

7 Gendered Expectations and Sexualized Policing

Latinas' Experiences in a Public High School

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Everything is fenced up, and I feel like everybody is watching us. You can't do this; you can't do that.

(Angelica Vega, high school senior)

As a Hispanic there's discrimination, and I think gender-wise there's discrimination too.

(Summer Reyes, high school junior)

As with many of her schoolmates, senior Angelica Vega feels her Southern California High School (SCHS) is “like a prison”. Wrought iron gates enclose it, several security guards patrol it, and occasionally drug-sniffing dogs scour it. Such security and punishment are part of what has been called a discipline regime in public schools (Morris 2006; Kupchik 2010). These forms of social control are part of the movement from a welfare state to a penal state, characterizing the neoliberal agenda of privatization and defunding of social programs (Fleury-Steiner 2008). Emerging in the context of “tough on crime” policies and fueled by a culture of fear and the demonizing of youth of color, schools are increasingly using prisonlike tactics, including zero tolerance policies where students caught violating school rules face stricter penalties, including suspensions, expulsions, and maybe even police interventions (Beres and Griffith 2001; Noguera 2008; Nolan 2011).

However, as high school junior Summer Reyes clarifies, these constraints are not meted out equally. Some students are given the benefit of the doubt and multiple chances; others are presumed guilty and receive no chances at all. They are heavily surveilled and punished. These are among the forms of discrimination Summer believes Hispanics or Latinas, such as herself, encounter at her high school.¹

Recently, there has been significant public and academic focus on the experiences of young boys and men of color, including the extensive policing they encounter in U.S. schools (Noguera 2008; Rios 2011; Conchas and Vigil 2012). President Obama's initiative, *My Brother's Keeper*, is a

contemporary, high-profile example centering boys of color. Launched in January 2014, this initiative focuses on providing mentors, support networks, and skills to enhance opportunities for all boys and young men of color.

Conversely, less attention has been placed on the experiences of girls and women of color and the types of constraints, surveillance, and punishment they endure in schools. With larger percentages of young women graduating from high school and matriculating at colleges and universities, some may divert attention away from girls and women with the false pretense that schooling is working for them and that it is just young boys of color who are struggling or who are maybe even the problem. This approach may inadvertently pit groups against one another in a zero-sum game where attention is directed at young men and away from women of color. It also ignores how groups are defined in relationship to one another and the ways race, gender, sexuality, and class intersect to differentially influence experiences and life chances. To more thoroughly understand the multifaceted components and implications of today's system of social control in U.S. schools, it is important to consider varied students' experiences. A wider range of narratives enables a fuller story about the belief systems, practices, and everyday dynamics structuring U.S. schools and students' opportunities.

LISTENING TO LATINA VOICES AS A CASE STUDY APPROACH

Drawing on in-depth interviews with educators and students from a Southern California public high school, this chapter considers dominant constructions, school practices, and everyday relationships on Latinas' schooling. Because elsewhere I detail academic barriers at the school (see Ochoa 2013), this chapter focuses specifically on raced-gendered expectations, including sexualized policing, where Latinas at the high school encounter constant monitoring of their bodies, beliefs, and actions. These are among the disciplining mechanisms occurring in our schools. By limiting students' ways of being, such expectations and policing are assimilationist. Justified by individualistic ideologies, these processes deflect attention away from societal and school conditions and instead blame Latinas/os and their families for educational inequalities. Together, they reinforce gender, racial/ethnic, and class hierarchies.

Although politicians, pundits, and the public talk at length about educational reform, students' perspectives are largely absent from contemporary discussions. New programs are instituted and marketed with the pretense that they are best for students, schools, and society. However, few speak with those impacted on a daily basis by what happens in our schools. Instead, students are increasingly evaluated *quantitatively* as though performances on standardized tests are meaningful measurements of all that needs to be

known. Going inside our schools and listening to students is more telling. Students' narratives unmask the hidden curriculum—the many unspoken lessons transmitted in schools.

Eager to learn from students, I spent over 18 months at the school I refer to as Southern California High School (SCHS). Located in Los Angeles County, SCHS has a population of nearly 2,000 students with relatively equal percentages of Asian Americans (46%) and Latinas/os (43%); the remaining student body is about 7% White, 2% African American, and 1% Native American. Over 30% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and about 10% are English Language Learners. As is the case nationally, the school personnel at SCHS do not represent the racial/ethnic backgrounds of the student body. About half of the teachers and administrators are White, one-fourth are Latina/o, one-fifth are Asian American, and less than 3% are African American or Native American (California Department of Education 2008).

SCHS is a relatively well-funded public high school. In addition to honors and Advanced Placement courses, it boasts an International Baccalaureate (IB) program that provides a special counselor and courses including Theory of Knowledge, Art History, and Twentieth-Century History for the 30–40 juniors and seniors in the program. SCHS is known for having high standardized test scores and rates of college attendance. As a result, it has appeared in *Newsweek Magazine's* list of the top 1,000 public schools in the nation. However, as students' testimonials reveal, not all have access to the same quality and quantity of school resources.

In May and June 2001, and again from May 2007 to December 2008, I sat in on classes and attended campus assemblies, graduations, and meetings. Working with several students from the Claremont Colleges, I interviewed over 50 teachers, counselors, and parents; but most of my time was spent listening to students. Across from tables, gathered around benches, and sitting in circles, in 50- to 75-minute interviews, we asked 139 students about their schooling, friendships, and future plans. The interview questions were broad and open-ended, allowing students to share their experiences in ways that were meaningful for them. As a result, students provided a range of testimonials about peer groups and high school life, some highlighting the institutional and daily constraints in school connected to gender and sexuality. For this chapter, I focus on these aspects of the interviews, specifically centering on the 46 interviews with Latina students. With the exception of a few of the interviews, most were audiotaped, transcribed, and then analyzed for recurring themes and patterns. The quotations appearing throughout this chapter are verbatim from the transcripts, but as is the custom in qualitative research the names of the participants and their school have been changed.

On average, the 46 Latinas were nearing the end of their sophomore years in high school. With parents in sales, construction, and trucking, most will be the first generation in their family to attend college. They are the

children or grandchildren of immigrants, and many identify as Mexican or Mexican American. Some identify pan-ethnically as Hispanic or Latina, and a few are Central American or identify with multiple ethnic groups.²

GENDERED EXPECTATIONS AND SEXUALIZED POLICING

At SCHS, school personnel and students reveal disturbing experiences that highlight how females' bodies and actions—especially Latinas—are sexualized, hyperscrutinized, and patrolled. Together, dominant myths, school practices, and everyday exchanges perpetuate strict dress codes, objectifying gazes, and labeling that are bolstered by an assimilationist imperative endorsing White, middle-class, and upper-class modes of comportment; narrow gendered and racialized constructions of femininity; and heteronormativity. Underlying these practices and imperatives are prevailing ideologies that blame young women for their experiences and cast Latinas as hypersexual and potentially pregnant teenagers. Together, these dynamics foster a discriminatory environment of sexualized policing that reinforces hierarchies and limits a sense of belonging in school. However, as their narratives suggest, students do not always acquiesce to such school climates; they construct counterspaces, and critique and contest exclusionary dynamics in multifaceted ways.

Dominant Myths about Latinas

Latinas' schooling experiences must be understood in the context of a legacy of exclusionary ideologies that justify power, privilege, and inequality. Ranging from biological and cultural deficiency perspectives that assume Latinas/os lack intellectual and cultural capabilities for academic success to constructions of Latinas as sex objects, these myths are part of larger belief systems maintaining and reproducing social, economic, and political inequality. It is because of the magnitude of these constructions that Patricia Hill Collins (2001) refers to them as “controlling images”.

These myths or controlling images manifest themselves in multiple arenas, and they may become self-fulfilling. They are historically rooted and permeate all aspects of our society, including attitudes and dynamics at schools. At SCHS, there are several recurring myths categorizing Latina/o students as uncaring about education, hypersexual, and potentially pregnant teenagers. These beliefs impact experiences and material conditions.

Uncaring About Education

The Asians seem to be motivated and driven. The Latinos don't seem to value education in the same way.

(Anthony Castro, SCHS teacher)

Such sweeping generalizations about Latinas/os not valuing education relative to Asian Americans permeate the campus of SCHS. These generalizations exist despite multiple studies indicating that Latinas/os tend to have *higher* aspirations to go to college than do students from the general population and that 94% of Latina/o parents expect their children to go to college (Delgado-Gaitan 1992; Kao 2000; Pew Hispanic Foundation/Kaiser Family Foundation 2004). Nevertheless, stereotypical views proliferate. They are rooted in deficiency perspectives, and they pit Latinas/os against Asian Americans.

In schools through the 1950s, White middle- and upper-class researchers and educators often used both biological and cultural deficiency arguments to explain differences in educational outcomes (Gonzalez 1990). For example, proponents of biological arguments believed that Mexican American students were predisposed physically to perform agricultural labor and lacked the mental capabilities to excel in academically rigorous courses (Gonzalez 1990). By the 1920s, as cultural deficiency perspectives became more popular, educators aimed to Americanize Mexicans and Mexican Americans who they believed came from homes and cultures that did not value education, were too present-time oriented, or were disorganized (Gonzalez 1990; Ochoa 2007). These racist theories justified unequal schools, punished those who spoke languages other than English, and prepared students for low-wage and gender-specific occupations. For Latinas, this meant preparation to fulfill domestic labor (Gonzalez 1990). Meanwhile, Euro-American students were largely schooled for higher paying occupations in accordance with their gender and class positions. Thus, these biological and cultural arguments reproduced a race-based capitalist and gendered labor system.

Today, in places such as SCHS, racist cultural deficiency explanations prevail in the dominant representations of Asian Americans as a so-called model minority in comparison to Latinas/os. Emerging in the midst of the 1960s social justice struggles and gaining prominence in the 1980s, this construction praises Asian Americans as a model group which has supposedly advanced in the U.S. because of their believed cultural emphasis on hard work and determination. At a time when Latinas/os and Blacks were demanding access into dominant institutions and engaging in mass demonstrations that critiqued U.S. society, the mainstream media depicted Asian Americans as good citizens who were advancing on their own (Lee 1996). Since the 1960s, popular magazine and newspaper articles have promulgated the false image that if Asian Americans can succeed without assistance, something must be wrong with Latinas/os and Blacks who are lagging behind educationally and economically (Lee 1996). Recently, high-profile academics have also promulgated such cultural beliefs, ignoring the significance of class resources and institutional disparities (see Chua and Rubenfeld 2014). The model minority myth lumps together heterogeneous groups with diverse histories and class backgrounds and assumes that all Asian Americans are advancing, that we live in a meritocracy, and that African

Americans and Latinas/os are to blame for their positions in society. The ramifications of such assumptions are felt widely. They work in tandem with myths about Latinas/os and permeate the SCHS campus climate.

Hypersexual and Potentially Pregnant Teenagers

A second prevailing assumption apparent at SCHS is that Latinas are hypersexual and potentially pregnant. This myth is also historically rooted, specifically in images deeming Latinas as “hyper-fertile baby machines”, “teenage mothers”, and barriers to children’s educational success (Gutiérrez 2008). For example, early theorists, such as a 1928 Los Angeles assistant supervisor of education, alleged that Mexican teenagers were naturally inclined toward sex over education: “authorities on the Mexican mind agree that after the age of 12–14 educational and higher ambitions turn to inclinations of sex impulse . . . The average [Mexican] boy and girl revert to the native instinct” (quoted in Gonzalez 1990, 37). These racist representations have been used to camouflage systemic inequality and justify discriminatory practices (Gonzalez 1990).

A common narrative in society, and repeated at SCHS, is that the sexuality of Latinas, relative to Whites, Asian Americans, and their male counterparts, is a problem needing control (Garcia 2012). Underlying this concern is a fear of teen pregnancy and acceptance of a cultural deficiency framework positing that Latinas, as a group, are promiscuous and favor young motherhood. An established teacher at SCHS, Margaret Albert most explicitly articulates these myths:

I’ve felt that there was a marked difference between the Hispanic female, and I remember reading a very interesting article on how it was a status symbol practically, you know, you’re proud that you’re pregnant at an early age . . . If you’re in one part of the subculture, it’s kind of cute for the girl to walk around pregnant. And she’s young and then he’s young and then there’s the limit to how much education you can get.

Adopting the belief that culture is to blame, teacher Margaret Albert characterizes teen pregnancy as a so-called Hispanic value. Despite false convictions such as these, there is not one Latina/o culture or value, and research indicates that having a child as a teenager is linked to *class* resources, not culture (Blum et al. 2000, as referenced in Denner and Guzmán 2006, 4).

Teacher Margaret Albert expounds on her essentializing of Latina hypersexuality and young parenthood by contrasting Latinas with Asian Americans at SCHS: “among the Asian population, generally dating and really getting involved in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships is something that is delayed a great deal. And therefore they have more time to do other things”. This disparate typecasting of Latinas and Asian Americans is reinforced in the mainstream media and influences public perceptions (Espiritu 1997; Rodríguez 1997). It is a gendered component of the problematic

conceptualization of Asian Americans as so-called model minorities relative to Latinas (see Ochoa 2013).

When Latinas are not invisible in the media or “symbolically annihilated”, they have been depicted as sex objects and teen mothers (Rodriguez 1997). During various historical periods, Latinas have been cast as sexually promiscuous and flaunting their sexuality, or as asexual and virgins until marriage. As hegemonic constructions, such representations are as oppressive as the myth of not caring about education: (1) they divide entire groups of women into whore/virgin dichotomies and pit women against each other in bad/good categories, (2) they blame Latinas, rather than consider larger factors influencing life changes, (3) they do not allow for the individual agency of women to determine their own sexualities, (4) they reinforce heteronormativity by presuming all sexual relationships are female-male partnerships, and (5) they assume that education is necessarily sidelined by relationships and pregnancy. The few studies centering the perspectives of Latina teens actually suggest that motherhood increases educational aspirations for some (Russell and Lee 1994), and that, as a whole, Latina adolescents are *less likely* to be sexually active than most other racial/ethnic groups (Blum et al. 2000, as referenced in Denner and Guzmán 2006, 4).

With so many racist and sexist assumptions about the supposed biological impulses and cultural values of Latinas and their families, young Latinas are derogatorily defined as “at risk”. They are blamed for their position in society and seen as the source of the believed problem of teen pregnancy (Garcia 2012). Meanwhile, unequal access to resources persist, and sex education remains absent in schools such as SCHS, thereby limiting students’ opportunities to learn more about their bodies, relationships, health, and sexual identities. Such absence persists in part because “lessons about sexual pleasure upset the balance of gendered power in our society by introducing women’s capacity for self-determination” (Fields 2008, 160).

THE DISCIPLINING MECHANISMS OF SCHOOL PRACTICES AND EVERYDAY EXCHANGES

Students’ testimonials reveal how exclusionary beliefs interact with school practices such as dress codes, curriculum tracking, and narrow course curriculum to maintain raced-gendered inequality and sexualized policing that typecasts, limits, and recreates hierarchies. These school practices are often unchallenged, accepted as normal, *and* educators and students internalize and reproduce them through their everyday exchanges. In the context of exclusionary constructions and school practices, interactions such as objectifying gazes, surveillance, labeling, rumors, and low expectations are everyday forms of social control that run the gamut of making select students feel hypervisible or invisible. Such experiences may leave students feeling hurt, angry, apathetic, and disconnected from school. Similar to school practices,

these individual actions also foster a chilly or downright hostile campus climate, and they illustrate the multiple forms of policing encountered by Latinas as a result of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality.

Dress Codes and the Institutionalization of Female Bodies as “Distractions”

Premised on the assumption that students’ styles need to be regulated for safety and learning, school dress codes repress and control students (Brunsma 2004; Ochoa 2008). At SCHS, the dress code intersects with hegemonic assumptions that female bodies—in particular female breasts—need to be covered because of a belief that they are distracting. The school’s dress code stipulates that clothes should “not distract or interfere with the educational environment . . . Dresses, skirts, and shorts shall be within bounds of decency and good taste”.

During a class discussion, Latinas critiqued the school’s attempts to contain their bodies. As several Latinos argued, “women can wear clothes that guys can’t” and pointed to a Latina classmate wearing a t-shirt with a woman and gun on it. One Latina student quickly corrected, “there are dress codes for prom. We can’t wear low-cut dresses or ones that are cut down the back”. Her response was met with a chorus of affirming “yea’s” from her Latina classmates. A student later shared how, before she could enter the school’s prom, school officials required her to cover her chest with a shawl because they believed her dress was “too revealing”. Thus, whereas the young men in the class critiqued a double standard where women are perceived to be granted more liberty, some women feel limited by the school’s requirement that they cover parts of their bodies. The school’s emphasis on “distraction free” dress codes assumes that if girls’ tops are low and shorts high, young men are unable to control their sexual desires, placing blame on female bodies for arousing excitement and interfering with schooling.

Given sexualized media representations where girls and women are evaluated by their bodies and clothes, some may support dress codes as a way to combat sexist and consumerist media pressures.³ Unfortunately, schools such as SCHS do not make this case for such restrictions or provide students with opportunities to deconstruct media representations. Instead, SCHS emphasizes “decency and good taste”—subjective constructs that are influenced by multiple factors, including age, generation, culture, religion, and socioeconomic status. It is assimilationist to assume that all at SCHS share or should share the same conceptions as the school’s primarily White, middle-class educators who regulate dress. The assumption too is that those who do not accept the school’s conception are somehow indecent and have poor taste. For female adolescents with larger breasts, they may be considered “indecent” simply because they have more to show than their slighter schoolmates (Hyams 2006, 100).

As part of schooling students on mainstream norms and socially preferred body types, students who break the dress code are sent home to change, or

they are forced to wear loaner clothes. Whereas female bodies are seen as distractions, being removed from the classroom is an unspoken interference from learning for the students involved.

Taken together, such dress codes simultaneously sexualize and control female bodies and discipline their sexualities (Hyams 2006, 101). These rules imply that female breasts are objects of desire needing to be covered, contained, and controlled. An assumption of heterosexual desire permeates these dress codes, and such rules may also foster shame among young girls who internalize negative messages about their bodies. Furthermore, adolescent females are policed to constrain their perceived sexualities and to enforce what sociologist Julie Bettie (2003) has described as school-sanctioned and middle-class norms of femininity. Thus, the objectification of female bodies and the implementation of school dress codes are not neutral. Not all adolescent girls are equally impacted by, or punished for, their styles of dress, and the subjective interpretations of the primarily middle-class and White school officials determine modes of comportment.

Objectifying Comments and Gazes

Objectifying comments and gazes also police students' styles of dress and bodies. Rooted in patriarchy and bolstered by dominant media representations, objectifying comments and gazes are so common that they often become naturalized. They may pass unnoticed by educators and students, or they may be justified as part of school cultures and hormonal changes. Nonetheless, their impacts are strong. They are microaggressions that keep those at the margins in their place (Solorzano 1998). At SCHS, such objectifying comments and gazes are part of the school culture. They occur among students and educators, and the school is implicated when such practices persist as part of a culture of silence.

At a 2008 SCHS awards assembly organized by students, four groups of young women from ninth through 12th grade each took turns dancing and entertaining their schoolmates and teachers through choreographed performances. Their matching outfits and synchronized moves revealed the time they invested in perfecting their dances to the latest hip-hop songs. However, schoolmates' catcalls and judgments about the performers' bodies, such as "the girl in the middle is going to make an earthquake", clouded the camaraderie, skill, and work displayed by the students. In schools where dance and cheer is given less status than football and basketball and young women's bodies are perceived as fair game for commentary, some schoolmates treated the performers' bodies as objects to be evaluated. In this case, students not fitting prevailing constructions of beauty based on body size were ridiculed.

The scrutinizing that some young women receive on campus because of dominant constructions of beauty is not only apparent among students. Teacher Marilyn Garcia, for example, is very concerned that "prettier girls with bigger breasts seem to get [certain male teachers'] attention more".

Garcia reveals that this pattern has detrimental impacts, including unequal practices by a couple of male teachers known for granting select female students desired classes and a severe case of negligence by a teacher who overlooked a student accident because the teacher was believed to be “checking out the girls”. Such disparate treatment and objectifying gazes create a dangerous and even hostile environment. They send powerful messages about women’s worth and pit students against one another by reinforcing a pattern of favoritism steeped in systems of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality.

As illustrated in school dress code policies, part of the objectification of females is the assumption that their bodies—in particular their breasts—are distractions academically. This was also evident when a veteran, White, male teacher, Tom O’Brien, joked before a faculty meeting, “ninth grade girls do well until they get the two Bs—boobs and boyfriends”. Although his comments were loud enough for most of his colleagues to hear, no one challenged them, suggesting that other teachers tacitly agree. Tom O’Brien’s specific reference to breasts implies that he believes anatomical development disrupts the academic performance of ninth grade girls, a group he assumes are attracted to and attract boys. In this example, females are reduced to their body parts, and their bodies are considered the source of their problems—removing any role of the school in hindering students’ academic achievement.

Surveilling and Labeling

Politically active Latinas and those who use their bodies in ways that disrupt hegemonic constructions of femininity encounter equally confining assumptions and forms of surveillance. For example, junior Summer Reyes, a leader in MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), a student organization established in the 1960s, believes that school administrators suspiciously watch her and her group’s activities, whereas other students and groups are granted more liberty.

Summer explains how, as a self-identified Hispanic woman, she is subjected to racial and gender monitoring in ways not experienced by MEChA’s male president:

as a Hispanic, there’s discrimination, and I think gender-wise there’s discrimination too. I noticed that for the president of MEChA, they’ve never given *him* dirty looks, or they’re never watching what he does, and for me, they are . . . I guess because they always notice me. They kind of know who I am. They don’t know my name, but after all that was going on with MEChA and they weren’t letting us do a thing, I started noticing that they were watching where I was going . . .

Along with gender and race, Summer attributes this differential treatment to her unwillingness to concede to the administrators’ attempts to cancel

MEChA's campus events. Because SCHS's administrators are predominately White males, Summer may encounter more surveillance than her male counterpart; not only is she involved with an antiracist and social justice organization, but by calling attention to racism and working to "empower Hispanics", she is also transgressing normative raced and gendered expectations of acquiescence and passivity.

Typically, students who are involved with the production of school-sanctioned dances, assemblies, newspapers, and yearbooks receive special status from school officials, and they are granted *greater* freedom of movement on campus (Eckert 1989). However, Summer's experiences illustrate how not all student leaders are granted such privileges. As a Mexican woman involved with an overtly political organization, Summer recounts more surveillance in the form of sexualized policing as well:

ok, there's a lot of couples around school and they are constantly making out, and no one ever tells them anything, and me and my boyfriend are just talking and I can see the administration. They're just standing right next to us. And I'm like, "we're not even doing anything". It kind of gets me angry that they don't do it to anybody else. They just do it to me.

Summer's experience must be seen in the context of the overall campus climate where other members of MEChA, including Latina/o faculty advisors, report constant questions and snide comments from administrators about their club's activities. Participating teachers and students compare what they observe as lack of trust and low expectations of MEChA with praise and celebration for other organizations. Likewise, relative to their Asian American counterparts, Latinas were far more likely to talk about feeling monitored based on their political participation, clothing, and romantic relationships (Ochoa 2013). In particular, the sexualized profiling Summer perceives may also be influenced by dominant myths of Latinas as hypersexual. Overall, when student leaders such as Summer and her MEChA schoolmates contest the status quo by raising awareness about racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and class inequality, their activities are stifled in a form of political repression.

Sophomore Angelica Vega also describes constant surveillance by school administrators and security guards. In particular, racialized and normative gendered expectations of "being ladylike" influence this monitoring, which for two years has haunted her schooling. During her sophomore year, Angelica befriended a group of girls who she later found out were doing drugs. After about a month of using drugs with them, she successfully quit and helped her friends stop as well. When her mother found out about Angelica's past drug usage, she reached out to the school. In return, the school punished Angelica and her friends, instigating ostracism and fistfights between these former friends who blamed Angelica for the school's actions.

Instead of being praised for no longer using drugs or receiving assistance during a difficult period, for the remainder of high school, school officials branded Angelica with a negative reputation:

because of all that with those friends that got involved with drugs and I got into a fight with them, [administrator] Johnson still thinks I'm the same type of person. Yet, I don't hang out with them. I don't have any interactions with them, and yet he still judges me from back in the day. It's like, "c'mon. I'm focused on school".

Despite her attempts to establish a new identity and friendship group, Angelica is forced to contend with low expectations and enhanced surveillance:

just the way security is, they'll sit there [in front of the campus]. They look at the same people to see what they're doing, to see where they're going but not new faces . . . Like me, they'll just watch and watch.

At times, this constant watching is combined with public ridicule by security guards:

they always give me problems. Like [saying], "here she comes. Be careful". I remember the security guards saying, "watch out! Here comes Tyson", 'cause they know me as fighting. So they call me, "oh, here comes Mike Tyson. She's gonna hit you".

These school officials' comments are humiliating, especially for a student trying to alter a negative image. However, the labeling of Angelica as "Tyson" has other implications as well. It is a form of masculinizing name-calling that reinforces assumptions that women do not engage in fistfights. Such labeling also fuels racist constructions of Black men as aggressive, violent, and ready to strike at any moment (see Feagin 2001).

Each time she is berated, Angelica does all she can to cope with such harassment. However, she is unable to remove the stigmas that have been assigned to her. Thus, when we met her in March of her senior year, she could not "wait to leave this school".

Shaming and Steering

Just as the constant surveillance experienced by Summer and Angelica marginalizes students by making them feel that they are suspect, the spreading of rumors and shaming are also disciplining mechanisms that ostracize and impact belonging. In particular, during a two-hour group discussion with three Latina/o friends, the stigmatizing and shaming of pregnant students were pervasive.

After stopping our discussion to scrutinize a student walking across campus, junior Monique Martinez explained how her schoolmate was the

eighth pregnant student at SCHS. When asked how students have reacted to news of these pregnancies, the three friends reveal the gendered judgment and gossip surrounding the young mothers that typically eludes the fathers:

- MONIQUE: Well, people are just talking like, “oh my god! She is pregnant. Did you hear”? That’s about it.
- GILDA: Like in a judgmental way or—[students start nodding]? Yeah, it is?
- MONIQUE: Yeah.
- ART: They are judging her.
- GILDA: The guys, what are they saying about the guys?
- MONIQUE: I don’t know what they say about the guys. They always talk about the girls. They don’t say anything about the guys.
- LAURA: They don’t say anything about the guys. They only say things about the girls.

This gendered double standard places blame entirely on young women, who must then navigate a campus climate filled with rumors and sneers, including by these three friends who also belittle their female schoolmates.

The shaming escalates when these friends believe that pregnant teenagers not only embarrass themselves but also defame the entire school. Here, they vilify schoolmates by drawing on racist and classist images of a neighboring school where most of the students are working-class Latinas/os, and the school has an on-campus childcare facility:

- LAURA: . . . [Teen pregnancy] makes our school look bad.
- MONIQUE: We’re like the next Northern High School.

Part of their criticism of pregnant teenagers, in addition, comes from their parents’ judgmental messages:

- MONIQUE: “They’re animals”, that’s what my mom tells me.
- ART: Yeah.
- MONIQUE: The way I was taught was purity. You do it when you’re married. It’s like love, and now everyone’s doing it. My mom’s like, “they’re all out there being little bunnies”.

Whereas the comments Monique hears at home are harsh, the disparaging lessons she and her schoolmates are subjected to from at least one of their teachers is downright hostile. In opposition, students do what they can to contest such sentiment:

- my English teacher, Ms. Saldana, this year, we were talking about having sex in class or pregnant girls, and she’s like, “I think it’s

disrespectful if you get pregnant in high school . . . You shouldn't come to school if you're pregnant". All of us are like, "what are you talking about?! . . . Shouldn't you be supporting that the girl comes to school to finish her education"?

By stigmatizing students and associating pregnancy with immorality and disrespect, sentiment by teachers such as Saldana pits students against one another, limits pregnant students' sources of support, and pushes them away from certain classes and maybe even out of school. Whereas in this case, students in Saldana's class critiqued her argument, perspectives such as Saldana's are prevailing, and they seep into worldviews and negatively impinge on young women's lives.

Shaming at SCHS is especially pernicious when educators withdraw support for pregnant students and young mothers. This was the case for junior Ashley Cordero, who initially praised several teachers for providing advice during her pregnancy and while raising her baby. However, an analysis of the larger messages conveyed by her school counselor and school district policies belies what appears to be a seemingly positive reception. Ashley's experiences illustrate the detrimental impacts of institutional practices that stem from a history of exclusion and foster unequal outcomes.

Before her pregnancy, Ashley was one of the only Latinas/os enrolled in the school's top academic program—the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.⁴ In the program, she was often tokenized, singled out as a "credit to her race". A difficult position to be in, Ashley was committed to "breaking that mindset" that some educators and schoolmates have about the academic abilities of Latinas/os. However, when Ashley became a mother, her additional workload impeded her ability to stay in this select program. After leaving the program, her treatment by the school changed. Just as Ms. Saldana, the aforementioned English teacher, advocated, Ashley was literally pushed out of the school. First, easy access to the IB counselor, who provides stress release sessions, letters of recommendation, and an open door policy for students in the program, was rescinded:

. . . [T]his last time I had made an appointment with her and I had cleared the time, and she had said yes just to tell her secretary, and I did. And then I ended up going in, and she wasn't there at the time. I was getting ready to leave and then I ended up seeing her, and I had went into her office . . . [a]nd she's like, "oh, my secretary wasn't here to shoo you away".

No longer in the IB Program, Ashley is physically shooed away by a once supportive counselor. This same counselor also eschews Ashley's initial college plans:

I've spoken to [my counselor] about my daughter, with school as far as [the academic program], like how should I go about doing this, which

way would be best for me to go. She suggested, that I should just probably go to [a local community college] for now so that way, because money's tight, and then I could transfer out after.

Her counselor's once high expectations receded from attending a competitive university to a community college. Such steering of Latinas/os into often overcrowded and underfunded community colleges is common, and given the low transfer rates from community college to universities, it is a pattern that negatively impacts the percentage of Latinas/os earning advanced degrees (Pérez Huber et al. 2006).

Just as her counselor sends messages that discredit Ashley's abilities, the school district's policies are equally unforgiving. With only one year remaining before graduation, Ashley can no longer remain at SCHS. As a student outside of the school's neighborhood lines, her enrollment as a transfer student was contingent on her participation in the IB Program. Whereas this district policy may appear fair, it is ostracizing. It literally banishes Ashley by not allowing her to complete her senior year at a familiar place. During a period of many transitions, Ashley is forced to change schools and establish new systems of support. This is a significant disruption to her education. Such district policies are inflexible and unaccommodating—they ignore students' differing experiences and unequal struggles.

Silencing and Invisibility

Finally, silencing discussions about sexuality is also a mechanism of social control at SCHS. Despite the apparent concern over teen sexuality and pregnancy, course curriculum on parenting, birth control, and sexual identities is absent in most classrooms. It is what the American Association of University Women refers to as “evaded curriculum”—“matters central to the lives of students and teachers but touched upon only briefly, if at all, in most schools” (AAUW 1992, 131, as referenced in Fields 2008, 72). Given the raced-gendered assumptions at the school about Latinas, these silences are conspicuous. They bolster individualizing discourses that blame and shame young women and remove any responsibility from men, society, or schools to provide education and support. The invisibility also stifles opportunities for enhancing understanding and creating a more inclusive campus climate.

The absence of these discussions is not lost on the three friends introduced earlier. Here, they reflect on how such topics should be part of students' learning, especially given the percentage of students believed to be sexually active:

- MONIQUE: I would say about 60% of [SCHS] is sexually active. 60%.
 LAURA: Probably.
 GILDA: Including ninth [graders] through seniors?
 MONIQUE: Yeah, I even found out little middle schoolers do the dirty.

- ART: Yeah.
GILDA: And is this being talked about, besides amongst students?
MONIQUE: No, they never talk about it.
GILDA: The teachers? Administrators? Should they be?
MONIQUE: I think they should.
LAURA: Yeah.
ART: I think so.

By denying educational opportunities to students and fueling a climate of shame for pregnant teenagers, adolescent girls are forced to bear much of the weight of learning about sexual health and birth control.

Another form of stigmatization and silence surrounds sexual identities and desires. These silences perpetuate heterosexuality as the expected social norm because these are the unnamed and idealized relationships (González-López 2010). Heterosexual relationships are assumed to be natural. In contrast, relationships and gendered ways of being perceived to fall outside of these normative expectations are ridiculed or hushed. Whereas the intents of the following exchanges differ, both of these dynamics maintain heteronormativity and stifle nonnormative sexual practices and gender identifications.

Just as sociologist C. J. Pascoe (2012) found at the California high school she studied, “fag discourse”, including the ridiculing of others by using derogatory labels, is part of the campus climate at SCHS. Primarily male students use this discourse to ridicule other males. It is a technique that debases gender, nonconforming students, femininity when performed by males, and activities perceived to fall outside of narrowly constructed heterosexual relationships. Such ridiculing polices students’ ways of being and enforces assimilationist imperatives—in particular, it maintains what researcher Lorena Garcia (2012) refers to as “heteronormative imperatives”.

Whereas “fag discourse” is overt and a form of public shaming that draws attention to students to squelch dissent, silencing any reference to “gayness” also privileges and reinforces heterosexuality. As sophomore Monica Ruiz shares, heteronormativity and homophobia are so pervasive that even speculating that a schoolmate is gay can foster a hostile climate:

the kid that sits next to me was like, “oh did you know that guy was gay”? I was like, “how do you know if he’s gay”? and he’s like, “oh, he’s just gay”. I was like, “no, he’s not. Don’t say that if you don’t know if it’s true. Now you can’t just go around saying stuff ‘cause that’s how rumors start” and then he was asking some kid in the back [of the class].

Although the tone and intent of this exchange is unclear, that Monica believes her classmate is spreading rumors by calling another student gay

reveals the negative connotations and even potentially violent ramifications associated with this identity. Monica's teacher, John Alvarez, has a similar interpretation and reaction to the students' conversation:

Mr. Alvarez overheard, and he got really mad. He's like, "what do you think you're God? It's not right; you shouldn't say that especially in my class. I won't tolerate that". He got really mad. Then again, you can't just be saying, "oh this guy is gay", like if you don't know if it's true.

Rather than encouraging dialogue, this immediate silencing has the same, and perhaps unintended, effect of Monica Ruiz's response—fueling a perception that being gay is shameful, something to hide, and an insult. As such, it regulates sexual identities by maintaining heterosexual supremacy and perpetuating homophobia.

The one space where students at some schools have found dialogue, visibility, and inclusion about sexuality and nonconforming sexual and gender identities is in organizations such as the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) (Clay 2012). GSA chapters are located in schools throughout the nation, including in over 900 active clubs and organizations in California (Marquez and Brickenbrough 2013). However, as one Chicana at SCHS bemoans, the school's GSA is floundering:

. . . [I]t's not going to last, even though I signed up, it is not going to last because high schoolers are not mature enough to deal with it. It's something you have to do more in college, and it is sad because the person was trying to recruit for the club, and people were just laughing. And then I signed up because I mean that's interesting and that's something that I want to support. But then I know it is probably not going to last it; it's probably going to end.

GSA chapters are crucial student spaces, but they alone cannot change a campus and societal culture filled with silence and stigma surrounding sexuality and identities. To change campus cultures, schools and students need course curriculum and affirming spaces that include materials on the sociopolitical constructions of gender and sexuality.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Going into our schools and listening to students reveal how more than school gates are barring students. Behind fences, students encounter multiple constraints—academically, socially, politically, and sexually. Because much has been written about the academic barriers, and there is growing scholarship on how schools limit student relationships, this chapter focused

on the less examined ways that schools also regulate students politically and sexually. In particular, Latinas' testimonials uncover how school practices, educators' messages, and students' interactions police their bodies, monitor radical political activism, and dismiss nonconforming students and identities. The various institutional and interpersonal constraints detailed in this chapter are forms of control conveying what is deemed acceptable and who belongs in our schools and society.

During a period of growth and identity development, such disciplinary measures impinge on students' abilities to form positive self-concepts unencumbered by others' assumptions and limitations. By mandating narrow ways of being and thinking, they also reinforce assimilationist imperatives and exclusionary campus climates. In their most extreme cases, some forms of control foster violence and death based on race, gender, and sexuality (see Frago 2003; Marquez and Brickenbrough 2013).

Dominant ideologies about so-called Latina/o values and Latina sexuality bolster these disciplinary measures. In a self-perpetuating cycle, they justify school practices and everyday exchanges. They also blame Latinas/os for their positions in society. Thereby, larger societal and school-level injustices are kept intact, and the cycle of racial inequality and blame continues.

Despite the pervasiveness of these constraints and the prevailing myths about Latinas, there are glaring silences surrounding them. Thus, Latinas are simultaneously positioned as hypervisible and invisible—alternatively spotlighted as problems relative to other girls or dismissed as succeeding compared to boys of color. Meanwhile, Latinas' perspectives and experiences are often ignored in discussions about education, as are the varied constraints they encounter.

A more complete understanding of schooling requires a holistic perspective that names and tackles raced-gendered exclusionary expectations and sexualized policing. This must be part of public debate and educational policy, and it is incumbent upon our schools to alter their campus climates by providing the necessary curriculum and educator training to enhance critical awareness and inclusive spaces. Academically, more research is needed to consider the linkages between multiple disciplinary mechanisms and their implications. We must continue unmasking the many forms of social control occurring in our schools. To do otherwise is to ensure the maintenance of exclusionary belief systems, school practices, and everyday dynamics that have damaging implications for students, communities, and our society.

NOTES

1. Whereas the pan-ethnic categories Latina and Hispanic are broad and refer to over 50 million people in the U.S. from diverse regions, generations, class position, etc., for inclusivity, I use the category Latina throughout this chapter,

except when referring to students' specific racial/ethnic identifications. In addition, all names in this chapter are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the information.

2. Whereas Latinas are the focus of this chapter, it is important to understand the backgrounds of their Asian American schoolmates, because these are the students Latinas are often compared to and evaluated against at this school. Reflecting systemic inequalities and differing immigration histories, most of the Asian Americans interviewed are immigrants and children of immigrants from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds and with college-educated parents who are primarily from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Most of the students identify as Chinese or Asian, but some are Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese American. Although largely ignored at the school, the general class differences between the Latina/o and Asian America students at SCHS are significant and result in unequal economic, social, and cultural capital.
3. Thanks to Lauren Adams for pointing this out.
4. This is a pattern observed across the nation. As a result of historical and contemporary exclusionary practices and unequal forms of support, Latinas/os as a whole are underrepresented in top academic tracks (Oakes 1985). For a detailed discussion of this at SCHS, see Ochoa 2013.

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