

## Controlling Images of Space: Latina Teachers and Racial Positioning in Multiracial Schools

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Controlling images, which are hegemonic racial ideologies that permeate social institutions, have been applied to racial/ethnic minority groups and individuals, but much less to space. In this article, I show how controlling images of school district space affect Latina teachers' perceptions of immigrant Latinas/os racial positioning in U.S. racial hierarchies. Drawing on ethnographic data collected from two Southern California multiracial school districts, I find that Latina teachers working in Compton—a city comprising primarily Latino immigrants—are initially encouraged to leave for districts that are not associated with the “Black underclass.” Latina teachers in Rosemead, an ethnoburb comprising primarily Latinos and Asians, on the other hand, enroll their children there, and are able to access resources the more class heterogeneous Asian population provides. Ultimately, Latina teachers perceive undocumented Latina/o immigrants to be below African Americans and Asian Americans in local racial hierarchies due to political ostracism and relative valorization, respectively.

### INTRODUCTION

This research shows how *controlling images of space*—defined in this article as racialized images of physical geographic locations—set the tone for the ways in which individuals interact in institutions that directly affect their daily lives. By examining Latina teachers' construction of American racial hierarchies in two multiracial school districts in Southern California, one located in Compton and the other in Rosemead, a smaller city in the west San Gabriel Valley, I provide a window into these processes.

My research specifically addresses the ways that school districts as educational spaces are racialized, including the ways that controlling images of space set the tone for how Latina teachers evaluate racial positioning in multiracial spaces. I address how controlling images (Collins 2000) of space influence how Latina teachers, the largest racial/ethnic minority group entering the teaching profession (Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2014), evaluate racial positioning between Latinos/as,

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African Americans, Asian Americans, and whites in schools located in two decidedly non-white multiracial communities. I focus on the perspectives of college-educated Latinas because teaching is the number one profession that they are entering. Not only are urban neighborhoods transforming by newer Latino migrant arrivals, but so are professional spaces in public schools in Southern California (Flores, 2011). I define controlling images of space as the powerful process by which educational spaces are racialized in ways that amplify problems of school governance structures. Controlling images of space are major instruments of power because they have the ability to guide behavior, and when internalized, can profoundly influence perceptions of the marginalized and rearrange local racial formations. The data reveal that Latina teachers, the college-educated daughters and granddaughters of Latina/o immigrants, perceive immigrant and undocumented Latinos/as, specifically Mexicans and Central Americans, to be below African Americans and Asians in U.S. racial hierarchies in terms of relative valorization and political power.<sup>1</sup> By building on Kim's (1999) racial triangulation framework, I challenge the notion that Latinos ally with whites, identify collectively with Blacks, or join the racial middle (Bonilla 2004; O'Brien 2008 ; Rochmes and Elmer Griffin 2006). Rather, I demonstrate that Latinas/os' position in U.S. racial hierarchies develops in relation with other racial/ethnic groups (Almaguer 1994; Cheng 2014; Ochoa 2014 ; Pulido 2006), especially in "majority-minority" school spaces.

I make two arguments. First, I argue that school districts are attributed with different controlling images that seep onto educational spaces. Second, I challenge prevailing views of America's racial/ethnic hierarchy, which argue Latinos/as are located in the racial middle along with Asians, and solely in between Black and white (Bonilla 2004; McClain et al. 2006; O'Brien 2008). By relying on the outlooks of middle-class and upwardly mobile Latina teachers, I argue that Latinos hold fluid racial positions in multiracial schools: one urban and one an ethnoburb. While college-educated Latina teachers have achieved intergenerational mobility, they perceive Latino immigrant parents to be below African Americans and below Asians in terms of political power, decision-making within the district, and relative valorization in the U.S. racial landscape—and Latina teachers' evaluations are influenced by space and region. Racial controlling images that Latina teachers apply to each city shape immigrant Latinos' racial position in educational spaces.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### CONTROLLING IMAGES OF RACE AND SPACE

Collins (2000) coined the term "controlling images" to explain the sociohistorical legacy of persistent stereotypes applied to racial/ethnic minority groups. The mammy, matriarch, welfare queen, and jezebel are controlling images often used to characterize and subjugate African American women. The emasculated Asian man, lotus blossom, or dragon lady characterizations for Asian American women (Espiritu 1997), and the "hyper-fertile" Latina (Gutierrez 2008) are also prevalent. Social institutions such as schools and government agencies are sites where individuals can reproduce these controlling images, making them hegemonic and seem natural, normal, and inevitable. While controlling images are most often used to describe the oppression of racial/ethnic minority groups,

I build on Collins's concept and apply it to geographic territories—in this case, the communities, school districts, and educational spaces that Latina teachers serve. Scholars have called for more microlevel analyses of racial hierarchies (Cheng 2014; Pulido 2006; Sides 2005), and focusing on a local or regional scale enables analyses of how regional racial hierarchies are shaped by local demographics, regional economies, and local history especially as cities undergo massive racial/ethnic demographic shifts.

Neighborhoods such as Watts and Compton, often associated with the urban underclass (see Wilson 1987), have seen major population shifts in just the last few decades (Camarillo 2004). Urban areas of historical African American concentration have been attributed with the controlling image of the Black urban underclass, despite Latino immigrant settlement there. Media and the entertainment industry, key sites at which controlling images are reinforced, undoubtedly inform this point of view. In contrast, we have also seen an influx of relatively high-skilled Asian immigrants, primarily from China and Korea, that has led to the sprawl of “ethnoburbs”—ethnically diverse suburbs (Li 1997, 2009)—in areas with large numbers of Latinos (Cheng 2014; Saito 1997). While Anderson (1987) describes how Chinatowns have been viewed as “ghettoized” minority communities, ethnoburbs are different because of their residents' socioeconomic status, high levels of social and economic capital, and economic structure (Li 1997). These studies, however, have not assessed the overlapping controlling images of space and differential racialization processes that emerge in multiracial communities.

#### RACIAL POSITIONING AND REGION

This study examines controlling images of space and racial positioning between college-educated, middle-class Latina teachers with poorer, undereducated coethnics and non-Latinos. Along this line, scholars have argued that racial/ethnic groups are racialized in relation to the dominant group and in relation to one another (Almaguer 1994; Foley 1997; Jun 2006; Kim 1999; Marrow 2007; Pulido 2006; Barrera 1979), and this process can alter racial hierarchies in different regions over time. Almaguer (1994:206) notes that racial hierarchies are “historically contingent and regionally specific, varying in meaning over time as well as within different regions of the country.” For example, in early 19th-century California, ethnic groups were racialized in unique ways to keep white racial privilege intact. Almaguer examines how differential racialization elevated the status positioning of whites in the social structure and placed below them, Mexicans, Asian Americans, African Americans and Native American populations. Mexicans, especially those who held citizenship status and were of a lighter phenotype, were regarded the least perilous to white workers because they were perceived similar to them; Native Americans were racialized as unassimilable; the Chinese were seen as heathens; and the Japanese as a Yellow Peril. Because of the anti-Asian exclusion immigration laws, a number of negative controlling images associated with blacks were displaced onto the Chinese. In an attempt to distance themselves from the Chinese, the Black press published anti-Chinese narratives in their newspapers so they could claim moral superiority to Chinese immigrants who were portrayed as alien, unsanitary, and sexually deviant (Jun 2006).

Differential racialization of Latinos/as operates across the United States. Today, the U.S. South, which has largely been characterized by Black/White political conflicts, is experiencing changes in status positioning due to Latino migration. López-Sanders

(2009) and Stuesse (2009) describe that Latina/o migrants are not entering society at the bottom social rungs, but rather are inserted into an ambiguous space between Black and white, and their positioning in society and in low-wage employment sectors is often shifting and situational. Other scholars like Marrow (2007) indicate that Blacks are actively excluding newly arrived Mexican immigrants through political ostracism resulting in a black/non-black divide. Because of this, McClain and colleagues (2006) suggest that Latino immigrants hold negative stereotypical views of blacks and feel more affinity with whites. Yet, whites do not reciprocate. In regions like the South, Latinos' negative attitudes toward blacks are modulated by a sense of linked fate with other Latinos.<sup>2</sup> Rochmes and Elmer Griffin (2006) argue that growing "tensions" between Latinos and Blacks are signs of an emergent white racial formation among Latinos and shows their continuing readiness to subjugate Blacks and choose whiteness instead of allying with Blacks in oppressive conditions. Differential racialization is therefore historically contingent, regional, and can produce fluid racial hierarchies (Almaguer 1994).

Others have also gone beyond the Black/white dichotomy to look at racialization processes of Latina/o, Black, and Asian populations as well as their conflicts and commonalities in educational spaces (Calderon 1995; Cheng 2014; Ochoa 2014; Saito 1997; Vaca 2004). Camarillo (2004) and Straus (2009, 2014) examine issues arising in Compton schools and note how the influx of Latino immigrants has led to increased hostility between Blacks and Latinos due to curriculum changes and Blacks' unwillingness to share power. This has been described a "zero-sum" game that relegates gains made by one group as a direct loss to the other (Vaca 2004). However, Kim (1999) argues that racialization does not occur in a vacuum but is mutually constitutive. For Kim, the racial triangulation of Asian Americans occurs in *relation* to Blacks and whites, where whites have ranked non-whites along several dimensions. For example, she describes two instances in which racial triangulation occurs: (1) whites either "valorize" Asian Americans to subordinate African Americans on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to dominate both groups within this racial field; and (2) whites, through civic ostracism, construct Asian Americans as unassimilable and forever foreigners compared to Whites and African Americans. These processes operate differently in relation to Latinos in schools. For example, Ochoa (2014) finds that the achievement gap in Asian and Latino schools leads to a series of negative outcomes for Latino high school students. More recently, Cheng (2014) suggests that in non-white multiracial communities, a regional racial formation process occurs, in which a concomitant racialization process of "Asian valorization and Mexican inferiority" emerges. These processes can also be gender-driven (Mindiola et al. 2009).

## HISTORICAL RACIAL/ETHNIC TRANSFORMATIONS OF COMPTON AND ROSEMEAD

Compton and Rosemead, only a few miles apart, are unique Southern California regions. In the 1950s, Compton was a white suburb where fewer than 50 African Americans lived among Compton's 45,000 residents (Sides 2005). Due to strict racial covenants and residential segregation, middle-class Whites in the city were able to maintain the racialized boundaries of urban space by keeping African Americans out of Compton as late as 1948, leaving only a very small presence of Mexicans on the northern tip of the city. Due to their middling social status in between blacks and whites, Mexicans lived in Compton, but

were not allowed to buy homes outside of their “*barrio*” (Camarillo 1970; Straus 2009). Prompted by the declaration that restrictive covenants were deemed unconstitutional, local whites in Compton recognized the marketing potential of the African American middle class who were willing to buy homes at higher prices (Sides 2005).<sup>3</sup> African Americans benefited from their suburban relocation and enrolled their children in the city’s superior school system. However, deindustrialization and the outmigration of manufacturing jobs, as well as the Watts Riot of 1965 deeply affected Compton’s black suburbia. White flight ensued, taking with them their retail businesses and depriving Compton of this crucial tax base (Sides 2005; Straus 2014). Coinciding with massive unemployment, the city of Compton saw a substantial rise in Black street gangs in the 1970s. And, by the 1980s, Compton had become something else entirely: “a metonym for the urban crisis” (Sides 2005), and Hollywood’s film and music industries exploited the growing regional notoriety of the city, cementing its image as an urban battleground for poor Blacks.

Today, 65 percent of Compton’s 98,597 residents are of Latino origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015). They are primarily Mexican immigrants and their children. The African American population has steadily declined to 32.9 percent, while non-Hispanic Whites comprise 0.6 percent of Comptonites (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015). In 2011, 78 percent of students are Latino, while only 17 percent are African American in K-12 schools (CDE 2011). Latinos are the numerical majority, yet Compton is still racialized as a Black city, associated in popular culture with Black masculinity, the “Black underclass,” and is a “national symbol of racialized blight and crime” (Sides 2005:85). Despite the concentrated Latino population, the majority of school board members are African American, and this has been the source of conflicts over equal political representation between the two major racial/ethnic minority groups (Fabienke 2007; Straus 2009; Vaca 2005).<sup>4</sup> The structure of the neighborhood of who is in power and control has not changed since the mid-1960s. Thus, Latina teachers are operating within a racialized structure that is still maintained by the previous group who prevailed numerically in the area.

Rosemead, just 20 miles from Compton, is a much smaller city in the larger West San Gabriel Valley that goes virtually unnoticed by popular media despite the fact that gangs, crimes, and code yellows<sup>5</sup> also afflict the school district and community, albeit to a much smaller degree. Until the 1950s when urban renewal programs and freeway construction helped lure in Asian immigrant middle-class residents to the region, most residents in the San Gabriel Valley were working-class whites, but there were pockets of large Mexican concentration (Rodriguez 1993; Saito 1997). In the 1990s, Asian migration swelled and Rosemead ranked among the top six U.S. cities listed on immigration applications as destinations for Chinese immigrants (Fong 1994). Rosemead also saw an increase in its Vietnamese immigrant population, as well as the emergence of other Latino nationalities to the city. Today, the San Gabriel Valley region of Los Angeles County has one of the most prominent collections of United States’ suburbs with large foreign-born Chinese-speaking populations, ranging from working-class residents living in Rosemead and El Monte, to wealthier immigrants from China living in Arcadia, San Marino, and Diamond Bar (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Asian families are also more than 60 percent of the population in Monterey Park, Walnut, San Gabriel, Rowland Heights, and Rosemead, and represent the core of the Asian American population in the San Gabriel Valley (Saito 1997; U.S. Census Bureau 2010).<sup>6</sup> While the Asian origin population is class

heterogeneous (Zhou 2009), Mexican immigrant and later-generation families have remained working class.

More recently, Chinese “ethnoburbs” (Li 1997, 2009) have begun to attract less skilled Chinese immigrants from the mainland and other Asian countries. Since the mid-1970s a large infusion of Chinese immigrants and capital has existed in the San Gabriel Valley, and in the 1990s many Chinese and Vietnamese origin people opened ethnic restaurants and stores in Rosemead (Saito 1997; Zhou 2009). According to the city’s 2009 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the Panda Restaurant Group, the largest Chinese fast food restaurant chain in the United States, which opened in 1973, ranked fourth among the city’s top employers. Rosemead is a region where two racial/ethnic minority groups, Asian and Latinos, who both occupy the perceived racial middle (O’Brien 2008) live side by side. It is much smaller than Compton with a population of approximately 54,947. The Latino population comprises 34 percent, while non-Hispanic whites are 4.7 percent. The Asian origin population is 60 percent and growing. In the Garvey District alone, 56 percent of students are Asian, 41 percent are Latino and only 1 percent are white (CDE 2011). In contrast to Compton, Asians are the majority of the school board in the district. However, prior to the Asian influx, the region was racialized as “dirty” due to its Mexican inhabitants (Rodriguez 2005).

## METHODOLOGY

I employ a comparative study design that incorporates multiple qualitative methodological techniques to examine contrasts between the experiences of Latina teachers at Garvey Unified, a predominantly working-class Latino and Chinese community in the west San Gabriel Valley, and those of Latina teachers in Compton, a formerly African American community, now predominantly Latino. I conducted 50 in-depth interviews with teachers (20 Latinas; 10 Asians; 9 African Americans; 5 Latinos; 6 Whites); over 450 hours of participant observation; 28 interviews with parents of various racial/ethnic backgrounds through focus groups; and finally, I recorded and analyzed discussions at school district meetings as well as media coverage. The data collection occurred between 2009 and 2011. I examined Latina teachers’ workplace interactions with students, parents, and other teachers in multicultural/multiracial schools in order to assess how space and race influence workplace dynamics. While my research examines workplace climate through the eyes of Latinas in the teaching profession, the majority of the sample, I also include interactions with their non-Latina colleagues to triangulate the data.

Latina teachers in California and the United States are a heterogeneous group. Ninety percent of the Latina teachers included in the study are the daughters and granddaughters of Latino immigrants. Of the Latina teachers interviewed, two-thirds of them (13 out of 20) had at least one parent born in Mexico, two had parents born in Central America, one in the Caribbean, and two were multiracial (Mexican and White). Six teachers described being a part of the third and fourth generation, but were still mostly from working-class origins and all worked in Rosemead. These Latina teachers came from working-class homes, with parents that toiled in low-skilled, manual, and manufacturing jobs. Only two of the Latina teachers, a Cuban/Salvadoran teacher, and one fourth-generation Mexican origin teacher, grew up in middle-class homes, having parents that worked as a nurse and a pharmaceutical clerk.

**TABLE 1.** Racial/Ethnic Demographics of Teachers and Students

	Latinas/os	Blacks	Asians	Whites
Compton district				
<i>Teachers</i>	25%	41%	1%	21.2%
<i>Students</i>	77%	19.3%	>1%	>1%
Compton Elementary				
<i>Teachers</i> <sup>1</sup>	30%	35%	4%	26%
<i>Students</i>	78%	17%	>1%	0%
Garvey district				
<i>Teachers</i> <sup>1</sup>	28%	3%	44%	23%
<i>Students</i>	41%	>1%	56%	1%
Goodwill Elementary				
<i>Teachers</i> <sup>2</sup>	45%	0%	41%	14%
<i>Students</i>	45%	>1%	52.5%	>1%

<sup>1</sup>Total: 48 teachers.<sup>2</sup>Total: 29 teachers.

### Site Selection: Compton and Rosemead Schools

I selected elementary schools within two school districts that experienced considerable growth in their Latina teacher workforce. In 1992, only 3.2 percent of Compton teachers were Latina, but by 2013 they constituted 25 percent. Also, in 1992, 17 percent of Garvey teachers were Latina and in 2013 they made up 30.1 percent (Ed Data 2015). Because racial positioning between racial/ethnic minorities is the central theme of this article, the comparative sample includes Latina teachers who worked as full-time teachers for Compton Elementary (10) and Goodwill Elementary, located in the city of Rosemead (10).

Compton Elementary School is a K-5 school that serves approximately 850 students. Because of its large size and enrollment, the per pupil expenditure was \$9,804 in the 2013–2014 academic year (Ed Data 2015). In the 2013–2014 academic school year, 78 percent of students at Compton Elementary were of Latino origin and 19.3 percent were African American (Ed Data 2015). There were no Asian students. At Compton Elementary, Latina teachers often referred to the student ratio as 80:20 and said they had one Samoan family. While some Latina teachers referred to the student population as “biracial” others negated the idea that it was diverse because most students were Latino. The majority of teachers in Compton Elementary are racial/ethnic minorities and the teacher racial/ethnic breakdown in the Compton District is as follows: 25 percent are Latino, 41 percent are Black, and 21.2 percent are White (ibid). Eighty-six percent of the student body receives free and reduced lunch and 85 percent are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged.

### Goodwill Elementary in Rosemead

Goodwill Elementary, located in the Garvey District in the city of Rosemead, serves children ranging from preschool to the sixth grade and comprises approximately 600 students. The per pupil allocation for each student was \$8,780 (Ed Data 2015).<sup>7</sup> Table 1 shows the percent of racial/ethnic groups of teachers and students at both the district

level and within the schools. While at times the Asian and Latino origin population were evenly split 50/50, when I began fieldwork, 52.5 percent of the student population was of Asian background while 45 percent were Latino (Ed Data 2011). African American students numbered between two and four, including one Latina teacher's niece, who was Black and Mexican. Eighty-five percent of children in the school were considered to be socioeconomically disadvantaged and 88.6 percent receive free and reduced lunch. The distribution of teachers in the Garvey District is as follows: Asian Americans 39.5 percent; Latinos 26.1 percent; African American 2.9 percent; and Whites 27.2 percent (CDE 2011). Most students who entered with English language ability had second-generation Mexican parents that were from working-class backgrounds. Asian students in this school were referred to as the "Asian super group" by the principal and all teachers because the achievement gap between Latino and Asian students was wide.

## FINDINGS: CONTROLLING IMAGES OF SPACE

### WORKPLACE SAFETY AND JOB SATISFACTION FOR LATINA TEACHERS

Latina teachers are initially afraid of working in Compton and their fears stem from preconceptions about the area. This ultimately has a negative effect on the community, and in this study, the experiences of Latina teachers in the school. The Latina teachers interviewed were surprised—and their anxieties about working in the city of Compton quelled—when they discovered that the African American population had dwindled in size, and they found that working-class Latino immigrant families now were the bulk of the population in the region. It was not until they actually entered the workplace that their own perceptions regarding the community changed. Once Latina teachers began working for the Compton school district they were surprised to find that the demographics mirrored their upbringing. Mrs. Estrada explained that before arriving at Compton she thought it would be "like gang banging and African Americans and hostile . . . afraid to go in." However, once she started working at Compton Elementary and interacting with Latino families her negative feelings about the community switched. As she explained:

Once I arrived I saw that there were more Latinos than I thought. At first I thought it was mostly African American. So I ended up liking it because I felt like 'oh this is like my community, when I was growing up.' I stayed because of that . . . I thought it wasn't so bad . . . I took a drive and it seemed very normal, just families [and] kids. I didn't see very many [Black] gangsters hanging out. I thought I would find [gangsters] in corners.

Mrs. Gutierrez, a Mexican origin teacher, also noted that she stayed in her job at Compton Elementary when she found it was mostly Latino. She said, "In the beginning I had misconceptions about Compton. I thought it was mostly African American. They are probably gangsters . . . But then I saw it was mostly Latino and it was okay."

Mrs. Estrada and Mrs. Gutierrez illuminate a very interesting and devastating point: Latino racism against Blacks. This is in line with other work that finds similar anti-Black sentiments in the Latino community (Rochmes and Elmer Griffin 2006) and between women of color (Mindiola et al. 2009). Both of these women grew up in largely Latino immigrant enclaves or multiracial Latino/White communities like many of the Latina



teachers in the sample did. They expressed that prior to working in the city, they were afraid of Blacks and their worries about working in the city minimized when they saw that the community was mostly coethnics. In fact, all but one Latina teacher indicated that they had never really been exposed to a larger number of African Americans prior to working in Compton. Their anti-Black perceptions regarding the African American population were molded by U.S. media representations and by the outlooks their Latino immigrant parents had formed while growing up in Latin America (Stuesse 2009).

Mrs. Madrigal, the only Latina teacher I interviewed that was raised in Compton, explained the sentiments she received from her mother regarding the African American population when they settled there in the mid-1970s. She said, "That was also a feeling from my mom. She didn't tell me directly like '*le tengo miedo a los morenos*<sup>8</sup> or whatever' [I am afraid of Blacks], but that was definitely the feeling with the way she expressed herself." Due to these experiences in her childhood, Mrs. Madrigal said that she was trying to move away from Compton and teach somewhere else that did not have a stigma. She said:

Very few people are like, 'Oh let me go work in Compton.' That's not the first place you think of. You just don't . . . A lot of teachers will come to Compton to get their feet wet and then leave within one to two years and then go to a nicer district. "Nice" if you want to be an administrator. That is the easy way . . . someone in Beverly Hills is not going to want to come to Compton . . . It is just a fact. If you have a heart and you care about Latino kids like I do, then you stay.

Latina teachers initially perceived Compton to be undesirable because of its African American population and noted that many perceived working there as a stepping stone, but Latinas stayed in Compton because Latino students and families were the overwhelming majority of residents in the area and pupils in the school. Regardless of the city being racialized as Black, Latina teachers remained in the schools because of their interactions with Latino families.

Like Mrs. Madrigal's mother, the parents and extended family members of the Latina teachers in this study expressed concern when they learned their daughters would be teaching in Compton, a city they associated with the Black underclass, poverty, and violence. Rochmes and Elmer Griffin (2006:79) note that "adopting a posture of hostile dissociation from Blacks" is indicative of a white racial formation among Latinos. Many of them were pressed to leave Compton for more affluent schools where it was presumed they would be safe and have more successful careers. "I remember when I told my mom . . . she was like, 'Oh my god, you are going to get shot. What are you doing working over there?'" said Mrs. Gutierrez. Mrs. Díaz, a second-generation Latina teacher, explained that working in Compton was perceived as a place where a teacher would have difficulty dealing with the student population. When asked how her friends and family members responded to her becoming a teacher, Mrs. Díaz replied:

I don't think anyone had an objection to my being a teacher . . . I just talked to someone yesterday and they were like 'Ugh! You need to move out of there.' They questioned my location . . . [My family's] apprehension is that Compton has more crime, Compton has gangs. There's a connotation that the students are unmotivated and they feel that that would make your teaching experience much more difficult.

Mrs. Díaz's husband, an attorney in Orange County, was very supportive of her, and while he was initially apprehensive that she would be working in Compton, he recognized that the students she was helping were underserved Latinos and did not question her motives for staying.

Similarly, Mrs. Tiscareño remarked:

When I got hired here my best friend is like, 'Oh you need a bulletproof vest. I'll buy you one.' Someone else told me to buy mace. And someone else's comment was 'Get a taser.' It was all very negative. Like, 'Where in Compton are you going to work at? What area? What does it look like?'

Mrs. Tiscareño illustrates how Latina teachers and parents hold negative stereotypes of Compton due to the city's association to Blackness. Latinos connect Blackness to danger and gangs and thus an unsafe place for Latina teachers. Latina teachers expressed that although the city was racialized as Black, the school's population was not and they often wanted the public and their families to know that it was no longer mostly African American. In their study of Latinos in the South, McClain and colleagues (2006) argue that Latinos socially distance themselves from Blacks and feel more attachment with whites even though whites do not reciprocate. We see this pattern at work at Compton Elementary, where Latino families and Latina teachers attempt to detach themselves from Blacks by associating African Americans with racist stereotypes and asserting the academic superiority of Latino students in this school. However, unlike McClain's study, middle-class Latina teachers in Compton do not identify with whites and do not want children to adopt a white racial identity. Mrs. Díaz, a Salvadoran-Afro-Cuban teacher explained, "the light skinned Latinos think they are white. They go, 'I'm white and you're not [to Black students]. I go 'sweetheart [laughs] 'where are your parents from? They [the children] are little. I get that, but race in America is a pretty important subject to understand.'" Mrs. Rivas, a second-generation Latina teacher, who had been working in Compton for 14 years at the time of the interview said, "I wanted them to understand that they weren't white. I think they don't understand that . . . they think they are white because they compare themselves to the African American students and it was almost a culture clash to tell them, 'I'm sorry you're not white.'"

While Latina teachers attempted to defend Latino students, Latino families and their jobs to their family members and to others, they also defended African American students, but to a much smaller degree. When I asked Latina teachers about their African American students, they often said that they tried to help their African American students as much as they could but indicated that they had many more "social problems" that afflicted their lives and that they did not completely understand "their culture." While Gilkes (2010), Vallejo (2012), and Bell (2014) argue that middle-class minority professionals develop a linked fate to poorer coethnics, within multiethnic educational institutions, racialized controlling images of space drove a wedge between Latina teachers and non-Latinos because African American children were ultimately construed as the undesirable class with "behavioral" issues, while the children of Latino immigrants were racialized as "docile."

In stark contrast, Latina teachers that worked at Goodwill Elementary in Rosemead were rarely nudged by friends and family to move to another district, showing how families and larger communities reinforce controlling images. The influx of Asian

immigration to the city of Rosemead and the Garvey School District slowly eroded the once negative, stigmatizing image of the region, and now it was used solely to emphasize the low-achieving Latino population at the school. This speaks to the racial cleavages that have emerged between Asian and Latino racial/ethnic groups in decidedly non-white racial/ethnic communities and schools over academics (Cheng 2014; Ochoa 2014). Long-time residents of the area, including later-generation Latina teachers and Latino focus group participants, lauded the increasing presence of Asian immigrants and noted that their moving into the ethnoburb was “getting rid of all of the Mexican riff-raff.” In fact, Mrs. Perez, a third-generation Mexican American teacher, whose parents were born in Texas and moved to the San Gabriel Valley when she was 11 years old, noted that when they had a larger “Hispanic” population, her extended family members were not very pleased about the prospect of her working in Rosemead schools. Mrs. Perez had a very extensive history in Rosemead. She began working as a substitute teacher in neighboring Garvey schools in the 1980s and was one of the first Latina teachers hired at Goodwill Elementary. Mrs. Perez explained:

At the beginning they [my parents] weren’t very pleased about it. Rosemead had a shady, had a bad reputation. It wasn’t looked upon as the greatest area to work in. It had its background and its history [of Mexican gangs]. It has changed now because of the influx of the Asian people moving in and buying houses and stuff like that.

When probed about how their friends and family replied when they said they worked in Rosemead, the younger wave of Latina teachers, many of them like Mrs. Quiroz, a Central American teacher, said that most people responded with “Where is that?” or “Where is Rosemead?” This was in stark contrast to the Black urban underclass controlling image Latina teachers in Compton experienced, demonstrating that controlling images of space are different in degree and kind. Other Latina teachers indicated that their family members did not give them any grief because they were long-time residents of the area and had extended familial networks they could rely upon. Mrs. Franco, a U.S.-born Latina teacher, was raised in Rosemead and her Mexican immigrant parents witnessed the transformation of their community. She said:

Growing up my neighborhood was primarily Hispanic. Now my neighborhood is primarily Asian. This whole community is like that. We used to have a lot of Latino markets, now, especially as you go further down Garvey towards Alhambra, [it] is just engulfed in little Asian supermarkets, furniture stores, delis and cafes. It’s changed.

Although 85 percent of children who attend Goodwill Elementary were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged and received free and reduced lunch, previous flows of Asian migration have brought with them foreign investment power, Chinese ethnic businesses enclaves, and human capital (Calderon 1995). Latina teachers attributed the growing Asian immigrant ethnic enclaves to changing perceptions of the region in a more positive direction, but it maintained negative stigmas for Latinos. Today, the city is generally perceived as calm and goes unnoticed. Many of these tranquil attributes were applied to the Asian population. However, these perceptions were different from reality. For instance, during my observations in the teacher’s lounge on one occasion, Mrs. Dávila spoke about an Asian student that had stabbed the principal at a local high school. On another occasion, teachers were extremely upset that their school was running the

risk of being considered a persistently dangerous school. Ms. Maciel, a Latina teacher, downloaded the description of the designation and went through a list of the events that had happened on their campus to the rest of her colleagues in the lunchroom as she counted them off in her hand, raising a finger for each violation: “We’ve had discipline problems for the past two weeks. We had expulsions. Brandishing a knife. We had that last year. A firearm. We had a fourth grader that brought a BB gun. A robbery. They took a laptop and they brought it back. An Asian student just brought and popped a ‘fart bomb.’ That was a suspension.” And, also a code yellow I experienced in my first visit to the school.

District size was also salient in Rosemead. Latina teachers explained that they were drawn to this educational space because of its small size as Mrs. Rocha, a fourth-generation Mexican American of a darker skin complexion, explained:

My parents were very excited for me. I had a lot of friends who are also in the education field that were very supportive and told me what to look out for—‘cause at the time when I was working as an instructional aide for LA Unified, and it was such a big, big school district. They kind of said . . . ‘Maybe you could look out this way [the San Gabriel Valley], there’s smaller districts.’

Sheer size played a direct role in mitigating interactions at the microlevel in Rosemead between Asians and Latinos. Mrs. Larry, a third-generation Mexican American teacher in Rosemead, spoke about her safety not being a major concern for her on campus: “There isn’t a whole lot of concern that’s been brought up . . . It’s not like it’s a major issue. I’ve stayed here late on numerous occasions.”

In contrast to Compton Elementary, Goodwill Elementary was more class and ethnically heterogeneous. There were second-, third-, and fourth-generation Latina teachers working at Goodwill Elementary and six of ten were raised in Rosemead or around the larger San Gabriel Valley. Many Latina teachers pointed out the ethnic heterogeneity within the Asian immigrant population and knew intraethnic differences within Latinos. They were also aware of intraclass differences within Asians. As Mrs. Sanchez explained:

Most people are working class, but we do have some [Asians] who are wealthier . . . I think they probably own their own businesses ‘cause we have people that come to school in like really nice cars . . . I think most of the Latino students are the ones getting the free lunch, but we do have some Asian students who are low income.

Thus, Latina teachers’ extended friends and families had contrasting assessments of the school districts and communities in which they worked, and these were molded by the racialization of space.

#### CONFLICT OR COOPERATION: ZERO-SUM OR ABUNDANCE MINDSET

Latina teachers at Compton Elementary explained that they felt Latinas/os as a whole held a lower social status due to language, political exclusion, and unequal representation in the school district. African Americans controlled the school board, and Latina teachers rarely got involved in district politics. Instead, they encouraged Latino immigrant parents to lobby for themselves at the district offices, but most did not because of the language barrier and because many lacked American citizenship. This is a form of

civic ostracism (Kim 1999). Latina teachers and Latino immigrant parents suggested that they did not trust Black authority in the district and questioned Blacks' commitment to Latino students. Mrs. Madrigal said:

This district is so racial. This city is very racial. This city wants to keep Blacks in power. I don't care what race you are as long as you possess the knowledge to run this city. Do it! But, *aquí* [here] no! It has to be, you have to be Black. If you are not Black, I'm going to give you hell . . . It's about who you know and it's about who you know that happens to be Black . . . If it wasn't because *hay mucho hispano* [there is so much Hispanic], I mean I wouldn't be here. Nobody other than Blacks would be there.

Latina teachers filtered these political problems through the lens of the controlling image of Compton as an African American space, prompting Mrs. Madrigal to explain that she felt Compton was run by nepotism and favoritism and it was done intentionally to keep Blacks in political power. In this instance, reality and controlling images of space intersect and influence Latina teachers' negative perceptions of Blacks. Mrs. Madrigal makes a factual observation about Blacks' overrepresentation on the school board, and this affects her appraisal of Blacks and their purported desire to maintain control of Compton. "There's a strong hold. *No lo quieren dejar ir*" [They don't want to let it (Compton) go] another teacher shared. The school was repeatedly described as an urban battleground and other teachers echoed this sentiment. During Back to School Night, Mrs. Shah, an Iranian American teacher, said, "We are just the messengers. Please don't shoot us . . . We are just like little marionette puppets, doing what we are told" as she curled her fingers and wiggled them, when queried about changing district policies regarding class placement. Mr. Vega, a Latino teacher added, "You as parents have a lot of power. If you go to the district, go as a group, not just as two or three parents." Mrs. Brady, an African American teacher continued, "you as parents have more power than us as teachers. We work here but we can't change it unless you make your voice heard." Mrs. Díaz, a Latina teacher concurred and added, "Our third grade team is very close. Our test scores have improved."

According to Latina teachers, it mattered who was on the school board because they felt politically ostracized, a lack of access to resources, and not invited due to lack of English skills for the parents. Mrs. Madrigal was not the only Latina teacher who expressed this sentiment. In fact, all of the Latina teachers and Latino parents in Compton wondered why the majority of the school board and administrators were African American when most of the students in school were Latino. They felt that the representation on the school board and administration should be evenly split. Latina teachers expressed that this was a primary way in which Latinos held less power than African Americans because Latina/o parents and children were politically ostracized from the district due to their legal status. Mrs. Ybarra, a U.S.-born Latina teacher said:

They always want to keep it pro-African American at all times . . . It's kind of ridiculous because it should be half and half. They don't want Latinos to be in charge of anything. It's very surprising that they don't want to give us an opportunity to be part of it. That's what I said about working in this community. Latinos can't hold office here because I feel like some African Americans belittle Latinos. 'Why should

you be a part of this community since the majority of people who are living here are trying to get their papers, become citizens or residents?’

In her theory of racial triangulation, Kim (1999) argued, Asian Americans occupy a field of positions and were marginalized through civic ostracism. In Compton, Latino immigrant families feared going to the district to ask for educational changes because they lacked the language and many were undocumented. As Mrs. Godinez explained,

Many [Spanish-speaking immigrant] parents are not willing to go to the district and fight for their rights. Many of them don't want to go over there and fight for their children's education. The ones that end up doing it are the African Americans. Some of the parents say, 'I don't want to go over there.' I tell them, 'You have to go and fight for your child's rights.' They say, 'No I don't have papers. I can't go over there.' I'm like, 'Okay, but they are not going to ask you if you are citizen.' They kind of degrade themselves. 'I don't know English.' And I say, 'There are people that speak Spanish over there.' 'No, but they are going to find out I'm not legal here.' So I just let it go.

Here we see how both Mrs. Ybarra and Mrs. Godinez pushed Latino immigrants to seek their rights in the district, but many were unwilling to speak up for fear of being asked about documentation and because they face a language barrier. Obviously, college-educated Latina teachers noticed the inequalities between poorer coethnics and African Americans in the district.

Hence, educational spaces can be the center of racial contests and they are also emblematic of entrenched systems of local power (Straus 2009). Tension between Latinos and African Americans was most palpable during Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, events that Latina teachers rarely attended. Many Latina teachers explained that when they started working at Compton Elementary they attended one or two meetings, but they completely avoided the PTA once they were exposed to the racial dynamics between African American teachers, immigrant Latino parents, and a few English-speaking second-generation Latinos. Black parents did not regularly attend these meetings. In fact, *las mamás voluntarias* [immigrant Latina mother volunteers], all members of the PTA, boasted and were content that the majority of their membership was Latino. When I asked about their participation in PTA, Latina teachers said they would pay the \$5.00 fee but that was all: "Have you gone? It's crazy over there!" exclaimed Mrs. Estrada. Mrs. Madrigal said, "PTA is another story. I stay away from PTA because it is so political. The less drama I have the better."

Regular PTA members were *las mamás voluntarias*, mostly Latina immigrant women and one 1.5-generation Latina mother. Similar to Latina teachers, they believed that the district was not there to help Latino children academically because there was no Latino representation on the school board. All six representatives were African American. Because these executive positions are elected and many unauthorized Latino immigrant parents cannot vote, not even legal permanent residents, several of the Latina teachers agreed with Latino parents that there was some "corruption" going on in the district, further reflecting civic and political marginalization of Latinos/as. *Las mamás voluntarias* often labeled the school board as a *mafia* and believed that the entire district and community was run this way. As Felicia, a Latina immigrant mother said, "Compton is a mafia, it's pure corruption. Look at how many Black children there are here, the majority

are Latino children...The district is full of pure Blacks...Blacks think that they are still the slaves, but the only slaves are us" (Author translation). This evidence confirms Mindiola et al.'s (2009) argument that Black-Brown relations are gendered, and suggest that Black stereotypes are more prevalent among Latino immigrants and Latina women. While Latino teachers also recognized unequal representation in the board, they did not express stereotypical views in this manner. Rather, professional men were expected to "handle" working in Compton.

Vaca (2005) notes that in predominantly African American and Latino communities, a zero-sum game prevails. Latina teachers struggled to secure resources for their Latino and Black students at Compton Elementary school. Latina teachers working in Compton felt that they did not have the necessary resources to "give back" to the community and often times "stretched themselves to the limit" (Millard and Chapa 2004). Mrs. Velasquez said, "Working here in Compton...it kind of shatters your hopes a little bit about what you thought you wanted to accomplish" in regard to the bureaucratic mayhem and the lack of resources available. In one campus visit, an entire faculty meeting was dedicated to teachers having to prove their case that they needed more reams of paper for their classrooms. Mrs. Kingston, a 1.5-generation Latina teacher, exclaimed to the African American employee in charge of providing school supplies, "Ay, come on Mr. Stuart, we need more paper. Get us more paper." Most of Compton's limited resources were spent on getting Latino children to learn the English language. Historians have noted that conflicts over bilingual education are one historical and contemporary wedge between African Americans and Latinos in school governance (Brilliant 2010; Straus 2009). Compton schools were considered Quality Education Investment Act schools, meaning that extra funding was provided for so-called "at-risk" students, namely Latino, African American, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English Language Learner students. Some Latina teachers also said that they received extra "combat pay"<sup>9</sup> for working in a low-performing, undesirable urban public school.

In contrast to Vaca's (2005) zero-sum assessment of Latino/Black multiracial schools, Goodwill Elementary provided an abundance of resources to both Asian and Latino students. The school had partnerships with various community organizations that donated money, services, and provided several after-school resources to both Asian and Latino families and teachers. For example, Panda Cares, a community involvement program that was established by the Panda Restaurant Group (Panda Inn, Panda Express, and Hibachi-San), which is headquartered in Rosemead, California, provided much of this funding.<sup>10</sup> Panda Cares, a branch of the Panda Restaurant Group, also provided training for Latina and Asian American teachers and offered conferences on the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," based on the teachings of Stephen Covey. While some Latina teachers like Mrs. Dávila, considered the 7 habits a type of "cult" because it had a wide following, its teachings were widely professed on campus. Every classroom I visited had a large poster board of the The 7 Habits Tree, a large green tree with large roots and a sun and a rain cloud hovering over it.<sup>11</sup> Latina teachers would also use these strategies in their classrooms, especially when they noticed discord among their students, and also explained them to parents during Back to School Night. The main premise of Covey's work is that schools are more successful when an "abundance mentality" or "abundance mindset" is established, emphasizing that there are enough resources for everyone and success can be shared with others. This is in stark contrast to the scarcity mindset, which can lead to destructive and unnecessary competition between groups. The focus was to

celebrate success rather than feeling threatened by another group. These teachings were used to ameliorate race and interclass relations on campus between Asian and Latino students and to get Latina and Asian teachers to have a better understanding of one another, the children and parents. Although these strategies were implemented daily by Latina teachers at Goodwill Elementary, there was inequality between Asian and Latino students over academic achievement as Asians were thought to be outperforming their Latino counterparts similar to the racial dynamics Ochoa (2014) documents.

Latino families were extended the opportunity to take advantage of many of the resources that wealthier Asian population provided. In fact, throughout the school day, a rolling chalkboard with flyers of different resources and activities offered in the city were pinned to it that all parents could take advantage of such as extracurricular activities for their children. The school also regularly set up booths at the entrance gate such as with a Nuvision Federal Credit Union with an Asian and Latino representative. They were trying to start bank accounts for kids starting as low as \$10.00. At Goodwill Elementary, Asian immigrant parents brought extracurricular resources that Latino families could take advantage of, but not all were able to do so. According to the sociologist Jose Calderon (1995), multiethnic coalitions between Latinos and Asian Americans were possible in Monterrey Park and the city of Alhambra once cultural and perceived class differences between ethnic groups were set aside.

At Goodwill Elementary, citizenship status and language did not exclude Latinos or Asians from participating in the PTA. I took field notes when the outgoing Asian immigrant PTA president encouraged Latina immigrant mothers to join. She said, "Come on, come on, we need new blood, new faces." The Latina immigrant mothers at the meeting seemed very timid, and were reluctant to join because of the language barrier. However, one of the Latina mothers *se animo* [was encouraged] by the Asian PTA president and was voted the new PTA vice president. At this PTA, both Latina and Asian American teachers also participated. Conflict arose when most of the PTA board was Asian because Latinos felt left out (see Saito 1997), but Spanish-speaking Latina immigrant mothers in the focus group noted that they were at times reluctant to hold administrative positions because of the hours required to be a part of PTA and said, "*A mí se me hace que los asiáticos son más organizados.*" [It seems to be that Asians are more organized]. Here, legal status or language were not a factor in ostracizing Latinos or Asians in schools, rather they were issues that both parties tried to overcome. While Cheng (2014) notes that shared experiences of exclusion can be a source of unity and commitment in "non-hierarchical" spaces, controlling images of space created opportunities for, rather than impediments to, interethnic cooperation in a majority-minority public school located in an ethnoburb. The underclass controlling image of Compton, however, seemed to further divide Latinos and African Americans.

#### SCHOOL CHOICES FOR LATINA TEACHERS' CHILDREN

Latina teachers want to send their children to the best schools possible. College-educated and upwardly mobile Latina mothers were wary of sending their children to schools in Compton with predominantly poorer coethnics and African American children. Latina teachers at Goodwill Elementary in Rosemead, on the other hand, enrolled their children in the schools with the children of Latino immigrants, third-generation Latino students,



and Asian immigrant children because they perceived the school extended more opportunities to their children and because they felt their own children would have a higher likelihood of success in this ethnoburb. Although Latina teachers saw themselves as “giving back” to poorer coethnics, they were torn about the prospect of sending their own children to the school districts they serviced. Historically, it has been common for middle-class Mexicans to send their children to Catholic parochial schools instead of enrolling them in schools with immigrant and poorer coethnics (Garcia 1991; Telles and Ortiz 2008). Many college-educated and middle-class African American families also opt to live in communities that have school districts known for their superior academic achievement and enroll their children in urban public schools (Posey-Maddox 2014). Similarly, many upwardly mobile and middle-class Latino families are seeking dual immersion language programs that are generally attended by middle-class white families so their offspring will have a higher likelihood of preserving the Spanish language (Muro 2015). At the time of this study, none of the Latina teachers who worked in Compton enrolled their children in the district. Many of them said that they wanted to shield their children from exposure to racial conflict at the middle and high school levels. The following vignette shows these sentiments:

A fifth grade African American teacher walked into Mrs. Madrigal’s room carrying her infant. Mrs. Madrigal told her that she was contemplating enrolling her seven-year-old daughter into a Compton school because it would make it easier to pick her up from her current school in Paramount, but she was hesitant. “I don’t know if I want [my daughter] to come here. It’s a bad area. Plus you hear all these things in the news. You have your son here, how’s that? Gimme some advice” she asked. “It’s not a big problem when they are small. They’re young. They don’t take notice. The problems start in middle-school . . . He’s not coming here for middle or high school though,” said the African American teacher. “Aw, heck no! I just don’t know if this is the best environment for my daughter” said Mrs. Madrigal.

Cheng (2014:68) argues that at the middle and high school levels “. . . racially segregated groups were easily perpetuated and naturalized” but Latina educators recognized that these processes began at much younger ages. Mrs. Madrigal enrolled all three of her elementary aged children in a school that had higher test scores than Compton Elementary at the Paramount Unified School District, but she was still not satisfied. On another occasion, when I told Mrs. Madrigal that the other research site was in Rosemead, CA and explained that the population was mostly Latino and Asian immigrant, she referenced residential segregation patterns and school availability for other racial/ethnic groups. Mrs. Madrigal said, “Aw, I want my family with the Asians and the whites. Like the Asians and the Whites in the suburbs. To me, the Asians are kind of like whites now. How did they make it? How did they get in there?” Here, Mrs. Madrigal was referring to the notion that many children of Asian immigrants were attending schools in more affluent areas, whom she perceived to be very class heterogeneous, and noted that upwardly mobile Latina teachers did not have access to the same extent. Mrs. Madrigal further distances herself from Blacks, displaying what Rochmes and Elmer Griffin (2006) define as a white racial formation.

Like Mrs. Madrigal, all of the Latina teachers did not want their children to attend inferior schools in Compton and they realized that poor Latino immigrant families that

enrolled their children there had fewer options. Latina teachers did not blame immigrant Latino parents for sending their children to schools in Compton, but they saw it as an outcome of structural discrimination and larger patterns of residential segregation. Mrs. Velázquez recalled that she initially enrolled her young son at Compton Elementary because she was going through a divorce and was raising her three children as a single parent. Financial constraints propelled her to enroll him at Compton Elementary because she did not have to offer monetary compensation for a caretaker after school. He was enrolled at the school for nine months, but she immediately transferred him to another district when she was financially stable. She said:

[My son] did first grade here [Compton Elementary], but I sent him back because we live in a really good school district [ABC Unified in Cerritos]. The school that they are at right now is the 20<sup>th</sup> top school in the state. I was like 'I'm going to take them over there because even though he was with Mr. Gordon [esteemed white teacher] . . . your best teacher is only really as good as your district. If the district doesn't have the music, science or art program, then my child is not really getting everything that he deserves . . . People would kill to get into that district . . . It's sad that all the districts aren't the same. Like these kids deserve just as much as those kids [at ABC Unified].

According to Mrs. Velázquez, this was the unselfish thing for her to do because he deserved "a well-rounded [education]" and to be in a "good district." Latina teachers strategize as many middle-class parents in finding the best school choice for their kids, but the ability to put it in practice is defined by their resources and racial perceptions. Latina/o immigrant parents were aware of teacher choices, and also wanted their children to emulate the mobility patterns of their teachers. Similarly, Mrs. Kingston, a 1.5-generation Latina teacher, lived in Tustin in Orange County, an affluent school district, and all four of her children attended schools in Tustin Unified. A primary reason she did not want her youngest child to go to Compton Elementary was because he was disabled and the schools did not provide adequate resources to cater to his needs.

Some Latina teachers went to great lengths to enroll their children in schools away from Compton. For example, the interview with Mrs. Rivas was cut short because she had to pick up her daughters from school. She explained that she lived in Riverside and would drop her daughters off at her mother-in-law's house in the city of Downey, before arriving to her job at Compton Elementary.<sup>12</sup> The commute from her home to her daughters' school would take roughly 60 minutes. She used her mother-in-law's address to enroll her daughters at "a private school in Downey Unified," a city in Southern California with a large middle-class Latino population. From Downey to Compton it was roughly another "20 minutes." Although Latina teachers in Compton acknowledged that they tried to do as much as they could to help Latino families, they were less likely to have their children attend schools with working-class Latino and African American children.

In stark contrast, all Latina teachers who worked at Goodwill Elementary recommended the school to their close relatives, and those with children enrolled them in the school, being active in teacher selection and gifted and talented programs. Four of ten Latina teachers that I interviewed from Goodwill Elementary, said that their own parents worked tirelessly and endlessly to enroll them in Catholic school for their K-12 education (Garcia 1991) because they did not want them to attend Rosemead schools while

they were growing up. However, as adults and now college-educated, many Latina teachers said that a couple of years back Goodwill Elementary was a California Distinguished School and that's why they enrolled their children there. They maintained that this was a "good school" and was located in a smaller district. Mrs. Rocha, a fourth-generation Latina teacher, enrolled her son and daughter at the school and ensured both were placed in GATE classes. She also alluded to her familial networks in the area that help her rear her children. She explained:

A while ago we were a distinguished school, a little higher than we have been the past few years. This is a better school than the schools that my kids would have to go to [in El Monte]. My husband, [works down the street]. He works there, I work here, it's just easier to bring the kids here than if they were to be over there in El Monte. I don't have any family that could help me pick them up or anything. I'm fortunate that they're here.

Similarly, both of Mrs. Cadena's sons attended Goodwill Elementary and she wanted them to take the fourth grade with Mrs. Arenas, a third-generation Latina teacher, a request that was granted. As she exclaimed, "I get to pick the teachers!" When I conducted observations at one of their faculty meetings, I overheard the principal say to Mrs. Cadena, "Don't worry, we got him in GATE," regarding her son's placement. Later on in the academic school year, I found out that she wanted her older son to attend a school in Temple City that had a larger White population. When I asked Mrs. Cadena why she wanted to move her older son to that district for middle school, she said that she moved him to Temple City to "keep him out of trouble" with Latino students enrolled in Rosemead schools, but also so he would not interact with the Latino students in Temple City since he would be placed in advanced courses with mostly Asian and White colleagues. She felt that the stereotypes of Latino students got worse at the intermediate level and wanted to shield her son by enrolling him elsewhere.

Although the Mexican population in Rosemead was mostly working-class, the more socioeconomically established Asian American population provided many resources to the school. Latina teachers at Goodwill Elementary also thought their children would have more opportunities in the future if they went to school with Asian children. They relied on controlling images to affirm their position and were adamant they did not want their children to go to school with Black children. "I don't know if I would send my child to schools in Compton. I would rather they stay here with Asians" said Mrs. Rocha. Latina teachers felt that this was a good school for their kids at the elementary level. Many Latina teachers echoed the sentiments expressed by a Latina immigrant mother who participated in the Spanish-speaking focus group. This mother also conveyed how her young son played a role in deciding where he would go for school and was explicit that they would prefer to be with Asians versus African Americans. Dolores said, "My son said, 'dad please don't move us over there [Watts]. I am very comfortable and at peace here. I believe that with African Americans there is more conflict. Asians are calmer. At this school the children get along . . . really well. It is very tranquil here' [Author translation]." Mrs. Maciel did not have children but she encouraged her sister to enroll her biracial (Mexican and Black) niece in the school. She explained, "The student population! That's one of the reasons why I brought my niece over because she is half Mexican and half black. I and my sister wanted her to be with people where there was diversity." Mrs. Maciel

specified that she urged her sister to enroll her niece in a school where she could be protected from racism and tracking that Latino and African American children encounter in schools (López 2002).

Of all teachers, Mrs. Franco was the only one who said she would not enroll children at Goodwill Elementary. This was also in response to the conflict that arose between an Asian teacher and Latina teachers at the school over language accents. As Mrs. Franco described, an Asian teacher turned to her and asked, "Would you put your child in a classroom with a teacher who had a very heavy accent?" Mrs. Franco said that she was offended by the remark because she felt the Asian teacher was criticizing the Latina teacher's speech. She responded to the Asian teacher, "If I did have kids I wouldn't send them to this school because I think you have to keep where you teach, work and your family separate. Sometimes teachers that have their kids here . . . other teachers talk and it creates conflicts . . . it's better just to keep the two separate." Unlike the other Latina teachers and parents who actively tried to get their children enrolled into Goodwill Elementary, Mrs. Franco explained that racial tensions arise between Latina and Asian teachers on school grounds.

## CONCLUSIONS

Within the last couple of decades the neighborhoods of Compton and Rosemead have experienced major shifts in the proportional representation of racial/ethnic groups in their regions. Traditional race scholarship presumes a Black-White hierarchy and assumes Latinos are a monolithic group, lumping them all under one pan-ethnic label (Oboler 1995). I find that controlling images applied to school districts affect Latina teacher's perceptions of racial positioning. The data presented herein, offer a more nuanced portrait of Latina teachers' experience of racialization along multiple axes of power, community, and exclusion. By adding a spatial dimension to controlling images, I show how school districts are racialized and elucidate how Latina teachers object to what they see as anachronistic control in educational spaces, especially Compton. Latina teachers who work in Compton are often asked about their personal safety and are encouraged to leave Compton by friends and family for districts that are not associated with the controlling image of the "black underclass" even though the majority of pupils are now of Latino origin. Yet, Latinas also express ambivalence about having their own sons and daughters attend schools there. Latina teachers who work at Goodwill Elementary in Rosemead, on the other hand, enroll their children in the school, live near the community because of their familial networks, and are able to access resources the more socioeconomically diverse Asian immigrant population provides—but they are not on equal footing.

Because Compton is racialized as a Black space and is associated with the urban underclass, Latina teachers see this as undesirable and attempt to socially distance themselves from Blacks. In addition, Latina teachers in Compton feel that school district authority is in Black hands, and they do not trust that they are working for the benefit of Latino children and families because their voices remain unheard and their views unrepresented. Because Rosemead, an ethnoburb, has a pronounced Asian American population, Latina teachers see that as an attraction and a potential opportunity for mobility for their own children. Although middle-class Latina teachers and poor Latino families are able to access the resources provided by the more socioeconomically established Asian American

population, they are not on parity with Asian Americans and Latina teachers perceive that they are below them in terms of relative valorization. Latinas as college-educated professionals make distinctions between themselves and undocumented poorer coethnics who are below African Americans on indicators of language, citizenship, and district politics, and are below Asian Americans on indicators of class resources and educational success. Because of these perceptions, they direct their teaching efforts to reaching the children of immigrant Latinos who they feel an ethnic affinity with, and who they perceive to need more aid due to their precarious and stigmatizing status in regional racial hierarchies.

Finally, these findings have two implications for sociological research. First, sociologists must be sensitive to the subject's point of view in relation to the multiple symbolic constructions of a city. The connotations that respondents hold of neighborhoods, and the meanings they attach to them, frame perceptions of local racial formations and should be more strongly emphasized in urban research. This approach is not presently found in the literature. Second, the findings of this paper have consequences for other geographic territories where dominant controlling images of space persist and are promoted despite demographic change.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>I am fully aware of mixed Latino identities, however, the overwhelming majority of Latina/o students, families, and teachers included in the study were not of multiracial backgrounds. Additionally, all participants were given pseudonyms. The names of the elementary schools have also been disguised.

<sup>2</sup>In regions like the Northeast, racial identity of Latinas/os is more diverse and Latinas/os have historically lived adjacent to African Americans (see López 2002).

<sup>3</sup>White homeowners sold their homes to aspiring Black suburbanites who were willing to pay more (Sides 2005).

<sup>4</sup>In 2013, the school board appointed a Latino high school student as a student member to their board. In 2015, the student representative was African American.

<sup>5</sup>Code yellow is used by school officials when the facility must be locked down until the police clear the order.

<sup>6</sup>Alhambra, Arcadia, Temple City, and Diamond Bar's, also in the SGV, residents are more than 50% Asian origin families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

<sup>7</sup>District size plays a direct role in per pupil allocation costs. While it appears that Compton allocates more money per student over Garvey, a larger percentage of the budget goes to teacher pay and plant services. While Garvey has less student enrollment, the district allocated (\$746) more to pupil services over Compton (\$706).

<sup>8</sup>Term used to denote African American lineage in some Latin American regions.

<sup>9</sup>While the combat pay is often used for veterans, teachers working in Compton used this term to reference supplements and incentive pay in their annual income. Combat pay equates poor, urban schools as war zones. Teachers earn a stipend ranging upwards of \$600.00 for working in inner city schools.

<sup>10</sup>The Panda Restaurant Group, the parent company of Panda Inn, Panda Express & Hibachi-San, was founded by in Pasadena, CA in 1973 by individuals affiliated with the Yangzhou region of China's Jiangsu province.

<sup>11</sup>Of significance are Habit 4: Think Win-Win: Everyone Can Win; Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood: Listen Before you Talk; Habit 6: Synergize: Together is Better; and Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw.

<sup>12</sup>Altering addresses to access schools is not uncommon, but is considered technically illegal in many states. Schools require some form of proof that guardians live in a residence such as a utility bill in their name to ward

off out-of-district parents. These regulations vary state by state, some punishable by a fine and others by jail time.

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