University of Kentucky
UKnowledge

Theses and Dissertations--Community & Leadership Development

Community & Leadership Development

2021

"Playing the Game": A Case Study of Latinx Leaders in an Agricultural Youth Organization

Graciela Barajas
University of Kentucky, gba256@uky.edu
Author ORCID Identifier:
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9091-5882
Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2021.068

Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Barajas, Graciela, ""Playing the Game": A Case Study of Latinx Leaders in an Agricultural Youth Organization" (2021). *Theses and Dissertations--Community & Leadership Development*. 56.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cld_etds/56

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Community & Leadership Development at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Community & Leadership Development by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Graciela Barajas, Student

Dr. Stacy K. Vincent, Major Professor

Dr. Patricia Dyk, Director of Graduate Studies

“PLAYING THE GAME”: A CASE STUDY OF LATINX LEADERS IN AN AGRICULTURAL YOUTH ORGANIZATION

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Community and Leadership Development in the
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
at the University of Kentucky

By

Graciela Barajas

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Stacy K. Vincent, Professor of Agricultural Education

Lexington, Kentucky

2021

Copyright © Graciela Barajas 2021
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9091-5882

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

"PLAYING THE GAME": A CASE STUDY OF LATINX LEADERS IN AN AGRICULTURAL YOUTH ORGANIZATION

Latinx members of the FFA Organization are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership positions. When they do get elected to leadership offices, they oftentimes have to accept behaviors that erase their cultural identity. This study aims to find what aspects of their identity they feel they have to give up in order to be seen as a potential state or national FFA candidate. Findings include the participation of the state-officer game, joining cliques that fit the white mold, and overall, assimilation on an individual and group scale. Recommendations include systemic change for state and national FFA staff, agricultural education, and the agricultural youth organization.

KEYWORDS: [Latinx Leaders, Critical Race Theory, Assimilation, Cultural Identity, FFA Organization, Agricultural Education]

Graciela Barajas

(Name of Student)

March 31, 2021

Date

“PLAYING THE GAME”: A CASE STUDY OF LATINX LEADERS IN AN AGRICULTURAL YOUTH ORGANIZATION

By
Graciela Barajas

Dr. Stacy K. Vincent
Director of Thesis

Dr. Patricia Dyk
Director of Graduate Studies

March 31, 2021
Date

DEDICATION

To Mr. & Mrs. Reece, thank you for loving this brown girl.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following thesis greatly benefited from the insights and directions from my advisors, peers, friends, and family. From the throw-away comments to the vulnerable expressions of agreement, thank you for shaping this thesis.

First, my thesis chair, Dr. Vincent: from long walks, to long talks, to the gallons of coffee consumed during both, thank you. You encouraged me to speak my truth and in doing so I was able to write about the things and people I am most passionate about. Thank you for growing me into a solid researcher, allowing me to curse freely inside and outside of your office, and introducing me to the best food in Lexington. In addition, Dr. Rignall and Dr. Tanaka provided me a platform in which I could explore the theories and the people I needed to successfully answer my most pertinent research questions. Their direction and guidance helped me unequivocally in completing this project. Because of you three, I know how impactful the agriculture profession can and should be.

Next, I wish to thank the people I shared an office with for the past two years: Andrew, Audrey, Austin, Brett, Caleb, Danny, Hunter-Anne, Jacelyn, Juliana, and Tara. Your constant encouragements, debates, and questions made me into a better researcher and writer. Your puns, links to funny videos, college basketball brackets, and love for Megan thee Stallion helped keep me sane during the last few months. Thank you.

I want to deeply and sincerely thank the members of my study who will remain anonymous for confidentiality purposes. May your voices and stories continue to ring loud and true.

Finally, thank you to my mom and my dad and Andres and Pelish. I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT i

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 1

Introduction *1*

Statement of the Problem *2*

Significance of the Study *2*

Purpose of the Study *3*

Theoretical Framework *4*

Limitations *6*

Definitions of Terms *7*

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW 10

Critical Race Theory *11*

In Agricultural Education 11

In Education 13

Multicultural Education *15*

Engagement *17*

Caring Teachers 18

Strong Community Support 20

Family Ties 22

Extracurriculars *23*

Leadership *26*

Conclusion *30*

CHAPTER 3. METHODS 31

Characteristics of Qualitative Research *31*

Qualitative Study *31*

Researcher's Role and Reflexivity *32*

Data Collection Procedure *34*

Data Recording Procedure *35*

Participants *36*

Data Analysis and Interpretation *37*

Trustworthiness *39*

Limitations *40*

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS 42

Overview *42*

RQ1: What unspoken practices of leadership offices in the FFA exist and reinforce racial inequalities particularly among Latinx youth leaders? *43*

Cool Kids Clique 43

Networking Opportunities 48

Agriculture Teachers' Reminders 49

RQ2: How do Latinx state FFA leaders respond to these practices and their need to assimilate? *51*

Playing the Game 51

Assimilation as described by interviews 63

RQ3: How can agricultural education and the FFA work to eliminate these harmful practices? *68*

Summary of the Findings *73*

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION 75

Restatement of the problem *75*

Limitations *76*

Review of the Findings *76*

Conclusions and Implications *77*

Conclusion 1 78

Conclusion 2 79

Conclusion 3 80

Conclusion 4 81

Conclusion 5 82

Recommendations *83*

Taking Action 84

For secondary agricultural teachers 84

For state and national FFA staff 85

Agricultural education university professors 86

For Latinx/ Hispanic members 87

Discussion and Future Research *88*

Final Words *89*

APPENDICES 91
IRB Approval *91*
Initital Email to Advisors *92*
Qualtrics Interest Form *93*
Email to Participants for Scheduling Interviews *94*
Revised Interview Question Guide *95*
Codes from the Interviews *97*
REFERENCES 100
VITA 109

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As the United States' population continues to increase, the demographics of school systems expands and diversifies. Although at-large our population seems to be changing, our social norms still conform to the dominant ideology that has pervaded our society since its creation—the ideology that benefits and prioritizes white, heterosexual males at the expense of our marginalized communities. Social norms that reiterate success- type of clothes worn, style of hair, articulation of the English language- encourage our society to place a heavier emphasis on this white culture.

Looking specifically at the United States school system, secondary education has a male-dominated culture driven by social norms that ask our students who do not fit the white, male mold to assimilate in order to be successful (Faircloth, 2012). This assimilation leads to a change in outward behaviors and internal ways of thinking that can be damaging to already disenfranchised students. Students of color need the space to learn about and develop themselves in an authentic way consistent with their culture at home; but with school systems that look nothing like them and that indirectly (or directly) invalidate their experiences of oppression, this sense of belonging is often difficult to find (Faircloth, 2012; Garza, 2009).

Within secondary agricultural education, minority youth are struggling to feel included within the white space of the classroom and the FFA organization (Barajas et al., 2020). The National FFA Organization has claimed an expansion of opportunities for marginalized youth with programs like Agricultural Education For All (ffa.org, 2020); however, state and national leaders continue to amplify the white, male narrative

common in agricultural education (Elliot & Lambert, 2018). In direct contradiction with their inclusion efforts, the National FFA Organization has surrounded themselves with the narrative of prioritizing conservative, traditional agriculture that has no place for students of color. With their deep connections to agriculture's Fortune 500 companies, the political attendance of former President Donald Trump at the 91st National FFA Convention, and the recent removal of a national officer with racist social media posts, the National FFA Organization has not explicitly and unequivocally renounced their white supremacy problem.

Statement of the Problem

Action needs to be taken to genuinely include our members of color in the conversation surrounding agricultural education. We start by listening to the stories our former student leaders tell and sharing their experiences of identity development and assimilation in our state FFA programs for reflection and future improvements. Specifically looking within the youth leadership organization of agricultural education- FFA- authentic feelings of engagement are rare for Latinx members.

Significance of the Study

In the agricultural education profession, a distinct lack of research exists prioritizing the voices of the underserved population at its center. Currently, research speaks about multiculturalism in agricultural education but stories directly from the mouths of students are slim (Roberts et al, 2009; Rodriguez & Lamm, 2016; Velez, et al., 2018; Vincent & Torres, 2015). The exploration of the experiences of Latinx members

involved in the FFA organization is limited among the agricultural education profession. Prior research about Latinx/ Hispanic youth looks at the involvement of high school students in three different programs in Texas (Roberts et. al, 2009), the perceptions of rural as opposed to urban privilege in one agriculture program (Elliot & Lambert, 2018), and the decision to enroll in an agricultural college and undergraduate program (Faulkner et al., 2009; Vincent et al., 2012).

The limited amount of research in the field is evidence that further studies are needed to expand literature surrounding Latinx members. Now more than ever, students of color need teachers to advocate for them among their peers, co-teachers, and administration. Hearing their lived experiences, understanding their multi-layered oppressions, and doing something about it is how educators best serve them.

Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to understand the multiple forms of racism in agricultural education that indirectly force our Latinx members to assimilate to the dominant (white) culture and the culture of success that permeates within assimilated Latinx leaders.

Answering the following questions is necessary for future positive identity development and social engagement within our Latinx and Hispanic student population:

1. What unspoken practices of leadership offices in the FFA exist and reinforce racial inequalities particularly among Latinx youth leaders?
2. How do Latinx state FFA leaders respond to these practices and their need to assimilate?

3. How can agriculture education and the FFA work to eliminate these inequalities and perceptions of assimilation?

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) analyzes race, racism, and other forms of oppression in the lives of people of color in order to disrupt these oppressive conditions between dominant and marginalized racial groups within the education system in the United States. CRT holds five central tenets (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017), which include:

1. The permanence of race and racism in society;
2. The challenge to dominant ideologies, specifically neo-liberalism in educational institutions;
3. The creation and manipulation of racial categories by the dominant group for their own benefit;
4. The racialization of minorities according to the needs of the dominant group;
5. The importance of experiential knowledge, specifically with counter-storytelling.

Critical race theory uncovers the ingrained social inequalities of our education system and challenges the status-quo of privilege and oppression for our students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical Race Theory centralizes the voices of students of color who experience oppressive conditions and works to challenge the dominant ideologies, specifically those surrounding a need for immigrant assimilation, that perpetuate these conditions. By using the fifth tenet of CRT, counter-storytelling, experiences of our

students of color can be authentically explored. Counter-stories serve as personal narratives from people of color that speak on their lived experiences dealing with their identity and living in a white space (Hiraldo, 2010; Huber, 2008). DeCuir and Dixson (2004) state that counter-stories are a resource that "both expose and critique the dominant (male, white, heterosexual) ideology, which perpetuates racial stereotypes." Counter-stories assist us in analyzing the culture of the youth leadership organization and provide ways to help agricultural education programs become genuinely inclusive rather than simply superficially diverse (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Critical race theorists used counter-stories to critique the idea of immigrants needing to assimilate to American culture for future generational success, defending such criticisms with the second and fourth tenets of CRT. Researchers have long established that white society uses the idea of assimilation to "discipline" and teach immigrants how to "behave" in their white society, particularly teaching the ideas of submissiveness and English-only assimilation (Lash, 2018). Latinx immigrants face psychological violence, discrimination, and obstacles that affect their identity from a young age (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

School teachers, of whom eighty percent are white (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2016), are unaware, unprepared, and/or unwilling to address the specific needs of their Latinx students when it comes to healthy identity development. Without the development of their cultural identity, Latinx students are left torn between choosing to embrace their culture at home and being left behind in school and dismissing their roots and potentially succeeding in school (Marx, 2008; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Looking at the assimilation of Latinx leaders in the FFA could provide a tool for educators and policy-makers to

begin looking at the structures and policies that force this internal cultural divide within our students in agricultural education.

Other studies that focus on Latinx students in agricultural education do not use Critical Race Theory as the foundation that drives the study, nor do they use counter-storytelling to aid in these discussions of assimilation. Researchers in this profession currently focus on engagement or disengagement of marginalized youth and outline some barriers— teacher engagement, parent involvement, and peer opinion— to recruitment and retention (Barajas et al., 2020; Jones & Bowen, 1998; Roberts et al., 2009). This thesis aims to fill this research gap and gain a greater understanding of Latinos' need to assimilate to fully engage in their extracurricular leadership roles. Through a CRT worldview, identification of the larger relationships between race, racism, and power in the classroom and in youth leadership organizations can begin to occur in the agricultural education profession and with agricultural educators. Specifically using the intersections of Critical Race Theory and assimilation literature, counter-stories of the current population of Latinx student leaders previously enrolled in their state FFA association will be explored. This thesis centers on the experiences of members who are developing their identity in an organization (FFA) where the dominant culture is different from their own.

Limitations

This research examined the experiences of Latinx and Hispanic members and their experiences as leaders within the FFA organization. Results of this study are limited to student members of an agricultural education youth leadership organization (FFA) in

three different states-- California, Texas, and Arizona. Efforts were made to include leaders from New Mexico, but due to a lack of responses, contact was discontinued. The research cautions the use of these findings for inference to other populations and in other states. Participants in this study identified as Hispanic and/or Latinx and had been involved in some capacity with their state FFA association within the past five years. Research may not be generalizable to other state associations or age groups.

Definitions of Terms

Latinx- a gender-neutral term for people of Latin American descent; used interchangeably with Latino/Latina/Latin@; an ethnic group.

Hispanic- a term for Spanish-speaking people from a Spanish-speaking country; an ethnic group.

Race- a social concept; physical differences that groups consider socially significant; transformed by social, economic, and political forces

Ethnicity- shared culture such as language, ancestry, practices, beliefs

FFA- a youth leadership organization in agricultural education; formerly known to stand for Future Farmers of America, now officially known as the National FFA Organization.

Assimilation- the act of minority groups and/or individuals taking on the characteristics, mannerisms, and traditions of the dominant group. Assimilation can be seen through language attainment, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, use of slang, dress and style, outward appearances, geographic distribution, intermarriage, hobbies, extracurricular activities, and other traits.

White- European Americans; the dominant social group in society and in the agricultural youth organization known as the FFA.

Nom Com- Short for Nominating Committee; usually implied to be at the state level but can be used for national, regional, or local elections. The nominating committee is a group of student and adult staff members that are in charge of the officer elections. Nom Com makes the decision of who gets elected to a certain position or who gets slated against each other for certain positions.

National officer- a leader in the FFA organization at the national level; this is the highest-ranking leadership position in the FFA organization; only six are elected to serve each year (four from each region of the country and two overall). This is a highly coveted position in the FFA organization by students and members.

State officer- an elected leader in the state FFA organization who is usually in their freshman year of college or senior year of high school. State officer teams range from six leaders to twelve leaders; they represent their state FFA associations; they're the second-highest ranking leadership officers behind national officers.

Regional/ district/ area officer- interchangeable in this thesis. Varying in names, these leaders represent a single region, a single district, or a single area in their state. States can be made up of a multitude of different regions/districts/areas depending on their population; these leaders have the third highest-ranking leadership positions behind national and state-level positions.

Chapter officer- a leader at the local level, usually at the high school or middle school level. This is the lowest-level of leadership position as each chapter has six to ten chapter officers.

State-officer game- Members of the FFA organization recognize the political game behind running for state and national office. In order to be elected, a member must play “the state officer game” in which peer status, ag advisor connections, and general success in the FFA program is required to be taken seriously as a candidate. The game is often started at the beginning of their high school career and students are seen as “winners” of the game when they are elected to state or national office. Usually required characteristics are excellent public speaking skills, multiple awards in CDE and LDE competitions, status from a regional officer position, and a deep understanding of the FFA association.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Designing this project started with the foundational theories of Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory. The overarching goal of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is to understand the oppressive aspects of society and work to alter them on an individual as well as societal basis. At its formulation in the 1970s, CRT was a critique of racism within the legal system with an expansion into evaluating all aspects of people of color's lives (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). In the 1990s, scholars began to apply CRT to education to examine curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment methods equitable for all students (Haskins and Singh, 2015). Scholars ultimately aim to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power. There are five core principles of Critical Race Theory:

1. *The permanence of race and racism in society*. Racism is permanently ingrained in the legal system, culture, and individual psychology. It intersects with sex, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation. This principle asserts that institutional racism results in a loss of power and voice in some groups, and the intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities can generate further alienation (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

2. *The challenge to dominant ideologies, specifically neo-liberalism in educational institutions.* This principle challenges the dominant ideology that the education system is race neutral and provides equal opportunities to all students (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Bell, 1995) Research shows that race-neutral or color-blind policies only harm communities of color and further advance the power-dynamics of white people versus people of color (Gillborn, 2005).

3. *The creation and manipulation of racial categories by the dominant group for their own benefit.* Whites have been historically notorious for this trait, dating back to early modern European thought. The concept of race benefits light-skinned European-Americans and intends to make "others" feel marginalized for having dark skin, curly hair, different diets, etc. (Ladson-Billings, 1998; James 2010).

4. *The racialization of minorities according to the needs of the dominant group*. Since he age of European imperialism, whites have determined the treatment of non-white people at their convenience. Some examples include: the ostracization of Asians during World War II and the violent marginalization of Middle-Easterners after 9/11 that continues today. (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

5. T*he importance of experiential knowledge, specifically with counter-storytelling*. A commitment to social justice for people of color in the form of sharing one's experiences as an act of empowerment and coping. (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

Critical Race Theory

In Agricultural Education

Although Latinos are regularly classified as the highest growing subpopulation in the United States (Schaeffer, 2019) minimal research has been done on the Latinx experience in agricultural education. Of the studies that have been conducted in the agricultural education profession, only two research teams have used Latino Critical Theory, or LatCrit, as a method for helping to identify barriers for Latinos in agricultural

education. The two studies outlined below are Elliot & Lambert's 2018 study "Urban and Rural Latino Students' Experiences in Agricultural Education: Toward Defining Rural Privilege" and Barajas, Crump, Vincent & McCubbins's 2020 study titled "¡Somos Nosotros!: Lived experiences of Latinx ELL youth enrolled in secondary agricultural education."

In Elliott and Lambert's study (2018), LatCrit is used as a lens for examining Latinx experiences in their agricultural education programs. Elliott and Lambert use a mixed-methods approach to identify "inequities students perceive in their respective agricultural education programs between rural and non-rural students" (p. 198). The research team had three major findings revolving around the concept of rural privilege. First, urban students, primarily Latino, did not have the same understanding of agriculture and agricultural education as their rural counterparts, primarily white students. The second finding shows that a "lack of privileged information presents a barrier to access, enrollment, and involvement in secondary agricultural education programs" (p. 204). Third, students from non-rural backgrounds tend to "report fewer opportunities and more barriers to fully actualizing the three-circle model" (p. 205). Ultimately, the researchers use LatCrit to argue that white, rural privilege should be a major concern for agricultural educators if they wish to foster true equity among our students and limit barriers to entry as experienced by Latinx students. The researchers clearly reference the pillars of CRT to counteract the currently shallow "equal access to all" mentality that shapes the agricultural education profession.

In the 2020 article "¡Somos Nosotros!", the research team looks at Latinx English language learners in secondary agricultural education classes. They use LatCrit as a

means to understand the dynamic between English-Language-Learners and their ag teachers and their ag peers. The research team found that Latinx English-Language-Learners are disproportionately isolated from their peers; and though they have relatively good relationships to their agriculture teacher, they have non-existent relationships to their white, English-speaking ag classmates. The research team outlined pedagogical approaches to teaching that incorporate English-language comprehension and highlighted steps to give voice to their ELL youth.

In Education

The relationship between race, racism, and power is in our classrooms and felt by our students; CRT and LatCrit can be used as a tool to combat this. The studies outlined below show critical race theory in the classroom.

In DeCuir and Dixson's article (2004), "'So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there': using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education", the researchers use qualitative methods to analyze the experiences of minority youth at an elite, predominately white independent high school. By uncovering the stories of these minority youth, DeCuir and Dixson provide educators and researchers strategies to counteract covert racist practices and policies that affect the education of underserved students across the United States. They emphasize the importance of the five tenets of CRT and explicate how this theory can be used as a tool in educational research (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Not only can CRT be used as a tool in educational research but Taylor (2006), argues for the use of CRT in educational programs to assist ESL learners. Taylor states that if ESL students can undergo antiracism education not only will it help with their

English language learning, but it can support their "intersectional and multilevel understandings of discrimination" (Taylor, 2006, p. 519). Taylor finds eight in ten ESL learners defined discrimination as individual overt bigotry—as only the horrifying acts one might see in the news. Providing antiracism education to these immigrant youth opens their eyes to the systemic discrimination they are facing and addresses ways to combat this. CRT can also be used to help these students with their social identity as it has to do with their national identity, cultural citizenship, and linguistic competency (p. 539). By helping these students find their place in the national discourse, these students not only further their English language development but become more engaged in school, with their peers, and with their educators.

Vaught and Castagno's (2008) use a qualitative design to uncover the attitudes and perceptions of white teachers at a heavily diverse high school where the racial achievement gap is high. Teachers from these high schools were sent to anti-racist and anti-bias trainings. The researchers employ the first and second tenets of CRT to analyze teachers' reactions and responses to the trainings, highlighting the importance of these tenets similarly to DeCuir and Dixson. One of their findings is teachers at the high schools view racism as an individual threat—teachers are only racist when they participate in overt bigotry therefore these trainings were perceived as useless. The tenets of CRT contradict the teachers' responses; racism can be an individual threat, but in education policy and in our schools, racism is more often a structural threat (Decuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 30). The researchers urge schools towards structural transformation because raising individual awareness cannot serve as the remedy for the racial achievement gap. The fundamentals of CRT can and should be employed in our

education systems. By changing the curriculum, policies, and attitudes of our educational leaders, our system can begin to work for all students, including the ones who need it the most.

Multicultural Education

So how do we begin this daunting project? Besides using CRT as an analytic tool, teachers can start by becoming advocates of multicultural education. Research teams have long-been stressing the importance of teacher preparation for our diverse student groups. Schmitt and Bender, two professors at Virginia Tech and Ohio State respectively, addressed this in the 1971 volume of the *Agricultural Education Magazine*. Their article *Teacher preparation for the culturally different* provides ten premises to serve as the foundation for preparing ag educators who serve minorities (p. 286). Among those ten premises, the researchers highlight the need for minority agricultural educators, professional teacher preparation, early involvement with minority children, and student-oriented curriculum. These foundations, the researchers claim, will ensure equitable opportunities for success of all children in ag courses, which they say is the "deepest and truest goal to be conceived by the American people" (p. 283).

For educators that aim to provide equitable classroom environments, including those focused on diversity in agricultural education, André J. Branch (2005) provides a review of the literature in multicultural education. "Practicing multicultural education: answering recurring questions about what it is (not)" goes in depth about the importance of multicultural education (ME), who ME is designed for, composition of curriculum under ME, and relevancy of ME in the hard sciences. Branch and his driving theorist,

Banks (1997), argue that today's teachers are required to do much more than basic concepts but instead are tasked with creating and informing students of their role in improving the world (p. 145). To teach students most effectively, educators must become aware of race issues in the world and in their classroom. Educators must have a thorough understanding of multicultural education to support students of all backgrounds. Hard science educators, like those that teach agricultural sciences in high school, can maintain the integrity of the subject, while still making the content relevant to the lived experiences of the students in the class (Branch, 2005). Branch emphasizes interdisciplinary curriculum and social-action for all teachers concerned about multicultural education or about serving the needs of every student.

According to Vincent and Torres (2015), teachers with diverse student populations are perceived by their students and through self-reflection as more culturally competent than those who have no diversity in their classrooms (Vincent & Torres, 2015). Thus, they urge teacher educator programs to prepare students to become multiculturally competent teachers, so they have a high chance of success once they enter the classroom. Some methods to do this would be to provide preservice teachers with immersion experiences into different cultures or to spend observation hours in ethnically diverse classrooms (2015). As schools become more and more diverse, it is imperative that agricultural educators enter the classroom with knowledge of how to best serve minority youths.

Ford, Scott, Moore and Amos (2013) examine the prejudices faced by culturally different students. Like Vincent and Torres, they provide methods for teachers to reflect and implement in their classrooms to enhance their cultural competency. The researchers

focus specifically on gifted students and microaggressions, but many of their methods intersect with those outlined by Vincent and Torres. Weight is placed on teachers participating in comprehensive multicultural development sooner rather than later (Vincent & Torres, 2015).

Rodriguez and Lamm (2016) examine the colorblind racial attitudes toward undocumented immigrants in a College of Agriculture. Their research showed that colorblindness was a significant predictor of less favorable attitudes towards undocumented immigrants. They argue for multicultural education instead of a colorblind education. Multiculturalism influences how students behave towards diverse people, usually in a more open-minded manner. Colorblindness was seen to keep racial separations, not break them down. Colorblindness, they claim, can "hinder learning, limit members' sense of self and overall group efficacy, and can prevent the success of an organization" (Rodriguez & Lamm, 2016, p. 45). Although participants' answers were contradictory at times, seen through the lens of social cognitive theory, these contradictions confirmed that students had stereotypical perceptions of diversity. Colorblindness maintains prejudice views and enhances racial bias; educators and policy-makers must start enforcing a multicultural mindset. Further research should be conducted to further examine the social cognitive theory among students who have been raised with colorblindness versus those with a multicultural background.

Engagement

With CRT and multicultural education in their back pockets, educators have begun to ask questions regarding how to engage and motivate Latinx youth in the

classroom. With ethnically-diverse students already enrolled in agricultural education, teachers and researchers have begun to identify various methods of engagement. Motivation and engagement for Latinx youth has been a topic of interest as they have been enrolling in our school systems at higher rates in the past 20 years (Fuligni, 2008). Researchers have found various motivational factors for Latinx students to be engaged in school. Among them, caring teachers, strong community support, and family ties are the most frequently found factors of motivation for Latinx students (Fuligni, 2008).

Caring Teachers

When it comes to defining "caring teachers", Faircloth (2012) researches teachers of ninth-grade English students at a high-needs high school. The teachers help the students connect their "street-smart" identity with their "book-smart" identity. Faircloth argues that developing a sense of belonging is essential to student/ teacher engagement. Failure to construct meaningful learning environments leads to a silencing of student voices and a disengagement from the class. Faircloth develops strategies to support connections between identity and learning. Learning is about gaining a space in the classroom that matches what students believe they have to offer. Faircloth uses "cultural modeling" as a strategy to blend both street and book-smarts in the classroom. Another strategy is "third space/ hybrid identities"; these spaces are the intersection between personal perspectives with the values of school, which can be developed by tapping into student's funds-of-knowledge. Other findings that prove to be successful strategies include reading literature from authors that match the demographics of the school, making discussions personally relevant to the students, reviewing rock music instead of traditional book reviews, among other strategies. These strategies help at-risk youth feel

more engaged in the coursework, identify with the subjects, and feel less like they are "wearing a mask" at school. Teachers who want to authentically engage with their students beyond the standardized curriculum are examples of caring teachers who inspire motivation to succeed in Latinx students.

Garza (2009) researches the different perceptions Latinx and white students have about what defines "caring behavior" from their teachers. Past studies either state that students of color encounter too many uncaring teachers or that teachers are caring but not in ways that relate to Latinx students. Caring behaviors create a sense of belonging within students; this leads to building relationships, increasing motivation to engage in the classroom, and ultimately creating a significant effect on academic performance. Garza's (2009) study found a significant difference between Latinx and white students' perceptions. Latinx students thought caring behavior occurred when their teacher provided "scaffolding during a teaching episode" and provided "affective academic support in the classroom setting" (p. 311). White students described caring behaviors as when their teacher's "actions reflected a kind disposition" and when they were "always available to the student" (p. 316). Actions like Faircloth's (2012) article align with the findings presented in Garza (2009). When teachers can provide academic support and authentically engage with Latinx students' culture, the classroom and learning environment improves for both parties.

Another example of this, Dixson, Keltner, Worrell, and Mello (2018), discover that a student's level of hope can mediate the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement (AA). Through a 2018 study of 600 adolescents aged 11-18, the researchers conducted quantitative methods to test if low SES students who

had low AA could improve their AA through increased levels of hope. The researchers found that low SES students who had high AA had high hope levels. Hope is defined in this article as having envisioned paths to goals and having the motivation to accomplish those goals. Increased hope may affect low-SES students by “broadening the possibilities they perceive as reasonably likely” (p. 512) thus increasing the students’ ability to envision and achieve their goals. If teachers are able to increase hope in socioeconomically disadvantaged students, academic achievement could begin to increase for these students. Many minority students who underachieve, Latinos included, come from low SES households—if teachers care and foster growth in their students' hope levels, the benefits would greatly improve the academic and social lives of our ethnically-diverse populations.

Strong Community Support

The second main factor that positively motivates Latinx youth is a strong sense of community support. Potochnick, Perreira, and Fuligni (2012) researched the psychological well-being of Latinx youth in rural and suburban North Carolina and compared their experiences to those of Latinx youth in Los Angeles. They focused on the process of acculturation for these youths and what kind of difference discrimination and social acceptance have on these three different populations. Research indicated that Latinx youth are at increased risk to face discrimination, but through family connections, ethnic ties, and social support, these stressors are minimized. Immigrant youth success, therefore, depends on many factors based on social reception. Because Latinx immigrants historically migrate to Los Angeles, Latinx youth are much more segregated with other Latinx immigrants in California; whereas, in North Carolina, the opportunity of

integration and interracial contact between Latinos and whites is much higher. Researchers found higher levels of both positive and negative daily psychological well-being among NC youth compared to LA youth. NC youth were more likely to be foreign-born than LA youth and NC youth were more likely to be happy and also to experience depressive symptoms. Because NC immigrant youth were smaller in population, the Latinx immigrant community was tight-knit. Immigrant youth in LA make up a higher percentage of the population and their sense of community comes from the high number of immigrants in the city. Ethnic identification reduced negative feelings and family identification promoted happiness (Potochnick et al., 2012). This sense of ethnically identifying with a community and having strong support within it can help Latinx youth in high schools feel happier, more grounded, and more likely to succeed.

Motivation from strong community support can be seen as a driving factor for Latinx youth engagement in Bloomberg, Ganey, Alba, Quintero, and Alcantara's (2003) article. In their research, they conducted a Chicano-Latino youth leadership institute (ChYLI) in one high school in southern Minnesota. ChYLI's mission is "to encourage, empower, and develop leadership skills and qualities in Chicano-Latino youth" (p. S46). Fifty applicants were chosen out of a pool to participate in the leadership program and researchers gained their data through written surveys, focus group interviews, reflection forms, and follow-up questionnaires. This mixed-methods approach wanted to determine if this leadership institute, with its roots in community service and personal development, could positively affect the lives of its participants by increasing graduation rates, increasing college enrollment rates, decreasing alcohol and substance use, and increasing the number of role models available to the Chicano-Latino community. At the time of

publication, the leadership institute had positively impacted over 200 high school graduates, significantly improved peer relationships, and increased levels of community service. With programs and educators willing to increase involvement of Latinx youth within the community, thus creating strong community bonds, Latinx youth not only graduate at a higher rate than before, but they enroll in college at higher rates, build networks with other Chicano-Latino leaders, and prevent abuse of alcohol and other substances (2003).

Family Ties

The third factor that plays a major role on Latinx youth motivation is family influence. Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy (2006) looked at the literature surrounding parental control in Latinx families to write an integrated review. In their review, the researchers found Latinx parents have three culturally-based goals when it comes to raising their children: *familismo* (familism), *respeto* (respect), and *educación* (education). *Familismo* refers to the desire to maintain strong family ties and the "feeling of loyalty to the family" (p. 1285). *Respeto* is "the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relationships" (p. 1286) through respect for self and others inside and outside of the family. Educación although translated to "education" means more than the English definition suggests; *educación* not only refers to the academic education of a child but the training of morality and interpersonal relationships with characteristics like "politeness, respectfulness, and responsibility" (p. 1286). Because so much of the literature shows Latinx parents focus on education in both academic and social sense of the word, researchers and educators know that family can motivate students to achieve in school.

In Jeannette Abi-Nader's (1990) article, "'A house for my mother': Motivating Hispanic high school students", she conducts an ethnographic study of a program in a northeastern part of the United States that had a successful program specific to minority students. In undergoing this study, she came to find three major themes about what motivated Hispanic high school students: (a) an educator's ability to help the students create a vision for the future, (b) the program's ability to help students redefine their low self-concept, and (c) building a supportive community. Ultimately, she found that Hispanic students wanted a successful future to support and provide for not just the rest of their community, but especially to provide for their mothers. When educators can tap into these family ties, motivation to succeed in school and become leaders surges in our Latinx and Hispanic youth.

Extracurriculars

Along with working with Latinx students inside of the classroom, another key to success for students is participation in extracurricular activities. Roberts, Hall, Briers, Gill, Shinn, Larke, and Jaure (2009) develop a three-year case study of engaging Hispanic students in agricultural education and the FFA. They argue the importance of sustaining leadership for the agricultural industry by ensuring the "face of agricultural education mirror[s] diversity from the national level to local communities and schools" (p. 69). Agricultural teachers at three different high schools made sure to engage the opinion leaders of the Latinx community in hopes of recruiting and maintaining membership numbers among the Latinx population. Over the course of three years, not only did Latinx membership increase but the number of Latinx members becoming

officers and engaging in more opportunities increased, too. Student participation in agricultural education and in FFA was due to meaningful engagement with the program, high opinions of FFA from their peers, personal aspirations, and recognition. Because students bought into the program and their FFA chapter, Hispanic students increasingly enrolled and stayed in agricultural education.

This theme reoccurs in Masumoto and Brown-Welty's (2009) qualitative study as well. The researchers looked into three different high-performing, high-poverty, rural high schools in California. The schools were impacted by poverty, many non-English speaking students, and limited resources. Masumoto and Brown-Welty found that a strong focus on instruction and standards, strength of teachers, and development of community support systems were the keys to these schools' success. In all three areas, the high school was identified as the center of the community and the relationship was two-sided. The high school incorporated their community heavily in curriculum, within sports teams, and in the FFA program; and the community businesses and figureheads would donate their time, effort, and money for these students and their programs as well. Because of how engaged the FFA program was in the community, these Latinx ESL students had bought into the importance of the program as did their non-English speaking parents.

Peguero (2011) researches the differences in extracurricular involvement among first, second, and third generation Latinx and Asian-American high-schoolers. Extracurricular involvement is seen as a positive marker for student success, but Peguero's study outlines the difference immigrant generational status can have on the involvement of immigrant youth. Peguero surveyed Latino, Asian, and white tenth grade

students in public high schools. First generation Latinx students were less likely than white students to be involved in academic school-based extracurricular activities. Second generation Latinx students and onwards were just as likely as white students to join an academic extracurricular. First and second generation Asian American students were more likely than Latinx and white students to join academic extracurricular activities, but involvement drastically dropped off after the third generation. With regard to sports school-based extracurricular activities, first generation Latinos were less likely than whites to join a sport, second generation Latinos were as likely as whites, and third generation Latinos were more likely than white students to join a sports team. First and second generation Asian American students were less likely to be involved in sports. The educational experience of immigrant youth is defined by race, ethnicity, and generational status; extracurricular activity involvement can help these youths find success in high school.

Velez, Clement, and McKim (2018) research the participation of school-based agricultural education (SBAE) according to white, black, and Latinx students and how this participation later affects their income level. They explore ethnicity and sex by varying levels of participation in SBAE—i.e., participant and officer. They gauge the involvement of 15,300 participants across the United States. They had three major findings. Black and Hispanic males have low involvement in SBAE, but those that are involved increasingly become officers in these SBAE clubs. Seventy percent of white males enroll in SBAE but assume officer roles at lower rates. Black and Hispanic females enroll at high rates into SBAE but rarely serve officer roles. White females participate in SBAE at high rates and of those white females a large percentage (90%) become officers.

These findings can be supported by the relationship between the participation rate and leadership Mullen, Salas, and Driskell (1989) find in their article “Salience, motivation, and artifact as contributions to the relation between participation rate and leadership”.

They demonstrate that typically the individual with the highest level of verbal participation is chosen as the leader of the group (p. 545). If white females in SBAE are among the most popular demographic to become leaders in their FFA chapter, then it is likely that they are the ones most involved in the program. Not only are they the most involved, but the rest of the membership sees them as heavily involved and may elect them to leadership positions without knowing about their leadership capabilities. Mullen and Salas claim this as one of the biggest downfalls in the relationship between participation rate and leadership (p. 556). Because ethnic minorities are the least likely to participate in SBAE (Velez et al., 2018), according to Mullen and Salas their election to leadership roles is less likely to occur. If minorities do get elected to positions of leadership, it is because these ethnic minorities are salient members of the “ingroup”, i.e., they are heavy participators of the group and have been for a long period of time—in this case that group would be FFA.

Leadership

Let’s dive deeper into this idea of an ingroup—specifically the ingroup of a youth leadership organization like the FFA. Social identity theory states that an individual’s knowledge of themselves depends on the social group they belong to (Hogg, 2001). Regardless of whatever group the individual is a part of, the individual will favor their

own group relative to outgroups (Hornsey, 2008). Although there are varying levels of power, every organization has an ingroup and outgroup—members that have a lot of influence and members that are barely, if at all, considered a part of the group. Social identity theory acknowledges that groups "occupy different levels of a hierarchy of status and power" (Hornsey, 2008, p. 207). When it comes to members electing leaders, those that are a part of the in-group are seen to be more fit for leadership roles than those in the outgroup (Hogg, 2001). Members in a group determine who is a part of each group through self-categorization theory (SCT).

SCT characterizes one's identity as operating at different levels of inclusiveness; those levels include human identity, social identity, and personal identity (Hornsey, 2008). The greater levels of inclusivity in each of those identities the more likely that individual will be seen as part of the ingroup. Categories within each group maximize *intragroup* similarities and *intergroup* differences—this further establishes the "us" versus "them" mentality. Because of this mentality, SCT argues that people become depersonalized, meaning people see themselves and other group members less as individuals and more as interchangeable group prototypes (Hornsey, 2008). From this perspective, "people are influential within groups to the extent that they embody the prototypical attitudes, behaviors, and values of the group" (Hornsey, 2008, p. 211).

Prototypes become the leaders of the group; nontraditional group members, or members of the outgroup, are hardly ever seen as being capable leaders. Because of how salient the leadership pool is, every member with hopes of one day being a leader will depersonalize themselves to fit the leader prototype established (Rush & Russell, 1988). SCT and SIT explain why ethnic minorities rarely hold officer roles at any level of the

FFA. Even in states like California or Texas, where ethnic minorities make up a large sum of the membership, the prototype of a leader (usually white, male, wealthy) has been well established in the state with little hope of nontraditional or outgroup members being elected to those leadership positions (Rush & Russell; 1988).

So, what do minority students do to become a salient member of the in-group? Past research will show us that individuals in the minority will assimilate to behaviors and attitudes reflected by the majority. Simply put, they assimilate. Arturo Vega (2006) refers to it as "Americanizing" (p. 39) and provides insight to the growing influence of U.S. Latinos and their attitudes and perceptions of issues about identity, political party, family values, and immigration. His article is in response to another article entitled "The Hispanic Challenge" in which the author argued that the growing invasion of Hispanics was threatening and changing our county. Vega's (2006) findings suggest 20% of U.S. Latinos identify as "American", do not trust the government (52%), favor a more active government (64%), and believe undocumented immigrants help the U.S. economy (75%) (p. 45-46). However, Vega (2006) found that Latinos differ substantially by generation. Second and third generation Latinos are more likely to identity as Americans, favor smaller governments and less taxes, and fewer believe in amnesty for undocumented immigrants (Vega, 2006, p. 51). Knowing that U.S. Latinos through the generations are assimilating to the dominant culture in the U.S., educators should be concerned about the levels of assimilation their students must conform too. Although assimilation isn't an inherently bad thing, its long-term effects decrease creative thought, individualism, and can hinder self-esteem.

Dane White (2019) speaks of assimilation's negative effects on a current student leader of a youth organization in California. He speaks about prototype-based leadership—"prototypicality fosters a culture where those less like the prototype will make greater strides to assimilate; in effect changing who they are to become more like the mold" (White, 2019, para. 6). He continues to tell the story of a Latinx male student who upon realizing he did not fit the mold of a student leader his freshmen year proceeded to strip himself of anything that made him the "outgroup" to ensure he would be seen by others as an "ingroup" member. Again, prototypicality and assimilation are not inherently bad and can in fact be used to foster good traits such as kindness and respectfulness, but we run into a problem when it asks students to give up their cultural identity. If it has happened to this particular student, it has undoubtedly happened to many others who wish to fit the prototype of the organization they are a part of.

In fact, research tells us it does. Pfeffer (1977) shows us how individuals define leadership is too ambiguous for its own good. In his article appropriately titled "*The ambiguity of leadership*", Pfeffer discusses the ambiguity of the concept of leadership and how there is not a clear definition of a leader, but individuals will claim to know a leader when they see one. Pfeffer argues that this promotes prototypicality and that selection processes often increase homogeneity within an organization. Organizations have their own culture, images, and stereotypes which all provide information about the organization's character, Individuals will put themselves into the organization if they can see themselves working alongside the other individuals in that organization (Nye & Forsyth, 1991; Pfeffer, 1977) Because individuals within an organization share the same biases of successful leaders (Nye & Forsyth, 1991), the selection of leaders and

successors of an organization is limited to those who match this constructed image of a leader. Nye and Forsyth tested 92 male and 84 female individuals to see if they would vote for a leader that matched the prototype of a leader for that organization. The researchers used leadership categorization theory as their fundamental framework; and they found that both males and females voted along the prototypicality lines and males tended to base their ratings on prototypes more than the females did.

Conclusion

Other studies that focus on Latinx students in agricultural education do not use Latino Critical Theory as the foundation that drives the study. Researchers currently focus on engagement or disengagement of Latinx youth and outline some barriers— teacher engagement, parent involvement, peer opinion— to entry and retention (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Through my studies, I hope to gain a greater understanding of Latinos need to assimilate in order to be fully engaged in their extracurricular leadership roles. Through a LatCrit worldview, researchers can begin identifying the larger relationships between race, racism, and power in the classroom and in youth leadership organizations that would lead to systematic change instead of small, incremental adaptations for agricultural educators. Specifically using the intersections of Critical Race Theory, social identity theory, and leadership categorization theories, I will look at the current population of Latinx students enrolled in agricultural education and how they have had to assimilate to the dominant culture in order to be considered a leader of the "ingroup" of FFA.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research works to answer the "why" behind a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Whereas quantitative research measures the extent to which a phenomenon occurs, qualitative research asks questions of participants that can answer *why*. In my study, I examine why student Latinx leaders in an agricultural youth organization are disproportionately underrepresented in their respective states. I analyze why Latinx leaders feel the need to assimilate to their white peers and why they believe this assimilation is the key to their success in the secondary agricultural youth organization referred to subsequently as the FFA organization. In accordance with Yin (2018), a case study design approach was used in this study-- I interviewed participants one-on-one asking the same questions about Latinx student assimilation.

Qualitative Study

I return to high school agricultural education where 98% of teachers and 80% of students are white and classes revolve around animal, plant, veterinary, environmental, and food sciences (The National Council for Agricultural Education, 2015). Based upon perception, men in the profession are traditional farmers teaching agricultural mechanics and most women excel at selling leadership opportunities to members who look just like them. Surprisingly, border states where 30% of the state's population is of Latin American descent can be described similarly to non-border states. Although the field of agricultural education ascribes to a dominantly white culture, my specific research area

will focus on Latinx youth and their experiences as leaders in an organization that disproportionately marginalizes them.

I conducted a case study via virtual interviews with past regional and state FFA officers in three different states: Arizona, California, and Texas. Those states were explicitly chosen because each state population has at least 30% of its population from Hispanic/ Latino origin (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). New Mexico is an additional state that meets these criteria; but after two efforts to include them in the study with no response, further contact was ceased.

Researcher's Role and Reflexivity

My perceptions of agricultural education have been shaped by my personal experiences. As a first-generation Mexican-American growing up in central California, my parents were unsurprisingly not on board with my engaging in agricultural education classes in high school. Both had previous jobs as farm-workers and expected the same fate from me if I continued with the agricultural education program in Galt, California. My eighth-grade teacher's wife (Mr. and Mrs. Reece) was an agriculture teacher at the high school I would soon be attending; he encouraged me to enroll in an agriculture education class with promises of future scholarships, college opportunities, and later career possibilities. Though my parents associated anything agriculture-related with farm-working, I associated it with something I could find success in if I was committed enough. Despite their precautions, I enrolled in agricultural education for all four years and emerged as a leader in my hometown and among my peers. At a four-year university, I continued to study agricultural economics with a later focus on agricultural education.

Although I was clearly an outlier in the agricultural profession—Mexican, female, working class—I developed an on-going relationship with agricultural education, ups and downs included, and was curious to see if others felt similarly. In my research, I am looking at a population that looks similar to me: Latin American descent engaged in a youth leadership organization focused on agricultural education. However, various intersections of similarities and differences do exist between myself and my future participants, leading most in the profession to label me as a "native" or "insider" in regard to Latinx members. However, like Narayan and Visweswaran state, even the most "native" or "insider" researchers cannot know everything about their own society (1993; 1994). My own experience of being a Latina in agriculture is viewed through the lens of being an older sister to a light-skinned brother and dark-skinned sister, of spending half of my holidays in the U.S. and in Mexico, of going to a K-8 school next door to a dairy farm, among other lived experiences. My life is uniquely my own and though I have some knowledge of what it means to be Mexican in America, I cannot claim to be an expert of all Latinos and certainly not those living in states different than my own, with ethnicities that vary, and homes made up of people I do not know. To say that I am an insider to a group that represents 30% of the state's population is foolish. These intersecting identities can be seen as commonalities and as limitations when engaging with this subgroup of members and FFA leaders. My research is not here as the objective truth for all Hispanic/ Latino members, but it is a subjective telling of stories that will hopefully enlighten the reader into understanding that whatever you may think is the objective truth of agricultural education is *not*.

Due to my previous involvement working closely within the secondary agricultural leadership organization known as the FFA organization, I bring certain understandings to this project. I think FFA and agricultural education is too competitive, too focused on professionalism defined by white ideals, and too uncompromising when it comes to accepting members of color.-

Although efforts will be made to ensure participants' voices are at the forefront of the study, these understandings shape the way I view and understand the data I collect. My understandings enhance my awareness of the structures of the FFA organization while simultaneously working to interpret the stories and emotions of student participants. Sensitivity to the challenges and issues encountered as a Latinx leader in the FFA is enhanced through these personal understandings. Ultimately, the stories and voices of the participants will be better understood not through an "objective" point of view, but through the eyes of someone who can deeply empathize with those who have encountered similar experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

The purpose of this project is to understand the experiences of Latinx student leaders in the FFA organization. I am working with underrepresented minorities and their experiences with racial disparities during their secondary education and will be using a case-study approach that looks to find patterns among these participants. Bernard (2017) lays out important steps to take before, during, and after semi-structured interviews in a case-study design. I will follow his procedures throughout this study.

To gather a set of student participants, e-mails were sent to state FFA advisors and state FFA executive directors in four states where the Hispanic/ Latino population was greater than thirty percent to establish critical mass (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). Of the four state advisors who were contacted, three responded with confirmations that contact would be made with past state leaders who identified as Hispanic or Latino. A link to a Qualtrics survey was sent to past state leaders on behalf of their state advisor. Participants were selected based on holding a state-wide leadership role and being involved with their respective state associations within the past five years. Regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, or other intersecting identities, participants who completed the Qualtrics and following Doodle Poll were selected for an interview time. A total of twelve interviews were conducted out of the fourteen who completed the online questionnaire. The two remaining individuals were unresponsive to follow-up emails so further contact was discontinued.

Data Recording Procedure

Initial contact was made the first of September of 2020 with state advisors and adult agriculture leaders. Interviews were conducted the weeks of September 20-26 and September 27- October 3 of 2020. Audio recordings of the interview were done and notes were taken throughout each interview. No videos or photographs of the participants were taken to ensure confidentiality. Interviews occurred in the form of one-on-one conversations. The interviews resembled guided conversations rather than structured meetings. Bernard (2017) argues that semi-structured interviews are the best method for building genuine rapport with participants as semi-structured interviews allow the most

room for open communication between both the researcher and the participants. Thus, my interviews with the former student leaders will resemble these fluid exchanges rather than question and answer sessions.

A standard introduction was used as a general welcome and outline of the interview for each participant. After answering any clarifying questions, the interview began. Eleven questions, along with clarifying sub-questions, were asked and spoken in English, though some brief moments of shared Spanish slang occurred and served to build rapport between myself and the participant. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted between 60 minutes and two hours.

Participants

Participants in this study were past state, regional, or district leaders of the FFA organization. They all identified as Latino or Hispanic, with many self-identifying with their ethnicity (Mexican, Mexican-American) or by simply acknowledging themselves as "brown". Participants held their leadership positions in the past five years (from the years 2015 to 2020). Twelve participants agreed to be interviewed for this study: seven were from California, three were from Texas, and two were from Arizona. Contact was made with three other participants who initially stated their interest, but after a lack of response from a follow-up email, further contact was discontinued.

Five participants identified as young men and seven identified as young women. To maintain confidentiality all twelve participants were given aliases throughout the study and in their direct quotes. Because Latinx state leaders are visible and relatively easy to find with a quick Google search, I will refrain from writing or outlining

specifically what state they served or what year they were active in their leadership role. Instead, I will list their aliases and quick descriptions of their personalities based off the time spent with them: Arturo calm yet passionate, Rosa eager and quick, Isaac reflective yet hopeful, Gloria sunny and relaxed, Martin colorful and direct, Carlos neat and sarcastic, Francisco funny and realistic, Araceli intuitive and cool, Lisbeth shy and innocent, Olivia outspoken and caring, Elena fierce and confident, and Maria naive and peculiar. My time spent with all twelve individuals was rich and enlightening.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, consent was obtained from each student participant through verbal confirmation. Of the twelve participating members, I obtained consent from 100% (n = 12) of the former Latinx leaders.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data were collected after each completed interview for common themes and recurring answers to each interview question (Schensul & LeCompte, 2010). Interviews were transcribed, and interview notes were taken during the interview to maximize the qualitative research design (Schensul & LeCompte, 2010). After organizing interview notes and transcriptions, I gained a sense of general understanding of the information and reflected on its overall meaning. After this step, codes were outlined of all collected and observed data. The data collection, through observation, was more casual than formal. According to Yin (2018), casual direct observations occur through fieldwork, including those occasions during which interviews are being collected. I paid close attention to student expressions on particular questions, nervous tendencies with responses, and

changes in mannerisms throughout the conversation. After each interview, I wrote in a reflective journal and meet the following day with my advisor to debrief my findings. Multiple perspectives from the participants, specific quotations from the interviews, and descriptive information about the participants' experiences will be presented.

Development of codes was based on the emerging information collected through each interview and placed in my reflective journal. Coding occurred on major topics discussed in the interview, repeated statements from a majority of the participants, and overall feelings from the participants perceived by my interpretations (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). Constant comparison of interview notes and transcriptions was conducted to clearly define the codes found: analyzing, sorting, sifting, clumping those alike, and separating those different (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). Through these constant comparisons, I became intimately and deeply familiar with the notes, data, and interviews. This familiarity facilitated instances of finding the same phenomena (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013).

A description of the codes was represented as a detailed discussion of several themes and subthemes. Themes from the codes were then analyzed and written in the project's findings. From this discussion, I will interpret the findings according to my personal culture, history, and experiences. Information will also be interpreted in terms of how it fits or expands upon the current literature in accordance with Critical Race Theory. Through my interpretations between my own experiences, past leader interviews, and CRT, triangulation should occur (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013).

Trustworthiness

Multiple validity strategies were implemented to ensure trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of the findings (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). My personal understandings have been explicitly stated; this self-reflection helps you and I understand how interpretations of the data could be shaped by my past experiences. The point of this research is not to tell you *this* is the objective truth, but to tell you that *yours* isn't.

Credibility was further established through consistent checking of the transcripts and interview notes to look for any possible mistakes made during transcription. Techniques used to establish credibility were similar to those outlined in Connelly (2016) including prolonged engagement with the participant, member-checking, and reflective journaling throughout the process. Returning to examine the questions and the data was also done to ensure credibility.

Dependability was achieved to ensure that my data and findings are reliable and consistent throughout the study. Procedures to ensure dependability include maintaining an audit trail of a reflective journal, researcher notes, and debriefings with my graduate advisor, Dr. Vincent. Notes were kept of all activities that happened during the study, in the interviews, and in those debriefings. Confirmability of the data consisted of thorough comparison to data with the codes to ensure there were no shifting definitions or meanings of the codes over the course of the research process. This was done to ensure that my own biases and understandings wouldn't influence the findings of lived experiences from the Latinx participants. Additionally, cross-checking of the data and codes was accomplished by myself and my research advisor to ensure accuracy and authenticity of the information (Connelly, 2016).

Transferability of the study and of my findings was accomplished so that readers and future Latinx leaders would find my analysis of these lived experiences applicable to their situations (Polit & Beck, 2014). My research focuses on the stories of my participants; and these stories will not be the objective truth for *every* Latinx FFA member. The study's transferability was supported through detailed description of the participants and their stories and by being transparent about the analysis and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016).

Limitations

Because of the limits placed on potential participants, the information gathered will be skewed in that the perspective of these members will differ from those who experienced the FFA organization in a state where the Hispanic/ Latino population is less than thirty percent, heightening their minority status. Second, information will be limited to those who have been involved with the state association in the past five years (2015-2020), meaning older and former FFA leaders who have had more time to digest their experience will be excluded from the study. Because contact was made through their state FFA advisors, a third limit is placed on the relationship between the advisor and student as it could sway whether or not the student chooses to participate in this study.

I chose to sample members who identified as Hispanic/ Latinx because I was curious if my own experiences would mirror their own; members with involvement from the past five years are closer in age to myself and have had more recent experiences with FFA and the current social and political climate than those older and former state leaders; and members from the four states with the highest Hispanic/ Latino population deal with

their social identity as a Latino represented largely within their state and as a Latino underrepresented in the state FFA organization. Because of the external similarities between myself as a former Latina leader in California in the past five years, the interviews will be conversational and more familiar than they would have been if these similarities were non-existent (Bernard, 2017).

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this project was to answer the following questions: (1) What unspoken practices of leadership offices in the FFA exist and reinforce racial inequalities particularly among Latinx youth leaders? (2) How do Latinx state FFA leaders respond to these practices and their need to assimilate? and (3) How can agriculture education and the FFA work to eliminate these inequalities and perceptions of assimilation? The research questions were answered in one-on-one interviews with twelve participants from three different states.

The first research question-- what unspoken practices of leadership offices in the FFA exist and reinforce racial inequalities particularly among Latinx youth leaders? -- can be divided into three different subsections of answers. The sections appear as the following: (1) Cool kids in the FFA and their cliques, (2) networking opportunities available only to those who attend conferences, livestock shows, fairs, and (3) agriculture teachers showing preferences and highlighting differences between the interviewee and state officers.

Research question number two asks how Latinx leaders respond to these unspoken practices. Although there was a myriad of responses, subsections are outlined between these three responses to RQ2: (1) a precedent of past Latinx officers being rewarded for their assimilation, (2) a majority of past white state officer teams and wanting to fit that mold, and (3) assimilation as defined by the interviews.

The last research question asks how agriculture education and the FFA can work to eliminate these inequalities and perceptions of assimilation. Though these answers

could never confront the white supremacy built into systems like the National FFA organization, student leaders outlined steps their agriculture teachers could take to begin addressing these issues at the local level. Participants spoke about Latinx student leaders working within the system to change it, the election of a Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican National Officer at the 2019 National Convention, and encouragement of agricultural teachers and advisors to not conform to unhealthy standards.

RQ1: What unspoken practices of leadership offices in the FFA exist and reinforce racial inequalities particularly among Latinx youth leaders?

Here, we introduce "the game" of state FFA officer elections.

Consistently and across all states, participants spoke of the major issues Latinx members face in the FFA due to unspoken inequalities that exist for its membership. Issues included the following: (1) the development of a "Cool Kids" clique that overwhelmingly dominates the leadership officer narrative; (2) a distinct lack of networking opportunities for members not involved in county fairs, livestock shows, or state-level leadership conferences; and (3) advisors' frequent reminders of differences between the aspiring student and a typical state officer.

Cool Kids Clique

Of the most prominent issues highlighting inequalities for Latinx FFA members, participants spoke of the "Cool Kids" clique in each state and how membership in this clique determines their success for higher leadership offices. One participant, Rosa, spoke of her time as a regional officer her senior year of high school. She didn't realize until she became a state officer the next year that the stereotypes of members at the regional level

she witnessed then were still prevalent in regional officer teams after her own. When asked if she could further expand on the identities of regional officers, she said the following,

> "There was definitely, like, a stigma of being a preppy kid during regional office. {What do you mean by preppy?} The popular kids [laughs] and they all hung out, and it was very exclusive, super-white, super popular, high achievers, legacy babies. Pushed to be perfect. Those kinds of people were the popular kids in our region."

Many other participants voiced similar experiences with the idea of the "cool kids" groups. Francisco noted their existence in his states and highlighted some key differences between the popular clique and his group of friends in state FFA association. Francisco noted not only the personalities of the members of the popular clique but also pointed out the exclusion and isolation felt by his group of friends:

> So we have [laughs] okay so we have the farming kids y'know those white girls and boys with farming backgrounds who own farms. Then we have those white Valley girls, there's a lot of them in [STATE] FFA.
>
> {What are Valley girls?}
>
> Those girls that do their full make-up, do full hair to go to a competition. They're walking around with their Starbucks, they have their Valley accents, their fancy girl accents. They sometimes, y'know I don't wanna be mean, but they always stare and whisper with each other in a circle. In district competitions, there's only like 2 or 3 [Mexican] students. It sounds bad but it happens. We're looked at like 'Oh we're the Mexican people,' and they're always looking at us. At state convention, there's really no Mexican people, just white people and people with farming backgrounds who like to show animals.

Participants like Olivia and Isaac, respectively, stated their concerns with the "cool kids" clique and how they fit or didn't fit in with the noticeably popular crowd. Olivia is an immediately outgoing person. She laughs throughout her interview; though many of her experiences are heavy. She emphasizes words to ensure I understand the

gravity of her responses. She uses slang often and references people from her FFA career that I am distantly aware of. She tells me about one popular girl,

> Like [X] ran the cool kids crew. Like if you were friends with her, you were **IN**, y'know? It wasn't until I started realizing that's what students do when they think certain students are **IN** or certain students have a chance to be state officers; they start to make cliques of kids they want to be on teams with or they start to make cliques with students they think can get them to that position. It was prevalent when I was a senior; it's there now.

Isaac is confident in himself from the get-go; he has straight bright teeth, a clean haircut, and smiles and nods along our conversation. He cusses frequently and seems to be comfortable sharing his experiences with me from the moment we begin the interview. Though he was once heavily involved with the cool kid clique, he recognizes the harm it did to his self-identity and cultural identity. He elaborates on the appeal of the cool kids,

> The kids that were successful were the cool kids, like you did prepared public speaking, join the clique, if you did livestock judging, that sort of thing. That would define if you were the cool kid. I definitely tried to associate myself with the cool kids... like [X], [X]; and everyone knew they were successful. I started to become part of that group when I got to surround myself with the juniors who I knew were successful during Nom Com.

Another participant, Gloria, speaks out on her time as an FFA leader in high school and outside of it. She is a natural story-teller and isn't afraid to reciprocate the questions I'm asking her onto me. Gloria has deep dimples, wild hair, and shares vulnerably with me despite the many hardships life has dealt her. She is at once proud of her family and tells me of how her parents have sacrifices so much for her and her siblings. At once, we've bonded over out Mexican, Catholic, immigrant family relationships. Her body language is open and receiving after a few shared experiences. She laughs at how similar our upbringings seem to be. Continuing on to the interview,

Gloria reminds me of how harmful these groups of "cool kids" were in making decisions for her future officer positions,

> Well, there were definitely cliques-- mostly a bunch of white kids with money thinking they were better than everyone else. I remember I did Nom Com that year and the majority of that [cool kid] clique was also in Nom Com; and before we even started interviewing, they went through the binder that had all the photos of the candidates and-- by looks-- started saying, "This person's gonna get it; this person's not." And there was a trend with people they were choosing. {What trend?} Just a bunch of white people who fit the mold of what you would think: white, skinny, nice hair."

Arturo agrees with the other participants about the harm of the socially and self-identified cool kids clique. He is loud but steady in his answers. He takes his time to think about each response but is sure to be commanding when he replies. Though he is younger than I am, I get the sense that he is mature and grounded in his experiences as the son of Mexican immigrants. He does not curse at the beginning of the interview, but by the end he is comfortable enough that curse words seep through. At the beginning, Arturo tells me about the cool kids clique,

> They walked like their poop didn't stink; they were big shots and knew they would be the next state officers. No one messed with them because it was like they had more power. If you wanted to be cool, you had to be like these types of people… Everyone envied the cool kids but no one wanted to publicly say they hated them because you didn't want to mess with them. There's this always really cool kid group... Everyone secretly hates them because they walk around like they're the next big thing.

Gloria goes on in her interview and contemplates her journey to state office and wanting to fit in with the cool kid group:

> The clique group, um, those people are the ones people look at and think, "Wow, they're gonna be the next state officer team" and shit like that, which is a dumbass, dumbass thing to say. When the perfect-looking people reject you and they're supposed to be the next group [of officers], you're like, "Oh, if the people I think are gonna get it don't like me, there's no way I'm gonna get it."

Martin speaks on the rejection from the future state officers known as the cool kid clique. Martin has long, curly hair, a backwards black snapback, and a small TV in the background. He tells me, in no uncertain terms, about the cool kids clique:

> They were the people who were aiming to be state officers since like their freshmen year. They just carried themselves differently. Like I would pull up to them and say 'what's up' to them and no one would really like engage with me just because I was like a no one, just another fucking FFA member to them. Until they got to meet someone like [X], who was a regional officer, that's when they were like, "Hey, what's up, how are you?"

To which, I asked him to expand a little further and explain who these members were in more detail. Martin replies with an abundance of expletives in a very straight-forward no-bullshit kind of way,

> The way I could identify them was when they'd all click up with each other. Like they'd all be together and just, like, feel like they're the shit. Feeling like they're way up here but they're not. Most of them have this like perfect smile, perfect teeth, I don't even fucking know why, but they all have perfect teeth. Most of them are white, well what I experienced anyway. They seem like they were really professional, like, for their age. Just the way they spoke to the teachers and everything. [Long pause. Sighs.] Super fucking fake, super fucking fake.

One participant, Carlos, spoke about his experience with the "cool kids" clique or "popular" crowd. He uses the term "Anglo" in lieu of the term "White"; when asked why, Carlos said it was slang in the community and school he was from to say Anglo rather than white, Caucasian, or *gringo*. He states,

> You had the legacy kids-- I wasn't a legacy kid-- they all knew each other because their parents grew up together. Those were mostly the Anglo kids. Um, and then you had the rest of us, first-time FFA-ers. Um, and we were mostly Hispanic. You had the steer jockeys. I mean there were HUGE, HUGE cattle guys. Or the big pig people. The cool kids were definitely the officers, the more just kinda active group. If they felt like they belonged, they were the more active ones.

Networking Opportunities

Here, I want to highlight Carlos's last statement. "If they felt like they belonged [in FFA], they were the more active ones." This sentence rang true for all participants interviewed in the study. When they felt like they could belong in the FFA organization, they became more active in leadership and member roles. In regard to activity level for members in the FFA, those who were able to subscribe to networking activities such as the frequently costly events like livestock shows, leadership conferences, or national conventions were more likely to look toward leadership positions and offices as they grew older. Leading us to our second point, Carlos spoke of this occurring in his state,

> If you found a kid looking pretty ag-like, then, yeah, they were part of the more serious crowd, or I don't know how you would call them. [Pause] If they were the more livestock kids-- livestock is a big deal in [STATE]-- if you raise livestock, you're going to be one of the more active ones in your chapter. CDEs and LDEs, our ag teachers, I mean, they call themselves 'banner-whores' [laughs] so we were gunning for those banners all the time.
>
> {And being active makes for better chances of getting elected?}
>
> Yeah, those that were really active went to the different camps, different conferences, different competitions. They just saw more.

Francisco was an FFA member who was deciding on whether or not to run for state office, having a year of eligibility to run after graduating from high school. Although he finds his time in FFA and in agriculture education beneficial, he states the difficulty being a member of color in an organization that is a majority white. Francisco said the following about his state association and his lower-income, predominantly Mexican, rural high school,

> No one from my chapter could ever be elected. When you look at the state officers they're all white, showed animals, come from farming families. When I think about having a chance [of getting elected state office] I really don't think I

> have one which is kind of, I would say, unfortunate; but it is what it is unfortunately. I've always seen white kids in state office. It's a niche of people who always hang out together, go to FFA camp, go to this conference or that conference, or who get badges and banners or whatever. It's almost like I'm not part of that and those are the ones that get state office.

Isaac further iterated this idea of needing to network and be high-achieving in order to find success at the regional and state-level. He first spoke about the "cool kids" group and the importance of being a member to be seen as a potential future leader in the FFA. He spoke about the cool kids clique being at the "top" of the hierarchy in the state. After being asked, "What gets you to the top?", Isaac responded honestly,

> As fucked up as it is, like, being known [gets you to the top] and like winning stuff. Yeah [pause] I know [another pause] it's like literally jacked up [pauses, breathes] but like no. If you wanna be successful, you definitely gotta play the game [long pause]. The friend group I was a part of, I was the only Hispanic one. You got three white kids from big houses, and then me! A tall, brown dude from an immigrant house. I didn't want to get kicked out of this friend group because I didn't meet their standards.

Over and over, participants highlighted the importance of not just being a member of the "cool kids" clique but also doing the activities, events, and competitions that this clique does too. Only through these, oftentimes costly, networking opportunities-- like the leadership conferences, conventions, fairs, shows, and CDE events-- were members able to gain the attention of their fellow peers, other ag teachers, and state FFA staff who frequent these events as well.

Agriculture Teachers' Reminders

To the third point, one participant spoke of her ag advisor's frequent acknowledgment of the power white, popular members had in their FFA organization and how she was affected. Elena spoke of her time preparing for running for a regional officer position her junior year of high school. Elena had been an FFA member since her

freshman year when she decided to seek out a leadership position beyond her chapter. When recalling the process, Elena remembers how her agriculture advisor approached the topic:

> One of my teachers had come up to me and she pulled me to the side-cause they train you or whatever- and she, I guess, wanted to point out the obvious but she said, "When you think of a regional officer, what do you think of?" and I didn't say anything [laughs] but I knew, but I didn't say anything. And she literally said, "You see a bunch of skinny, white, blonde girls," and she told me-- and I quote it because I'll never forget it-- "You don't look like that." And I-and I was in shock, but I also wasn't because I knew, like I knew what I was getting myself into.

Though Elena praised her ag teachers frequently throughout the interview, she did say that their constant reminders of differences between herself and the officers on stage opened her eyes to the inequalities faced by Latinx members like her. These inequalities are the reason she decided against running for state office despite her position as a high-ranking regional officer. She detailed this here,

> When I got the position, I, like, celebrated or whatever, got off the stage, and I had this guy come up to me and say, 'You know it's so nice to see someone that looks like me up on that stage.' On the outside I was like, 'Oh my gosh, that's so nice,' right? But on the inside I was like, 'Oh my gosh that is so sad. That is so sad.'

Further findings will detail how other participants responded to the inequalities they perceived at the regional-level and in entire state FFA associations. Though Elena was one of the two who decided against running to be a state officer, other participants clearly were successful enough to be elected to that high-ranking position. Let's look at how they were able to do so despite the obstacles they outlined above.

RQ2: How do Latinx state FFA leaders respond to these practices and their need to assimilate?

Here, we introduce how Latinx members "play the game".

When faced with issues like the "Cool Kids" clique, lack of networking opportunities, and unhelpful agriculture teachers, Latinx members must rely on themselves and whatever is in their power to respond to these inequalities if they wish to become state officers. In turn, Latinx members look for patterns, strategies, ways of achieving the title that they have seen for the past four years of their high school career. They looked for ways to successfully "play the game". Participants in the study outlined three ways to do so: (1) looking at the precedent of past Latinx officers, (2) fitting the mold of past (majority white) state officer teams, and (3) assimilating and accommodating for their differences.

{A note to add: there will not be hard lines drawn between these three points as seen previously. Although I have outlined three points, they intersect with one another heavily in all of my participants and are not mutually exclusive. I have done my best to summarize what my participants have said succinctly but effectively. With assimilation, acculturation, adaptation, everything is blurry. You don't know where one starts and the other begins. For the journeys of these young adults, a lot of it was blurry. Authentically, they spoke of a reality faced by students of color everywhere. I will not be the one to draw hard lines here.}

Playing the Game

Eleven out of twelve participants spoke of the "game" needing to be played when running for state office. When further asked about what "the game" was or how it was

played, participants responded accordingly. Olivia spoke of "the game" to be played and how her agriculture teacher warned her about it.

> There's a game to be played, FORRR SUUUREEE [laughs]. There's a game and some people are phenomenal at it and I didn't really know there was a game to be played until my junior year. My ag teacher, she was younger-- like slated in the early 2000s or something-- she told me, "Okay, I'm gonna be honest with you. I think you have a good chance of making it. But with someone who has as many feelings as you do-- that cares as much as you do-- Just be cautious cause this game is gonna be ugly. And I wish it wasn't that way, I wish kids weren't like this cause it's not the end-all be-all.

Carlos recalls a time he was out with an older past state officer who also came from his high school FFA chapter. He and his friend reflected on the "political game" of running for state office:

> We were talking about this, actually. [X] told me, he kinda felt like it was a political game. {What do you mean by that?} Like talking to other district officers or other areas to whip up votes. Kinda like you do when you're running for office. And that [the political game] only happens when you're running for office not other FFA stuff.

He continues to say, "And that was back in 2014-2015, yeah, that was his state officer team year. He felt like he had to be a little politician about it. And I think for the rest of us [following Hispanic officers on state officer teams] we just ran with it." Members like Carlos, and those that came before and after him, felt like they had to be a politician to play the game well, to get elected as a high-ranking officer.

For many other participants, they contemplated on their time participating in "the game". Isaac reflects, "I really just wanted to fit in and be successful in FFA. [Pause] I would put the jacket on and want my hair to look hella nice and look the part. I definitely- I don't know- I never defined myself as my culture; I never emphasized I'm Mexican." After asking for clarification, he tells me,

> I remember not making the top-10 list for Creed and thinking, "Damn... Is it cause I speak funny or like did I say things wrong?" That's when it hit me [pauses] like, "Ok, Isaac, what are the things we need to do to fix that or be better or fit this box that other people would check off?" Ultimately, I was like, "Okay, here's the rubric. They're looking for this, this, and this. How can we change you, so you can fit all these qualities?"
>
> {What kind of qualities are you talking about specifically?}
>
> Well, like, I was surrounded by a lot of Hispanics and would see them dirty because they worked in the fields, so I think-- wow!-- I think that's what it was for me! Wow! [Clearly having some sort of realization.] I didn't want to look dirty because I wanted to look clean and look like I have my.... I don't know... just like trying to stray away from that as much as possible to move in a direction where I'm hitting another level. [He ends this sentence like it's a question.] Just, like, trying to create an opportunity for myself. Oh, that sounds kinda tricky. [Pause] I don't know. I knew I had to dress and act opposite of that.
>
> {Act opposite of what?}
>
> Of the Latino farm workers.

As a freshman in high school participating in the FFA Creed public speaking contest, Isaac had convinced himself to act completely different from people he had been surrounded by his entire life: Latino farm workers. Of note, Isaac's parents are both farm workers in the southern part of his state. He associated himself with his hard-working, yet "dirty" parents. He associated his loss of the Creed contest with his self being "dirty". Because he saw those that were successful (top ten Creed winners), he decided at that point to "fix" and change himself to emulate what he saw in the winning crowd.

Lisbeth reflects on how she got to the state officer position. She explains how she reached out to past Latinx leaders and followed in their footsteps to get to the level she aspired to achieve as an FFA member,

> There were not a lot of Hispanic leaders in FFA. But I remember being able to connect with them and ask how they got there. I asked how were they able to get up there with a lot of white people, and ultimately, being able to figure out what stepping stones they took, so I could do that too.

Again, these Latinx participants saw a pattern and followed it. Reiterated by Olivia, she says,

> Obviously like--you know this too-- like running for state office, and with [X] running right before me, I think I tried so hard to look and act like [X] because that's what I thought was the epitome of a state officer. And that's when I was a regional officer. She was a state officer when I was a regional officer. Um... and I remember thinking that people like [X], like very polished, always had their hair curled, just like THAT. Like THAT was, oh my gosh, like THAT'S definitely what I needed to be, obviously.
>
> {What is "that" that you keep saying? What was she like that you felt you had to be?}
>
> Obviously, she's very knowledgeable, she's very polished. [X] knows a lot because that's all her family talks about. Even the way she came to school, like her hair was curled *every* day, Graciela. It was never not done. We had 7am-zero-period Ag Leadership, so we would come to Leadership and I would come and hang out with my friends that I didn't see a lot. We'd come and make posters, eat our yogurt together, we would just bullshit in Ag Leadership, like, we didn't care. And then she would be, like, practicing her Prepared speech or talking about people she met at WLC or talking about people at COLC. She would be like, "I'm being trained by so-and-so." Then like junior year, senior year, I was like, "Should I care about these things?" Like obviously it worked for her, so should I change my thought process? Like should I change what I look like? Should I model being polished and ready and knowing everyone so that I can achieve this [state office]? Like what is going on? It worked for her and I wanted to be [pause] like her. Like it worked for her so maybe it could work for me.

Of importance, the member Olivia is talking about is a wealthy, white girl whose parents work in the agriculture industry and at a university. [X] is part of the cool kids in her state. Olivia works to become like [X] despite being the opposite of [X] in many aspects. Olivia is fully Mexican, raised by a single mom, has no agriculture background, and considered working class. Olivia and [X] come from the same chapter, so Olivia's acceptance of [X] being the definition of success is inevitable.

Similarly, Rosa and Arturo speak on past leaders who influenced the way they thought about their Latinidad in relation to the FFA. When Rosa was a member, she

didn't see Latinx officers leading authentically. She remembers, "It didn't feel like he was Hispanic or a person of color. He never talked about it or got specific to embrace his Hispanic culture or who he was. His retiring address wasn't specific at all; it just felt inauthentic." Rosa continues to describe feeling like the Hispanic officer at the time was "code-switching". She self-consciously asks, "Is that the right term for it?" To which I respond, "What do you mean?" She explains,

> I felt like he wasn't an accurate representation of the Hispanic culture. Not in an offensive way, but for me, I felt like it was a lot of like code-switching that had happened to get to the point where he was [a state officer] and I don't know if he was really being his authentic self on the stage.
>
> {What do you mean specifically by 'code-switching'?}
>
> Code switching as in changing your natural patterns, natural language, natural culture you grew up in to mold or conform to these expectations that FFA has for a person going into it. Those weird expectations like speaking perfectly or having your hair a certain way or having a specific pair of heels or skirts. Whatever that may look like. [Pause.] A flawless filter you kinda have to put on. Those FFA expectations.

Arturo, separately speaking of the same Hispanic officer, reveals the following:

> The only people that were Mexican on that [past state officer] team were [X] and [X], but they weren't, like, me-Mexican. They were second-generation, and it was harder for me to relate because like [pause] I speak Spanish at home and I didn't know if that was the same case as them.
>
> {Why do you think it wasn't the same case as them?}
>
> I remember [X, same as Rosa's] came in the room, and he sounded very [pause] white. Everything about him was white except his skin color; and I remember thinking, "Okay I don't talk like him," and that was weird. His layers of Mexican were just like stripped away at that point and it was just like [another pause] white.

From the beginning of their high school journeys, Rosa and Arturo see Hispanic leaders not as somebody representative of them and their culture, but someone stripped of their authenticity and seen as "white". The same happened for Gloria who echoes her

fellow participants in her feelings about the same [X] as above: “No, definitely there was that FFA-voice and it’s a white-washed voice. And no, they would never have an accent. I don’t know if I ever necessarily saw them as people I could relate to just because they were Hispanic y’know?”

Again, Isaac speaks on the same two past state officer and echoes other participants in the study:

> I think honestly, like going up to [X] and [X] during their state officer year and one of them saying, “I am the whitest-washed Hispanic you’ll ever know,” was crazy and I thought “Fuck, okay let me acclimate and try to be white-washed too because these successful Hispanic kids are not Hispanic.” That’s what I kinda got from that interaction.

Another participant, Martin, describes what made other Mexican officers feel disconnected and unrelated to members like himself. Martin is a Mexican student who immigrated to the United States along with his parents when he was young; he is a proud older brother, identifies as working-class, and is a first-generation college student. He is unapologetically Mexican in his interview. Refreshingly, he cusses loudly and frequently throughout our conversation. He laughs about the same past Mexican state officer who tried to “hide his brownness despite being six feet tall”. Martin says,

> It was the way [X] talks... I remember hearing him. He was talking to some people at the Career Expo one day and we were walking by, and I was like, “Oh, shit, what the fuck.” {Why did you think that?} It was just kinda like [pause] it caught me off guard. Like, I didn’t expect him to talk like that. [Laughs] Like his voice didn’t fit him.

Unlike Martin, who was one of two members in this study who decided against running for state office, other participants saw behaviors of past Latinx officers as a precedent that was set and to be followed in order to get to the top. Arturo says, “I tried to

keep myself more myself, but I started to strip away those layers of ‘Mexican’ and things like that because I thought that’s what I had to do.”

A similar action occurred in other participants. Clearly, assimilation in mass was happening. Carlos however calls it by a different name:

> I don’t think there is a definite ‘you have to do these things to qualify’ but it’s more so like [pauses to think] having a clear-cut path. Traditionally, those who are state officers are the livestock, popular kids, but I think we’re getting away from that.

To which I challenge him to dig deeper:

> {Traditionally, what are Hispanic state officers like in [STATE]?}
>
> [Long pause, small smirk] Yeah, I think traditionally they would have to be white-washed. [Pause] Of course, nobody tells you that. Um, and I’ll be honest, I think the only Hispanic kids on state officer teams have been from the south [X] areas because they are more [pause] white. The guy right before me, he was like me [white-washed]. The guy before him was similar but he showed his Hispanic side a little bit more. The guy before him, [X], he was from my chapter and he was white-washed too.

Throughout the interviews, participants used the term “white-washed” when describing Latinx members who acted white. I asked what it meant to be white-washed; though none gave me a strict definition, much like whiteness itself according to CRT (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017), their definitions were fluid and constantly changing based on location, age, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status and the lens of their respective Latino culture.

Francisco begins:

> Other [officers] were Mexican but I don’t know. They never really showed it. Cause like when you meet another Mexican person you kinda automatically know if they’re like... y’know? If they speak Spanish and laugh with you. You know if you’re gonna bond together, if you’re gonna know what the other person’s gone through. No one else [state officer] has really been down like that, y’know?

Though he never explicitly says "you kind of automatically know if they're white-washed", that's what I assume he means. As Mexican members in the FFA living in a dominantly white country, assimilation happens on a spectrum. Thus, Mexican members can determine when another Mexican member is further down the "assimilation spectrum" than they are. Though not inherently evil, assimilation can be harmful.

Olivia notes this in her interview about a fellow Latinx Hispanic member,

> [X] would be, like, embarrassed to speak Spanish. We tried to get him to like be proud of it, but I don't know [pause] there's a lot there [pause]. I don't know. He had a really hard time accepting who he was, I think. Like, he wanted to be white. Even though he's more Mexican than me in terms of, like, the way he was raised, he speaks Spanish, he writes it, reads it, everything. He doesn't show it. He doesn't want it. He's trying to be someone he's not."

She later contradicts herself and says, "He's very much so Mexican-Mexican like through and through." I then ask her, "Do you think that?" After one, two, three, four seconds she responds:

> I think... I think he's not proud of it. Um, if I'm being honest.
>
> {Why do you say that?}
>
> We met his parents. His mom is a typical Mexican mom. [Laughs] Like his mom and my mom vibed [keeps laughing] they were just like typical Mexican moms. And my mom, and every other [state officer] family made it a point to talk to [X's] parents because they didn't speak English. [Y's] parents know Spanish because of their farmworkers, so they would converse with them like in Spanish. At Christmas dinner, all the parents ate together and I remember [X's] parents crying and telling my mom to translate, "Thank you for making us feel like we are a part of this." And like, so, we met them, great people, super sweet. I don't think [X] sees that. I just think that, like, he wasn't very proud of them.

Olivia can clearly see through the assimilation her peer underwent; however, some assimilation is deemed necessary by participants to be a part of the in-crowd. Francisco tells me,

> Whenever I'm texting state officers or people outside my chapter who are also in FFA, I almost have to talk like a different way because they have their own way of talking. Like I hear them always say "Sweet! Awesome! Yeah!" stuff like that. [Laughs] You always hear FFA members saying, "Yeah, that's so awesome!" and stuff like that so it's almost like you have to talk the same way to be their friends. You have to start listening to country music, get the boots, the belt, and it's hard cause I don't do any of that.

Though Francisco doesn't subscribe to white culture in terms of recreational activities or clothing, he does mention needing to use different vernacular and different slang than his own. Similarly, Elena tells the story of her needing to assimilate to the English language rather than use her Spanish slang outside of her friend group:

> "I didn't know what nylons were; [laughs] nobody told us! But I knew what *medias* were. Cause you know, that's what my mom and friends and everyone calls them [laughs]. And it wasn't until some white girl called my *medias* 'nylons' that I was like, "Ohhh that's what you all are talking about." [Laughs.]"

A situation like the one above is a small example of assimilating, or acclimating, to white culture. Not inherently a bad thing, but when looking deeper into experiences by Latinx leaders, the reality of the self-image and social identity they feel they need to project can become damaging. Arturo tells me of when he realized he held some power within the "cool kid" clique because he was able to assimilate to their group; however, feeling uncomfortable, he decided to exclude himself from such a group despite aspirations to be a state officer one day. I asked if he was ever a part of the popular crowd to which he replied,

> Oh yeah, definitely. Once I started to know I could get into that group, I thought I could be somebody. That state officer team was the cool kids, and everybody knew it. When everybody started to see, "Oh, Arturo is kinda cool, we should hang out with him more," then I kinda knew I was able to fit in with them. But it was uncomfortable. I started to not be my usual self. I didn't want it to represent me anymore.

I proceeded to ask in what ways he started to become less like his usual self. He answers with a few examples from himself, but mostly with characteristics of those in the cool kid clique. “It’s hard to describe…. Kind of fluffy, I guess. [Pause] Someone overly-polished that can be really artificial sometimes [another pause]. They would behave one way, overly really nice, but with their friends they were really casual. Fluffy kids would talk like condescending in a way.”

I heard it constantly in the interviews of members needing to be ‘white-washed’. Isaac says it explicitly first, “I can definitely say I was like white-washed. Not because of my chapter’s culture but the [popular] friend group I surrounded myself with.” Of all my participants, Isaac was the male who was fully immersed with the popular crowd. Though others had dipped their toes into the “cool kid” clique, Isaac makes it clear throughout the interview that he fully assimilated to white culture in order to be a part of the seemingly successful popular clique and that he recognizes the assimilation he had to do from an early age. Isaac tells me, remorsefully, about his experience being a part of the popular crowd:

> I remember kind of being a dick to [NAME OF GIRL] because she was, like, weird and different than the other regional officers on our team. She didn’t fit this idea of being mean or fierce to be part of the cool kids. And that’s something that was hard for me to come to terms with. I wanted to be cool so bad I had to be a dick in order to get there, y’know?

I asked him to explain further what he meant by “being a dick” and responds with the following,

> I was definitely a follower when I was with the cool group. Like whatever [X] or [X] said I would just agree and be like, “Yeah! Okay!” In order to be successful in FFA and in the group, I felt like I had to be a dick. I remember thinking, “Okay, being kind doesn’t get you to the top so like that doesn’t matter anymore. Let’s focus on being intimidating.” Y’know?

Gloria was not a cool kid during her time in FFA. She makes it clear that the pressure was definitely there, but ultimately, she just was not able to fit in. She tells me that she did not ever plan on running for state office because of the mold she didn't fit. When serving on the nominating committee she says,

> Even on Nom Com, you have a vision of what a state officer should look like. I never felt like I fit that mold. It didn't matter if I was as spontaneous or outgoing as other people. Just because of the way I look, they weren't gonna vote for me. That was always my thought process.

She shares about a personal experience she had after finally deciding to run for state office. In her experience, former state leaders are *explicitly* telling her things to change about her appearance in order to make herself more electable. Most of these changes were to fit in with a basic white, female mold.

> I was running for office and went to a training at [university]. They were giving us tips on how to present ourselves in the interview room, and they mentioned hair and they were like, "Make sure to look the part. Curl your hair and pin it up and make the bump." Like, y'all, I have *this* [points to her naturally kinky hair] that I'm working with. What do you mean? Even for me choosing to go through the interview process with my natural hair was such a hard decision to make cause I was scared that I wasn't looking like how they told me I should look.

I asked her if she ever felt she had to fit a mold before her state officer training at the university. She interrupts me to immediately exclaim,

> Oh my god, YES! YES! All the time. Like chameleon characteristics. Have you heard of that? {No. What is it?} Like a chameleon. Like I knew I didn't want to completely change myself, but I couldn't always say everything I was thinking or feeling. Cause I was afraid of rejection from people I was with.

Continuing with her time as a regional officer, Gloria says,

> Regional officers are bidding to be a state officer. And it can be hard to prove yourself. [Pause] Maybe because I'm Latina, plus I'm a girl, and only 5'2" and loud and weird. [Another pause] It was hard to get support outside of my chapter and my advisors. I felt like people just saw right through me.

> {What do you mean?}
>
> You will be disregarded and cut out, your questions won't be answered, and you'll look stupid. [Long pause] I love this industry, but I don't think it loves me. How am I ever gonna find a place in it?

Elena speaks of a similar experience of being told to change her outer appearance to look more electable for state FFA office. Elena had earlier said that her ag teachers were "training" her. I asked her to elaborate on the word "train" to which she recalls,

> A lot of people go through this, they just show you how to be professional, how to shake a hand, like this is how you do it. Little things like that. [Pause] Straightening my hair, the whole makeup thing. She [her agriculture teacher] told me to do my makeup, like, "Really natural. Don't make it look crazy."

I ask how she felt about this assimilation. She responds slowly, "You don't realize that you're doing it; you just see it as a way to, like, get the thing, get the position that you want."

For most Latinx members, blending into the status quo is a sure-fire way of getting the position you want. Olivia is one of my more self-aware participants when it comes to her assimilation into the 'cool kid' group. Though older than Isaac, similarly, she was *in* and she knew it.

> I definitely was the only Mexican kid on the 'in', quote on quote. I was not [pause] The rest of them were white. They were very [another pause], like powerful? Yeah, powerful in ag. [X]'s dad is a powerful lobbyist who works in the capitol. And [X]'s family are seventh-generation organic dairy farmers and are like gods in [STATE]. [X]'s family are very powerful in the Central Valley. They're all well-known all over everywhere. While me, I don't have any of those ties, I didn't know where I fit. I didn't know where my invite came from, or how I got my invite. I was very lost. I later realized it was because I had gotten regional office and I was regional president that they saw me then as an equal because I could pull my own weight.

However, this 'cool kid' group would not turn out to be the friends Olivia thought they would be. She states, "It was a very dog-eats-dog world. Which is whatever, I mean it

happens but [long pause] I thought that they wanted to be my friend because they liked me y'know? But I didn't know there was a whole politic game behind it. But I know it now [laughs]."

Lastly, Carlos tells me something that shockingly proves a point I have been agonizingly waiting to make throughout this project. Off-handedly and confidently, he claims, "I've been told I'm white-washed [small chuckle]. And I jokingly will agree. You know, I'm a coconut: dark on the outside, white on the inside. It doesn't really affect me or anything. People have been calling me that my entire life."

"It doesn't really affect me or anything."

"Being white-washed doesn't really affect me or anything."

"Others acknowledging my whiteness doesn't really affect me or anything."

But in the following statement he contradicts his first statement: "I didn't feel like I had to be somebody else to run for office [pause] but that's cause I was always kind-of white-washed. You know, I never fit any of the [Mexican] stereotypes." He never fit any of the Mexican stereotypes. He considered himself white on the inside. He was elected as the only Hispanic member on his state officer team as was done for the past five years before him and since the years after him. *"It doesn't really affect me or anything."* Oh, Carlos, but it did!

<u>Assimilation as described by interviews</u>

Latinx participants found ways to successfully "play the game" when faced with issues of fitting a mold or being accepted into the successful "cool kids" clique. Participants spoke of looking at the precedent of past Latinx leaders to assimilate to the mold they were seeing throughout their time preparing for a high-ranking leadership

position. Participants spoke of being “white-washed” and having to assimilate and accommodate for these differences. The levels of self-awareness of their assimilation varied throughout each participant depending on their family background, state, leadership position, and cultural heritage.

Students were self-aware of the assimilation, and the social perception of their whiteness, to varying degrees. One participant, Araceli, was incredibly in-tune with herself, her time in the FFA, and her thought processes about the assimilation she underwent to get the level of success she was able to achieve. Araceli speaks in a calm, even tone throughout the interview. She never raises her voice or answers a question without taking at least ten seconds to think of her response. Everything is articulate, well-spoken, and seems to have been given some thought before I ever met her. From the start of the interview, her ability to share vulnerably about her assimilation was thoughtful, reflective, and honest. She starts,

> With there being a big change to a merit-based election system, people are esteemed and elected because they’re good. So, it wasn’t really hard to be a part of that. But it was hard being really Mexican.
>
> {What do you mean?}
>
> Like a lot of people were really good and they were officers, so it was easy to think that I could be a state officer. But there were people that were Hispanic who had done it before, but they weren’t, like, super Mexican, like raised-on-the-border Hispanic. I was the only Hispanic on my team (of 12) and it was hard.

I asked her if she felt really Mexican during her time in FFA. She responds,

> I don’t tend to speak accented English unless I’m in [border city]. Other than that, I tend to have this flat English. A lot of people don’t know that I’m ESL. So, in some ways it really wasn’t hard to be a part of cliques or to be popular or to be esteemed-- that part wasn’t hard. When I’m back home I don’t feel really Mexican, I just feel normal. But here, I’m surrounded by all white officers, and I feel more Mexican than I ever have in my life. That’s hard for me.

Araceli was so clearly in-tune with her own assimilation. She did not speak of it negatively, but she did not approach it positively either. I asked her what made her feel like she could be successful, continuing from her previous response. She tells me,

> It was easier for me to be successful because I could speak without an accent, I have really light skin and just have the ability to assimilate better. Other officers before me were very American, they didn't really know how to speak Spanish-- which Spanish isn't a parameter or anything but it is different, y'know? Like that was my mode of communication for the first five years of my life, there was no other thing.

She explicitly tells me what I already know but what I want others to know so desperately. It was easier for her to be successful because she could assimilate more easily than her other Mexican peers. Wanting to hear more, I ask her to describe her assimilation further.

> Well, I'm a more privileged minority.
>
> {How so?}
>
> I was able to dominate English really well, whereas a lot of my counterparts were not able to dominate English as well. Like I can take off my accent when I want to or turn it on when I want to. Not everybody else has that ability to speak. Not everybody else can, um, build their high vocabulary. Not everybody else can dress the way I was able to dress because my parents bought me things before I anticipated them to buy it for me. I was able to show and not everybody's parents have $2000 to drop each year to take care of these animals. Overall, I was able to be a more polished figure. I was able to have all the experiences that I could put on my résumé that I could talk about with other people that helped me connect with other people. Overall, I was a better package and I come back to just being better assimilated. But I was privileged to have all that. I'm one of the more privileged minorities.

She describes herself as a minority, but a privileged one because she had the means to fit in-- she has the language mastery of an average white student; she appears outwardly like a white student; and she participates in events that most white FFA members do.

I ask her if, at the time she was in high school, she recognized the assimilation she was undergoing. I ask if she knew she was changing herself to fit the mold set before her. She replies, "A lot of it [the assimilation] was intentional. Though I made sure to always pronounce my name the way it was, Araceli, because my parents didn't name me in English." However, here she drifts apart from the other participants in the study. She explains to me her reason for being this assimilated, new version of Araceli:

> I know students want to see someone that's different, and not just different in the same way as them but just different. We don't get a lot of different in FFA. It's a lot of the same. I wanted to be that kind of different for people. So I was like, "I do have to assimilate, but then when I do get there I can be exactly who I want to be [long pause] and I can talk about the perspectives that need to be talked about and I can be disagreeable." My younger self did know that all that had to be done, the assimilation, in order to be that for other people.

In order to give voice to members who don't fit the typical white, FFA mold, Araceli had to become that mold. Araceli had just confirmed having to change her outer appearance just to get a metaphorical seat at the table. In other words, she had to become a part of the system to work within the system. As the one asking the questions, even that left me at pause, so I asked what differences she wanted to see or be for other FFA members. She asked me, "Have you heard of intersectionality?" I nodded and told her I had read books and articles regarding the theory. We briefly bonded over the genius of Kimberlé Crenshaw. Araceli goes on,

> Intersectionality-wise I think we can't have too many identities otherwise we're too hard to swallow. That happens at the state level when they elect the national officer candidate and that happens at the national level as well. Like you can be cisgender, white, and gay but you can't be cisgender, gay, and Mexican-American. That's already too many switches. You need to be Christian, polished, cisgender. The only thing different you're allowed to have is your skin color.

She followed up with the articulately well-put statement: "The less unpopular identities you have the easier it is to get elected, to assimilate, to [long pause] to experience

success." She wanted to be the "different" FFA members long for; she wanted to encompass more intersections with her identities than had been elected before but could not represent those identities until she was already elected as a state officer.

Thus, she highlighted the point I have been trying to find the words for since I started this study. The more "agreeable" Latinx members seem, the more our identities are able to be swallowed by predominantly white audiences, the greater the likelihood we get elected and find success in the FFA, especially at the state and national level. Araceli made this point crystal clear; she highlighted it with the brightest marker, she pointed a giant red arrow to it, she told me explicitly time and time again.

Though she is the only participant who said this loudly and blatantly, other participants said it implicitly. Isaac, who was once in the popular crowd but has emphatically moved on from his role as the cool kids' follower, detailed a story that revealed the self-awareness he had about his assimilated characteristics when running for state office. He went on about being slated against another Mexican-American boy from a popular chapter; however, this boy had a strong Spanish accent and refused to play the assimilation game that Isaac had mastered. I asked him if he had any thoughts when the slate was announced and realized who he was up against. Isaac was shy in his response, more so than he had been throughout the rest of the interview. He slowly says,

> Something that kinda went through my head, honestly, was, "Annunciate a lot so that they know you can speak good English," which is super fucked. It's sad. I made sure I sounded like a white guy, like I could speak English. And, like, a lot of the times whenever we see Hispanics in FFA, they are white-washed because they acclimate to their surroundings. You just want to fit in.

Even Carlos, who earlier said that his assimilation "didn't really affect me or anything" was aware of its presence not just in himself but for other Latinx members in

the FFA, both at a state and national level. Our conversation had taken a turn towards national officers and his relationship with them. Though not a national officer, he had developed close kinships with most of them, including a Latinx male officer. [Yomar] is Puerto-Rican, speaks broken English, and is unapologetically proud of his Latino roots. Everyone in the FFA is aware of [Yomar] and his unconventional election into national office. Since 1928, there have been two Puerto Rican elected as national officers; the first was in 1998 ("FFA History," 2021). A Puerto-Rican has not been elected into such a high-ranking position since 2003 ("FFA History," 2021), and certainly no one has seen a student on stage that is so clearly not an English-first American. Thus, his election was historic to the Latinx membership. Our conversation about it went as follows:

> {Last question, it's a simple yes or no. Does a kid like Yomar get elected for [STATE] FFA office?}
>
> [Long pause] No. [An even longer pause] Yeah, no. I think if he was going to have a chance he would be from [REGION]. Which is shitty to say, but [pause] no. There's people out there who have those biases, and they shouldn't have those biases. It sucks that this is the process but [another long pause] he wouldn't get elected here."

RQ3: How can agricultural education and the FFA work to eliminate these harmful practices?

Agricultural education and the FFA organization have a long way to go when it comes to genuinely creating a home for members who aren't white. The National FFA Organization is the largest student-ran youth leadership organization in the United States ("FFA Statistics,"2019) at the expense of our members of color's sense of identity and authentic cultural expression. White supremacy weaves its way into every institution--agricultural education included. Latinx members subscribe to this inherent inferiority by

wanting to fit the white mold created by leaders and officers who have come before them and set this precedent. To make actionable change, participants highlighted three major steps that should be taken in order to remedy these intrinsically racist practices outlined above: (1) representation matters for Latinx members, (2) agriculture teachers need to think about the bigger picture, and (3) working within the system does not work.

Representation from other Latinx members taking the stage at state and/or national convention was overwhelmingly important for my participants. For most, they felt like Rosa during their first experience in the FFA outside of their hometown, "I remember the majority of people were predominantly white, and I remember thinking, 'Oh shoot! What am I doing with my life? These people don't look like me. I'm not represented. I'm not sure I could ever be on that stage.'"

Each spoke of personal relationships they had with past Latinx state officers and a majority referenced the 2019 National FFA Convention in Indianapolis where Yomar Roman, a native Spanish speaker representing Puerto Rico was elected to be the 2019 National Southern Region Vice President, a feat not done by a native Spanish-speaker since 2003 ("FFA History," 2021). Martin, an attendee of the conference, said, "It's a burst of confidence, like when Yomar got elected… who I can relate to and who comes from where I come from. I think for, like, younger kids I think it's really cool for them to have an example to look up to like that."

Francisco tells me with a voice that is confident and hopeful at the same time, "We need a platform for other Mexican kids to see that if I tried, they can try for themselves as well. Mexican kids need to see that barrier gone. Even though Mexican officers are white-washed, Yomar is proof that we don't need to be." Gloria continues

this anti-assimilation message, “We need representation up there, so that people like me will feel like we have a place here. I was fortunate enough to see someone who didn’t look just like me but looked different too. She always said to wear your hair naturally, and I did!”

Not only was the 2019 National FFA Convention impactful because of it’s election of Yomar Roman, but at the fourth general session and for the first time in 92 years, the audience heard the traditional opening ceremonies spoken entirely in Spanish. For reference, the opening and closing ceremonies occur at every formal FFA meeting that is conducted. Meetings occur at the local, regional, state, and national level; suffice to say, almost *every* FFA member can say the ceremonies word-for-word as they are taught in class their freshmen year and repeated until they graduate. Francisco is emotional when he tells me the greatest impact on him as an FFA member was “the Spanish Opening Ceremonies and I remember being there and like we didn’t expect it at all! Seeing the other officers speaking Spanish was a really cool thing. And we saw Yomar getting elected and it was-- Oh! -- it’s a bigger thing cause, y’know, a Hispanic, a Latino as a national officer. We thought we couldn’t dare.”

Gloria was one of the Spanish speakers conducting the opening ceremonies during that fourth general session. She shares,

> After the Spanish Opening Ceremonies, there were literally people in tears coming up to us saying, “Thank you for doing that” because they never felt seen or like they had a place because there is no one in [STATE] that looks like them. And it was just like, we are a part of this, we are accepted here, and it doesn’t have to be the way we’ve seen it before. We’re here and we bring something to the table. It felt good to do something [pause] big.

However, a note should be made that representation though nice is not anything substantial to creating lasting change. No real action is taken with representation. Rosa

calls out the selection committee for state FFA officers. At the end of the interview, I asked her if she had any last thoughts she would like to share before ending the call. She nervously said that she did and then states,

> I don't know. [Pause] This might be kind of random. About my friend [X]. I felt like we were slated against each other [for state office] because we were "of color" and we were the only two women of color on that stage. That for me was a big thing because I felt like it was too easy for us to be paired together because we looked similar. It felt like we were very replaceable. Maybe there's some unconscious bias that people don't realize they're doing. [Pause] I don't know.

Aside from representation, the second step according to my participants was for agriculture educators and advisors to begin focusing less on titles like regional/ state/ national officers, and more on the culture expressions and identities of their members of color. Instead of asking why they don't fit in the FFA, ask why the largest student-run organization refuses to open up a spot for them. Olivia tells me of her ag teachers and their encouragement for members stay true to themselves,

> For a school that's predominantly Mexican, the teachers did not represent--didn't make up-- what the rest of the school was. Seven of my eight ag teachers are white, half are blonde. But they did a really good job of understanding where students come from and being proud of who they are. Indian students can't shave their face, because of their religion. And normally, I know, when you look at officer teams, state or national officer teams, they were white, clean shaven, that's the typical look. Our teachers never once told them they needed to shave or needed to do anything different to their hair or turban or anything to interview for a higher office. The students would struggle with that because, y'know, it's rare to see a student with a turban interviewing for anything, let alone FFA office.

She emphasizes that her ag advisors created "this culture of acceptance and love. I was never afraid to be just Olivia. They never made me feel uncomfortable, or like weird." She even discloses a conversation she had when she was helping a fellow student of color run for state office, years after her:

> He asked me, "What do I need to change?" and I said, "Nothing. Don't change anything-- they'll take you for what you are and you should never look back." I

> hate that so much of it has become being molded. Like there's this culture of like molding yourself. I wish it wasn't like that. No one should decide your worth like that.

Similarly, Gloria praises her advisor's positive affirmations of her Latina identity; she described her as being "so awesome" and saying, "Just be you. Don't hide anything about you. Like just be you." Gloria closes her comments by saying, "While you're sitting there thinking you should change, say 'Just be you. You're okay.'"

Lastly, participants repeatedly stated that FFA can be a home for Latinx/Hispanic members... just not yet. I heard participants like Araceli and Carlos state that being white-washed allowed them to become state officers and allowed them to work within the FFA system to work to change it. Araceli did this because, as she said, "We empower people who are better assimilated which is also the problem." Instead of encouraging members to assimilate to the white cultural norm showcased in the FFA, ag teachers, educators, advisors, and staff should look at the existing structures and policies in place that disenfranchise members of color. With interview panels that look nothing like them, officer processes that encourage the status quo, and curriculum meant for land-owning members, it's no wonder why Latinx members want to mold themselves to fit that shape. But as I heard, it doesn't have to keep being like this. Members of color don't have to keep trying to work within a system that will never prioritize them.

Lisbeth artfully says,

> I think it's cause FFA has always been for white people. 'Oh you wanna be a farmer, you join FFA.' But going to state convention for my first time or area leadership conference for my first time, it's like, "Whoa there's a lot of white members and not as many Hispanic members." It's obviously an intimidating thing, but just like.. do they have a place for me here in their organization? And we do. I want to better serve my Hispanic community. I want to let them know that they can do it too, and that you don't have to be white to accomplish this.

With an abundance of expletives, Martin says, “Most of them [FFA members] think of an image in their head of what an officer should be like, like perfect hair and stuff. But like if you’re not real, then what the fuck are you doing here, bro? Like, you’re just here for the fucking title. Like fuck you; get the fuck out.” This doesn’t only go for the title-seeking FFA member, but the title-seeking agriculture teachers and advisors who harmfully push these narratives too.

Summary of the Findings

As seen, unspoken practices that reinforce racial inequalities for leadership officers do exist in the FFA. These practices consist of the development of the “cool kids” clique, the exclusivity of networking opportunities that are oftentimes costly, and the harmful reminders by agriculture teachers of the cultural differences between the aspiring member and past state leaders.

Latinx leaders observe and experience these practices and develop a strategy to combat these practices so they too can find success in the FFA organization. They respond in a variety of ways but mostly participants stated they looked to behaviors and attitudes of past Latinx state leaders and mirrored them; they looked at white state FFA officers and subscribed to their culture to fit that mold; and lastly, they changed their self-identity and social perception to appear more palatable for white audiences in the FFA through assimilation, adaption, acculturation.

Latinx members were consciously aware of the assimilation they underwent. In search of a high-ranking officer position, they intentionally changed their pattern of behaviors to fit the mold their state FFA associations wanted to see from their state

officers. Behaviors such as speech, dialect, slang, clothing, hair, makeup, traditions, and overall pride in their heritage was altered to fulfill this need.

To make actionable change in the FFA so that future Latinx/ Hispanic members don't feel the need to "play the game", participants highlighted three major steps that should be taken in order to remedy these practices that included representation for Latinx and Hispanic members in a way that doesn't exploit the members for being culturally different; agriculture teachers encouraging their members to stay true to their self-identity and recognizing that officer position or title at the region, district, or state level is not the end-all be-all for members; and lastly, participants don't want other members to feel like they have to assimilate to work within the system. Participants want to see actionable change in the system. The system (state and national FFA associations) must recognize the harmful practices of their leadership officers and rebuild from the ground up. Participants want to see an organization that appreciates and cares about them, not simply one that *looks* like them.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Restatement of the problem

Growing up in the United States and attending a public education system as anyone other than a white, English-speaking, wealthy person is hard in an agricultural youth organization that prioritizes the described majority. Authentic identity development is difficult to achieve for our underrepresented minorities; leading us to resort to conforming to the majority in order to feel some sense of belonging. Wanting to fit in is a common experience felt by our participants; however, when this sense comes at the expense of genuine identity development and cultural expression, we see a suppression of self in our youth.

The idea of playing the state-officer game in the FFA is not uncommon within members of this agricultural youth organization. Members who are not in the majority play the game as a means to win the ultimate reward: being elected as a state or national leader to an organization they love and have been a part of for years. This case study was conducted to specifically look at the lived experiences of Latinx state leaders in an agricultural youth organization. I wanted to know the answers of the following research questions: (1) What unspoken practices of leadership offices in the FFA exist and reinforce racial inequalities particularly among Latinx youth leaders? (2) How do Latinx members respond to these unspoken practices? and (3) How can agriculture education and the FFA work to eliminate these inequalities and perceptions of assimilation?

Limitations

This research examined the experiences of Latinx and Hispanic members and their experiences as leaders within the FFA organization. Results of this study are limited to student members of an agricultural education youth leadership organization (FFA) in three different states-- California, Texas, and Arizona. Efforts were made to include leaders from New Mexico, but due to a lack of responses, contact was discontinued. The research cautions the use of these findings for inference to other populations and in other states. Participants in this study identified as Hispanic and/or Latinx and had been involved in some capacity with their state FFA association within the past five years. Research may not be generalizable to other underrepresented minorities, state associations, or age groups.

Review of the Findings

In response to research question one, the following findings, from the view of the participants, were discovered as unspoken, implicit characteristics of the 'game' of state officer elections: (1) a formation of a cool kids clique that dominates the state-officer-election conversation (2) a lack of low-cost networking opportunities to provide connections and contact with high-ranking leaders for Latinx youth, and (3) ag teacher's preconceptions of what high-ranking student officers should look like.

Latinx participants responded to these unspoken practices in the following ways: (1) they followed and mirrored behaviors and attitudes of past Latinx state leaders, (2) they subscribed to the culture of white FFA officers to fit that same mold, and (3) they

changed their outward appearances and social identity to be more palatable for white audiences in the FFA through assimilation as described by participants.

Eliminating these inequalities was detailed by Latinx leaders in a few different ways. Participants stated that work could be done through (1) representation for Latinx and Hispanic members in a non-exploitative manner, (2) encouragement from agriculture teachers to stay true to themselves and recognizing that success can look like a variety of different ways in the FFA, and (3) a focus on the FFA system changing itself for the members and not the members changing themselves for the system.

Through these interviews, participants established a review of the game of state office, how they successfully played the game, and ways future educators and advisors could prevent their Latinx members from participating in the game. They felt they had to give themselves up for this role and emphasize how unfair and *wrong* it was for their teacher's and the state FFA association to indirectly or directly do so.

Conclusions and Implications

In response to the findings of this study, five conclusions and subsequent implications were made:

1. Authentic representation of the Latinx culture in FFA and in leadership roles is not being felt by our Latinx members.
2. Latinx members see a clear game that must be played in order to get elected to higher-level leadership positions in the FFA which is being further endorsed by agricultural teachers, past officers, and current white members.

3. Whiteness, or the appearance of, plays a major role when getting elected to state FFA office whether Latinx members are aware of it or not.
4. Implicit behaviors labeled “normal” for white members, teachers, and staff are not normal behaviors for Latinx members.
5. Agricultural education needs staff that not only have empathy for their Latinx members but are actively antiracist.

Conclusion 1

Most elected officers at the state and national level who identify with being Latino/ Hispanic were interviewed for this study. Of the past five years, state and national FFA associations elect Latinx leaders at a disproportionately low rate and when they did get elected, they tried their best to erase their culture to be seen as the right prototype of a leader. Over and over again participants stated they did not see themselves genuinely represented on stage with the state and national officer teams. Even at a district or regional level, members were hesitant to say that they were appropriately represented among their peers. In states where the Hispanic/ Latinx population is well over 30%, members failed to see their culture accurately celebrated. Furthermore, the National FFA Organization and respective state associations (and a case could be made for white America at large) does not recognize that Latinidad encompasses a wide spectrum that’s defined as more than just “Mexican” or “brown” or even “Hispanic”.

Lack of cultural representation implies that Latinx members feel the need to wear a mask instead of really feeling connected to their peers and teammates. Faircloth (2012) writes about the reciprocal nature of the adolescent identity experience and the resulting impact on engaged participation and connection. Members need FFA connections to

things that are foundational to them. Participant interviews showed that they oftentimes felt replaceable by another token Latinx student because they never felt like their connection to FFA was specific to *them*.

Conclusion 2

The game of becoming a state officer is described as changing the way one presents themselves and molds themselves to follow the state officer prototype. The game usually consists of players who come from rural, high socioeconomic backgrounds and fit the ever-changing definition of White, according to student participants and in conjunction with Critical Race Theory. Strategies to win "the game" (or get elected to state office) include assimilating to white behaviors such as language, dress, hobbies, music, and hairstyle to be seen as serious game players. Latinx members are assimilating to these behaviors because they associate Whiteness or non-Latinidad to the state officer prototype. Latinx members want to fit this prototype because they want to fit in with characteristics of the rest of the crowd.

Though Latinx members are unaware of it, their actions fall under the pillars of self-categorization theory. Self-categorization theory tells us that group prototypicality has an important role when it comes to leadership (Hains et al.. 1997). Specifically, more prototypical group members-- in an agricultural youth organization that would be defined as white, rural, conservative members-- are more likely to become leaders and are more likely to be perceived as effective group leaders than are *less* prototypical group members (which can be defined as our members who don't subscribe to traditional 'white' norms).

Therefore, it is implied that perceptions of leader effectiveness and leader acceptance are strongly influenced by in-group defining features called prototypes. Being

an accepted leader of a group like the FFA is not only a matter of having the stereotypical leadership characteristics like being an effective speaker or being charismatic, but it is also a matter of being a prototypical in-group member (Hains et al., 1997).

Conclusion 3

Whiteness and the appearance of whiteness does play a role when running for state office. As seen in conclusion 2 and in student interviews, Latinx leaders did everything they could to appear less culturally diverse than their white peers. They became more agreeable and more palatable for FFA alumni, adult state leaders and staff, and agricultural advisors. Latinx leaders sought to become a high-ranking FFA officer at the expense of their identity.

Theories about assimilation have evolved to label the act of individuals being "absorbed into a racial system by racial assignment and categorization and taught the commonsense and sanctions accorded to the hierarchy of humans in the races in that system" (Trietler, 2015) as racialization. Sociologists make this distinction between racialization and assimilationist theory because under traditional assimilation theory, as developed by Park and Burgess in 1921, *both* ethnic groups are said to absorb one another's customs, cultures, and traditions (Trietler, 2015). However, over time we see that established groups-- defined as traditional White America-- feel *threatened* by these ethnic groups invalidating the two-way process assimilation theory outlines (Crul, 2018).

I make the important distinction between assimilation theory and racialization theory as defined in Trietler's 2015 article here because of how inherently devastating racialization is for our members of color. Though saying members had to 'assimilate' helps the everyday reader understand the process for our Latinx youth in the FFA,

racialization conveys the inherent white supremacist attitudes underlying the belly of FFA leadership positions. These positions and the processes needed to be elected teaches our members the racial hierarchy existing in the FFA and in society at large-- that the whiter and more palatable you are, the more FFA and society will accept you and celebrate you.

Conclusion 4

Through participant interviews, Latinx members stated how differently they had to behave when playing the state-officer game. Running for election and interacting with other FFA members required them to change their behaviors to ones more commonly defined as 'white' behaviors. Changing their accents, hairstyles, and hobbies was essential when interacting and engaging with white FFA audiences. Participants made it clear they wanted white FFA members to view them as "really American" (see findings). These changes occurred during casual and professional settings; and for some members, these unspoken norms made it unappealing to run for higher-ranking leadership positions.

Institutions, including the FFA organization, subtly and overtly make it difficult for Latinx students to thrive or succeed through rules about language, appearance, conformity to members' prototypicality, or familiarity with unspoken norms about professionalism, social interaction, or organizational practices. We see this same pattern in the literature about workplace discrimination (specifically Carbado et al., 2008) and what happens after people of color have been hired. Carbado et al. (2008) state that although people of color are being hired and are getting through the metaphorical door, white supremacist practices and social norms prevent them from being promoted or

advancing to higher-paying positions. The researchers' findings can easily transition themselves to what we're seeing happening in the FFA organizations and through state FFA associations as well.

Conclusion 5

The National FFA Organization prides itself in its acceptance of culturally diverse student members. However, this acceptance comes with some conditions: one can't be *too* diverse, *too* different in thinking, or *too* unagreeable with older, white leaders and staff. Through the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020, members and alumni alike saw how they dropped the ball supporting their Black members. No statements were made from the National FFA Organization that recognized the institutional racism our Black students are born into inside and outside their organization. Black Lives Matter is a topic that is labeled as *too unagreeable* to deal with or something that isn't *palatable enough* for their white audiences to talk about.

Unless agriculture teachers, state FFA staff, and the National FFA Organization can begin doing the bare minimum of recognizing that racism is steeped into every aspect of American society and school systems (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998), members of colors will not feel a sense of belonging in the agricultural youth organization. And it does not and cannot stop there! Not only must agriculture staff recognize such realities, but they must do their jobs as educators to be actively antiracist.

Bonilla-Silva (2018) writes about the persistence of racial inequality in America despite liberal and progressive social and academic movements. Ultimately, he concludes that it is not enough for teachers, staff, and citizens to be 'non-racist' but they must become an antiracist. He emphasizes that our students need educators that are willing to

“ask themselves the hard questions and admit (or at least be willing to explore) very troubling racial feelings you might still have” (p. 243) This implies that not only must educators check themselves often but they must do the work to transform themselves by joining coalitions, participating in social organizations, and creating networks of associations and real friendships with people of color. “Fundamental change on race, class, and gender matters always requires social movement activity” (p. 245). For an agricultural youth organization and an agricultural education program to undergo fundamental change-- not just verbal commitments to change-- action must be taken.

Recommendations

In order to get anything done, we have to start talking about racial inequality in our organizations. It’s 2021. There are zero excuses for the agricultural youth organization to be ignoring issues of race. If conversations aren’t happening, start them-- don’t wait for people of color to begin these talks; do it yourself. Speak on issues loudly and often. Invite people of color into the conversation and *listen* when they join. Whatever you may think is the objective truth for agricultural education, remember it’s *not*. Students of color have cultures, languages, and traditions that should be celebrated in every youth organization.

We cannot begin to create meaningful change until we realize the integral structures of the American society were founded on racist, heteronormative, classist, conservative binary beliefs that marginalize, isolate, and murder underrepresented people. From the racism seeped into our schools to the capitalistic structures of our healthcare, housing, and judicial systems, the interwoven oppressions of our students of color cannot

be separated from the fundamentally unequal world we live in. The way the FFA is situated in our students' lives and thus in American society must be viewed through the oppressive, capitalist, conservative, Christian viewpoint that founded this country and created this agricultural youth organization in 1928. The context behind the inception of the FFA organization is intrinsically oppressive to minorities-- from one of only allowing white, land-owning men to join, to the forced adoption of new policies in the late 1960s allowing black and female members to join, to the refusal from the National FFA to disclose any statistics on the past or current demographics and make-up of its members. I outline beginning steps for agricultural educators below, but I would be doing a disservice to this work if I didn't highlight the bigger picture and societal infrastructure that's the true root of these issues.

Taking Action

For secondary agricultural teachers

Encourage students and FFA members to tell their authentic stories. Whether the story is just for you or their classmates or teammates, encourage students to speak about the various aspects of their identity (Faircloth, 2012) and then validate their feelings. Telling their stories clarifies a student's sense of self and creates connections to the classroom and FFA organization especially at the chapter level. Anzaldua's (1999) *Borderlands* encourages an 'identity-as-clusters-of-stories' metaphor which focuses on the construction of identity through the lens of telling one's life stories. For students to feel a sense of belonging in the FFA organization they must have opportunities to establish connections between the FFA and their developing sense of identities (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

Research tells us that Latinx students perceive caring behaviors from their educators differently than white students (Garza, 2009). Adapting to student's needs and incorporating their definitions of perceived caring behaviors is essential for creating connections in the classroom and in the FFA program. Agricultural teachers and advisors should develop an understanding of motivation and engagement factors for Latinx youth. Of the most important are (1) caring teachers, (2) strong community support, and (3) family ties as outlined in Chapter 2.

For state and national FFA staff

For a number of reasons previously listed in this study, the national and state FFA organizations have not achieved the same degree of diversity among their leaders and they have among their student members and alumni. Other organizations such as those in higher education who experience the same paradox have outlined some steps to take to address these issues. Reconciling this paradox must be done to ensure our students of color not only have a seat at the table but are actively engaged and listened to by other folks at said table. Recommendations for remedying this paradox include the following:

1) Minorities must view leadership positions as a viable option and make plans for making use of that option.
    a) Minority members should have mentors, role models, and staff who can help them achieve their goals. Staff should have credibility in the field and should be willing to put their reputation on the line when recommending the minority student to such positions.
2) Governing boards, like state FFA staff teams, should do all they can to create an institutional climate that is conducive to diversity.
    a) Trustees, staff, and advisors should work to ensure the leadership position is as appealing to minority members as it is to whites.
3) White board members and FFA staff should be understanding in seeing the value of electing minorities to the leadership positions.
4) State and national FFA staff should work to create opportunities to identify and recruit members of color into the agricultural youth organization.

5) Current state and national FFA officers should seek, mentor, and guide members of color for future leadership positions. Current leaders must demonstrate a commitment to members of color through their own examples.
6) The nominating committee of officers should eliminate the words "best qualified" as it sets a harmful standard that disproportionately eliminates members of color from elected positions.
    a) Review qualifications of leaders through the eyes of CRT as racist policies can infiltrate election processes too. (Vaughan, 1996).

Systems can be rethought, reimagined, and redone in ways that doesn't put any of our members at a disadvantage inclusive of the steps outlined above. Problems of misrepresentation or lack of minority applicants cannot be fixed unless state and national staff and directors begin to act and ask more from themselves and their adult leaders.

Agricultural education university professors

The best recommendation I have for those in higher education who want to legitimately make change in their teacher preparation programs is to read Schmitt & Bender's (1971) article "Teacher preparation for the culturally different." Though the article celebrates its 50-year anniversary, much of its findings are deeply relevant today. Essentially, the article acts as a to-do list for agricultural teacher preparation programs. Schmitt and Bender outline ten premises that every preparation program should incorporate to develop teachers who are equipped to serve minority youth:

1. Vigorous efforts must be made to recruit and retain future teachers from marginalized populations.
2. Pre-service minority agricultural teachers must be provided a variety of interdisciplinary classes (rather than the traditional monolithic program) to enhance their preparation experience.
3. Teacher preparation programs must provide students with educational experiences that has them interacting and engaging with minority groups.
4. Preservice teachers must learn to genuinely utilize parental involvement in developing realistic educational experiences for their youth.
5. Early and continuous involvement with minority children, youth, and adults must be an important element in the teacher prep program.

6. Understanding the motivation of minority youth is essential for agricultural teachers to be successful.
7. Future agricultural teachers must become increasingly "person-oriented" and "student-centered".
8. Agricultural teacher preparation programs must be cohesive partners with local school districts, state departments of education, industry and community organizations.
9. Strong lobby groups for teacher education programs are needed at the state, regional, and national levels.
10. Twenty-percent of the teacher's time should be spent with the university, local school district, and community in conducting research or professional development activities.

Tokenism of minority pre-service teachers should be replaced with commitment and genuine action if the educational hardship of minority students is to be improved. Only through systematic changes to the program and its curriculum can there be equitable opportunities for our preservice teachers and their future students.

For Latinx/ Hispanic members

For every Latinx/ Hispanic FFA member miraculously reading this, I hope I am accurately telling your story. Obviously, we are all different, composed of different lived experiences and engaged in agricultural education to differing degrees. Though this study consisted of only 12-member interviews, I hope you saw yourself in there somewhere, somehow, some way. Each story written is uniquely theirs, but these experiences can speak to you too. I'm sure throughout this you muttered "Duh" and "No shit," but I hope you had some "Hmm…" and "Wow, I didn't even see it like that" moments too.

I know that a lot of times the FFA/ Ag Ed can be shitty. They can say shitty things on purpose and accidentally; and I hope you know every time that happens, I am there with you too. I am not going to tell you to "just wait it out" or to be patient with these white folks because fuck that. You don't have to keep being engaged in agricultural education or in FFA if you don't want to. It's hard being in an organization and an

industry that doesn't seem to respect us. As dumb as it is, I want to try to change that. But I recognize I am just one Mexican girl, so who knows how far I'll make it? I too want to quit most days, but agriculture is so fucking cool and powerful. So, I'm going to keep fighting for you, for us; and I hope someday you can be proud of this.

Discussion and Future Research

Critical race theory attempts to understand the oppressive aspects of society to generate societal and individual transformation. In this study and in agricultural education, I use CRT to challenge the dominant discourse in race and racism being portrayed in the agricultural youth organization by examining the practices of the FFA organization that are being used to subordinate and further marginalize Latinx youth. Through this study and future examinations pertaining to institutional policies, programs, and practices of the FFA organization, agriculture education can begin to address and rectify the hindrances that interfere with Latinx members' rights and abilities to receive the best educational and organizational opportunities. Agricultural education can do this by beginning to recognize patterns and policies of racial inequality that continue to exist in more insidious and covert ways-- such as through colorblind racism, current officer requirements, and culture erasure in the FFA.

Ultimately, a reimagining of agricultural youth organizations needs to be accomplished to look at how systemic racism and white supremacy play a role at every level of leadership within the organization. Who is in charge? Who makes the final decisions? How were they elected? Who pays their salaries? Why are we doing things *this* certain way? Could they be done differently? Where are we heading towards as an

organization? Who decides that? Are members from every state being represented? Who are we asking to speak to members on a national level? Is every decision being made to have the right impact?

The National FFA Organization prides itself in being the largest student-run organization in the United States (ffa.org), but adult leaders and staff are the ones running the show. Looking at the diversity on those boards and panels, the requirements for state and national officers, and the election process they undergo is a start in addressing how racism seeps through every level of the organization. Agricultural educators must challenge themselves and their peers about their curriculum, CDE and LDE teams, officer elections, and overall messages sent to their students.

This case study only examined Latinx leaders and their relationship with Whiteness at the state-level of leadership. Further research should look at different minority populations engaged in agricultural youth organizations and their relationship with high-ranking leadership positions. Further understanding of Latinidad in the agricultural youth organization could be detailed to expand our knowledge of how each Latinx ethnicity deals with whiteness and assimilation in their state and in the United States. Understanding the various intersections of our members and how they can have a voice during every step of the reimagining process is essential for abolishing inequalities in the agricultural youth organization.

Final Words

I had a really fucking great advisor. Dane White refused to allow me to assimilate just to fit in with the FFA officer prototype despite my wanting to do so. He challenged

me to play the game by my rules-- natural hair, pride in my family, and unapologetically myself. I was never elected to a leadership office higher than my chapter. I am grateful for him, his friendship, and his reminders that this fight is the only thing that matters. Mr. and Mrs. Reece, thank you for introducing me to agricultural education. I will never say it enough, but you are the reason I started this whole thing and it has become my life now. I think of you both often and with a full heart. I love you.

At the end of the day, I don't have all of the answers. I am just a graduate student trying my best. I am privileged to have studied something that makes me want to change the fucking world; something that I want to fight for every day. When the largest student-run organization disproportionally marginalizes our Latino and Black youth, it's doing *everything* wrong. America doesn't look the way it did in 1928; this organization shouldn't be run as if it does. If national and state leaders are serious about our members, they will change. And if they do not change, it means they are okay with the inherently racist systems we have in place. Members do not give a shit if the National FFA Organization doesn't *mean* or *intend* to be racist. Impact over intent is what matters.

Let's do better for them.

APPENDICES

IRB Approval

University of Kentucky | Office of Research Integrity
IRB, RDRC

XP Initial Review

Approval Ends:	IRB Number:
7/21/2021	60174

TO: Graciela Barajas, M.S.
Community & Leadership Develop
PI phone #: 2097471379

PI email: graciela.barajas@uky.edu

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Nonmedical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol

DATE: 7/24/2020

On 7/22/2020, the Nonmedical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

Latinx Leader Assimilation in Secondary Ag Ed

Approval is effective from 7/22/2020 until 7/21/2021 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. In addition to IRB approval, you must also meet the requirements of the VPR Resumption of Research Phased Plan (i.e., waiver for Phase 1, training & individualized plan submission for Phases 2-4) before resuming/beginning your human subjects research. If applicable, the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects can be found in the "All Attachments" menu item of your E-IRB application. [Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.] Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review (CR)/Administrative Annual Review (AAR) request which must be completed and submitted to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

*****PLEASE NOTE******

Please obtain approval from UK PR for the advertising flyer before beginning recruitment.

Per the IRB, please make it clear to state FFA advisors that any questions about the research project should be directed to the PI.

****

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" available in the online Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

Initital Email to Advisors

Latino research project

Barajas, Graciela <graciela.barajas@uky.edu>
Tue 9/1/2020 12:05 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: Vincent, Stacy K. <stacy.vincent@uky.edu>

Good morning [redacted],

My name is Graciela Barajas and I am currently a graduate student at the University of Kentucky in agricultural education. We have yet to formally meet, but I am eager to chat further about your association and its students.

For my graduate program, my thesis will look specifically at Latino leaders in FFA and I was hoping to speak to some of your current and former member leaders. I am asking you, along with California, Texas, and New Mexico state advisors for their help too.

The qualitative research study will focus on the experiences of Latino youth leaders in the FFA organization, specifically those in the past 5 years who have served at the district, region, or state level. If you have students that fit this role, please provide me with any of their contact information or share with them the link below. Even if you don't have their contact information, a name would be a helpful place to start or a request for their local advisor to share with them.

This study is approved by the University of Kentucky's Institutional Review Board (protocol # 60174). The one-time interview would last about an hour, and we would have a conversation about their experience in FFA. I would be more than happy to reach out to you and them personally to discuss this study a little more before any official interview.

Below is a link to a Qualtrics form. If you could have your selected students fill that out (name, state, etc.), I can get in contact with them soon.

https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yZxfr2WLI1eYlf

I am hoping this project will further our profession in its inclusion of Latino youth—I am very grateful for any help you can provide!

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do.

Best,

Graciela Barajas
University of Kentucky

Qualtrics Interest Form

Default Question Block

Hello! My name is Graciela Barajas, and I am interested in hearing about your experience as a Latino district/ region/ area/ state leader in FFA. If you are willing to interview or would like more information, please fill out this short form and I will contact you soon. Thanks!

Name

State

E-mail

Phone Number

Highest officer position held and year (Ex. Area 3 Vice President, 2017)

Powered by Qualtrics

Email to Participants for Scheduling Interviews

Participating in the Latino research study

Barajas, Graciela <graciela.barajas@uky.edu>
Mon 9/21/2020 2:45 PM

Cc: Vincent, Stacy K. <stacy.vincent@uky.edu>
Bcc: [redacted]

Hello,

My name is Graciela Barajas; it's great to finally be in contact! As you may have been told by your state advisors, I am a graduate student at the University of Kentucky conducting a study on Latino leader's experience in the FFA organization. As a former California FFA leader and a Latina myself, I am curious about others' experiences leading an association like the FFA.

Below is a link to a Doodle Poll for a one-hour slot for the interview. I am happy to meet before then if you want to chat about the interview itself, though it really is more just a conversation about your time in FFA. Pretty low-key.

https://doodle.com/poll/n3f8mvby8x2gy9f7

I would love to hear from you if you're still interested or if you have any questions! Let me know.

Thanks!
Graciela Barajas
University of Kentucky

Revised Interview Question Guide

Interview Questions for Thesis Project

1. I wanna hear about a few different things but the general roadmap is I will ask you some questions about you, your experience with FFA in high school, your time spent as an officer, any experiences with hispanic students, and then we'll finish off with any last words you have. Sound good?
2. I would love to hear about you: family background? Ffa history? Rural background? First gen? Speak spanish? Siblings? Farm workers?
3. As you know, I'm interested in Latino/ latinx youth in ag ed leadership. how would you describe your ethnicity? what does it mean to you? What has your experience been of your heritage or your culture?
4. Tell me how you came to FFA? Why were you involved?
5. Tell me what your chapter is like, number of members involved? Culture of ag ed program? SAE? Power-house?
6. I'm interested in hearing about the leaders of your local chapter. Who were they? What were they like? How did you identify with them? How were they different?
    a. Who was important? Did you have problems with anyone? Why?
7. What were the different groups or cliques within your state FFA program? Was there a popular crew or leading group?
    a. Tell me about the crew you belonged to.
    b. How did you feel you were different? How did you react? What did you do?
8. What did state officers look like when you were in high school?
    a. Can you remember any thoughts/ feelings/ realizations you had when you first saw a state officer team?
    b. In what ways did you belong? Less so?

9. What was your thought-process in running for office? What hopes, reservations, fears did you have?
    a. How did you express your Latino culture? What limitations did you feel in expressing your cultural identity? How did you respond?
10. How did other Latinx friends, family, and community members react to your involvement in FFA?
11. Based on your perspective now, what would have made this experience better? What did you need as a person? What should FFA do for leaders like you? What would have helped you along?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add? I'd love any summarized thoughts? Did anything come up that you'd like to share that we didn't quite hit on yet?
13. I may have to come back for clarifications or follow-ups. Are you open to that?

Codes from the Interviews

STUDENT INTERVIEWS	
Name	**Description**
Assimilation	**the "Americanizing" of students of color**
accent	the distinct mode of pronunciation, usually in regards to one's nationality or social class
code-switching	the ability to move back and forth in language/slang between native and non-native languages
country music	Type of music most often played in classrooms, at meetings, and FFA events
mannerisms	Changing of vocabulary, different ways of communicating with white and students of color
polished	Ideals of an FFA leader: clean-shaven, neat appearance, well-spoken, seen as successful
precedents	Latinx students who came before them
white-passing	Change in Latinx students to become more "White"; ie, hair, make-up, language, interests
networking	**communicating with other state or regional leaders to become more well-known in the state FFA organization**
self-awareness	**Latinx students are aware of the assimilating they had to do in the ag ed leadership organization**
popular group	**Most prominent student members of the state organization**
"cool kids"	Term most often used by interviewees to describe the popular group of their respective state FFA organization
regional officers	Students at the second-highest level of leadership (right below state officers)
state officers	The top leaders of a state FFA organization; students with most coveted leadership title in the state
chapter officers	**Local leaders at the high school level**
high school FFA	Students most related to students in their high school FFA program (called an FFA chapter)
representation	Leaders of the chapter were representative of the diversity at each school; very inclusive of students of color

leadership	**Defined as follows...**
in-group	Leadership in the in-group meant you were included with the cool kids/ popular group
title	Leadership as your title meant you helped some sort of regional or state officer position
training	Leadership was seen through training FFA members to fit the prototype of a state officer; ie. white, put-together, polished, successful
White kids	**The FFA members who are white in each association**
FFA legacies	Students whose parents were past FFA members and/or leaders
friends amongst each other	Pointed out as white students who are only friends with other white kids
future officers	Seen as the popular kids, most likely to hold leadership roles in the future (like regional/state office)
livestock show-people	Students who show animals at county and state fairs; usually very interested in raising and selling livestock such as cattle and pigs.
popular	White students were most often described as being a part of the "popular crowd"
Trump supporters	Defined as "the racist students, pro-Trump probably because of their parents"
Ag teachers	**The agricultural educators in the classroom and FFA advisors outside of the classroom**
competitive	Teachers were described as wanting to win a lot of awards, competitions, and titles. Seen as cutthroat.
empowering	Teachers who understood the lived experiences of Latinx students in a white-space. Seen as positive.
unaware	Teachers who were simply doing their job; unaware of the power relations between Latinx members and white leaders. Seen as indifferent.
successful	**Defined a student as this if they were high-performing and high-achieving in the FFA organization**
officer position	The leadership position of an officer; ie. president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, reporter, or sentinel. Those ranked higher are seen as being superior

who you knew	Students thought of success as "who you knew" whether that was being friends with the in-crowd, knowing past state officers, or being part of a regional office team.
banners	Banners are used to give individuals and teams awards for winning FFA activities and competitions. The more banners a student has, the more successful they are perceived as being
Working within system	**Used by a student to convey their work advocating for other students of color as a state officer**
2019 National Convention	Last year's National FFA Convention included a seminar spoken in all Spanish and the election of a Puerto Rican officer. Both were seen as reaching out and being inclusive to Latinx student members.
Past Latinx leaders	**State leaders of previous years who identified as Hispanic/Latino.**
assimilated	All past Latinx leaders were described as having been assimilated to the white, dominant culture in the FFA
high-achieving	All past leaders were seen as being successful, winning multiple banners, and being high-achieving
rewarded	All past Latinx leaders were seen as being rewarded for their assimilation by being elected the top officer position
slated against Latinx	Most past Latinx state officers were slated against another Latinx leader for that same position

REFERENCES

Abi-Nader, J. (1990). A house for my mother: Motivating Hispanic high school students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *21*(1), 41-58.

About us. (2020, November 18). Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/about/

Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza*.

Agricultural education for all. (2021, January 15). Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/ag-ed-for-all/

Banks, J. A. (1997). *Multicultural education: Characteristics and goals*. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M.

Barajas, G., Crump, M. K., Vincent, S. K., & McCubbins, O. P. (2020). Somos nosotros! Lived experiences of Latinx ELL youth enrolled in secondary agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 61*(4), 143-155.

Bell, D. A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory? *University of Illinois Law Review, 893*, 893-910.

Bernard, H. R. (2017). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Bloomberg, L., Ganey, A., Alba, V., Quintero, G., & Alcantara, L. A. (2003). Chicano-Latino youth leadership institute: An asset-based program for youth. American *Journal of Health Behavior, 27*, 45-54.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Branch, A. J. (2005). Practicing multicultural education: Answering recurring questions about what it is (not). *Counterpoints, 131, The politics of Curricular Change: Race, Hegemony, and Power in Education,* 143-161.

Carbado, D., Fisk, C., & Gulati, M. (2008). After inclusion. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 4,* 83-102.

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing, 25*(6), 435-436.

Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Crul, M. (2018). A new angle to the assimilation debate in the US. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 41*(13), 2258-2264.

DeCuir, J. T. & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26-31.

Delgado, R. & Stefanic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction (3rd edition).* New York, NY: New York University Press.

Dixson, D. D., Keltner, D., Worrell, F. C., & Mello, Z. (2018). The magic of hope: Hope mediates the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research, 111*(4), 507-515.

Elliott, K. M. & Lambert, M. D. (2018). Urban and rural Latino students' experiences in agricultural education: toward defining rural privilege. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *59*(3), 198-212.

Faircloth, B. S. (2012). "Wearing a mask" vs. connecting identity with learning. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *37*, 186-194.

Faircloth, B. S. & Hamm, J. V. (2005). Sense of belonging among high school students representing 4 ethnic groups. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *34*(4), 293-309.

Faulkner, P. E., Baggett, C. D., Bowen, C. F., & Bowen, B. E. (2009). Attitudes, educational, and career choices of food and agricultural sciences institute participants. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *50*(1), 45-56.

FFA history. (2021, February 05). Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/ffa-history/

FFA statistics. (2019, September 04). Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/statistics/

Ford, D. Y., Scott, M. T., Moore III, J. L., & Amos, S. O. (2013). Gifted education and culturally different students: examining prejudice and discrimination via microaggressions. *Gifted Child Today*, *36*(3), 205-208.

Fulgini, A. J. (2010). The academic desire of students from Latin American backgrounds. *In Growing up Hispanic: Health & Development of Children*. Susan McHale & Alan Booth (Eds.). (Washington, D.C: The Urban Institute), 265-272.

Garza, R. (2009). Latino and white high school students' perceptions of caring behaviors: are we culturally responsive to our students? *Urban Education*, *44*(3), 297-321.

Gillborn, D. (2005). Education policy as an act of white supremacy: Whiteness, critical race theory and education reform. *Journal of Education Policy*, *20*(4), 485-505.

Hains, S. C., Hogg, M. A., & Duck, J. M. (1997) Self-categorization and leadership: Effects of group prototypicality and leader stereotypicality. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *23*(10), 1087-1099.

Halgunseth, L. C., Ispa, J. M. & Rudy, D. (2006). Parental control in Latino families: an integrated review of the literature. *Child Development, 77*(5), *Special Issue on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture in Child Development,* 1282-1297.

Haskins, N, & A Singh. (2015). Critical race theory and counselor education pedagogy: creating equitable training. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 54*(4), 288-301.

Hiraldo, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection, 31*(7), 53-59.

Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5*(3), 184-200.

Hornsey, M. J. (2008). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory: a historical review. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(1), 204-222.

Huber, L. (2008). Building critical race methodologies in educational research: research note on critical race testimonio. *FIU Law Review, 4*(1), 159-174.

James, C. E. (2010). Why is the school basketball team predominately black? *Handbook of Research in the Social Foundations of Education*, 450-459.

Jones, K. R. & Bowen, B. E. (1998). Influence of student and school factors on African American enrollment in agricultural science courses. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 39*(2), 39-49.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7-24.

Lash, C. L. (2018). Making Americans: Schooling, diversity, and assimilation in the twenty-first century. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences, 4*(5), 99–117.

Marx, S. (2008). "Not blending in": Latino students in a predominately White school. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 30*(1), 69-88.

Masumoto, M. & Brown-Welty, S. (2009) Case study of leadership practices and school-community interrelationships in high-performing, high-poverty, rural California high schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 24*(1), 1-18.

Mullen, B., Salas, E. & Driskell, J. E. (1989). Salience, motivation, and artifact as contributions to the relation between participation rate and leadership. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 25*, 545-559.

Narayan, K. (1993). How native is a "native" anthropologist? *American anthropologist, 95*(3), 671-686.

Nye, J. L. & Forsyth, D. R. (1991). The effects of prototype-based biases on leadership appraisals: a test of leadership categorization theory. *Small Group Research, 22*(3), 360-379.

Oluo, I. (2018). *So you want to talk about race.* Seal Press.

Peguero, A. A. (2011). Immigrant youth involvement in school-based extracurricular activities. *The Journal of Educational Research, 104*(1), 19-27.

Pfeffer, J. (1977). The ambiguity of leadership. *The Academy of Management Review, 2*(1), 104-112.

Polit, D.F., & Beck, C.T. (2014). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (8th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Potochnick, S., Perreira, K. M., & Fuligni, A. (2012). Fitting in: the roles of social acceptance and discrimination in shaping the daily psychological well-being of Latino youth. *Social Science Quarterly, 93*(1), 173-190.

Roberts, T. G., Hall, J. L., Briers, G. E., Gill, E., Shinn, G. C., Larke, A. & Jaure, P. (2009). Engaging Hispanic students in agricultural education and the FFA: a three-year case study. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 50*(3), 69-80.

Rodriguez, M. T., & Lamm, A. J. (2016). Identifying student cultural awareness and perceptions of different cultures. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 57*(2), 106-118.

Rush, M. C. & Russell, J. E. A. (1988). Leader prototypes and prototype-contingent consensus in leader behavior descriptions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 24,* 88-104.

Schaeffer, K. (2019). In a rising number of U.S. counties, Hispanic and black Americans are the majority. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/20/in-a-rising-number-of-u-s-counties-hispanic-and-black-americans-are-the-majority/

Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (2010). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research*. AltaMira Press.

Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (2013). *Essential ethnographic methods: A mixed methods approach.* (Vol. 3). AltaMira Press.

Schmitt, H. E. & Bender, R. E. (1971). Teacher preparation for the culturally different. *The Agricultural Education Magazine, 43*(11), 282-283.

Solorzano, D. G. & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 14*(4), 471-495.

Stepler, R. & Lopez, M. H. (2016) Ranking the Latino population by state. *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends.* https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2016/09/08/4-ranking-the-latino-population-in-the-states/

Suarez-Orozco, C., Gaytán, F. X. & Kim, H. J. (2010). Facing the challenges of educating Latino immigrant-origin youth. *In Growing up Hispanic: Health &*

Development of Children. Susan McHale & Alan Booth (Eds.). (Washington, D.C: The Urban Institute), 189-239.

Taylor, L. (2006). Wrestling with race: the implications of integrative antiracism education for immigrant ESL youth. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(3), 519-544.

The National Council for Agricultural Education. (2015) National AFNR content standards, revised 2015. *The National Council for Agricultural Education*. https://thecouncil.ffa.org/afnr/

Treitler, V. B. (2015). Social agency and white supremacy in immigration studies. *Sociology of race and ethnicity, 1*(1), 153-165.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," "Charter School Teacher Data File," "Public School Data File," and "Charter School Data File," 1999–2000; and National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16.

Vaughan, G. B. (1996). Paradox and promise: Leadership and the neglected minorities. *New directions for community colleges, 1996*(94), 5-12.

Vaught, S. E. & Castagno, A. E. (2008). “I don’t think I’m a racist”: critical race theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 11*(2), 95-113.

Vega, A. (2006). “Americanizing?”: Attitudes and perceptions of U.S. Latinos. Harvard *Journal of Hispanic Policy, 18*, 39-57.

Velez, J. J., Clement, H. Q., & McKim, A. J. (2018). National participation in school-based agricultural education: considering ethnicity, sex, and income. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 59*(1), 189-203.

Villenas, S. & Deyhle, D. (1999). Critical race theory and ethnographies challenging the stereotype: Latino families, schooling, resilience and resistance. *Curriculum Inquiry, 29*(4), 413-445.

Vincent, S. K., Henry, A. L., & Anderson, J. C. (2012). College major choice for students of color: Toward a model of recruitment for the agricultural education profession. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 53*(4), 187–200.

Vincent, S. K. & Torres, R. M. (2015). Multicultural competence: a case study of teachers and their students' perceptions. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 56*(2), 64-75.

Visweswaran, K. (1994). Fictions of feminist ethnography. U of Minnesota Press.

White, D. (2019). Diversity and inclusion: Now what? *CATA Golden Slate, November issue.*

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: design and methods*. Sage.

VITA

Graciela Barajas

Education

University of Kentucky; Lexington, Kentucky
M.S. in Community and Leadership Development
Teaching Credential in Secondary Agricultural Education
Thesis: "Playing the Game": A Case Study of Latinx Leaders in an Agricultural Youth Organization — Expected May 2021
Chaired by Dr. Stacy Vincent in the department of Community and Leadership Development.

University of California, Davis; Davis, California
B.S. in Managerial Economics — June 2019
Emphasis in Agricultural Economics

Professional Experience

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY — Aug. 2019-Dec. 2020
Graduate Teaching Assistant

National Association of Agricultural Educators, Anaheim, CA — Dec. 2019
Workshop Presenter

Locust Trace Agriscience Center, Lexington, KY — Jan 2021-May 2021
Student Teacher

Research Experience

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY — Aug. 2019-May 2021
Graduate Research Assistant

Publications

Barajas, G., Crump, M. K., Vincent, S. K., & McCubbins, O. P. (2020) ¡Somos nosotros! Lived experiences of Latinx ELL youth enrolled in secondary agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *61*(4), 143-155.

Papers & Posters Presented at Conferences

Defining your Role: Facilitating Experiential Education. Poster presented at the Southern Region American Association for Agricultural Education Conference in Feb 2021.

¿Puedes Verme? Latin ESL Youth in Secondary Agricultural Education. Paper presented at American Association for Agricultural Education. National Research Conference, May 2020.

Building Rapport and Vulnerability Through Personal Narratives in a Multicultural Education Course. Poster presented at American Association for Agricultural Education. National Research Conference, May 2020.

Exploring Engagement of English as a Second Language Latino Youth in Agricultural Education. Poster presented at the Southern-Region American Association for Agricultural Education Conference. Louisville, KY, Feb 2020.

Cardboard Confessions: A Critical Starting Point for Culturally Responsive Teaching. Poster presented at the Southern-Region American Association for Agricultural Education Conference. Louisville, KY, Feb 2020.

Honors and Awards

National AAAE Research Conference, Distinguished Manuscript Award, 2020

Southern-Region AAAE Conference, Top 2 Innovative Posters, 2020

Southern-Region AAAE Conference, Top 3 Research Posters, 2020