience uneasiness about the entire situation. Because microaggressions often assist to develop a psychological barrier for both the aggressor and recipient, it can be easier to handle overt and obvious forms of discrimination (Sue et al. 2007a). Additionally, the most harmful microaggressions occur between those that hold power and those most disempowered. It can thus be said that microaggressions are a reflection of an “unconscious worldview of White supremacy, an inclusion-exclusion views that are imposed on racial and ethnic minorities” (Sue et al. 2009: 183). This innocuous characteristic of microaggressions gives space for Whites to develop a false understanding about the function and nature of racism in the United States (Sue et al. 2007b; Sue et al. 2009).

In their study of how microaggressions affect the lives of Latina/o Americans, Rivera et al. (2010) discovered that the Latinas/os participating in the study experience seven different microaggressions: ascription of intelligence; second-class citizen; pathologizing cultural values/communication style; characteristics of speech; alien to own land; criminality/assumption of criminal status; invalidation of Latina/o experience; and other assumed Latina/o attributes. Many of their experiences were found within the context of education at both the primary and secondary levels. While many of their experiences were non-confrontational, others became hostile in nature in their attempts to respond. If individuals chose to respond, they risked a level of hostility from aggressors. On the other hand, if they chose to remain quiet, they risked internalization of the aggression. The dynamics within this interaction strengthens a cycle of oppression as microaggressions go unaddressed (Rivera et al. 2010).
Gender Microaggressions

Unlike subtle racism, few studies have focused on subtle forms of sexism. What does exist suggests that gender microaggressions “invalidate women, diminish their contributions and accomplishments, and limit their effectiveness in social and professional settings” (Capodilupo et al. 2010:194). Similarly to racial microaggressions, gender microaggressions can also be categorized as gender microassaults, gender microinsults, and gender microinvalidations. Gender microassaults are more blatant forms of sexism. Microinsults are more subtle as they are verbal and non-verbal incidences that are often unintentional and express negative messages about women. Finally, microinvalidations are unintentional verbal remarks that negate the thoughts and feelings of women (Capodilupo et al. 2009).

Women are greatly assailed by the microinsult of second-class citizen; not only are their physical bodies devalued, but so too their human essence. Women are therefore perceived within a subordinate position to men. Rigid gender-role beliefs serve as a source of control and power over women through descriptive and prescriptive means. Descriptive female stereotypes are false beliefs about women that are imposed by a dominant powerful group, e.g. women are too emotional, illogical, and overly sensitive. Prescriptive female stereotypes are believed to be more damaging, however, because they state how women should think, feel, and behave and enact punishments on those who violate these roles (Sue 2010). Additionally, these narratives of normative roles are not written from the perspective of women. Early in the 20th century, C.P. Gilman (1911) stated that we live in a world that has been created by and for men, and is therefore a reflection of male characteristics, such as when one praises the work of a woman, “we say she has a ‘masculine mind’.” Emma Goldman (1911) also stated that women went through a “failed emancipation” as they moved from the household to the workforce. In fact, this
movement only added stress to women as they were now expected to maintain steady work for wages as well as maintain their traditional gender roles of a housewife.

Gloria Anzaldua (1987:17) reiterates this view in stating that culture has been created by men and women are expected “to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the [cultural] value system than men.” The power held by men encompasses verbal, symbolic, and physical power (Kimmel 2008). It is through from this power dynamic that the microinsult of sexual-objectification pervades. This microinsult provides the message that a woman’s appearance is for the pleasure of men and a woman’s body is not her own. The women that follow the normative standards of beauty are inflicted by a double-edged sword that is used to judge and keep women in a subordinate position (Sue 2010). Adherences to gender ideologies that do not accurately portray the everyday realities and experiences of women entangle women in a process that impedes the exploration of other forms of expression.

In an analysis of how racial and gender microaggressions affect the career paths of twelve Chicana/o scholars, Solorzano (1998:125) documented that these individuals “endured acts of disregard” that included nonverbal messages, stereotypical assumptions, lowered expectations, and racially derogatory comments such as “You’re not like the rest of them. You’re different;” “I don’t think of you as Mexican;” and “You speak such good English.” These experiences were viewed by these individuals as a rejection of their presence at the university.

In an exploratory study of how race-ethnicity and gender can be confirmed and supported by wage labor for 152 Chicana white-collar workers, Segura (1992) found that the tasks accomplished during work, the overt and covert sex and race-ethnic discrimination and harassment, and the gender specific tasks Chicanas do at home, perpetuated dominant gender and race/ethnic expectations. Many of the women in the study felt that sexual harassment was one the
most underreported problems within the institution. One professional worker stated the issue clearly:

Everyone likes to pretend it [sexual harassment] doesn’t happen…this university it’s so small that bosses know each other…so you sort of have to be careful how you handle it. So, if you really want to nail him, you’d better go through the proper channels and make sure that when you do it you do it well (professional worker #102a, Segura 1992: 172).

The sexual harassment experienced by these Chicanas reinforced their sense of vulnerability and subordination to the men within the university. These Chicanas were transformed into objects that exist for the benefit of men and were removed as being the owners of their bodies.

In their look at gender microaggressions, Capodilupo et al. (2010) found that their participants experienced many of the categories within the microaggression taxonomy developed by Sue et al. (2007): sexual objectification, sexist language, second-class citizen, assumption of inferiority, assumption of traditional gender roles, denial of reality of sexism, and environmental microaggressions. They also noted one original category not before stated: leaving gender at the door. This last category was something that was only mentioned by a small percentage of participants, but refers to deflection by aggressors that gender roles are not relevant to the experience. Only a small percentage of the participants spoke to how they responded to experiences with microaggressions, and stated that the decision to respond or not respond to the aggression was overwhelming. Those that were assertive and confronted the aggressor saw a change in the future actions of the aggressor, while those that chose not to respond saw it as a means to ignore the entire incident (Capodilupo et al. 2010).

**Microaggressions in the Education System**

Microaggressions within the education system uphold White privilege and assume the existence of meritocracy and maintain tension. While microaggressions in education may not always be expressed interpersonally through verbal and non-verbal aggressions, they can be experienced through the overall climate of the campus (McCabe 2009; Solorzano et al. 2002).
Additionally, while there has been little research that has focused on how college students are influenced by the intersecting oppressions of race and gender, the current research on women and racial groups provides a limited comparison for such an analysis (McCabe 2009).

At an institutional level, environmental microaggression can evoke feelings of isolation and thus lead to students missing opportunities that can enhance their academic journeys. In her work exploring the experiences of Latinos applying to graduate school, Ramirez (2011) found that one of the leading barriers for student success was the lack of Latino faculty. As a result many of the participants expressed not being comfortable enough to approach other professors for mentorship, advice, or letters of recommendation. Students felt that Latino faculty, because of their cultural background, took greater “interest in them and appreciated their intellectual talents and abilities compared to mainstream faculty” (Ramirez 2011:212).

In exploring the experiences of graduate teaching assistants from underrepresented backgrounds in a predominantly white institution, Gomez, Khurshid, Freitag, and Lachuk (2011) found that the teaching decisions of participants were continuously challenged by the European American teaching assistants. Participants stated that the aggressive manner of such challenges caused them to question their own abilities as future teachers. The overall negative environment experienced proved to further isolate and marginalize their position within the larger institution. This feeling of isolation as a result of microaggressions was also experienced by the students of color interviewed by McCabe (2009:145), whose participants stated feeling like “outsiders on their own campus and in their own classrooms,” and Solorzano et al. (2002), whose participants developed great levels of frustration because they were usually the only students of color in their classrooms and were expected to speak on behalf of their entire racial/ethnic group. Sue et al. (2009:183) has stated that major consequences of microaggressions for persons of color in institutions of higher education can include the creation of a “hostile and invalidating campus
climate; the perpetuation of the stereotype threat; and an assault on the mental health of recipients.”

As a result of these experiences, there is a need to establish networks and mechanisms by which to deflect and cope with their emotions. As a means to turn around their negative feelings, many of the students interviewed by Solorzano et al. (2002:42) stated that they pushed themselves to succeed in order to “prove wrong” the ideas, statistics, statements and attitudes that say people of color are less intelligent or less capable than others.” In addition, many of these students sought out mentorship from faculty of color who “understood their plight on campus” and “were concerned about their success and had a positive, vested interest in it” (Solorzano et al. 2002:61). The participants in McCabe’s (2009) work coped with their experiences and emotions by bonding together with other students that can relate to their experiences, embraced the role of the spokesperson for their community in their classrooms, and/or confronted aggressors. While participants expressed there being a sense of stress associated with making the choice to respond back to aggressors or finding those spaces and individuals that can be of guidance, their choice to take these actions provided them the opportunity to maintain a sense of control and the encouragement to continue their academic goals.

The existence of microaggressions within our environment and intrapersonal relationships presents one with a worldview that places those on the margins and those who hold dominant positions within a dichotomous relationship of inclusion/exclusion, superiority/inferiority, and normalcy/abnormality (Sue 2010). Marginalized groups must contend with standards and values that view differences as deficiencies and are forced to comply with cultural expectations that may be counter to their own views. As the values and standards of the dominant culture become institutionalized, they are reproduced and perpetuated with future generations through the mechanism of socialization.
In order for this relationship of the oppressor/oppressed to continue and to preserve the elusiveness of these aggressions, a “culture of silence” (Sue 2010:112) must be perpetuated between these two parties. This culture of silence can also be seen as hegemonic ideologies that become so immersed within our society that they become normalized and “determine the boundaries of acceptable thought” (Pulido 2006:22). Furthermore, “when the oppressed are not allowed to express their thoughts and outrage, when their concerns are minimized, and when they are punished for expressing ideas at odds with the dominant group, their voices are effectively silenced” (Sue 2010:112). When a dialogue around these issues is terminated before it ever had the opportunity to develop, an entire society is maintained ignorant, is desensitized to the realities surrounding them, and is veiled to why certain messages and representations are presented to be of inheritance to certain groups. A new consciousness must arise to combat hegemonic ideologies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is within interaction at the interpersonal level that Chicanas experience these subtle forms of discrimination. It is through language and nonverbal behavior by which microaggressions are transmitted and processed. Henry Giroux (1997:121) states that language cannot be separated from “lived experiences and from how people create a distinctive voice.” Further, language is connected to an “intense struggle among different groups over what will count as meaningful and…legitimat[e], placing particular renderings of ideology, behavior, and the representation of everyday life in a privileged perspective” (Giroux 1997:121). Language is therefore a means through which others come to understand who we are and how we know ourselves. It is with language that we are able to define our reality (Espinoza 1994).
To explore how experiences of microaggressions have the power to shift the identities of second generation Chicanas, the frameworks of Intersectionality, Multi-Racial Feminism, and Symbolic Interaction are utilized. Intersectionality shines light on the multiple narratives that second generation Chicanas are a part of and must contend with on a daily basis. Multi-Racial Feminism provides insight into the power dynamics between the individual and social structure. Symbolic Interaction provides the means by which to understand how narratives and ideologies at the societal level are reproduced at the interpersonal level. The combination of these frameworks helps to illuminate the ability of Chicanas to interpret and reflect upon their social location, take charge of their personal agency, and how institutions of higher education can become allies to this population and establish means by which to value their experiences and assist them in becoming successful individuals.

**Intersectionality**

Gender and race/ethnicity are not just a means of classification and organization. They express the inequality between women and men and between those within dominant and subordinate racial groups. The discourses within these systems are not just one of difference but one of hierarchy, power, and inequality (Kimmel 2008). The relation that exists within domination and subordination produces a power imbalance that becomes “the cornerstone of women’s difference” (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996:327). This power dynamic is accentuated for women of color who are not only assaulted because of their subordinate position as women but also as a racial/ethnic minority. Their experiences within multiple systems of oppressions, however, cannot be separated or compartmentalize in any neat fashion. Patricia Zavella (1991:73) poignantly stated that “women of color have argued that race, class, and gender—including sexuality—are experienced simultaneously, and to only use a gender analysis for understanding women’s lived experience is reductionist and replicates the silencing and social
oppression that women of color experience daily.” It is therefore within the intersections of systems of oppression that one must look to in order to capture the realities of individuals. The conceptual framework of intersectionality can bring to light those realities.

Coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989:139), intersectionality “denote[s] the various way[s] in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of [an individuals’] experiences.” The focus here lies on the relationship among multiple systems of oppression (Espino 2008; Jones 2009; Jordan-Zachery 2007). Furthermore, as intersectionality provides us with understanding of the differences between and within groups, it provides the tools to cease essentializing differences (Jones 2009; Jordan-Zachery 2007). According to Jones (2009:289), intersectional research is characterized by “(a) a primary emphasis and centering on the lived experiences of individuals; (b) an exploration of identity salience as influenced by systems of power and privilege and the interacting nature of such systems; and (c) a larger purpose and goal of contributing to a more socially just society.”

Multi-racial feminists posit that a framework such as intersectionality provides a starting point to view race and gender as part of a larger system of inequality at the institutional level (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996; Lorner 2010). Accordingly, gender and race are imposed upon individuals at birth, function to place individuals within their designated social locations, and bestow their social identity (Baca Zinn 1980). This system of inequality has been ingrained into the social fabric of our society through such social institutions as the family, religion, politics, education, the legal system, the health system, and economics. While many powerful individuals within the dominant group have spent much time and energy to deny the realities and effects of social stratification, the exploration of the realities experienced by Chicanas can elucidate on these dynamics more fully (Blea 1992).
Within their gendered and racial/ethnic identity, Chicanas enact this identity through both voluntary and coerced means: though they may have a certain amount of room to choose who they wish to be, they are often compelled, pressured, and/or sanctioned to take on certain normative characteristics. Many of these women live within a place of tension and between multiple narratives: living within the traditional value system of Mexican culture as well as making sense of American ideals of individuality, meritocracy, and entrepreneurship (Reyes III et al. 2011). For young Chicanas, navigating between the commitment to uphold communal and familial values of Mexican culture as well as an “American” culture can be an arduous journey.

Within such a journey, Chicanas are often faced with the task of comprehending and moving through dichotomous gender narratives. The primary gender narrative that is presented to Chicanas is that of the model of Malinchismo and Marianismo (the whore and the Madonna). Malinchismo refers to la Malinche, an indigenous woman that was said to be the ultimate traitor of Mexico because of her alleged assistance to Hernan Cortes in his conquest of the Aztec empire. While she was an intelligent and adaptable leader, she is cast a traitor that relinquished her culture for assimilation (Calendaria 1980). The antithesis of Malinchismo is then Marianismo, or the veneration of La Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. La Virgen has become an idealized model for Chicana womanhood: she is a mother, a nurturer, a willing servant, and the one that endures pain for the survival of her family (Hurtado 2003). This dichotomy provides, however, very limited possibilities for what directions women can take: “to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother. Today [however] some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous” (Anzaldua 1987: 17). Nevertheless, women who assert themselves in a manner that is in direct opposition to culturally prescribed norms risk retaliation by those involved within their interpersonal networks (Segura 1992).
Within this context, Chicanas are expected to be submissive. As women they are seen as inferior to men and consequently less valued than men. Chicanas are seen as both sexual objects that are to be manipulated by men, and as suffering mothers whose purpose is to reproduce offspring and be completely dependent on their husbands. Furthermore, as a person of color, Chicanas are culturally inferior to whites (Baca Zinn 1980). Such a perspective is coercive to sacrifice their culture and belief system, as these are not consistent with the “American” culture (Espino 2008). Attempts at resisting conflicting narratives can also become quite difficult to execute and further prompts tension within their identity (Reyes III et al. 2011). The pursuit of obtaining something that falls outside of gender and racial expectations, i.e. college degree, directly opposes dominant images of the Chicana and signifies a shift in the type of experiences she will have compared to her parents and family (Talavera-Bustillos 2007).

However, those that are able to break through the institutional barriers are utilized as tokens to convince the subordinate population that the American dream can be achieved, while those who fall through the cracks are blamed for not working hard enough, or for maintaining attachments to cultural practices (Espino 2008). In order for Chicanas to attain the opportunities found within the “American Dream,” we are deceived to believing that we must first assimilate to the new culture and cut the ties that join them to their indigenous culture. Due to the stratified nature of systems of oppression, Chicanas’ incongruent identities with the dominant culture make the American Dream unattainable (Espino 2008).

The inability to attain this “dream” provides the justification needed to blame the victim, the culture to which the individual belongs, and make generalizations of an entire group. A dangerous stereotype regarding Chicanas is that their culture predicates their behavior. Because Chicanas’ cultural and phenotypic features are distinct from that of the dominant conception of what is acceptable and therefore valued less, Chicanas can develop an internalized oppression
that “reinforces the mechanism that keep White, middle and upper class communities in power” (Espino 2008:16). Though some of these experiences do take place within the macro-level of society, much of this tension also arises within their interpersonal experiences. When Chicanas have negative experiences, their location within multiple systems of oppression make it difficult for them to know the angle by which they are being attacked (Ferdman and Gallegos 2001). Furthermore, for those individuals that have stepped out of their designated roles have experienced that there are no mentors that can provide guidance for alternative models. In an effort to forge their own path, Chicanas that have moved outside prescribed roles can experience the potentially devastating force of sexism and racism. This can lead them to question their position within their multiple communities and question their overall value within the society they reside (Blea 1992).

Multi-Racial Feminism

While feminism can have much to say about the realities faced be females, it has predominantly evolved from a white, middle-class lens and therefore lacks perspective on the realities faced by women of color. Multi-racial feminism provides that space for women of color to expose, understand, and analyze the truth about the realities of their communities. Multi-racial feminism is an effort to examine how gender inequality lies within the intersections of systems of domination (e.g. race, class, gender); how economic and educational privilege and disadvantage lays within social structures; and the cultural devaluation of women subordinate racial/ethnic communities (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996; Lorber 2010). This branch of feminism has its origins in the 1960’s and the civil rights movements of various ethnic/racial groups. From these groups arose “coalitions of women who felt that their issues were neglected, but who did not abandon entirely the fight against racial ethnic oppression” (Lorber 2010:198-199).
Multi-Racial Feminism provides a body of knowledge that contextualizes women and men within various systems of oppression. It is an attempt to go beyond recognition of diversity and difference among women to examine systems of oppression (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996). This framework asserts that (1) gender is constructed along various forms of inequality; (2) hierarchies are intersectional at all levels of society; (3) power is at the forefront of women’s lives and therefore the differences between women are connected at the systemic level; (4) explores the relationship between social structure and women’s agency; (5) there is an array of methodological approaches and theoretical tools that are used to guide the research; and (6) the understandings and lived experiences of diverse groups of women are brought together (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996).

Within the United States, the stratification system privileges many within the dominant group (white, upper-class males and females) and places barriers for subordinate communities (lower-class men and women of color) in areas such as “schools, health care, job opportunities, and political access” (Lorber 2010:98). Furthermore, multi-racial feminism asserts that gender is constructed by a range of intersecting systems of inequality that come together in a synergistic fashion to form what Patricia Hill Collins (2000:18) names as a “matrix of domination.” Collins (2000) goes further on to state that despite the specific intersections at work, diverse spheres of power continue to be evoked throughout various forms of oppression, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality.

It is through an analysis of these various systems and their intersections that one can expose the erroneous notion that gender affects all women in the same manner (Collins 2000). Within these dynamics, it is made clear that “power [becomes] the cornerstone of women’s difference” (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996:327). Those within the hegemonic group have then the ability to set the standards for appropriate behavior, beauty, and culture. This may lead
to some women, and men, of color to internalize hegemonic ideals (Collins 2000). To maintain its status, the dominant group’s values and ideas become reflected within formal policies and social agendas (Lorber 2010). Within this context, however, arises the opportunity for women of color to both challenge old paradigms and establish new paradigms that cultivate awareness and consciousness. An analysis through this kind can offer women of color the tools to not only resist the oppression they face, but also construct new bodies of knowledge that represent their lived experiences (Collins 2000; Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996).

For la Chicana, an analysis of this kind gives space to understand her life with greater in a fuller way. From a historical context, we see that she comes from a people that have been colonized many times over by various nations that in their wake have left an amalgam of languages, norms, traditions, and cultures. These ongoing external and internal conflicts have continuously placed pressure on la Chicana to mold her into something different than from her ancestral past. The male dominated systems and structures that have developed in the United States contribute to the control of Chicanas and other women of color in both overt and covert forms. In this male-dominated society that continuously presents fallacies about her own history, her own body, and her overall value, la Chicana is coerced to accept her own oppression. However, there is much more to her reality than just her oppression. In developing an understanding of her own reality and sifting through the various symbols, meanings, and languages, la Chicana plants the seed for the development of her own consciousness and liberation from racism and sexism (Blea 1992).

**Symbolic Interaction**

Symbolic interaction seeks to understand the individual at an interpersonal level and provide a framework for the development of identity. This perspective can be traced back to the work of George Herbert Mead (1934). Symbolic interaction has five principles: (1) Humans are
social creatures that are created within interaction with other individuals; (2) Humans engage in an active ongoing process of thinking; (3) Humans define the situations they are in, which arise from ongoing social interaction and thinking; (4) Action is enacted as a result of the defined present interaction; and (5) Humans are not passive, rather they are active participants in their environments (Charon 2007; Solorzano et al. 2002).

Within interaction, humans respond to the interpretation of gestures of others within a given situation. To be able to define what these gestures mean, individuals must be able to take to role of the other actor and adequately define and interpret the interaction. This ability to adequately define a situation allows human beings to respond to the environment in a similar fashion, and thus be able to share one another’s experiences (Solorzano 2002). It is when individuals are unable to accurately define and interpret the present situation that there is conflict and tension, for example when someone makes prejudicial comments to another and is unable to understand why such comments are considered prejudicial. What is more, the interpretations that we make about a given interaction and about the individuals within that interaction, largely depend on the internalization of values and expectations put forth by the “generalized other” (Charon 2007:109; Solorzano et al. 2002). The generalized other is an amalgam of the collective culture or reference groups that have influence because their norms and values are dominant in society (Charon 2007).

However, for those groups that have been historically discriminated against, e.g. second generation Chicanas, they must rely on the perspectives established by the dominant group. While they may have significant others in their lives that share their cultural and personal beliefs, values, and norms, marginalized groups carry out their lives within a society whose norms, standards, and laws were not established with their best interest at heart. It is through this lens
that Chicanas understand themselves, and how to relate to members of their own and other communities (Ferdman and Gallegos 2001).

Within this context is the self. The self is “the internal environment toward which we act” (Charon 2007:73). Like other social objects, the self is a tool internally situated that can be used by the actor within a given situation in achieving the actor’s goal(s) (Charon 2007). The self is also described through the “I” and “me” formulation developed by Mead. The “I” can be seen as the self as a subject, while the “me” can be seen as the self as the object (Charon 2007; Solorzano et al. 2002). What is important to note is that it is the “me” is the outcome of an interaction between the “I” and the generalized other, or the agent Self and the social Self (Charon 2007). This, however, is not a clean or linear action. The general other, like other constructs, moves, fluctuates, and changes from one form to another as the value and belief structures of the society change. Therefore, because individuals interpret and utilize the perspective of the general other to navigate their movement within society, how individuals move and interact with the various institutions, groups, and individuals of our society can also fluctuate within or counter to the generalized other.

Some scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldúa and bell hooks, have posited that marginalized communities have within them the ability to create alternatives that run counter to the dominant generalized other. In her seminal book Borderlands/La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) develops the concept of the new mestiza consciousness. It is a “dual identity,” or the “synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness” (Anzaldúa 1987:36). She further explains that from her location between worlds, la Chicana develops “la facultad,” or the capacity to see the underbelly of society and “see the deep structures below the surface” (Anzaldúa 1987:38). For Anzaldúa, the focus is on the individual’s agency, or “I,” to be able to escape the structures of inequality in society. bell hooks (1990) also speaks to the power of marginalized
individuals to be able to break away from the dominant generalized other. For hooks, rather than placing the focus solely on the individual, she emphasizes the role of the margins as a site not only of pain but also of empowerment. This “home” space becomes a place where “one discovers new ways of seeing reality…confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are” (hooks 1990:148). It is within this site that marginalized communities can become empowered to challenge dominant culture and politics of the dominant group.

In the racialized and gendered context of the United States, Whites and males view themselves as superior to people of color and women because they have internalized the views of the greater society (the generalized other), which claims that Whites and males are inherently superior to people of color and women, about these groups into their own self. On the same token, people who are part of the subordinated groups within the same context can also incorporate this subordination into their own sense of self (Solorzano 2002). For those who are identified as being part of these subordinated groups, many feel that they must separate themselves from the collective in order to escape devaluation. Furthermore, it is these same dominant groups that hold many of the resources for advancement, i.e. good jobs, opportunity of a good education, good housing, etc. The evaluations by these groups become quite significant for those who are dependent on these resources (Solorzano et al. 2002). Those individuals that assimilate the values of the dominant group to the greatest degree are more readily afforded these resources than those who continually challenge these values. This internalization in turn gives dominant groups greater social control over members of marginalized groups (Blea 1992).

Given this, it is also crucial to understand the importance of phenotype. The manner in which one looks becomes critical as to how people of color and women, like Chicanas, are perceived and responded to. This in turn affects how Chicanas view themselves and how they act
toward others (Solorzano et al 2002). Given the stereotypes held about Chicanas, one can infer that those who have more European physical features or act more White may amass more favorable responses or be considered more valuable than someone who is more closely associated with Mexican cultural norms. Research has shown that the color of one’s skin, the texture of one’s hair bears upon how the individual is treated (Zavella 1991). Jessica Vasquez (2010) also explores various outcomes in ethnic formation/identity based on color. She asserts that while third generation Mexican Americans would rather utilize their “flexible ethnicity,” or the “ability to…navigate different racial terrains and be an ‘insider’ in more than one racial or ethnic group,” their efforts are thwarted through “razialization,” or “the process of imposing racial assignments on other and linking those ascription with differential expectations and value assessments” (Vasquez 2010:47). While the participants in this study want to have the freedom to define their own ethnicity/identity, the dominant group utilizes their phenotype, in particular skin color, to sort them and affords those with lighter skin advantage over darker skinned people in all institutions (Vasquez 2010).

Because of the pervasiveness of controlling images that devalue women within the Chicana/o community whose phenotype more closely resembles that of indigenous people, some within the community may be moved to internalize this rejection and in turn may evaluate others based upon these characteristics. However, an alternate reaction to these dynamics is one in which Chicanas understand that the views and norms of the dominant group are an imposition that can negatively shape their lives. Upon this recognition that the dominant groups do not accept them, Chicanas understand the fallacy that lies with being labeled inferior to the dominant group (Blea 1992).

Identity construction then involves the process of managing both what we think of ourselves and how we think others view us (Jones 2009). Within the context of everyday
discrimination, the management of this process can be quite arduous and overwhelming. In our pursuit of dignity, respect, and ability to define our own identity, a denial of such a pursuit as a result of racist and sexist ideologies may or may not become internalized. To not achieve our desired form of identity, however, may still influence the formation of our identity and our perceptions of the world around us. For second generation Chicanas who navigate constantly between two worlds, and who may be affected by overt discrimination, the added barrage of microaggressions adds another layer to their already difficult journey.

**EFFECTS ON IDENTITY**

The accumulation of a lifetime of these assaults can develop into a sense of self that is false, confused, and feels rejected by the greater society. This sense of rejection and the internal struggle faced by Chicanas can be further exacerbated by the experiences of microinvalidations. These microaggressions directly reject the realities faced by Chicanas/os through the negation of their thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences (Sue 2010).

The real sense of fear, rejection, and anger experienced by Chicanas is further accentuated by the fact that her culture and her communication style have beenstigmatized (Sue 2010). This microinsult evokes the message that a Chicana’s culture is abnormal. “Alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, [Chicanas do] not feel safe within the inner life of her Self…[as] males of all races hunt her as prey” (Anzaldua 1987:20). She has been made to feel that part of her, the Indian woman, is not worthy of recognition (Anzaldua 1987). The social location of a Chicana is one that is in flux as she is situated between two cultures that she is not fully part of. Chicanas, like other marginalized groups, are not only compelled to live within the edge of multiple realities but also become skillful at moving from one reality to the other. It is, however, not enough to just be able to how to act in any particular situation or
environment. The difficulty lays in recognizing and holding onto one’s true self in the middle the transitions.

This new position is seen by Patricia Hill Collins (1986:14) as the “outsider within” and by Gloria Anzaldua (1987:77) as a “new mestiza consciousness.” This new location brings to focus the possibility of becoming more than what has been prescribed by the dominant culture. This is a dual identity that is born out of the oppression encountered in the intricacies of multiple identities (Bernal 2001; Jehangir 2010; Reyes III et al. 2011). In the case study of a Chicana former migrant in her first year in college, Reyes III et al. (2011) show that the young women’s understanding of her social position between these two worlds provided a lens through which analysis of values could be made. “‘Life on the Borderlands…is that this place…of her [the mestiza] worst battles with racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism, but paradoxically, it is also the place of her greatest strength” (Martinez 1999:47, as cited in Bernal 2001). This in-between state “allows for perspective to be both up close and remote at the same time” and acquire the skills necessary to continue to rise above the assaults from her environment (Collins 1986:15).

A means through which la Chicana can fight against subjugating master narratives is by what Collins (1986:18) calls “self-definition” and “self-evaluation.” Whereas self-definition involves the challenging of those externally-defined and stereotypical images of womanhood, self-validation places focus on the content of definitions and strives to replace those external definitions with authentic images and representations (Collins 1986). This is similar to Anzaldua’s (1987) “la facultad,” which provides the ability to move past superficiality and see the deeper meanings of those structures that lay below the surface (Anzaldua 1987: 38). In this manner, Chicanas can reject internalized oppression that has assaulted their emotional, mental, and physical bodies. Taken together, self-definition and self-evaluation and la facultad are
mechanisms for survival (Anzaldúa 1987; Collins 1986; Sue 2010). Within this context, Chicanas can rip through the veil of their everyday experiences and shift their reality that deepens our understanding and awareness of our environment (Anzaldúa 1987; Collins 1986). bell hooks (2004:157) has stated that “the mind that resists colonization struggles for freedom of expression.” It is in this struggle that Chicanas have the opportunity to increase her knowledge and her consciousness, and transform into someone new that refuses to continue to uphold inequitable standards to move forward in a journey to find her true consciousness.

SUMMARY

Second generation Chicana identities lay within a context that is highly stratified, though elusive, challenging, and constantly changing. In her everyday experiences, she encounters gender and racial microaggressions that send messages of what society views her to be. These microaggressions are a reflection of a world perspective that presents her as weak and submissive, objectify her body, down play and negate her achievements and her culture, polarize her identity, and perpetuates an environment of violence (Sue 2010). Though sceptics may claim that alarms over microaggressions are merely exaggerations, the reality is that Chicanas and women in general continue to be physically and psychologically affected by unfair standards that subordinate their body and mind. Sue (2010:183) poses a critical question: “How can we as a society allow such injustices to continue against women, who are our mothers, wives, lovers, daughters, and sisters?”

There is a call for pursuit of greater awareness and understanding of how gender and racial microaggressions function, how they manifest within society, how they impact Chicanas and women of color in general, the interaction and dynamic between receiver and sender of microaggressions, and how to produce tools that push for the elimination of them (Sue et al.
The division and inequality that is created, whether consciously or subconsciously, between different people and groups create and perpetuate prejudices that are based on misinformation and the desire by some to dominate. To have a people that is misinformed and misled is to have a people that have been deceived and are oppressed. It is then in utilizing Intersectionality, Multi-Racial Feminism, and Symbolic Interaction that we can dive deeper and explore how and what facilitates change in the many identities held by Chicanas. It is by looking at their historical context, their location within multiple narratives, and how they interact with other individuals and groups that we are more clearly able to understand this population and establish tools to facilitate space for Chicanas.
In order to understand the full scope of an individual’s identity, one must understand how an individual defines his or her own identity for themselves as well as the boundaries they erect to separate themselves from the larger society (Massey and Sanchez 2006). For this reason, I will be taking a qualitative approach and conduct in-depth interviews as they are able to capture to a great extent the perceptions these individuals have of themselves and their racial and ethnic communities, as well as the greater society they are a part of. In its nature, qualitative research provides a space for exploration and a sense of openness for those voices and experiences that may not always be heard or acknowledged (Espino 2008). In-depth interviews are adequate to utilize as they are able to capture to a great extent the perceptions individuals have of themselves and the communities they are a part of.

In-depth interviews provide the opportunity to see the world through the perspective of the respondent or to gain an empathetic appreciation for their world (Marvasti 2004). Furthermore, in-depth interviews endorse disclosure by both interviewer and interviewee to freely express their views about the issue as the context of the interaction can be emotionally charged (Marvasti 2004). This method provides an opportunity and a safe space for Chicanas to speak openly and honestly about their experiences with discrimination where they may otherwise not have the opportunity. Through the use of in-depth interviews, this study can be a space for these individuals to have their experiences, their truths not only be acknowledged but validated.

Through both the in-depth interviews, I hope to explore the following areas as they relate to microaggressions and second generation Chicanas’ identities:

1. What types of microaggressions are experienced by the student at the campus generally and in the classroom specifically?
2. What messages are conveyed in these microaggressions?
3. What are the reactions to microaggressions by the recipients? (did they engage or disengage)
4. How do individuals cope/deal with the effects?
5. How do individuals view themselves as a result of these experiences?
6. How do they think others view them?
7. How do these materialize in individual’s everyday lives (do actions/behaviors change based on context, do they experience identity conflict)?
8. What is the campus climate? (What representations—in posters, flyers, events, announcements, policies, administration, departments—if any, are there of your race/gender group).

PARTICIPANTS

The present study details the data gained from in-depth interviews of sixteen Chicanas enrolled at California State University, Sacramento. In order to explore the multiple identities of Chicanas, purposive sampling was utilized to identify individuals that are interested in participating in the study. Purposive sampling has been defined as a method by which researchers choose subjects based upon prearranged criteria to the extent that participants can contribute the greatest to the research (Solorzano et al. 2002). The women are all second generation (at least one parent born abroad while they are born in the United States) and have at least one parent of Mexican descent. Purposive sampling has been defined as a method by which researchers choose subjects based upon prearranged criteria to the extent that participants can contribute the greatest to the research (Solorzano et al. 2002).

Academics

The participant’s academic levels span from first year freshman to graduate level. However, the majority of participants are upper class undergraduate students. One participant is a first year freshman, three participants are sophomore, six are juniors, five are seniors, and one
participant is a graduate student. Thirteen of the participants began their university journeys at CSUS as first year freshman. The remaining three participants transferred to CSUS from community colleges in the northern California region.

The academic programs of the students span across four of the seven colleges of the university: The College of Arts and Letters (Communication Studies and Spanish), The College of Engineering (Civil and Electrical Engineering), The College of Health and Human Services (Speech Pathology and Audiology, Social Work, Kinesiology, and Health Science), and The College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Sciences (Chicano Studies, Sociology, Ethnic Studies, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Psychology). Two of the participants are working toward engineering degrees, four in arts and letters, five in health and human services, and five in the social sciences and interdisciplinary sciences.

**Family Background**

Fifteen of the sixteen participants are from northern California. The one participant not from northern California is from the Los Angeles area. Those participants from the northern California regions come from small, agriculturally based towns whose populations are predominantly Mexican and White. Excluding one biracial student whose parents are German and Mexican, all participants have Mexican parents. Of these parents, four were born in the United States and the rest were born in Mexico. All of the participants come from working class families that have worked or currently work in agriculture, trade based work, or service industry.

Consent forms will be provided and will be filled out by participants at the onset of the interview. The consent forms will include, but are not limited to: identification of the researcher, the purpose of the research, the benefits for participating, the level of participant involvement, guarantee of confidentiality, and assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time (Creswell 2009). Confidentiality will also be maintained as pseudonyms will be utilized in the
reporting of the data. Finally, information on counseling resources, both on campus and in the Sacramento community, will be provided in the event that participants needed professional support after interviews.

**DATA GATHERING**

Interviews ran approximately one and a half hours in duration and were recorded via a voice recorder whose data will be destroyed at the completion of the data collection and transcription process in order to protect participants’ identity.

The interviews will be transcribed verbatim and will include any slang used, different language, and pauses to provide the greatest account of the conversation with participants. Once complete, both the transcription and the narratives will be coded to reveal themes pertinent to the research question. This coding technique will be inductive. The codes will emerge directly from the examination process. A first round of coding will be conducted to get an initial sense of what was said throughout the interview and the narrative. Upon the completion of this first round, a coding scheme will be established to utilize on the interview transcripts and narratives. Utilizing this coding scheme, a second round of coding will take place. A third and final round of coding will take place, in which themes and any emerging theories will be finalized. Once this data has been recorded and coded, the original interview recoding and narratives were destroyed.
Chapter 4 – RESULTS

This research explores the effects of microaggressions encountered within the university upon second generation Chicana’s sense of self. While previous research has identified microaggressions experienced by communities of color, women, and other marginalized groups, there lacks research that focuses on the intersection of race and gender within this particular group. This research dives deeper to spotlight the unique experiences of second generation Chicanas within the university setting.

This chapter provides qualitative results for data collected via in-depth interviews of sixteen Chicanas within California State University, Sacramento. The chapter is divided into seven sections: primary socialization, experiences in primary and secondary schooling, types of microaggressions experienced, reactions to microaggressions, coping with microaggressions, effects of microaggressions, and university as a space for empowerment. Each section is further subdivided into themes that are exemplified by quotes and further explained to provide greater context. These sections provide a micro-level understanding and the particular experiences of this group of Chicanas. A macro-level analysis is provided in the following chapter.

PRIMARY SOCIALIZATION

To establish a sense of their primary socialization and a sense of how they view their own social location, I asked a series of questions that tapped into the participants’ experiences growing up within their families and in their communities prior to entering the university. These questions led to a conversation on gender within the home and race within primary and secondary schooling.
**Gender in the Home**

The vast majority of the participants spoke of being raised under strict, gender based ideologies and socialization practices. These ideologies and practices established the do’s and don’ts of acceptability.

**The Idealized Woman**

The participants spoke of the expectation of being obedient and accommodating to the needs of the male figures in their lives. For the participants, this usually meant obedience to their fathers and engaging in traditional gender role expectations. Carmen explained, “When my dad would get home he would expect me to prepare the food, set the table, and all that. From a young age I was socialized to be a little house wife.” Regardless of what Carmen was engaging in at the time of her father’s arrival, she was expected to drop all she was doing to accommodate to the needs of her father. Angelica reiterated this sentiment: “My sister has always been traditional, very obedient, very complacent, always do the right thing, never deviate from anything and she was just so traditional. Everything my parents would want in a daughter…” In the household of Angelica, her sister exemplified appropriate and expected behavior of a daughter.

**Double Standards**

These expectations became ever clearer when compared to the expectations expressed for those participants who had male siblings. There were clear double standards within the household of nine out of the sixteen participants. These participants expressed frustration that their male siblings were afforded greater liberties and privileges. Angelica expressed: “Growing up, I was also really resentful because I saw how – I think those were the earliest signs of gender inequities – how different he was treated than I. I was taught to wash dishes from very young age, to clean, not allowed to sleep over, and he was given free rein on everything.” While Angelica’s movement was confined to the household, her brother was provided the opportunity to
move about the world with liberty. When speaking on differential treatment between her and her brother, Catalina recalled a point where her father demonstrated clear double standards: “My brother had lived with his girlfriend for two and a half years. And I was like, “What?! He’s living with her and you’re not going to say anything? What’s going on with that?” That’s when my father told me, ‘I don’t have to worry about Jose’s soul. I have to worry about yours.’” For Catalina, greater attention was paid to her actions than to those of her brother’s. While both were engaging in the same behavior, the fact that Catalina is a female changes the significance of this behavior. It would not be proper of a female to live with her partner without being married.

The Deviant Woman

While the expectation for the participants is to be obedient and engage in traditional gender roles, nine of the sixteen participants have had examples in their lives that in some way contradict these expectations and create an alternative model of acceptable behavior. For Silvia, her mother was not the “typical housewife.” Silvia goes on to say: “My mom in Mexico she was the first female in her family, in the town they were from to own a vehicle. It was progressive, but because of that a lot of people would talk a lot of smack about my mom.” While the societal expectation may have been to stay within the home, Silvia’s mother deviated from this and became more economically independent than other women in her area. This provided Silvia an alternative model of how a woman can act. Carmen also moved against these types of expectations and created her own model:

I refused to learn how to cook because I was always pressured to learn how to cook because I needed to learn how to take care of my husband and I felt I didn’t need to learn how to cook to take care of a grown adult. And that was one of the ways that I rebelled and I still don’t know how to cook. And he [participant’s father] wants me to take cooking classes, but I won’t because it’s a stance.

For Carmen, not learning how to cook was an opportunity to demonstrate to her father her independence and will not engage in strict gender role expectations.
To run counter to gender role expectations, however, positioned some of the participants as a challenger to existing familial arrangements, in turn leading to tension within the family.

Lorena exerted her independence to her parents once she turned eighteen and an adult under law:

I told my parents ‘I’m 18. I’m already an adult.’ And my parents would get mad. ‘Esta es mi casa. Estas son mis reglas.’ You know? ‘You live in my house. I make the rules.’ And I would tell them, ‘No you don’t. Not anymore.’ And let me tell you, it was so hard for him to get that. Like now el entiende que yo me mando sola.

While Lorena felt that she gained her independence once she became eighteen years of age, her father felt that because she lived in his home, she was obligated to abide by his rules. This contradiction created tension within their relationship. Angelica also experienced great tension when she declared her intention to move away for college:

I told him that I was going to come to Sac State for my career, he [participant’s father] was mad. He said, ‘How is it possible as a girl you think it’s proper to move away?’ which to me was just absurd. And he pretty much disowned me, and we didn’t talk for a few months. To me it was hard not having his support. And my mom, when my dad disapproved, she felt the need to back him up…she felt that she had to be opposed to it as well. So for me there was not a lot of parental support. So it was hard for me.

This challenge to existing expectations led to a lack of parental support during a crucial time in the participant’s life. As she embarked in her journey for higher education, an act that ran counter to what was acceptable for a female within her home; her parents removed the support that she desired.

**EXPERIENCES WITH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING**

In addition to understanding the primary socialization of the participants and their experiences with exploring self, I asked the participants about their experiences and perspectives within the educational system prior to their entrance to the university. Their experiences within their secondary schooling provide a foundation as to the manner by which they interact with peers, instructors, and administration at higher levels of education. The two major themes that
arose from the conversation were experiences of discrimination and experiences of encouragement to pursue a higher education.

**Experiences of Discrimination**

Eight of the participants spoke of experiencing one form of discrimination or another. The most evident form of discrimination was favoritism toward white students over students of color. Zenaida spoke of a difficult experience in which the school she and her siblings attended did not want to advance them in grade because of their ethnic background and their perceived lack of deficiency in the English language.

My mom shared with us…they were trying to flunk [my sister] from the second grade cause they were like ‘Oh you know she doesn’t know English. Viene de México.’ Mom’s like ‘She’s never been to Mexico. She was born here.’ So it’s just like that stereotype…They were like ‘Oh he [participant’s brother] can’t speak English.’ They put him in special ed. and I feel like that really harmed my brother. I feel like my brother had a lot of potential but because they told him you’re not smart enough…I feel like that really harmed him.

Because of the held assumption that all Mexicanos are foreign, the school assumed that Zenaida’s siblings did not speak English and should be placed in a classroom for students with special needs. This inaccuracy, however, led to issues of lowered self esteem.

Feelings of being unwelcomed were also experienced by Nerida. Nerida recalled feeling that she was not welcomed in her high school’s career center. She mentions:

I remember going in to the career center one day and they were like, “What are you doing in here?” Like, I got yelled at. I was like, “I’m here to get my college application done.” I don’t know. I guess you could just notice that some students were treated differently…There were others [teachers] that wanted more for the white students. They thought that the Mexicanos were just going straight into Delta or another community college.

While the school’s career center is supposed to be available to all students, this particular staff member created an atmosphere that discouraged Nerida from receiving the assistance she needed in order to complete her college applications. This sends the message that she is not expected or capable of entering a four year institution out of high school.
Another participant, Karina, saw differential treatment between ethnic groups in her high school as it related to disciplinary actions. She recalls that students of color were often times punished more severely than white students, though they engaged in the same activities:

"I look back and the high school was so segregated. There was not that many white people and they got a lot of advantage over Mexicans...most of the time when Mexican or black person or Chinese got in a fight with a white person, white person hardly ever got in trouble. Their punishments were always more minor than the minority group."

Preferential treatment was afforded to white students. This sends the message to students of color that their personal worth is to a lesser level than that of white students. While Karina saw this differential treatment on a more macro-level scale, Dolores experienced this differential treatment from one of her high school instructors. "I had raised my hand, and she had looked right at me and ignored it, and someone else raised their hand. And I can't remember if they were of – I'm pretty sure they were white, and she went straight to them. But that kind of stuck with me.”

While the behavior from the instructor may have been more subtle than that of the school as it relates to disciplinary actions, the message is nevertheless the same: students of color are valued less than white students. This message of being devalued can lead to a sense of confusion as to one’s place within the educational system.

**Race in School**

Many participants spoke of being teased and feeling out of place as they did not feel welcome within their own ethnic community as well as the dominant community. Many of these participants’ ethnic identities were questioned as they did not match stereotypical ideals. Catalina stated that during her years in high school, she “wasn’t Mexican enough to hang out with the Mexican kids and I wasn’t white enough to hang out with the white kids.” Catalina was caught in a state of limbo where she was not accepted by the two dominant groups in her school because she did not fit the stereotype. Dolores also experienced similar behavior from some of her high school peers. She explains:
In high school I used to have people tell me, ‘You're white on the inside and brown on the outside,’ because I didn’t act like a Mexican...I was always told, ‘You don’t act Mexican.’ I was like, ‘Well what to you is Mexican?’ You don’t think about it. Back then...you had stereotypes or assumptions of what you were supposed to be, and if you weren’t, you agreed. You were like, ‘I'm not Mexican’...That’s kind of how I thought at first. Like, maybe I'm not Mexican. But then the more I thought about it I was raised by two Mexican parents who raised me culturally Mexican. My first language was Spanish...but if you don’t fit that...you don’t fit whatever they deem your culture is supposed to be then you're not really Mexican.

Dolores’s ethnic identity was questioned because she did not fit the stereotype of what a Mexican female is “supposed” to look like. While she has questioned these stereotypes, these stereotypes were internalized as a young person.

**Sources of Encouragement**

While the participants may have received messages that question their worth or their ability to move on to college, the participants did have sources of support within and outside of the school setting. It was within academic programs, instructors/counselors, and their parents that the participants found the encouragement to continue their education past high school. It was in the academic organizations such as AVID (Advanced Via Individual Determination), Migrant Education, and Cal-SOAP, that participants were provided information relating to college entrance requirements, as well as potential majors and careers that could be pursued. It was in the instructors and counselors that participants were provided encouragement and validation of their efforts. Karina recalls one counselor that provided her with encouragement to continue forward:

I had my high school counselor, Perla. At that time she always told me, ‘You can do this.’ When I doubted myself, she was always the one I would go to talk to. She always made sure I am on the right track: my A through G all that good stuff. Made sure my GPA was high, and always took me to college tours. So she was my main influence.

It was this genuine encouragement from her counselor that assisted Karina during difficult times.

It was, however, in their parents where a majority of the participants found encouragement. Knowing the difficulties of living paycheck to paycheck in labor intensive work, the parents of these participants pushed their daughters to pursue something more. This was the
case for Miranda. Her father knew “the value of education, and he wants me to pursue it…He always told me he doesn’t want me to deal with the same things he did.” The parents of Marta reiterated similar sentiments. They expressed to Marta: “‘No you have the opportunity, you need to go. You need to do this.’ And also my dad always tells me that it doesn’t matter what I’m going to do, as long as later in life when I get married – he doesn’t want me depending on a man.” While the participant’s parents may not have had the economic resources or cultural capital to place their daughters in top secondary schools or private tutors, the participant’s parents understood that to earn a college degree would provide their daughters with greater opportunities that they themselves did not have.

**TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSION EXPERIENCES**

The experiences that the participants encountered within their family’s household as well as those within the school setting set the foundation for perspectives held at the university level. The university is another setting by which a majority of the participants have continued to experience microaggressions based both on their ethnic background and gender. As Chicanas, the participants’ experiences are intersectional and as such cannot be easily defined as solely racial or solely gender based. In exploring how race and gender converge into their lived experiences provides further understanding as to differences within the Chican@ community and between the Chican@ community and other groups. Additionally, in this convergence, we are provided greater understanding as to the tenuous relationship with higher education and the emergent from relationship.
Environmental Microaggressions

Within the university setting, the environmental microaggressions experienced by the participants were a lack of representation within the classroom (both students and faculty) and a lack of representation of gender and cultural sensitivity within the curriculum of their courses.

Lack of Gender/Ethnic Representation within the Classroom

In speaking about their experiences within the classroom, participants often mentioned the lack of representation of gender or ethnic representation. Many of the participants would see that they were “the only Mexican in their classroom” or that all of their instructors were either male or white. Miranda, a speech pathology and audiology major, expressed that when she began her course work she felt intimidated because “it seemed like everybody knew each other…I was the only Mexican. I didn’t feel like I could fit in here at all.” To Miranda this provided the message that Mexicanos are not welcomed within the department. Faviola, a communication studies major, sees also a lack of diversity within her own department: “There’s not very much diversity at all. I just see a bunch of white people. That’s all I see: a bunch of white people…I can count the Mexicans in the room, which is sad.” There is a level of frustration in the tone of Faviola. As she expressed, it is disconcerting to be within an environment that does not reflect your cultural background.

Additionally to a lack of representation within the student body in their classrooms, the participants saw that there was a great lack of representation within the faculty. There is a sense by some of the participants that as more and more Latino faculty are “getting pushed out…they’re not replacing them.” Silvia explains that “we are losing them [faculty of color] and they are not getting replaced by faculty of color, Chicano/Latinos.” Chican@ faculty represents a model to Chican@ students for what is possible and attainable. This lack of representation is magnified when intersectionality is taken into consideration. There are very few women faculty of color.
Just like their lived experiences reflect their membership as females and Mexicans, so too do the participants see a need for there to be faculty that represents this intersection. This lack of representation provides the message to the participants that it is more specifically women of color that are not welcomed or valued within the professional ranks of faculty.

**Lack of Representation within the Curriculum**

Several participants spoke about a gap between their lived experiences and the curriculum that is presented within their classrooms. When topics relating to gender emerge in her courses, Faviola states that professors are not willing to “challenge stereotypes and ideology.” This in turn leaves students “thinking it’s ok, it is this way, like woman are supposed to be sensitive or they are supposed to be submissive or they are supposed to be just like in the house or whatever…” Zenaida, a second year communication studies major, reaffirms these experiences. Within her department, there is the sense that faculty are “generalizing everything they give you. And they are not questioning anything.” Carmen further sees that some of her instructors “trivialize our experiences when [they] choose not to touch on those subjects…I feel like it pushes you to be ashamed of whom you are because it’s not looked at.” When faculty decide that it is not important to touch on subjects that affect their students, students in turn receive the message that their lived experiences are not of value.

**Microinsults**

At the interpersonal level, participants experienced three primary categories of microinsults: assumption of traditional gender roles, assumption of intellectual inferiority, and second class citizen.

**Assumption of Traditional Gender Roles**

Assumption of traditional gender roles occurs when an individual assume that a woman should maintain traditional gender roles (Capodilupo, Nadal, Corman, Hamit, Weinberg, 2010).
For many of the participants, their peers often perceived Mexicanas to both deviate and adhere to traditional roles. As a deviant, Mexicanas were seen to be hot-tempered or too strong in character. Karina is often thought to be feisty because she is open about her self-sufficiency. This is often taken the “wrong way.” Karina states that “it’s just me and my independence.”

Lorena has experienced similar tension with some of her peers. A student in one of her classes stated that Latino women are “very hot tempered.” When she sought an explanation for the comment, her questioning reaffirmed the statement for the other student: “I'm like, ‘What do you mean by that?’ And he's like, ‘You see that?! You see that?!’ And I'm like, ‘No. I got defensive because I am a Latino woman. I'm concerned now. I'm not mad about it.’ But he says that we get very defensive and we’re very hot tempered, and we don’t back down.” The simple act of inquiring why a comment was made reaffirms the stereotype. This Catch-22 is often unavoidable in these exchanges.

As an adherent of traditional gender roles, many of the participants also experienced hearing comments that viewed Mexicanas as interested in being housewives and starting a family. Angelica experienced tension with a former partner because of such assumptions. “He just assumed I was the type that wants to…automatically settle down and have kids, but that was defiantly not the case.” Similarly, Karina has been often told that Mexicanas are good cooks and housewives. “If you are Mexican, you have to know how to cook, which is not the case…Also, the traditional thing is that you’re going to be that housewife. I am not going to be no housewife.” For another participant, her ability to be an effective leader was questioned.

Miranda was not expected to be capable of leading a student group on campus:

I’m co-chair for [a student group]…One’s male and one’s female…at the beginning a lot of people forgot that I was co-chair. I started noticing that I started taking the Mom role…I started feeling like they would forget. They would just direct everything to him and I was doing more the background stuff… But even the women in the organization, started forgetting that there was a female co-chair.
For Miranda, the members within the student organization did not recognize her as an equal to her male counterpart. Instead, she was relegated to taking on the caretaker role. The message in these varying examples is that women should be feminine and domestics. Mexicanas hold an interesting position in that they are perceived to be both adhering to these roles and also deviating from them.

Assumption of Intellectual Inferiority

Participants were also thought to have inferior intellectual capabilities than those of the dominant group. Based on the work of Sue et al. (2008), assumptions of intellectual inferiority refer to microaggressions that assume that certain individuals, because of their ethnic background, are intellectually inferior, inarticulate or lack common sense. Within the classroom, participants had experiences in which instructors lowered their standards because of the participants’ ethnic background. One participant, Zenaida, experienced this within her English composition course: “I feel like in those English 20 classes [for multilingual students] they lecture down. Like they dumb their lectures down for us ‘cause we might not understand and that really bothers me.” The underlying message is that students within these classes are not capable of engaging in college level course work. Similarly for Angelica, some of her instructors lowered their expectations for her based on their assumptions of Chicanas: “A lot of professors they can’t tell by my last name [that I’m Chicana]. When they do realize that I am Chicana, they oftentimes down play my intelligence. Oftentimes they are surprised by how good I write…they’re surprised how proficient in English I am.” In these two instances, the message has been that Chicanas are not proficient in the English language. As a consequence, those Chicanas that are at or above proficiency become exceptions to the rule.

For Silvia, her abilities to conduct rigorous research were also questioned.

When I applied to IRB…I went to go pick up the paper and one of the persons in charge said, ‘Well you are very ambitious in what you want to do.’ And I was like, ‘Yeah, well
I’m gonna try.’ But I felt like he meant that I was striving too high, like you’re reaching too high for something that you’re not capable of doing.

Though subtle, Silvia walked away from the interaction with the message that Chican@s are not capable of engaging in rigorous academic research. These messages can deter individuals from engaging in work that can not only be of benefit to institutions but also for the advancement of marginalized groups.

**Second Class Citizen**

The final major category of microinsults that emerged from the interviews was second class citizen. According to Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2007), second class citizen microinsults refer to individuals being treated as a lesser being than those from the dominant group. This could mean that those in a dominant group are given preferential treatment over women and/or persons of color. For the present participants, these microaggressions appeared in the form of having their opinions shot down and ignored, not being provided the same level of assistance as white students, and feeling physically intimidated. During her undergraduate work at Sacramento State, Silvia can recall that her opinion would often be ignored and overlooked while the opinion of white students would be explored. She stated that she would want to start a conversation “…and when I bring them about they are dismissed or ignored…And then it’s not continued on. And then another student puts in their input about the same issue and that conversation is developed for them and not for me.” Carmen had a similar experience with a staff member in her major department. When she approached this staff member for assistance, she was brushed off while another student was provided with excellent support:

> I heard about someone who had the same situation as me and [the staff member] went out of his way to help this student…like did backflips. [He] got the other teachers to allow her to enroll in their class when we had the exact same situation…So that was ridiculous to me because I felt like I was being written off, like I didn’t matter enough.
There is frustration for Carmen as she recounted this experience. In that moment, she felt that she was being written off and did not matter as much as the other student. The message here is that people of color are thought of as less than and should therefore not be given the same level of respect and assistance.

For Zenaida, her most vivid experience treated as a second class citizen was a confrontation she had while living on the campus’ resident halls. A male student sent her the clear message that he was of greater value than she.

It was my first week living at the dorms and had to go do laundry and I was carrying my bag full of laundry and I was walking downstairs. At the [same] time there were men walking up the stairs, a big male group. Then they saw me going down and...there was one that said ‘I’m not moving. I’m not moving.’ So I literally had to like stand there and wait till they passed me to go down.

These male students enacted their male privilege and physically demonstrated that Zenaida was of lesser value as than they were. This behavior clearly demonstrated to Zenaida that women are not valued in the same manner as males.

**Microinvalidations**

While microinsults produce messages that demean an individual’s background and identity, micorinvalidations communicate messages of exclusion, negation, and invalidation of the opinions, feelings, or reality of an individual. In exploring the experiences of the participants, two primary categories emerged: exclusion and assumption of a universal Chicana experience.

**Exclusion**

According to Johnston and Nadal (2010), a microaggression that excludes is one that questions an individual’s identity and endorses a monoracial society and norms. For the participants, their identities were questioned because of their physical appearance. Fourteen of the participants in one form or another had their identities questioned because they did not “appear” to be Mexican. Lourdes has repeatedly had her ethnic identity questioned because of
her light skin tone and tall stature. She is often asked “Why are you so tall and skinny?
Mexicans are not like that. Why are you white? Why are you pale skinned?” As a result, she
feels the need to debunk these comments. “I'm like, ‘You've gotta get more informed and get
your research behind Mexico or Latin America…” It is frustrating for Lourdes to continuously
reaffirm her identity to others. She continues:

Me molesta cuando…generalisan sobre una cultura. Cuando dicen, ‘yo quiero una
Mexicana. Pero no una Mexicana negra; una blanca.’ What is wrong with color? You
know those little comments about color. They bother me because we shouldn’t be
looking at colors.

Lourdes’s example provides a glimpse into the tenuous space that Mexicanas hold. It is expected
that Mexicanas are to be of a dark skin tone, but are not valued because of this same skin tone. If
they do not have stereotypical skin tone, their identity is questioned. However, if they do exhibit
these features, they are not valued in the same manner as individuals with lighter skin tone.

Angelica reaffirms this sentiment when she speaks of her lived experience as a light
skinned Chicana. “I think I recognize my privilege being light-skinned, because I feel like a lot
of people mistake me for being Caucasian. I think in that sense I am lucky or not lucky, but I do
have some type of system of privilege.” Angelica recognizes that she holds some form of
privilege that is not provided to her dark skinned sisters. She questions, however, whether this
privilege is beneficial. This uncertainty causes a certain sense of tension that she cannot shake.

For others, like Carmen, this sense of tension is experienced within both the dominant
community and her ethnic community. Carmen often feels she is in limbo as she does not feel
accepted within these two groups. Carmen explains it in this manner:

Because we were born here [the United States], they expect us to have our Mexican side
and our American side – your white side and your Mexican side – and they can’t blend in
and possess both…You’re either Mexican here or white there…I think there’s more
pressure. You’re not allowed to kind of possess both at the same time. People don’t
understand that. Yes I grew up this way. Yes I can speak these languages but…that
doesn’t make me less of a person. That’s who I am first, a person.
To be in this in between place creates a sense of anxiety and frustration for Carmen. Within spaces that are not welcoming, it can become difficult to find a sense of identity. Catalina also holds this perspective: “I feel like our generation is like ‘ni de aqui, ni de aya.’ Where do we fit? We have this new way. And my mom is very light w/green eyes and my dad is a lot darker. So it’s like I’m in-between…” To feel excluded from the dominant group as well as one’s own community positions these women within in-between spaces that can be difficult to navigate.

Assumed Universality of the Chicana Experience

Juxtaposed to the category of exclusion is the category of assumed universality of the Chicana experience. Adapted from Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, and Rivera (2008) who spoke about the experience of African Americans, assumed universality of the Chicana experience posits that those that identify as Chican@s can speak on behalf of all other Chican@s.

Several of the participants spoke about being the token Chicana in their classroom and were often called upon to speak on behalf of their community. For Nerida, she explains that “when stuff would come up,” instructors would expect her “to talk and I don’t know what to say.” She is taken aback by this expectation. Similarly, Cristal has felt this expectation when topics about her ethnic community arise:

I always get called upon to speak on behalf of my community. Like I’m supposed to know everything about all Mexicans…[I]n an anthropology class, they were talking about Dia de los Muertos and I got picked on to talk about that. I think she might have been going through the roster and saw my last name…I mean it’s always been stuff like that.

Because of her surname, the instructor assumed and expected that Cristal could speak to the lived experiences of all those that identify as Mexican. Adding to this, Faviola expressed that in being expected to speak on her community’s behalf, she is being discriminated because her personal history is not being taken into account. “All that individuals see is color. “They don’t see you like a brown woman or a brown man. They just see you as brown. It doesn’t matter…” In being
lumped together, individual lived experiences are neglected and therefore the individual is neglected.

There were several categories that were only touched upon by a minority of the participants. These included: denial of racial reality (denial of personal racism or one’s role in its perpetuation), myth of meritocracy (statements which assert that race plays a minor role in life success), and alien to own land (the assumption that all Mexican Americans are foreigners or foreign-born). While these categories were not prominent within this research, they were prominent categories within other research (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino, 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, Esquilin, 2007). Further probing from other participants could have provided the opportunity to expand on these categories.

**Comparison between Groups**

To investigate differences in experiences between the participants, their male counterparts and women of other ethnic groups, the participants were asked if they have witnessed these groups being treated differently than they within the university. The responses were mixed. Of the six respondents that provided a response to the inquiry about their male counterparts, two respondents stated that there was no difference in treatment and another that stated that “men have more pressures.” The remaining participants stated that while their male counterparts may experience some oppression because of their ethnic background, they also experience privileges that are not afforded to females. Carmen states that while males are “somewhat oppressed,” “they’re still men…I think we have a lot more obstacles to where you’re not taken seriously even in the smallest things.” Zenaida provides similar sentiments: “I feel like our experiences have been different…but then I think they are men overall. So I feel like some of them don’t acknowledge that? They don’t acknowledge that they’re privileged and so they just
move on with it and they don’t really care about mujeres.” For these participants, it is important to recognize that males the privileges they experience have historically been denied to females.

When asked about differences between women of various ethnic backgrounds, all of the five women that provided a response explained that the greatest difference appeared when comparing women of color with “white” women. Participants explained that while white women may experience discrimination because of their gender, they also experience privilege because of their perceived cultural background. Faviola explains that white women “have it a bit easier” as they move through their classes. “Teachers pay more attention to them…especially when I ask questions. The teacher will acknowledge it but kind of brush it off [but] they will pay attention…for a white woman. They’ll have a conversation off of it.” A similar sentiment is felt by Angelica. She speaks of these differences as an internalized, systematic issue:

In comparison to white women I feel like they obviously come from a system where they would never have that issue where they are commented on how proficient they write. And I feel like, even subconsciously, teachers may have higher expectations from them, and this is on the basis of being white…

As Angelica explains, the privileges afforded to individuals with lighter skin tones are a systemic issue that has become internalized by many of the faculty within the university. Whether through acts of policy or primary socialization, greater value has been placed on those with this phenotype.

The perceptions and lived experiences of these women provide an insight as to the precarious position of women of color within the university setting and, as an extent of that, within the larger society. Their experiences provide us the understanding that their lived experiences cannot be easily categorized as being part of only one system of oppression. They are not only women or only persons of color. They are both. These cannot be separated from one another.
NO DIRECT EXPERIENCES WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS

As the participants and I moved through our conversations, a few of the women spoke of not having experienced racial or gender based microaggressions. Three participants stated that they had not experienced gender or racial microaggressions, two participants had not experienced race related microaggressions, and two had not experienced gender related microaggressions. For one of these participants, the differential treatment she experienced was seen as positive. While it is difficult to clearly state why their experiences were different than the rest of the participants, two of these participants offered their own theories. They stated that their lack of exposure was due to their particular majors and the courses they were taking while attending Sacramento State. Karina stated that, as a psychology major, she has had “open-minded professors” that are willing to explore various perspectives. She contrasts this with other professors that may teach math or biology as being “more biased because they…have only one way of doing things.” Dolores, another psychology major, has had a similar experience. She states that her professors “highly encourage diversity and do not assume things of others.” For these participants, their level of exposure was contextual. Had they been a different major or taken course with different instructors, this experience may have been different. What is clear, however, is that these individuals were witness to situations that, while not directed toward them personally, nevertheless affects the communities they are a part of. This in turn demeans the individual as well as their accomplishments.

REACTIONS TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

In recounting their experiences with subtle forms of discrimination, the participants explained that they tended to react in one of two ways: confront the aggressor or ignore the
encounter. The reasons participants decided to confront the aggressor or ignore the situation, however, varied.

**Confront and Educate the Aggressor**

Those participants that decided to confront the aggressor did so as a means to “debunk” the held assumption. In response to stereotypical comments about Mexican men as controlling, Carmen felt the need to speak up: “I have to talk up and correct them and say that my grandfather wasn’t like that with my mom and my grandma. He trusted everybody and wanted to make sure that he provided for his family, but he was never controlling.” She wanted to ensure that the aggressor understood the generalization they were making. Similarly, after hearing on several occasions from a faculty member that all Mexican males are in gangs, Silvia decided to confront the faculty member. “I just thought he was just feeding into…and creating those stereotypes about our men of color. And I did talk to him…and I really feel it made a huge difference about how he teaches his classes.” Silvia wanted to ensure that the faculty member did not perpetuate these stereotypes. She hates “that feeling where you know you can say something but you don’t.”

In order to be comfortable with herself, she needed to correct this behavior. As educators, faculty members can have great influence in shaping or reinforcing the perspectives of their students. The repetition of a specific stereotype can help or reaffirm stereotypic beliefs or build them.

**Ignore the Situation**

For other participants, they felt that the best course of action was inaction so as to not escalate matters or unnecessarily expel energy to undeserving individuals. Catalina feels that instead of wasting her “energy trying to argue” with the aggressor, her energy is better placed into “a positive place and try to help people and talk about how to do something. That’s where I’d rather see my energy being spent.” Similarly, Faviola sees confrontation with aggressors as giving them the satisfaction of getting a rise out of someone. “Generally I don’t say anything
because I don’t want to pay attention to them. You know what I mean? Like maybe they want to
get a reaction or something and I’m not gonna give them that satisfaction.” To ignore the
aggression is also a means to de-escalate a potentially volatile situation. For Lourdes this was the
case: “I don’t know if I should say something. I don’t know how will they take it, and it’s gonna
be disrespectful to them. So sometimes I stay quite…because it’s not even worth it.” Whether to
stop a situation from escalating or denying an aggressor satisfaction, several participants decided
that it was best to not confront those that aggressed over them. Regardless of action after their
occurrence, microaggressions can have an effect on the lives of individuals.

EFFECTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Continuous experiences with microaggressions can have varying types of effects on an
individual. To continuously explain ones identity to others or to have to debunk negative
associations to ones ethnic background and gender can be taxing on ones social and psychological
body. Regardless of whether or not they confronted the aggressor, or regardless of the type of
microaggression experienced, the participants all felt effects of these on themselves. The primary
effects that were expressed by participants included confusion over what transpired, a sense of
isolation within the campus community, and the desire to move forward in spite of the
aggression.

Confusion

A few of the participants experienced a sense of confusion following each
microaggressive incident. There is confusion as to what actually occurred and if it was something
that they simply imagined. In trying to understand a particular microaggression, Faviola
questioned the overall intentions of the aggressor: “I think just those little things that like I
notice…It makes you think. You know what I mean? ‘Why did you pay more attention to her
than you did to me?’ Like, ‘aren’t we supposed to be the same? We are just students.’ You know?’ As Faviola works through the experience of the aggression, she is left questioning the intentions of the instructor toward her and her peers. A similar feeling is expressed by Zenaida. In her quest to understand a particular microaggression, there is a moment of self-blame: “It’s the little things that you don’t think of but have a huge impact…and then I started thinking: “what did I do? Did I offend somebody?” But I was like “no I didn’t.” While she comes to the conclusion that she did not bring about the aggression, the stress associated with the aggression led Zenaida, for a brief moment, to feel that it was something that she had done that brought it upon herself. If not reflected upon and deconstructed, this confusion can turn inwardly and question one’s own abilities to perform academically.

**Isolation**

The theme of isolation from the university emerged as participants spoke about both the lack of gender and ethnic representation within the classroom (among both the student population and the faculty) and the lack of a comprehensive curriculum that reflected their experiences and background.

**Student Representation within the Classroom**

In speaking about their experiences with their peers in the classroom, a third of the participants expressed having a sense of being “the only Mexican in their classroom,” or one of a few. Miranda, a speech pathology and audiology major, expressed this sense of isolation when she beginning her program’s coursework. She felt intimidated as “it seemed like everybody knew each other, and everyone had blond hair, and a white face, and blue eyes. I was the only Mexican. I didn’t feel like I could fit in here at all.” It was only until she formed a study group with other Mexican students from the program that she finally felt like she belonged: “that’s a big reason why I stayed. I felt like I belonged there…” It was in finding a sense of community with
other Mexicanos in the program that provided the needed support to continue. Faviola, a communication studies major, sees that the lack of diversity in the classroom produces a sense of discomfort.

> There’s not very much diversity at all. I just see a bunch of white people. That’s all I see: a bunch of white people…I can count the Mexicans in the room, which is sad. Probably like five girls and three guys that are Mexican in there…But it makes me feel uncomfortable at times…You can’t relate.

The inability to relate to most of the people in her classes establishes a sense of discomfort for Faviola as her experiences cannot be shared amongst one another.

This inability to relate to one’s peers was clearly expressed by two participants within the College of Engineering. Cristal, an electrical engineering major, explains that while she may be comfortable with her male peers, there is one of only a small number of females within the majority of her classes. This fact can at times be a struggle. Similarly, Gabriela expresses that there is a level of intimidation that results from a lack of female students within her department:

> Having more women would be beneficial in engineering because I feel that, as a woman, you feel more comfortable talking to a woman, you can relate more to them…sometimes it’s really intimidating to be surrounded by guys in a classroom. So by having more girls, you can really, like form study groups or things like that that I wouldn’t really feel, even to this point, really comfortable doing with a lot of guys.

The lack of female students within their department not only establishes a level of isolation but also hampers the level of interaction that the female students have with their peers and instructors.

**Faculty Representation**

While a third of the participants felt a sense of isolation due to a lack of student representation, half of the participants expressed that this same sense of isolation was due to a lack of faculty representation. There is a sense of disconnect that arises for the participants. Many of these participants expressed a sense of discomfort to speak up in class or to approach faculty if they were non-Latino or male. As a result of the lack of Chican@ faculty on campus, Silvia has become more cautious in the classroom and thinks twice before making comments.
“Sometimes when I know…the professor is a white male, I’m a little more cautious about what I say. And if I do, I am aware that I might be shut down or ignored.” Because of the potential cultural insensitivity that can exist, Silvia takes a step back and analyzes the context before speaking up in class. Marta, a first year student, expressed that to have a faculty that she identifies with would allow her to “be more comfortable…because you have similar backgrounds, maybe you went through same things, and stuff like that, rather than having a professor from a different race because you wouldn’t really know where they are coming from.” To have a faculty that is representative of the student population can in turn assist with retention of Mexican students so that this population of students are not “just statistics that really don’t make it.”

Karina has seen that those students that excel in their classes do so because “they can go talk to the teachers in the office without feeling awkward.” Being part of the institution for several years, Silvia sees that there is a pattern that more and more Latino faculty is “getting pushed out.” Latino faculty is “getting pushed out and they’re not replacing them. We are losing them and they are not getting replaced by faculty of color, Chicano/Latinos.” Chican@ faculty represents a model to Chican@ students for what is possible and attainable. Angelica believes that Chican@ faculty are invaluable “role models, because I know how much it has influenced me seeing Dr. Julie Figueroa talking to us and motivating us. Just seeing her up there is a source of encouragement to keep going.” While seeing Mexican faculty is important to students, seeing female faculty represents alternatives to Chicanas that may have only been expected to follow a singular path.

For the participants, the importance of having faculty that represents them is imperative. Just like their lived experiences reflect their membership as females and Mexicans, so too do the participants see a need for there to be faculty that represents this intersection. To only have “a handful of people you can identify with is kind of scary sometimes,” states second year and
Communication Studies major Faviola. Without faculty that students can identify with leaves a gap for students to find support. Engineering major Cristal states that to have Chicana faculty would greatly add to her educational experience:

It’s one thing to relate to a woman, but I never see Mexican women orLatinas. I mean I think my whole four years here I only had maybe five women teachers, maybe six. Everyone else was a dude and they were white. I feel like if you were to see somebody who you can relate to a little bit more, in their background, you can be like: ‘I can get there one day.’

Faculty that are representative of their students become models for possibility and for strength to continue forward.

A Chicana faculty presence on campus provides the strength to dismantle existing stereotypes and strict gender expectations that can narrow opportunities for young Chicanas. Silvia states this clearly:

To see people that have gone through similar struggles and lived the same experiences. I mean by being here, we challenged our parents, more like our fathers and those expectations of being a typical housewife. But we are here, getting an education and not doing the typical role. And it’s powerful because the stereotype is that Latinas get pregnant at a young age and that’s it. You’re done. I think that could have happened to me.

The lack of representation within the faculty can help to develop a sense of isolation within students. To students, the message becomes that Chicanas are not truly welcomed within the institution. This is then coupled with a lack of representation within the curriculum of many courses.

Lack of Representation within the Curriculum

Several participants spoke about a gap between their lived experiences and the curriculum that is presented within their classrooms. When topics relating to gender emerge in her courses, Faviola states that professors are not willing to “challenge stereotypes and ideology.” This in turn leaves students “thinking it’s ok, it is this way, like woman are supposed to be sensitive or they are supposed to be submissive or they are supposed to be just like in the house or
whatever…I feel like students just accept it…‘That’s what it is cause the professor – someone who is above me – is telling me this.’” Because of the perceived expertise faculty hold, students may blindly believe in the information that is provided. If faculty does not challenge stereotypes, in effect upholding these stereotypes, students may themselves continue to uphold these stereotypes.

Zenaida reaffirms this sentiment. Within her department, there is the sense that faculty are “generalizing everything they give you. And they are not questioning anything. It’s just like oh well these are the facts you memorize them and there is a test.” Her experience within the department is juxtaposed with those she has had in courses from other departments. Within one of her courses taught by a Chicana, she experiences inclusivity and feels “like what I have to say is valuable and my experiences do matter.” Carmen further sees that some of her instructors “trivialize our experiences when [they] choose not to touch on those subjects…I feel like it pushes you to be ashamed of whom you are because it’s not looked at.” When faculty decide that it is not important to touch on subjects that affect their students, students in turn receive the message that their lived experiences are not of value to the instructor and to the institution.

To have a diverse faculty and curriculum that is representative of the student body becomes a source of support and validation for students. As they see their lived experiences reflected in the course curriculum, these participants can then in turn see that they are valued. To be valued for who one is and what they have lived through can be a source to reaffirm who they their identity.

*Fuel to Keep Moving Forward*

A final theme that emerged as an effect of microaggressions was the fuel to continue forward in spite of these experiences and improve their community and themselves as individuals. For several of the participants, their experiences became examples of needed systemic changes
within the university and the greater society. As a result, it became their social responsibility to stay firm in their pursuit of a higher education. Carmen passionately stated that her pursuit for a higher education is her way to give back to the next generations.

I’m proud to say that I’m a woman of color. And people can say all they want and try to oppress me all they want but I’m still going to keep fighting. I’ll be fighting like hell. I owe it to the coming generations to fight and allow them to have the opportunities that I didn’t have, or even the ones I did have, and to allow them to choose to identify however they want without being told otherwise.

For Carmen, it has become a fight to maintain existing resources and garner resources historically unavailable to Chican@s, and fight to allow individuals to identify as they choose. Similarly, Angelica wants to utilize her experiences with microaggressions “as a source” of strength. Rather than seeing herself as a victim, she wants “to reframe it in a way that it’s useful to other girls that are maybe going through the same things and helping to shed some light” on subtle forms of discrimination.

Experiences with microaggressions have further allowed the participants to grow as individuals and see the importance and value of their voices. Cristal has seen these experiences as a valuable opportunity to let her voice be heard:

I feel like I should learn to speak up if someone’s treating me bad. I used to be scared to say something because…I was scared it would escalate more because of me, because of my anger. But I feel like now I need to be able to speak up…little by little I’m learning to speak up, and say what I feel.

Lourdes also states that her experiences have given her the opportunity to reflect and see that she is different because of it: “I feel I have grown. I feel I have matured. Not only because of the age factor but because of the experiences I have gone through and the challenges that I have faced…they make me stronger.” It is in going through these experiences that the participants have been pushed to learn and grow.

While difficult, these experiences have demonstrated to the participants the need to continue their efforts. For some, it has become an opportunity to be an agent of change. As an
educated individual that has gone through such experiences, it becomes their social responsibility to take what they have learned and improve the conditions of their communities. For others, this has become an opportunity to reflect and grow as an individual and explore what is best for them. In these challenges, the participants have been able to develop the strength to continue forward.

COPING WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS

In order to cope with their experiences, participants developed networks of friends and mentors to assist in relieving stress associated with microaggressions. Many of the participants also looked inward and developed personal coping mechanisms against microaggressions. In utilizing these networks and personal mechanisms, participants were able to garner the support and understanding to move through their university experience with greater ease.

Networks

Friends became one of the biggest sources of assistance for the participants. Friends became valuable sources of support because they were able to relate and understand the difficulties faced as women and/or as a person of color. For Faviola, this became invaluable as it provided a space for reflection:

I definitely would go to my other mujeres. I express my feelings and they know how I feel cause they can relate so I feel like that is really good that I can have those conversations and breakdown what has been happening so I can kind of think about it and discuss it with other people.

Faviola is able to vent and deconstruct what occurred because her friends are able to relate to her struggles. Similarly, Marta goes to her friends because they offer a level of support and understanding that she is unable to receive elsewhere:

Well, my friends because I know them and I trust them…I feel more comfortable around them…I feel more comfortable around my own race, because I can express myself better, and sometimes you mix Spanish and English and there are certain words in Spanish that you want to say but you can’t when you’re with a non-Spanish speaker, and you just want
to Spanglish all over and you can’t. You try to explain and you can’t, because you can’t find the words in either language.

For Marta it is imperative to go to someone that has the same language and cultural background as she. Language becomes a critical component in expressing how one feels. To lack individuals that are representative of one’s background, can lead to the inability to release tension within a space that is safe and understanding.

Some of the participants also confided in Chican@ faculty for support and guidance. Miranda regularly speaks with Chican@ faculty because “they make it feel okay because they understand” what she is going through. Similarly, Silvia experiences with Chican@ mentors have been sources of empowerment:

You have to have those support groups…even with some of my mentors. I talk to them about it and they always empower you…They tell me, ‘Yeah that’s how it is but that’s why you have to keep going’…And they always tell me, ‘You have to be visible…You have to show them that we’re here, that we are not going anywhere. You can’t close yourself.’

The faculty member becomes a source of empowerment to the extent that they are able to not only demonstrate understanding and emotional support, but they are also able to reaffirm their value as an individual.

**Build Tough Skin**

While several of the participants established networks to assist in coping with microaggressions, many also looked inward to develop their own means by which to minimize the effects of microaggressions. Several participants have stated they have had to build tough skin as a coping mechanism. If ever she finds herself in a group of men, Faviola demonstrates a different posture. She feels the need to put up her guard “and appear confident. I have to appear like I can do whatever they’re doing…I guess like prove myself is what I am trying to say.” In order to be taken seriously and be more comfortable within that environment, there is a different stance that she must take. Catalina expresses very similar sentiments. “I’ve had to literally build
another layer of skin so that it doesn’t hurt me when they tell me things. Because it does hurt, but you just gotta do what you gotta do.” For Catalina, the way that she has been able to manage the pain experienced from microaggressions is to develop another “layer of skin” to shield her from these attacks.

For participants that built internal coping mechanisms, it becomes a means for survival. While it may be painful, it is in appearing confident that these women have been able to survive and garner respect from their male counterparts. Gabriela states that “you really have to step up…You need to, you know, do more than them for them to acknowledge you.” In building tough skin, however, participants are affirming their own value and identity. Faviola believes that you must “know who you are” and to not “let other people try to define you.”

UNIVERSITY AS A SPACE FOR EMPOWERMENT

While the university setting has been one where the participants have experienced microaggressions, for many of the participants the university became a space where they have garnered the tools of empowerment.

Becoming Aware of Societal Injustices

It was in their courses and interacting with other like-minded individuals that participants were able to become aware of injustices that exist within our society. This new knowledge provided the participants with new perspectives that were incapable of being attained in their home towns. Faviola describes these experiences as bringing consciousness to her and making her “think things in a different way that will definitely change your perspective and introduce you to terms like Chicana.” In becoming aware of such perspectives and injustices, participants gain the understanding that they are not alone in their experiences. For Angelica it was in taking Women Studies courses that she gained this understanding and “began to share everything”: 
I was just like, ‘Oh this isn’t something that’s just particular to me?’ I thought it was just me being dramatic. I felt that I was going through these things by myself. But once I realized it was shared experiences that a lot of Chicanas feel the same, that’s when I started talking about it, and it feels like it was healing. ‘Oh, that’s why things happen.’ You come to know how and why they come about.

It was in being part of these courses that Angelica was able to more clearly understand the structure and history of various forms of discrimination that affect her daily life.

Similarly, it was in taking course in sociology that Silvia gained a deeper understanding of these realities. “Before sociology I was never aware of them [subtle racism] and that’s why I can’t recall any before sociology. But after sociology yes… after sociology…I did become more aware of subtle racism.” While enlightening, these realizations were also frustrating realities.

For Catalina, realizing the depth of the injustices within the United States lit a fire under her unlike any other:

I took a social work class about two years ago that talked about white privilege, marginalization, the way media portrays people, and it hit me. It hit me and I was just like, ‘What the fuck?! Why aren’t people standing on cars? F everybody. There is no equality in the United States.’ So that was my ‘aha’ moment.

It was in that class that Catalina came to an awakening of the world around her and a catalyst for her drive to be an agent of change.

**Growth as an Individual**

In learning more and more about different perspectives and ways of being, these participants became more comfortable in whom they are as individuals. For many, it was in attending college and becoming independent that they were able to begin to shed expectations imposed upon them by their families and society. For Catalina, the university experience became the opportunity to be happy on her own terms: “It actually took me coming here…to finally be like, ‘You know what, no matter what I do, I don’t think my parents are going to be happy with my life so I might as well do what I want and be happy.’” She continues: “Now that I’m in college I feel like I’ve found myself…And it took time; it took me leaving and meeting people to
realize that it’s okay.” There is a sense of relief that is developed that may not have been able to find had she stayed in her hometown.

For others, this has also been an opportunity to claim and reaffirm one’s identity. For Miranda, to learn about Chicanismo has been a defining point:

Definitely I grew a lot in the past 3-4 years. Like when I was in high school and middle school, like aceptaba las cosas. That’s the way it is. And then, viniendo aqui…I feel like empowered, especialmente con M.E.Ch.A. – como the word Chicano. I would have never used the word growing up, and now I feel like it’s the best word to refer to me or say what I am, or why I’m here.

Similarly, Carmen has found a sense of pride in her ethnic background: “I really learned a lot about myself, my family, la raza, who I am, and where I really come from. I’m not just ‘that Mexican’…I think it made me prouder and because of that I identify as Chicana.” Lorena explains that this is a time where “you learn about yourself and you realize many things about life…That’s the whole point of moving away: learning about yourself and learning about the world.” While the process may be difficult, it is in these experiences that these participants have had the opportunity to learn and grow.

**SUMMARY**

This research set out to explore second generation Chicanas’ experiences with microaggressions within the university setting and the effects these have on the participants. The data collected from 16 in-depth interviews of these mujeres is invaluable. This data provides a more specific understanding as to what aggressions are experienced by this group of second generation Chicanas within the university setting, what messages do these aggressions convey, what is the emerging relationship between the institution and the participant, and what effects do these have on the participants.
Those participants that experienced microaggressions faced them in the forms of environmental aggressions, microinsults and microinvalidations. Participants saw themselves less valued by the campus community as they did not see themselves represented within major aspects of the university (student body, faculty, and the curriculum). These participants were assumed to hold traditional gender roles, were thought of as second class citizens, and assumed to be intellectually inferior to their male and white counterparts. Furthermore, the participants’ lived experiences were neglected as they were often seen through a myopic lens that saw all Chicanas as the same. As a result, they were often excluded whenever they did not fit this arbitrary mold. The messages that emerged from these events are that because of their race and gender, these individuals are marked by “otherness.” Whether by their peers, faculty/staff, or the institution, the message that is sent is that they are not valued for what they have accomplished but instead devalued because of the arbitrary labels that have been placed on them.

While three of the participants may not have perceived that they were aggressed, they are nevertheless part of a greater system that has historically devalued their identities. These individuals still, however, heard commentary and witnessed behavior that, while it may not have been directed toward them, affected their gender and racial/ethnic community. As example, one participant stated that instructors within her major would often times lessen requirements and expectations for her and her fellow female classmates, while her male classmates were held to much higher standards. While the participant felt that this differential treatment was positive, this nevertheless, whether realized or not, demeans her position within society and other achievements she may have attained.

The participants’ experiences with their peers and faculty/staff showcase the contradictions that exist in their lived experiences. While the university setting has been a space where a majority of the participants have experienced microaggressions, it also became a space
where they have had the opportunity to define and understand these aggressions, and understand how to better navigate through an environment where microaggressions are present. In order to navigate through this environment, it became important for participants to establish networks of people and spaces that allowed them to be open, vulnerable, valued, and empowered. In addition, the university also became a space for growth and empowerment. In being active participants within their classrooms and in the campus community, these participants became aware of the myriad of injustices that exist within United States society and how they as individuals fit within this context.

In moving through these events, several participants experienced a sense of isolation that stemmed from a lack of representation within the classroom. In seeing a lack of Chicanas within the student body as well as within the faculty, the participants that experienced isolation felt as if they did not belong and their voices and presence did not matter. This sentiment, however, was countered with a fire that also emerged from experiencing microaggressions. In understanding these injustices, the participants saw it as their social responsibility to transfer this negativity into something positive that not only benefitted them but also their communities. It was within this context that participants began a process of shedding familial and societal expectations that did not serve them. This became an opportunity to find what makes them passionate and begin to define for themselves their own identity. This process of aggression, reflection, and understanding became an opportunity to reclaim or redefine identities that were jeopardized by expectations that have been imposed upon them.
Chapter 5 – DISCUSSION

The previous chapter provided a detailed look at the specific types of experiences these women have gone through with subtle forms of discrimination within the educational system, how they coped with these experiences, and the personal effect they had. The perceptions and lived experiences of these women provide an insight as to the precarious position of women of color within the university setting and, as an extent, within the larger society. Their experiences are a reflection of the relationship between society and the individual in reproducing discriminatory ideologies; the precarious nature of living within multiple narratives; and the amazing ability of these women to utilize the margin as a site of personal and political power.

The current chapter then provides an analysis as to the theoretical significance of these experiences. The chapter then dives deeper into two major themes that emerged: (1) the reproduction of discriminatory ideologies and how the participants have worked to balance the emergent narratives; and (2) the participant’s ability to utilize the margins as a space of empowerment to continue further in their academics and in their communities. An intersectional and multi-racial feminist analysis will be utilized to point to the power that institutions have to not only create environments that directly or indirectly assail the value of certain groups of individuals but also have the ability to foster an environment that values and empowers individuals from marginalized backgrounds so that they have the opportunity to flourish. The chapter concludes by providing the limitations of this study and offers suggestions for further research.

THE REPRODUCTION OF DISCRIMINATORY IDEOLOGIES

The reproduction of ideologies, discriminatory or otherwise, occurs at both the macro- and micro-levels of society. As individuals we are not isolated from society. Society prompts
our movements and shapes our thoughts, identity, and emotions. In essence, “[t]he structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness…” (Berger 1963:121, as cited in Charon 2007:20). It is those in power within the dominant society that through their interactions in media and various other institutions that develop a perspective, a definition, a narrative that places them in an elevated position over others and creates difference (Charon 2007). These narratives are the smokescreen by which difference and inequality are justified. In this sense, the narratives constructed to describe expectations of categories of people are utilized to maintain the existing power structure (Vasquez 2010). As we interpret the messages that we receive from the various institutions of which we are a part, we develop an understanding of what is socially acceptable and internalize it as our own. Once internalized, individuals, even those who are negatively affected by them, reproduce these same narratives in their daily interactions.

Within the context of this study, the university setting is one more institution through which these narratives are reproduced, confirming years of socialization that places Chicanas in a subjugated position. Internalized ideas about Chicanas can lead to both overt and covert forms of discrimination in the form of educators devaluing the opinions of students and establishing curriculums that deny, ignore, and/or do not challenge the realities of racism and sexism within our society (hooks 1981; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

Because the United States has by and large shifted away from tolerating overt and direct acts of discrimination, most within the dominant society tend to believe that minorities and women are doing much better, discrimination is declining, and that society is quickly approaching equality among all groups (Capodilupo et al. 2010; Rivera et al. 2010; Solorzano et al. 2002; Sue et al. 2007; Sue et al. 2008). However, discrimination has not been eradicated but changed forms to something that is more covert, subtle, indirect, and ambiguous that is built into cultural and social norms. These microaggressions can be quite damaging because they attack one’s self-
esteem, harvest anger and frustration, and create inequalities by denying marginalized groups equal access and opportunity to education, employment, and healthcare (Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007b; Sue et al. 2008).

Microaggressions are thus conduits for shaping and reshaping an individual’s sense of self. As social creatures, humans utilize interactions between themselves and others, and the interpretations of such interactions, including overt and covert messages and symbols, to have an understanding of their social location (Charon 2007; Solorzano et al. 2002). For marginalized individuals, microaggressions become just one of example of the types of interactions with others that gives them a further understanding that they are indeed within marginalized positions. In the act of a microaggression, receivers of these aggressions interpret the interaction as a statement that they are inadequate or incapable of engaging in certain activities or processes for the simple fact that they are part of one or multiple marginalized communities. In turn, receivers can act on these messages and internalize them or disregard them as inaccurate portrayals of who they are.

For the participants within this study, three major categories of microaggressions emerged: environmental microaggressions, microinsults, and microinvalidations. All three of these forms in one way or another devalued and further marginalized these women. Environmental microaggressions are the messages and symbols that we are exposed within the various institutions that we are a part of that demean marginalized groups (Sue 2010). For the participants, the environmental microaggressions took the form of lack of representation within the student body as well as within the faculty. While this was most evident for those participants that were within majors outside of the social sciences, participants still saw this as a prominent issue. Many spoke of the feeling of being the “only Mexican” in the classroom. In addition there was a great concern that faculty of color, and in particular female faculty of color, were routinely
pushed out of the university and not provided the same opportunities to reach tenure track or full-time status as white faculty.

To have an adequate representation of faculty within the university provides the opportunity for marginalized communities, in this case Chicanas, to establish connection with models for success. In his work exploring the experiences of Chican@s in California as they move toward completion of their doctorate degrees, Solorzano (1993) explains that a barrier in the success of the students was a lack of role models and difficulty accessing mentorship from Latino faculty. The Latino faculty they encountered during their undergraduate and graduate studies were the first Latino faculty they had ever met but became examples and inspiration to pursue a graduate degree. Similar to the students in this study, Solorzano et al. (2002) found that graduate students in California felt the campus environment to be a hostile location, in part because of a lack of representation among the faculty. This lead to experiences of being disconnected from the faculty who believed minority students should not be present at the university.

To have Latino faculty, and in particular Chicana faculty, visible within the classroom provides the opportunity for students to connect with the institution at a more personal level and feel validated in their struggles and experiences. In seeing the presence of Chicana faculty, students have the opportunity to feel welcomed and appreciated within the university.

Within the institution the participants are pursuing their education, however, there is a disconnect between the student body and the faculty. From 2010 – 2014 there has been a steady decline in Latino faculty, while there has an increase in Latino student enrollment. In terms of gender, while this data is not disaggregated by ethnicity, there is nevertheless a disparity between the proportion of female faculty to that of female students within this same time period (Sacramento State Office of Institutional Research, University Fact Book: Section 1 and 3 2014).
Many of the participants explained that if they had faculty that were representative of their gender and/or ethnic background, this would facilitate connection to the faculty and give them the confidence to approach them when they were struggling with their classes or sought guidance in other matters of their lives.

In addition to a lack of representation, participants were also frustrated that they were unable to connect with the curriculum as this often did not reflect their lived experiences. Sensitive topics such as race or gender were often evaded or stereotypes of females and Mexicanos were not challenged. Within the context of the classroom, faculty are in a position to legitimize certain perspectives and narratives and thus have a role in perpetuating or challenging controlling images of Chicanas. Because of the inherent difficulty in speaking about sensitive topics such as race and gender, faculty may manipulate their classes in a way that avoids discourse in those topics (Chan and Treacy 1996). The relationship that exists between faculty and student is then one of power by which faculty take on an authoritative role and students are more passive in the decision making process of curriculum and pedagogy development (Foire and Rosenquest 2010). As holders of knowledge and expertise, faculty are in a position to not just maintain the status quo but to “clarify the complexity of the many overlapping” structures of power within our society and “work with our students to build critical skills necessary to examine their own” social locations and make positive contributions within their environment (Chan and Treacy 1996:214). While the former plays a role in the continuation of viewing individuals from marginalized as inconsequential, the latter not only examines societal structures and their potential sources of inequality, but also sees students as valuable that have the ability to be agents of change.

The second major microaggression that emerged was that of microinsults. These microaggressions disseminate the message that demean an individual’s racial, sexual, and gender
identity, and are subtle and commonly automatic aggressions (Sue 2010). The participants were often defined under the dichotomous Marianismo and Malinchismo narrative that places strict and limited possibilities for what directions Chicanas can take. Via these microaggressions and this narrative, a very specific identity is imposed upon the participants. Those that pursued an identity that is outside of the Marianismo expectation were labeled as deviant. In this sense, patriarchy is further upheld. Hurtado (2003:14) expresses that “all Mexicana/Chicana women are potential Malinches capable of betrayal if they are not under the watchful eye of patriarchy.” While other ethnic groups have similar dichotomies, for many within the Chicano community, adherence to Marianismo provides a means by which the community garners strength to combat oppression from the dominant group (Hurtado 2003). They are thus faced with a Catch-22: If they do not personally ascribe to the ways of Marianismo but yet fulfill these expectations, they create a dissonance within their self and identity. If however they move away from Marianismo and follow their personal beliefs, there is greater salience within them but may risk marginalization within their community.

In addition to the Marianismo/Malinchismo dichotomy, several of the participants spoke out in frustration of the manner in which instructors would often lower their standards upon realizing that the participants were Mexican, thus sending the message that they are intellectually inferior to their peers. The narrative that Mexicanas are not capable of rigorous academic work stood firm for these participants. While the actions of the professor and staff member may not have been intended as malicious, a negative message was evident for these women. These experiences further reinforce the message that these women because of their gender ethnic background are not expected to excel academically. Similarly, Solorzano et al.’s (2002) Latina participants expressed this sentiment stating that both their White peers and faculty did not recognize their high achievements and believed that their admittance into the university was only
possible via affirmative action policies. In addition, Yosso et al. (2009) also found that their Latina participants were often excluded from participating in study groups because their peers felt that they were unable to add any academic benefit to the group. These assumptions not only deny these women the opportunity to explore their academic passions but also deter individuals from engaging in work that can benefit the institutions as well as the advancement of marginalized groups.

The automatic labeling of individuals as incapable of excelling, or being competent, in academics can lead to less success for the labeled individual. This in can create a self-fulfilling prophecy. If internalized, these negative messages can lead individuals to believing that they are incapable of achieving academic, personal, or professional success and will not strive to improve their position. This lack of willingness then leads to less success and reinforces the negative messages established by the dominant group. A self-fulfilling prophecy is thus a belief that provides its own confirmation (Houghton 2009). While the belief may be false statement in the beginning, the chronic reiteration of the statement takes on new form so that the false statement becomes true. The stress that is associated with living within multiple systems of oppression can cause an individual to “maladaptive and even self-destructive behavior” (Solorzano et al. 2002:23). How marginalized individuals are depicted within the larger society then has a major impact in how they see themselves. For Chicanas, the barrage of messages labeling them as betrayers of their culture for not adhering to specific gender role expectations can carry within them such weight that this it becomes internalized and a reality for the individual. She is thus unconsciously coerced into confinement and limits herself to the choices, opportunities, and successes she can take and achieve.

Participants also spoke about how they were often denied access into participation within the classroom by faculty or denied access to campus knowledge and resources from staff. Their
opinions were often shot down or ignored, others were not provided the same level of assistance as white students, and yet others were placed in situations where they felt physically intimidated. The message received by the participants is that Chicanas are thought of as less than their male and white counterpart and should therefore not be given the same level of respect and assistance. In ignoring the opinions and physical space of the participants, their value as contributing members of the academic community and the larger society is put into question. Devaluation within the university setting—a setting which is touted as one that is safe for self-expression—is then a reflection of their devaluation within the larger community. As “objects of assimilationist policies” (Elenes 1997:364), such as school segregation, that have devalued and deemed their culture, language, and customs as inferior Chicanas have continuously been marginalized peoples in the United States (Perea 1997).

While the participants did not fully internalize these messages, it can be inferred that the internalization of such messages could deter individuals from pursuing areas of interest that are outside of the expected narrative of who they are supposed to be or prevent individuals from being successful. Solorzano et al. (2002:27) found that the accumulated experiences of racial microaggressions upon some of the Black students interviewed resulted in “high levels of repressed frustration…and lower grades.” Additionally, Yosso et al. (2009) explained that the isolation some of the Latino students experienced within the classroom as a result of racial microaggressions led to students becoming confused and lost focus during lass. In line with symbolic interaction, the students from marginalized communities are continuously responding to their perceptions of how others view them. They are continuously reminded that they do not belong within the institution and the held belief that they are not academically competent.

The final form of microaggression experienced was microinvalidations. These evoke communications that exclude and deny acceptance of the thoughts, feelings, and lived
experiences of marginalized groups. Several participants spoke of the frustration they experienced in having their identities continuously questioned by their peers because they did not fit the existing narrative of what a Chicana looks like. The participants continuously fight to select their own identity. They, in essence, would rather have the opportunity to define their own ethnic/racial identity and freely move from one context to another without recourse, or engage “flexible ethnicity” (Vasquez 2010:46). The existing racial narrative, however, is one that does not permit a successful exhibition of such an ethnicity as it racializes them instead. According to Vasquez (2010), because dominant groups utilize racialization as a mechanism to imposes certain racial assignments on others, those with darker skin tones are placed at greater disadvantaged than those with light skin tones. This then affords those with a lighter skin tone the opportunity to more fully engage in their chosen identity. As such, those that identify as Mexican but whose appearance is not in accordance with this expectation are denied this identity. It is within this context and against these images and narratives that the participants are challenged to define themselves.

In addition to being excluded from their ethnic background because of their phenotype, participants also felt that they were often expected to be representative of the Chicana community as a whole. They became the token Chicana in their classroom and were often called upon to speak on behalf of their community. Such experiences have been substantiated by Sue et al. (2007:76), who, in exploring the experiences of Asian Americans, found that many of their participants expressed feeling of having their individual experiences negated by statements such as “All Asians look alike.” These microaggressions denied the existing interethnic differences. Sue et al. (2008) expressed that many of the Black participants they interviewed, either at work or in school, felt that they were often looked upon to speak for the entire community. This, however, negates the “individual experience because” they are “viewed as interchangeable” (Sue
et al. 2008:334). The experiences of tokenism expressed here further showcase the widespread occurrences of these microaggressions.

The experiences of these participants before and while at the university have led to a further understanding of their in-between position as second generation Chicanas, their unique phenotypic variations, and the need to navigate various worlds. It is within this dynamic that our “self” takes form. As second generation individuals, these participating Chicanas must grapple with two generalized others, that of the United States culture and that of the Mexican culture. These two generalized others become the internalization of what we believe society to be and in effect guides our behavior (Charon 2007).

This tug between worlds and the tension that arises within this is what Gloria Anzaldua (1987:78) refers to as a state of “mental nepantlism,” or being torn between different ways. As mestizas, we are the result of an interchange of cultural values between groups and as such have a dual identity in which we do not fully identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and do not fully identify with the Mexican cultural values as well. We are “ni de aqui, ni de aya.”

This position also caused conflict with their families and their education. In attempting to stretch their wings to explore new aspects of themselves, they were drawn back by traditional gender role expectations held by their families. Immigrant families have the ability to discipline their daughters as racial/national subjects as well as gendered ones…and can opt to regulate their daughters’ choices by linking them to cultural ignorance or betrayal” so that those “who disobeyed parental strictures [are] branded ‘non-ethnic,’” “untraditional,” “radical,” “selfish,” “not caring about the family,” [or] “Americanized” (Espiritu 2000:228).

Because women within this population have become the vehicle by which tradition is maintained, the burdens of cultural presentation and representation fall most heavily on them (Espiritu 2000). On the other side of this lies the institution. There is still an expectation that in order to become
academically and professionally successful, one must assimilate into the existing culture. This then disregards students’ responsibilities to their families.

Of importance, however, is that the narratives presented about Chicanas are not only internalized by members of the dominant society but also by those most negatively affected by the narratives. Participants spoke about other female peers also engaging in microaggressions against them and sent the message that the role of women and their value is secondary to that of men. In accepting this narrative, whether consciously or subconsciously, these women “passively absorb sexism and willingly assume a pre-determined sex role” (hooks 1984:85). This internalized sexism has much to do with the manner by which women in the United States have been socialized. hooks (1981:121) has stated that, regardless of their social location, women in the United States have been socialized to such an extent that we “blindly trust our knowledge of history and its effects on present reality, even though that knowledge has been formed and shaped by an oppressive system.” These actions, though seemingly mundane, reinforce oppressive narratives. Bearman, Korobov, and Thorne (2009:14) explain that internalized sexism upholds sexism “via a system of social expectations and pressures enacted between women” and therefore becomes a “key piece in the puzzle of oppression.” Internalized sexism is thus a relational process produced and reproduced within interactions. It is in these sites of interaction then that these forms of oppression can be both constructed and deconstructed.

Regardless of their initial reactions to these microaggressions, the participants have taken the difficult step of maintaining the values and traditions from their families while incorporating the knowledge they have gained in other parts of their lives, even in those spaces of privilege that make others uncomfortable. “Navigating this racialized and gendered borderland that is replete with stereotype landmines remains part of everyday life of U.S.-born Mexican Americans”
The success of the participants in coping and managing the effects of microaggressions has much to do with the networks they are able to establish and the campus resources available to them. To cope with the effects of microaggressions, many of the participants found this external strength through various departments, organizations, and or individuals that allowed them to build safe spaces. It was within these spaces that their experiences were valued and accepted so that they can maintain strength. bell hooks (1990:46) refers to this safe space a “homeplace” and is one that “affirmed our beings, our blackness, out love for one another” and was a space for “necessary resistance.” It is “a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become…” and where we can speak with power and resistance against the narratives that oppress the self (hooks 1990:148).

Participants spoke about going to raza faculty, friends, and counter spaces, such as the university’s Multi-Cultural Center, as a means by which to regain focus and engage in dialogue with others who could relate to their struggles and empower them to keep moving forward. These became those “homeplaces” that hooks (1990) spoke about. They became important places that valued and validated the participant’s experiences and the various aspects of who they are. Without these spaces, it is not possible for aggressed individuals to create “a meaningful community of resistance” (hooks 1990:47). As second generation individuals that must traverse multiple narratives, the participants also utilized these homeplaces as sites of remembrance where they were able to retain and reclaim their cultural history.

This is similar to the experiences of Latino/a students interviewed by Yosso et al. (2009). Their students created and utilized counterspaces as opportunities to represent the cultural wealth
of their home communities. In the face of racial microaggressions, these students created their own families that provided spaces to vent frustrations and engage in academic rigor without the added pressure of being perceived as a spokesperson for their community. Solorzano et al. (2002) also expresses that the students of color in their study utilize counterspaces as an opportunity to “challenge the dominant deficit notions of People of Color and promote a positive campus racial climate” (p.44). Academic and social counter spaces in the form of study groups or student organizations fostered their learning within the university and created environments that validated their experiences and saw them as meaningful knowledge.

For the Chicanas in this present study, counterspaces and homeplaces became means for self-preservation, survival, and transformation. As hooks (1990) explains, “We come to this space through suffering and pain, through struggle…We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world” (p. 153). They became spaces where they developed a “counter-language” (hooks 1990:150) that gave them the tools and courage to navigate through the multiple narratives to which they reside.

**UTILIZING THE MARGIN AS A SPACE FOR EMPOWERMENT AND CHANGE**

An intersectional analysis shines light on the multiple narratives that second generation Chicanas are a part of and must contend with on the university campus. In exploring these intersections, multi-racial feminism provides insight into the power dynamics between the individual and social structure. The combination of Intersectionality and Multi-Racial Feminism helps to illuminate the ability of Chicanas to take charge of their personal agency and how institutions of higher education can become allies to this population and establish means by which to value their experiences and assist them in becoming successful individuals.
An intersectional analysis speaks to the various ways in which race and gender interact to create the various dimensions of an individual (Crenshaw 1989). For the participants, it has been in moving through their educational journey that they have strengthened their understanding of their social location and how this location relates to the university as well as the greater community. The conflict experienced with their family to gain independence and the space to explore the various sides of them was countered with the conflict they faced within the university as there was an unspoken expectation to relinquish their cultural selves to assimilate to the demands of the university. The gender/race microaggressions experienced further solidified their understanding that females and people of color are marginalized not just by their peers but also by the institutions they are situated within. Additionally, it is in experiencing these microaggressions that they come to more fully understand that their lived experiences are unique as they are positioned at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression. The confusion and difficulty they have experienced in making sense of their experiences in part stems from this position. Just as their self may be difficult to situate, they come to understand that the microaggressions they have experienced are just as difficult to situate or define.

As these women struggle to understand the agency they hold within the structure of their society, they struggle to shape their lives. While these experiences were at times isolating, in becoming educated as to the reality of their social location and the manner by which institutions have been structured, their ethnic and gender identity becomes more salient as they see the importance of staying firm in the face of oppression. In rejecting “the powerful’s definition of their reality” they enact their “personal power as an act of resistance and strength” (hooks 1984:90). In fighting to maintain their traditions and values and their own truth even in the face of oppression, they exert their personal agency. The personal power they have gained through
their journey compels them to seek and do more. To “mak[e] the invisible visible” (Sue et al. 2007a:281).

The value and space that an intersectional analysis provides to marginalized individuals and the focus that it provides to deconstruct power structures falls in line with that of Multi-Racial Feminism in going beyond recognition of diversity and difference among women to examine systems of oppression (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996). In living within the third space of being second generation Chicana, the participants have fought to be recognized and valued. Their experiences have become an opportunity to further question the existing power structure, reinforce their intersectional identity, and have become fuel to do more. As the categorical definition of Mexican has changed within the United States, so too has the manner in which Chicanas have been treated. When deemed to be of benefit to the country, Mexicanos have been incorporated into the mainstream. When deemed threatening, however, they are cast out and marginalized. Within this context there is yet still inter-group variation that affords some privileges over others. Those that have fair skin have the ability to “pass” and move more freely within their environment. Those who have darker skin are constricted in their movement and are relegated to subordinate positions.

From these marginalized positions, however, the participants have gained insight into the inner workings of our society. Anzaldua (1987) calls this capacity “la facultad” (p.38). She describes that those that have this capacity are more sensitized to the subtleties that surround us. It is in having to fight against discrimination that we are forced to develop such a capacity. It becomes a “survival tactic that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate” (Anzaldua 1987:38-39). W. E. B. DuBois’ concept of double consciousness provides us a similar understanding. Double consciousness is the ability to not only see ourselves as those of the dominant culture see us, but also have an understanding of the inner workings of systems of
oppression. It is a “second sight” that gives us the ability to “recognize the presence of racism” (Craig 2009:84). It is with this second sight that participants have had the courage to confront aggressors and challenge stereotypes and controlling images that continue to further subjugate them.

While individuals can become successful in curbing inequality, they are nevertheless limited by institutional policies and overall culture that is in place. It is these structures and institutions that affect an individual’s autonomy and have their truth valued. It is here then that institutions have the power to continue to marginalize individuals or to provide support and greater equity. One of the greatest difficulties for the participants was to see a lack of representation within the curriculum, the faculty, and resources available within the university. This is critical for Sacramento State in particular as it is moving toward establishment as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). According to the latest federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data, the university's full-time undergraduate Hispanic/Latino enrollment reached 26% as of Fall 2013. Given this, Sacramento State is in a position to not only enroll but also serve this population. To serve Latino students is to have intentionality. It is to know the profile of the Latino population within the institution as well as surrounding community. It means having the willingness to adapt curricular design, improve academics, and establish support services that promote the persistence and personal growth of Latino students (Santiago 2009).

Just as there is a difference between enrolling and serving students from marginalized backgrounds, such as Chicanas, there is a distinct difference between writing policies that spout ideas of diversity to combat educational gaps and actually implementing mechanisms that get to the root causes of inequalities, e.g. subtle and covert discrimination. Iverson (2007) has stated that in establishing policies that get to root causes of inequalities existent in universities, policy
makers establish a platform for marginalized groups to voice their concerns and provides the opportunity to be “challenged to consider how the articulation of solutions in policy corresponds with the stated problems” (p.605). Through this process, university policy makers can deconstruct the ways in which some knowledge and practices are given more power than others. A means by which policy can address such issues is establishing opportunities for faculty to reflect on their own social locations. Sue et al. (2009) have stated that educators, and in effect students and institutions, within all levels of education would benefit from training in facilitating difficult dialogue and recognizing their own biases so that teaching becomes more than just lecturing and moves toward critical thought.

In addition, policies must furthermore establish mechanisms by which faculty hiring committees represent the student population and have the needs of the students in mind. There is thus a need to increase the numbers of male and female faculty of color. For the purposes of this study, there is a need to increase the number of Latino faculty. Faculty can then become emulative examples for students. They become in a sense standards to which “we want others (or ourselves) to aspire” and “pass on system traditions, values, and culture onto the next generation” (Verdugo 1995:678). To have faculty that accurately represent the student body and holds their interest at heart can furthermore lead to the development of curriculum that is more reflective of the changing demographics of its campus. This means challenging long standing stereotypes that further devalue and marginalized groups. In enacting institutional changes, the university sends the message that Chicanas are valued and whose achievements are welcomed.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This research focused on the relationship between subtle forms of discrimination at the institutional and interpersonal levels against second generation Chicanas. In particular, it focused
on the effects of these forms of discrimination on these participants and how they balanced the multiple narratives they reside in.

In utilizing Intersectionality and Multiracial Feminism, two major findings emerged: the reproduction of discriminatory ideologies and utilizing the margins as a space for empowerment and change. The first discussed the manner in which microaggressions are a vehicle by which discriminatory ideologies are reproduced at the interpersonal level. When these go unchallenged and/or unnoticed, these ideologies are further reinforced and validated. The second finding discussed the way by which the participants, through their struggles, have been able to utilize their positions on the margins to not only gain insight into the underbelly of societal structures but to also utilize this as the opportunity to enact change within themselves and their surrounding community. While this research focused on the experiences of second generation Chicanas, the theory, concepts, and methodology utilized within this work may be applicable when exploring the experiences of other second generation populations of color on university campuses.

However, the narratives expressed within this study cannot be assumed to represent the lived experiences of all second generation Chicanas. The small sample of the study is thus a limitation of this project in representing the larger population in terms of fields of study covered, age, and backgrounds. Further research can address this limitation by recruiting a larger sample that holds within it greater diversity of participants. All the same, the experiences of these sixteen women can serve as a starting point to give insight into the experiences of second generation Chicanas on university campuses.

In conducting this research, two challenges arose: the availability of literature and the researcher’s standpoint. The research literature forced me to combine literature of several academic fields to develop a more unified picture of the lived experiences of second generation Chicanas within higher education. There is a scarcity of direct work that explores not only the
lived experiences of Mexicanos and females with microaggressions, but more specifically the experiences of second generation Chicanas with gender/racial microaggressions. This challenge makes clear the severe gap in the literature. In spite of this challenge, the data uncovered through this research provides an opportunity to further explore the experiences of this population within the university setting and work toward closing the gap within this literature.

In addition to the challenge faced in compiling the literature, it is of importance to note the relationship that I as the researcher had with the project. I self identify as a second generation Chicana and thus have a personal investment and relatability with the participants. This identification can be seen as a limitation in where the work conducted under a different researcher that does not personally identify with this group could yield a different perspective, results, and analysis. To remedy this potential limitation, further research in this area need be conducted under various lenses to ensure that the literature on second generations Chicanas is expansive and thorough. Future research could engage in the use of narratives as a source for rich data that is not as restrained by the dynamics that arise between interviewer and interviewee such as social desirability.

Finally, the present and future research can then shine a light into institutional policies that can be modified to create safer spaces for Chicanas. This can include increasing faculty representation, modifying biased curriculums, and establishing more centers that celebrate the achievements of Chicanas. We must create structures that can be fluid and flexible to the changing needs of its populations. To deny a space for the voices of marginalized groups to emerge is to deny their experiences and to send the message that their successes and struggles are inconsequential.
Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in research that will be conducted by Mayra Villarreal, who is a graduate student in Sociology at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of second generation Chicanas with covert discrimination within the university setting, specifically at California State University, Sacramento. If you decide to volunteer for this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview lasting approximately one to two hours. During the interview you will be asked several questions relating to interactions with peers, faculty, and staff on campus, potential experiences of conflict with these individuals, and how these have affected the way in which you see yourself as an individual. With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded. Following the interview and outside of the presence of the interviewer, you will be asked to complete a written exercise that will provide you the opportunity to speak about your experiences in the classroom and on the campus in general.

In the case that these questions cause any strong emotion, discomfort, or embarrassment, you may contact the university’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 916-278-6461. This interview is an opportunity for you to tell your story about your experiences concerning covert discrimination in school, how these experiences affected yourself as an individual, and how you have coped with these effects. There may be no personal gain for you other than being able to share your personal experiences but the information from the study will help to understand the experiences in general of Chicanas at a university.

Your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be utilized instead of your actual name. Anyone that assists in the transcription of these responses will only know you by this pseudonym. The recording and transcribed responses will be destroyed at the completion of the research. The information you provide will be utilized for my master’s thesis and may be used as the basis of articles or presentations in the future. Your name or information that would identify you will not be utilized in any publications or presentations.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. If at any point you feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, you have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or have any other concerns, the CSUS Institutional Review Board may be contacted at the Hornet Bookstore Building 3400, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95819, (916) 278-7565. If you have any questions or concerns relating to your involvement in this particular study, you may contact the researcher directly or the researcher’s advisor Todd Migliaccio.

Agreement:
The nature and purpose of this research have been explained to me in full and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

Signature:___________________________ Date:______________

Print Name:___________________________

By signing here, I am consenting to be recorded for this interview.

Signature:___________________________ Date:______________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Experiences as Chicanas
1. Describe your experience growing up within your family.
2. Describe your experience growing up Chicana in your community.
3. Describe your experiences in school before attending this university with other students, teachers, and staff.

Microaggressions Experienced
1. While here at Sacramento State, what are some subtle ways that people treat or have treated you differently because of your race?
2. While here at Sacramento State, what are some subtle ways that people treat or have treated you differently because of your gender?
3. Think of some of the stereotypes that exist about Chicanas. How have others expressed (subtly or directly) their stereotypical beliefs about you?
4. Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable or insulted by a comment made about Chicanas?
5. As opposed to women of other races/ethnicities, how do you see your experiences differ both inside and outside of the classroom?
6. As opposed to Chicanos, how do you see your experiences differ within and outside of the classroom?

Coping with Microaggressions
1. What are some of the ways that you dealt with these experiences?

Effects of Microaggressions
1. What do you think the overall impact of your experiences has been on your life?
2. Have your experiences on campus affected your plans after graduation?
3. In what ways do these racial/gender incidents affect your ability to perform academically? Please explain.
4. What are the advantages of having a significant number of female students on campus?
5. What are the advantages of having a significant number of Chicano students on campus?
6. Do you think the campus environment for Chicano/a students at CSUS has gotten better or worse since you began here? Please explain.
7. Do you think the campus environment for Chicana students at CSUS has gotten better or worse since you began here? Please explain.
REFERENCES


(https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=CA&zc=95819&zd=0&of=3&l=93&ct=1&jc=1&id=110617#enrolmt).


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