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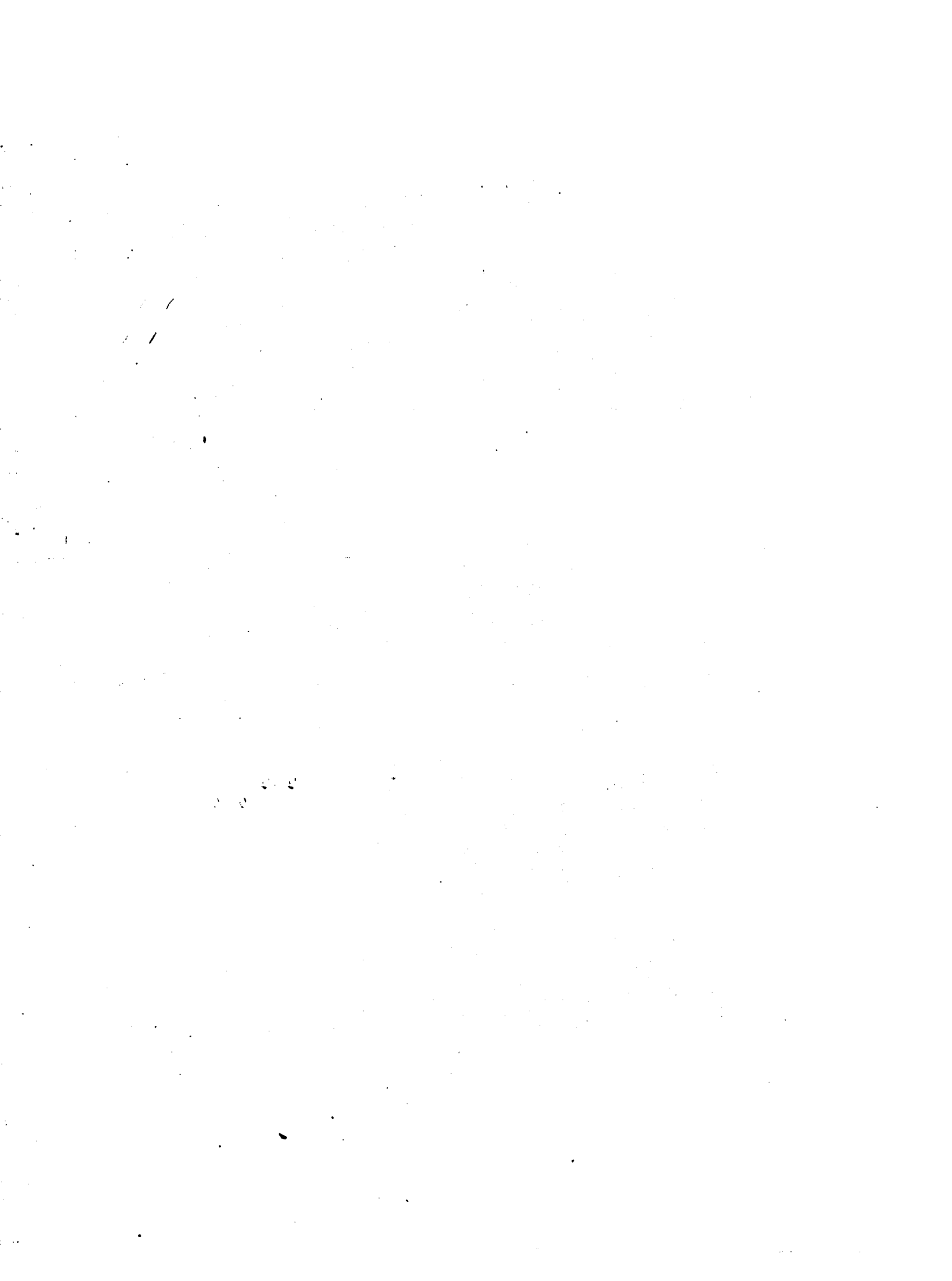
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**THE SIMULTANEITY OF EXPERIENCE:  
MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND SYMBOLIC USES OF LANGUAGE  
AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICANS**

by

**Jacqueline Henriette Elise Messing**

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**DEDICATION**

**To my parents-**

*Pour maman, qui a tant lutté pour que je parle le français -- c'est là que tout a commencé.*

**For my father, Dr. Simon D. Messing, for his inspiration and support.**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	8
ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES OF IDENTITY .....	12
THE BORDERLANDS.....	15
METHODOLOGY.....	20
IDEOLOGY IN DISCOURSE .....	21
ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING.....	22
CASE STUDIES - INTERVIEWEE PROFILES .....	25
Marcie.....	25
Teresa .....	27
Elaine.....	29
Tracey.....	31
Aurelia .....	32
Mario .....	35
Enrique .....	37
DISCUSSION: CASE STUDIES AND BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE .....	39
“DIFFERENCE” AND CONFLICT IN THE DISCOURSE .....	40
“SIMULTANEITY OF EXPERIENCE” AND CATEGORIES OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER.....	42
ETHNICITY AND CLASS: MINORITY STATUS AND HIERARCHIES OF POWER .....	44
THE EMOTION OF MINORITY STATUS.....	47
DECONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES OF MEXICAN-AMERICANS.....	51
LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND LINGUISTIC INSECURITY .....	53
THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE.....	58

**TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued***

<b>GENDER: HERE VS. <i>EL OTRO LADO</i></b> .....	<b>61</b>
<b>REFLEXIVE NOTE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>67</b>
<b>APPENDIX: ETHNICITY, LANGUAGE BACKGROUND, AND LANGUAGE USE QUESTIONNAIRE</b> .....	<b>69</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>71</b>

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on multiple identity constructions and symbolic uses of language among Mexican-Americans in Arizona. The concept of a homogeneous “Mexican-American community” is shown to be a construct -- an imagined community. Building on anthropological conceptualizations of identity, and studies in language and identity, a framework of the *simultaneity of experience* focuses the analysis in terms of ethnicity, class, and gender, framing a discussion of the emotional dimension of minority status and the symbolic function of language in identity. Rather than offer a comprehensive analysis of a bounded Mexican-American identity, this paper offers insight into the construction of multiple identities, through the analysis of discourse from a small group of people; individual voices are highlighted through the use of case studies. Conceptualizations of identity construction are problematized, including the common expectation of heterogeneity in ethnic groups such as those of Mexican heritage.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses issues related to identity, language and culture.

Conventionally, identity has been described as static and bounded. Kondo (1990), Kroskritey (1993), and Zavella (1987, 1991) suggest new ways of conceptualizing identity that are more flexible and open -- allowing for multiple identity components. These frameworks are welcome and timely additions to the study of identity, especially in the borderlands context where political-economic, nationalistic, linguistic, and ideological multiplicities abound, giving rise to various borderlands ideologies (e.g. Anzaldúa 1987, Martinez 1994, Rebolledo & Rivero 1993, Rosaldo 1980, Vélez-Ibáñez 1979).

In this paper I wish to build upon this body of work, as well as anthropological studies of minorities in the U.S., by examining these theoretical constructs at the level of the individual -- through particular instances of talk. This data, from interviews with members of the Arizona Mexican-American community, should help to elucidate these theories of identity. These interviews yield information about a diversity of ideologies within this community. A discourse of the simultaneity of experience (Zavella 1989) will focus the analysis in terms of ethnicity, class, and gender, framing the discussion of the emotional dimension of minority status and the symbolic function of language in identity.

Following Hymes' (1988[1972]) view of a diverse speech community (in which differences in language use, and social meaning of language are expected) in this analysis I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of a bounded Mexican-American identity, but rather, I hope to offer insight into the construction of multiple identities and

the role of language in such constructions, through the analysis of discourse from a small group of people. Pursuant to this goal, I have chosen to highlight individual voices through the use of case studies.

My broad research goals are to focus on issues of language use and ethnic identity in the Arizona Mexican-American community and to explore the role of language as a marker of identity, through patterns of language use and choice of ethnic markers (i.e. Chicano and Hispanic). The following analysis is focused on one component of this work: a model for the conceptualization of multiple identities, in which the role of language in identity construction is backgrounded, although important. My research is informed by a multi-disciplinary body of work on language and identity construction. There has been a recent preponderance of work on identity construction in fields such as literary and cultural studies, and including writings on identity by members of ethnic minorities (e.g. Brown and Ling 1993, López 1993, Pérez 1993). Some of the more recent work exhibits Post-Modern attention to a multiplicity of selves, rather than a static “self.” Finally, a grounding of my analysis in an understanding of key historical processes in the Southwestern borderlands leads to an understanding of class and ethnic positioning.

Located in the U.S./ Mexico borderlands, Arizona is home to a very diverse population of Mexican-Americans, Mexicans and Latinos, composed of multiple generations of Mexican-Americans, as well as recent immigrants. The diversity is visible, for example, through variation in linguistic competency in and use of Spanish (and sometimes Native American languages); attitudes toward “Mexican-ness;” level of

education; and socioeconomic class<sup>1</sup>. These factors are interdependent, although the most important differentiating factor seems to be the number of generations an individual has been in the U.S. Officer (1981) concludes his book on the Mexican heritage of Arizona with the hope that his work doesn't convey a "false impression of homogeneity" (Officer 1981:228); he continues by providing the most apt characterization of this community that I have seen:

here we are dealing with some people whose Arizona roots are ten generations deep, and with others who crossed the border from Mexico half an hour ago; with individuals whose ancestors were people of means who came here because of political differences, and others who waded the river or crawled through the barbed wire to escape the starvation that plagued them and their families; with persons who are visibly Indian and others who are physically indistinguishable from numerous European immigrants to this land; with individuals who are splendidly bilingual, and others who speak and understand only Spanish, or only English; with persons who have lived here for 40 years without becoming citizens, and with others who took the oath of naturalization the day they became eligible; with individuals who come from such widely removed places as Yucatán and Sonora, where the speech patterns, food music, and general life style are remarkably different; and with people who prefer to speak of themselves as Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, Spanish-Americans, Latin-Americans, Hispanic Americans, and just plain Americans, as well as with some who are still proudly "Mexican" and who hope some day to return to that country. [Officer 1981:228]

This quote makes plain the need to problematize the notion of a "Mexican-American community," a term commonly used and rarely explained. The common roots of the U.S. Mexican people has led to a conception of a bounded community, which because of its great diversity (as illustrated above) becomes what Anderson has termed an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991).

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<sup>1</sup> Religion and religious observance is another factor of variation, although not dealt with in this paper.

Adding another layer of complexity is that although, as I have just suggested, an “imagined community” of Mexican-Americans may be a construct, there remains in the mind of many Americans a Durkheimian collective consciousness (cf. Durkheim 1933) that views Mexican-Americans as a homogeneous group. This collective consciousness stems from the ideological hegemony of a “mainstream America,” (which is itself an imagined community, although one that is rooted in American hierarchies of power and socioeconomic class differences.) In this ideology, which is both ignorant and racist, “Hispanics” are seen as homogeneous because “they all speak Spanish,” and subordinate because of their socioeconomic class. (Issues such as illegal immigration add fuel to this perception.) This collective consciousness is salient to many Americans, and although the U.S. Mexican community is diverse, all Mexican-Americans must contend with the ignorance and racism inherent to this collective consciousness at some time in their daily lives.

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES OF IDENTITY

As a point of departure, I will introduce some important recent conceptualizations of identity construction. Kroskrity (1993) has proposed the concept of a “repertoire of identities,” advancing a conceptualization of identity that is multi-faceted:

“The advantage of a *repertoire of identities* approach is that it permits us to attribute to members a multiplicity of *alternating* identities, and directs analytical attention to (1) when and how identities are interactively invoked by sociocultural actors and (2) the relations between various identities (e.g., the compartmentalization or convergence of ethnic, social, and culturally available voices) as well as the means by which they are communicated between members. [...] But rather than claiming that ethnic identities are exclusive, continuously ascribed, or automatically expressed by particular languages, a repertoire approach focuses attention on speakers’ alternation, or selection, of codes and identities, both intracultural and intercultural. [Kroskrity 1993:222-3]

The strength of Kroskrity’s “repertoire of identities” is its definitional acknowledgment of the existence of intrasocietal diversity and a speaker’s ability to draw upon multiple resources, both cultural and linguistic, in forging his/her concept of self. Kroskrity follows Hymes’ call for “a general theory and body of knowledge within which diversity of speech, repertoires, ways of speaking, and choosing among them find a natural place” (Hymes 1988[1972]:40). This conceptualization of a bounded set of referents of identity has been discussed by others as well; Stuart Hall (1991) suggests a pie chart to visually represent multiple identities, and Ralph Turner (in Cohen 1994) envisions a basket as a container of selves, in which, like Kroskrity’s repertoire, different identities surface in different contexts. These models, however, are not as elaborated as is Kroskrity’s repertoire, which focuses analytic attention on context, and on language.

While Kroskrity's model makes room for the multi-faceted nature of identity that had long been ignored in conceptualizations of identity, the bounded "repertoire" model lacks the potential for change, other than alternation between identities. Kondo's work on the construction of identity in Japanese society addresses both the dynamic and complex, mutually constructed nature of identity:

Identity is not a fixed "thing," it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations. [Kondo 1993:24]

Rather than bounded, essential entities, replete with unitary substance and consciousness, identities become nodal points repositioned in different contexts. [Ibid. 1993:304]

Kondo's description highlights the contextual variation of the presentation of the self, which constantly has the potential of being reconfigured. A problem with this definition - is that it does not define what is meant by nodal points - are these equally open and ambiguous as identity itself, and not historically constituted?

Both Kondo and Kroskrity's models have strengths and weaknesses - I propose that while we each have our own repertoire of selves<sup>2</sup>, we also have fixed components to our identities; yet there is always the potential for change. Fishman characterizes an ethnicity that is both grounded and changeable: "Characteristic of a postmodern ethnicity is the stance of simultaneously transcending ethnicity as *a complete, self-contained*

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<sup>2</sup> The following quote serves as an example of a repertoire: "Finding a comfortable collective identity is not as easy as it sounds--especially for people who think of themselves as independent spirits....I could legitimately group myself with native New Yorkers, nonfiction writers, or the middle-aged, but I choose to identify with the categories I find most meaningful, 'women' and 'Jews,' two groups that manage to be simultaneously significant yet intractably marginal." [Cottin Pogrebin 1991]

*system, but of retaining it as a selectively preferred, evolving, participatory system”*

(Fishman 1985:11, italics added for emphasis). Despite the difficulty in defining identity, these attempts work together and each offer insight into studies of identity construction.

## THE BORDERLANDS

Much attention has been paid to the characterization of multiple identities in the context of geographical and metaphorical border crossings. An “ideology of the borderlands” has developed, as described in this section. It is the site of creative conceptualizations of border crossers - where identities symbolize nations - and the conflicts between dominant and subordinate forces. The language and romanticization of the border region seen in the following quotes, is distinctly different from my interviewees descriptions. This discord between discourses is one that will surface again later in the paper.

Renato Rosaldo depicts the borderlands as regions of cultural production of multiple identities, rather than simply regions of multiple populations:

Although most metropolitan typifications continue to suppress border zones, human cultures are neither necessarily coherent nor always homogenous. More often than we usually care to think, our everyday lives are crisscrossed by border zones, pockets, and eruptions of all kinds. Social borders frequently become salient around such lines as sexual orientation, gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, politics, dress, food, or taste. Along with “our” supposedly transparent cultural selves, such borderlands should be regarded not as analytically empty transitional zones but as *sites of creative cultural production* that require investigation. [Rosaldo 1993:207-208, italics added]

The reference to “social borders” is a metaphoric extension of the physical border. The focus suggested by Rosaldo, of seeing borderlands as “sites of creative cultural production that require investigation” is one I follow in this analysis of multiple, multicultural identities. Martinez (1994) describes the dynamics of a geo-political borderlands as having an “environment of internationality inherent in the border zone. Powerful

transnational forces pull large numbers of borderlanders into the orbit of the neighboring country, with a resulting array of cross-boundary relationships and lifestyles” (Martinez 1994:59). What are the “powerful transnational forces” to which Martinez refers? Are they based on migration for economic survival? This is a characteristically vague description, which nonetheless points to a region with a multiplicity of ideologies and senses of self. These multiplicities are further elucidated by Vélez-Ibáñez:

...we are not bicultural but instead, uniquely cultural - as participants of history and as history-makers. We are a synthesis of myriad experiences - pan-human, multicultural, and multisocial. During the course of history, such experiences and continuing experiences are added as layers of meaning, layers of orders, layers of different and similar shared understandings, and, as a result of such experiences and the discarding of layers, we constantly “become.” This is another way of saying that culturally we are neither Mexican nor Anglo-American, but we are of the American continent in a technologically complex society, with a complexity of experiences of moral orders. Some of these moral orders are uniquely Mexican, some are uniquely Anglo, and some pertain to other minorities, but in their totality and together with our own participation in the creative process of living and experiencing, may be considered uniquely Chicano. [Vélez-Ibáñez 1979:47-48]

Tafolla (1985) echoes Vélez-Ibáñez in her caution against thinking of Chicanas’ biculturalism as being simply a blend of two traditions; rather she sees the Chicana’s culture as “a unique blend of dual experiences and a creative invention of new forms expressly her own...her perspectives are...unique and often different from both Mexican and U.S. cultures” (Tafolla 1985:13-14). The “synthesis of experiences” expressed by Vélez-Ibáñez is a part of the “historical patrimony” of being born into this particular community (González 1992), which becomes an important factor in what Wolf has termed “claims to ethnicity” (Wolf 1994).

Much has been written about multiple identities in the field of Chicana studies, in which there is a salient conceptualization of the border as at once geographic, ideological and metaphorical. Feeling excluded from work by both Chicanos and feminists, a new discourse (both literary and theoretical) has been created, (cf. Anzaldúa 1987, 1990; Anzaldúa & Moraga 1981, López 1993, Rebolledo & Rivero 1993) in which the borders and intersections of Chicana identities and ideologies are central, as illustrated below:

Chicanas have always had [concern] about borders. Fluidity, translations, multiplicities, limits, complications, alienations, the other, the outsider, the insider, the center, the margin. And, although the concern has always been there, it has become more clearly articulated, more explicit, more prevalent. It is a concern that derives from the triple or more cultures that must be explained, understood, constantly translated. Chicanas are Malinches.<sup>3</sup> [Rebolledo & Rivero 1993:30]

I find this poetic description of borders immensely satisfying to read; As someone who grew up with multiple cultures and languages, much of the literary writing on multiple identities appeals to me. But as I compare my interviewees

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<sup>3</sup> The historical "Malinche" was a woman sold into slavery, and given to Hernan Cortes when he arrived in Mexico. Since she spoke both Nahuatl and Maya, she was paired with a Spaniard who had learned Maya, learned Spanish and she then acted as Cortes' translator. She became his mistress, bore his child, which some consider the first mestizo child of the "New World." The image of the Malinche has been used against Chicanas (Tafolla 1985), because for many, the word Malinche is synonym with "traitor." The Malinche is *la chingada* 'the fucked,' or the raped woman. This interpretation blames a weak female victim and serves to reinforce gender hierarchies.

Another mythical archetype, the Llorona or weeping woman is a mix of Indian and Spanish folklore. La Llorona murders her children, after which she can never rest peacefully (cf. Mathews 1993). In the Southwest, the images of La Llorona and La Malinche come together in the figure of one woman. "In general the image is a negative one, tied up in a vague way with sexuality and the death of children: the negative mother image" (Rebolledo & Rivero 1993:192). Many Chicanas have written about these women and given the myth multiple interpretations. Some writers have reclaimed this symbolic woman and see her as a survivor; the Malinche as translator is another positive reinterpretation. Rebolledo and Rivero see the Chicano Renaissance as marking a re-examination of this symbolic woman by Chicana writers, who now see the Malinche as a symbol of "strength and self-determination" (Tafolla 1985).

characterizations of their experiences to writing in this style, I realize that this quote represents a romantic characterization that cannot claim to be representative of everyone's - every Chicana's - experience. Although, it is important to note the centrality of feelings of "otherness" or marginality in this work, that also came out in my interviews:

The life experiences of Chicanas mold a consistently repeated sense of 'otherness,' nurtured by feelings of alienation from both their Mexican and their American cultural modes; at times they despair in not finding an appropriate place as a safe haven, a cultural niche, or space of their own. [Rebolledo & Rivero 1993: 75]

Chicana identity has been described as multifaceted (Anzaldúa 1987, 1990; Anzaldúa & Moraga 1981; Baca Zinn 1980, Rebolledo & Rivero 1993). In her book Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza, Anzaldúa talks about the border as being "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Anzaldúa 1987:3). But for Anzaldúa, the border is at once geographic and metaphoric, representing borders between nations, ethnicities, languages and sexual identities. Another example of cross-border feelings of "otherness" is Pat Mora's description of a "legal" citizen who nevertheless feels like an "alien" because she is othered in both Mexico and the U.S.:

Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural/.....able to sit in a paneled office  
 drafting memos in smooth English, able to order in fluent Spanish  
 at a Mexican restaurant,/American but hyphenated,  
 .....an American to Mexicans/ a Mexican to Americans  
 a handy token/ sliding back and forth/ between the fringes of both worlds  
 [Mora in Anzaldúa & Moraga 1990:376]

**The question arises: Is this writer on the fringe of both countries? Obviously she perceives herself as such - but again, the experience is not one shared by all my interviewees.**

**This literature review has shown that conceptualizations of multiple identities are quite common among many Mexican-American scholars and writers. These issues, of marginality and conflict were also apparent in my interviews - to which I now turn - although they remained largely implicit, with varying degrees of explicit-ness.**

## METHODOLOGY

My data collection consisted of open-ended interviews with individuals of Mexican heritage. The interviews averaged one hour each, and with each person's prior consent, I tape-recorded a total of 8 hours of data; time constraints limited my interviews to one session. I deliberately kept the pool of consultants small, with the goal of in-depth interviews focusing on the individual's experience. I used open-ended questions as a guide or a means of directing the conversation (cf. Briggs 1986), rather than as a basis for quantitative results. The questionnaire (See Appendix) contains 50 questions about family background, language use, ethnicity, and naming choice (i.e. Chicano); not all questions were applicable in each interview.

The interview population consisted of five women and two men. Six of the seven people interviewed are students, both undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Arizona. I had the most access to this group through my campus ties; I obtained the names of these individuals who were interested in being interviewed through word of mouth. Several of the women interviewed received community service recognition from their sorority for their participation.

## IDEOLOGY IN DISCOURSE

The analysis undertaken in this paper falls into a tradition within linguistic anthropology that looks to discourse as a source of ideology (cf. Foucault 1980; Giddens 1979; Hill 1995; Philips 1992).

Language is central to the creation, promulgation and maintenance of ideologies. We experience the world through human interaction that is constituted by discourse and much of the ideational content of human dealings is expressed and mentally experienced through language. Language is for these reasons relevant to understanding the role of ideology in the maintenance of dominant-subordinate relations in human societies. [Philips 1992:377]

The interviews I conducted were conversations on the topic of language use and identity and, despite my having control of “the floor” (including when to relinquish control) I view the conversation as a two-way discourse.

Bakhtin describes discourse as having “a two-fold direction - it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward *another's discourse*, toward *someone else's speech*” (Bakhtin 1984:185). He further explains that “our practical everyday speech is full of other people's words” (Ibid:195). Using a Bakhtinian concept of voice and heteroglossia is especially useful in a borderlands context - to tease out the voices that are indexical of the various ideologies being called upon by speakers in the production of discourse. I use the concept of voice as expressive of, and drawing upon, particular ideologies, that reveal for example, dominant ideologies and notions of “imagined community.” Using speech as data provides a great diversity of ideologies. The voices are multiple, as part of a bicultural (also bilingual) discourse. Often, the voices are conflicting and the ideologies contested.

## ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

All interviews were conducted in Tucson, Arizona; five interviewees grew up in this area and the other two have lived in other parts of Arizona and the Southwest. Tucson is in the southwestern borderlands, an hour away from the Mexican border. Its history is one of social and military conquest. Two hundred years ago it was a presidio and outpost to ward off Apache attacks, and before that, home to various American Indian tribes - the Yaqui, Pima and Tohono O'odham. The region was part of Mexico until the 1854 Gadsen Purchase, and Spanish was the lingua franca (Sheridan 1986). In 1860 roughly seventy-one percent of the population was "Hispanic," by 1920 the percentage dropped to half of that, and by 1940 Hispanics were outnumbered by Anglo immigrants, with a thirty percent population (Ibid:3). By the 1950's the schools actively tried to "teach Mexican students 'American' values, as well as the English language" (Ibid: 219). The statistics continue to exhibit the same trend: The demographics of this former Mexican territory have completely changed so that, outside of certain areas of the city such as South Tucson, Mexican-Americans are in the minority; Vélez-Ibáñez reports that today twenty-five percent of Tucson's population is "Mexican" (Vélez-Ibáñez 1988:44). In this fast-growing city, the predominant newcomer view of Tucson is illustrated in the following quote from the "Newcomers' Handbook to Tucson":

Tucson has come a long way in its 15,000 year history.....A part of its unique character, something that distinguishes it to this day, had already taken shape: Tucson would always be a community of many cultures, a place where Native Americans, Hispanics, Anglos, and others would live together (usually) in harmony. [Madden Publishing 1993:6]

This popular view of the city is ignorant of Tucson as a segregated city where, with few exceptions, the North, Northwest and East regions are predominantly Anglo, and the “South side” is predominantly Mexican-American, and Native-American, with a small population of African-Americans. The maps in the Sunday paper’s real estate section, showing sale prices of homes by geographic quadrant of the city, are illustrative of the correlation between economics, ethnicity and geography. So salient are the divisions in Tucson, that in the course of everyday conversation I might hear an Anglo classmate express surprise at my “venturing into” South Tucson (which she would only attempt on a trip to the airport)<sup>4</sup>; another Anglo student might speak of visiting the *barrio* (usually meaning the *barrio histórico* - Tucson’s historical district), which, for most Anglos indexes a gang-infested inner city neighborhood, rather than a “neighborhood” as the word *barrio* translates in Spanish; and hear of a Chicano student who is the recipient of dirty looks while he shops in a University neighborhood. I see latent racism in these incidents. All of the people I interviewed are students at the University of Arizona, and several made reference to the city’s divisions:

...and I live on the south side and I’ve lived there, you know, forever...  
[Marcie]

Until I came to the U of A, I realized that you’re the minority - not the majority. Because, like, all elementary and junior high school, I didn’t understand - you’re the minority. Because we grew up with the Hispanic children. I thought that we were the majority, I guess. When I got to the U of A I realized how little of us there are. And then it made me take an outside view and look at Tucson as a whole..... My dad works at UMC

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<sup>4</sup> It is a widely acknowledged fact that airports, and other sources of noise or environmental pollution are usually located in the poorest sections of any U.S. city, where the residents lack the monetary clout or education to voice their opposition in ways accepted by those in power.

**[University Medical Center] and my mom used to tell me “take a good look, someday you’ll be there [at the University].”**

**These quotes can serve as introductory statements to my examination of the multiplicity of selves visible in these interviews. To best highlight the individuality of the voices and ideologies, I have chosen to introduce these voices through individual case studies, in a biographical format.**

## CASE STUDIES - INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

In the following section I highlight the seven people I interviewed. All the names are pseudonyms; only the origin of the names (Spanish or English) has been maintained. Of the five women and two men, six are students, and the seventh runs a family business.

### **Marcie**

Marcie is a 21 year old college student who has lived in Tucson most of her life. Her family originates in Morenci, AZ, although her father was born in Mexico. When asked if she understands Spanish her response was:

I can understand it if.. they're not speaking it really quickly he-he[laughing] you know if there's a slow pace or whatever I can understand it and then you...I mean I grew up with it - my dad hardly spoke any English and we, you know we always learned how to understand him you know and everything but they never taught us how to answer him back in Spanish so I guess that's why [laugh] we won't but [pause] I kind of regret that they didn't you know teach us to speak Spanish

To explain her regret, Marcie lists finding a job, communicating with friends, and feeling out of place because she doesn't understand much Spanish. Her parents didn't speak much Spanish, which she explains as being a result of her mother's punishment for speaking Spanish in school as a young child; her mother was afraid to teach her children what for her had been the "forbidden language" at school. English is the predominant media language at home, with some Spanish present. She sees Spanish as being important to know in the Southwest, especially having grown up on Tucson's south side where people

often come up to her and begin speaking Spanish. This annoys her and makes her “real nervous.”

She and her older brother talk a lot about what it means to be Mexican or Mexican-American; he accuses her of thinking that she is better than people from Mexico and tells her that she is “white”. At times, her family has called her “racist” because:

Just because I don't really I'm not into the culture and I'm not really... I don't really agree with everything in the culture, I just... it doesn't mean that I'm not proud to be Mexican. I don't think I'd like to be anything BUT Mexican. My brother sometimes gets really upset at me and doesn't want to talk to me, just leave me alone. He thinks that I'm so... I don't know. And also because I'm going to college. And I'm the first one in my family you know to go to a university. And they he thinks that I think that I'm better than them - than other people.

Getting an education is a big step for Marcie - she doesn't want to have to worry about money as much as her parents have had to. She plans on “going all the way” to get a Ph.D. in Psychology. It is important for her to move to a higher socioeconomic class. When asked about celebrating Mexican holidays Marcie tells me that her parents often celebrate Cinco de mayo and Mexican Independence day. Her personal irony is that while her brother was born on this day, she was born on July 4.

Marcie ended the interview by telling me that she feels that she has a conflict in herself between the culture and the socioeconomic class she was born into and her desires for change. She told me of feeling marginalized, which she likened to the people illustrated in her Psychology text's “Marginalization” chapter.

**Teresa**

Teresa is a twenty year old college student who has spent her whole life in Tucson. Her mother is Mexican-American originally from New Mexico and her dad is Yaqui Indian. Both sets of grandparents speak Spanish as do her parents. She describes her Spanish as follows:

I understand a lot when people are talking. I can understand because that's what people spoke my whole life - I I don't really remember when I lost it but I don't feel that comfortable speaking it as I used to...

Therefore Spanish has always been present in Teresa's home, but she has never formally studied it; she studied French in high school and studies Italian at the University. She does speak Spanish, occasionally with a family member she is apt to speak it, or code-switches on occasion with her friends. Her parents read in Spanish but she doesn't usually; the whole family will watch the Spanish TV stations and listen to radio. At work her parents feel more comfortable speaking English, while their home language is Spanish. Her father speaks a mix of Yaqui and Spanish with his relatives - Teresa knows some words but she isn't always able to distinguish between Spanish and Yaqui when hearing the family converse.

Of future children, she says: "I think I would I think would like them to be able to understand ...like my mom and everybody. But I think it would be good for them to be bilingual. I'd actually like them to have a kind of educated Spanish [laughs]." She explains this type of Spanish speaker as knowing sentence structure, verb conjugations, and having an abundant vocabulary, unlike her parents.

Teresa would want her future children to know their heritage and sees Spanish as being a way to “touch base with that side of them - That’s the main reason - I don’t even think it’s for the job opportunities - just for the heritage.” Like Marcie, Teresa often has people addressing her in Spanish and expecting her to be fluent; she didn’t elaborate more on this.

Prior to going to college, Teresa’s sister had warned her of “being the only one with a Hispanic last name” and “the only dark person in the classroom.” She was afraid of “sticking out”, and found that even the Spanish-speakers weren’t necessarily from her background, but she gradually got accustomed to the University. She and her sister, who “married a black man” always have discussions about being Mexican and about racism. Hawaii, where her sister and husband live, is more a more open-minded place, according to Teresa, who says that this interracial couple get a lot of attention when they come back to Arizona. About her own ethnicity she says: “Most people assume - just assume that I’m Mexican-American and that’s okay. I mean, if they ask me what I am, I’m sure to tell them that I’m also Yaqui Indian.” When presented with the naming choices, she said:

Of all these - I think they’re all pretty weird - I’m mostly comfortable with Mexican or Mexican-American. ...Latino and Hispanic I started hearing here at the U of A - but never, like when I was younger....And I understand, like what Chicano is too.

When I asked about her opinion on the role of language in her ethnicity she states:

“...that’s why I would want my kids to know it because it does keep you...it touches base on...your culture, and so I don’t think it’s that significant - I think it plays a small role.”

### **Elaine**

Elaine, also a college student and a Mexican-American Studies major, has lived in Tucson most of her 23 years, and was born in California. Her mother was born in Cananea, Sonora but moved to Douglas, AZ, the town her father is from, early in her childhood. Her parents live in Tucson, and she has family in California. She has relatives in Sonora, Mexico.

Although she doesn't want the interview to be conducted in Spanish, she understands it. When asked if she likes to speak it she replied:

I like to when I know I'm not going to get all jumbled up and I know what words to say kind of I mean, I'm not - I guess I am proficient... in Spanish there are so many words depending on what you're talking about...so many technical terms... for specific terms.

She speaks Spanish with her grandparents because she has to; she will also answer questions in Spanish. "I've been told it's good to know it, an asset, a valuable skill. By my mother especially. It's a step above someone else who doesn't especially in Tucson." I get a sense of tacit knowledge from Elaine's resistance or surprise at some of the detailed language use questions - Spanish plays some role, but it isn't necessary to look at it analytically - it's just there: "It's never been separated - it's just something we speak... because it's part of our family." Her grandfather will read in Spanish, while her parents read more English, as she does. Spanish-language television and radio are also on much of the time - although here, again, the situation is bilingual.

In addition to seeing Spanish as a valuable skill, she sees it as otherwise important: "I have a niece - I'm trying to speak more Spanish to her than English so she can get a

good grasp of it. We see it as important to know your, to know the language, not just as a skill but as a culture...aspect.” Occasional family events, such as weddings, take her family to Mexico and she has gone to Nogales on occasion. Elaine discussed her views on ethnicity at length, due to her major she discusses these issues a lot. Elaine sees herself as a passive person who will speak her mind if “something is wrong” but she’s “not much of a activist radical type of person”. Without my asking, she gives her opinion of the term “Chicano”:

another thing is the whole issue of the term Chicana. I myself am am not comfortable with just - with - I don’t know, that’s not what I want, would like to call myself, at this time. It’s um I think cause Tucson’s very different, it’s a very different place where - and being so close to the border it’s not really a term that’s very popular here.....It’s not that I don’t like it... it’s more like, I’ve never called myself it, so it’s like why do I start calling myself that, you know, now? It’s not - I haven’t found a reason to call myself a Chicana yet, you know. I’m comfortable with Mexican-American, even though it’s hyphenated -and that whole deal...it doesn’t bother me.

Before I was comfortable with Hispanic, but now I’m like - I don’t know, I’m changing my views on that. I’ve just heard so much about - you know it’s just such a government term you know, it’s the government gave that to us, which is true. So, I’m kind of changing my views on that [laughs].

She believes that usage of this term “exist[s] more with academic people” since the University is the only setting in which she has heard so much about the term. Tucson is a border area and this makes a difference to Elaine who sees California, for example, as being a place where such terminology as “Chicano” would be more popular or “in those types of cities where you see a lot more protesting and activism and Tucson’s just not like that.....Tucson is just so much of a laid back place”, although she acknowledges that

there are people here who attend rallies and “try and get everyone’s attention”.

Individualism is important to Elaine who says people should be comfortable, and not forced to use a particular label.

### **Tracey**

Tracey is 20 years old and a college student who grew up in Tucson, and was born in Casagrande, AZ. Her parents were also born in Casagrande, and grew up in Eloy, AZ. Most of her family lives in Tucson. She began the interview by asking if she could still be interviewed, even though she isn’t bilingual. She is studying Spanish and has been around Spanish speakers a lot in recent years. Her father speaks Spanish but never spoke with his children; Tracey mentions that her mother isn’t Mexican-American.

Much of the time Tracey understands what is being said but has difficulty speaking Spanish. Tracey explains: “I really wish that I knew it [Spanish] - it fascinates me and I just feel like I’m missing a part of my background not knowing it.” She is unable to communicate with her grandparents and wishes she could know them better. She hopes to learn more and listens to Spanish music, especially the bilingual stations. Certain family members want her to learn Spanish. Living in the Northwest part of town, she is in the minority “because there are so few Mexicans over there.” She has always felt like a minority: “I felt that I wasn’t brought up with so much of my own background”. The people from the South side of town seem to stay together in their own group at the University, and Tracey feels that her experience has been one of greater diversity. She

found people from South Tucson expected her to act in a certain way - to share their culture - and they were surprised to find out that she was different.

Tracey would like to expose her children to Spanish: "When I have kids I'm going to try to bring them up....learning Spanish." As a child she visited her family in Mexico twice a year. She feels "isolated on my side of town" which is "like a whole other little town." The number of minorities there has slowly grown, but when she was in school she was one of the only Mexican-Americans. Her younger brother is having a different experience and his friends all seem to be "like us - half and half."

When presented with the list of ethnic markers, Tracey says: "I usually say Mexican but given the choices I say Mexican-American.....When I think of Mexican I think of just this area, you know, the people who come from Mexico....I think of my family" When asked about Mexican-American she answered:

I think of me. All the people who are in my similar situation....I don't really see the people who.....were brought up on the South side - I don't think of them as Mexican-American as much as me who - I lived on that side - so I have a lot of American in me."

Tracey sees herself as being Americanized.

### **Aurelia**

Aurelia is a 52 year-old woman who runs an auto repair shop with her husband; she is the mother of several children. When I first asked Aurelia if I, a business acquaintance, could interview her, she expressed skepticism that she would have anything to say to me. I encouraged her, without insisting, explaining that I was talking to many different people

who had grown up in Arizona. She consented to the interview, which took place at her workplace.

Aurelia was born and raised in Tucson as was her husband. Her father was from a small town in Sonora, Mexico and her mother from Morenci, AZ. At home she speaks both Spanish and English to her husband and three children. Most often, people address her in English. This was the only interview I conducted in which Spanish was the primary language. I asked my questions in either English or Spanish but Aurelia always answered them in Spanish, with occasional code-switching, and English when a customer came into the shop. About her children's language use she says: "Pues quisiera que hablaran más en español pero hablan más en inglés. Pero conmigo es *half and half*". [Well, I would like for them to speak more in Spanish but they talk more English. With me it's *half and half*] She tends to speak to her husband in Spanish and he speaks more English to the children. Her reading is primarily in English, except for the religious books she reads; she is equally comfortable in both languages. About the younger generation in her family she says: "Los más jovencitos hablan inglés, uh huh." [The youngest ones speak English.]

When asked if it is important to her for her children to speak Spanish she agrees, and explains why:

Porque - como te puedo decir um - porque como somos de ..(?) nuestros *ancestors* son de México quisiera que hablara más el español y ahora sí ahorita se necesita saber más, ser *bilingual*. For their culture, quisiera que (?) hablaran más el español, uh huh

[Because - how can I explain it um - because since we're from (?) - our ancestors are from Mexico I wanted them to speak more Spanish and now, yes now it's necessary to know more, to be bilingual. For their culture, I wanted them to speak more Spanish, uh huh]

This echoes the reasons put forth in the previous interviews. However, Aurelia gives me a different characterization of the border region, saying that growing up in the U.S. and in Mexico aren't necessarily different:

Pos, para mi no es diferente, no hay diferencia porque tiene mucho que ver los padres como crian a sus hijos y como nos criaron a nosotros..... [Well, for me it's not different, there is no difference because it has a lot to do with how the parents raise their children and how we were raised.....]

Aurelia goes on to tell me that she doesn't like to go around to fiestas like the Mexican Independence day celebration, but within the family there are many celebrations, such as weddings and *quinceañeras* (15th birthday celebration and young women's rite of passage).

Aurelia continues to convey her feelings of individual choice when she discusses the lists of terms. She believes that people like her, born in U.S. of Mexican parents, are considered to be Mexican-Americans, Latino is for people from other parts that speak Spanish, and Hispanic is simply a term for people who speak Spanish. "Chicano" is a "slang word" for Aurelia and "*to me es un nombre que dan a los jovenes*" [to me it's a name they give to the young people.] When she is asked which term she would choose, she chooses Mexican-American and then resists the imposition of labeling herself:

hmmm [pause] Pues fijate que no. [pause] *Mexican-American* porque soy nacida aquí y y mi papá era del otro lado era de México. Pero me...pero pero pero pero casi no no para mi no hay importancia yo nomas soy yo

hmmm [pause] Well you know - no. [pause] Mexican-American because I was born here and my father was from the other side - he was from Mexico. but I... but but but but really no no for me there is no importance and I'm just me]

Aurelia ended the interview by saying that “it is important for them to know the language” and if the younger generation stopped speaking it, they would be leaving their *raza* [translates as “people”] or identity behind them.

### **Mario**

Mario is a 46 year old graduate student who was born and raised in Los Angeles. After he turned 18 he lived in Texas, New Mexico, Mexico, and Hawaii (while in the Marine Corps). His parents are from El Paso, TX, and his father lived in Globe, AZ as a child. He has lived with his mother and his two children in Tucson for a year and a half. The rest of his family is in California, Arizona, and Texas. In the following quote, Mario highlights the diversity in Mexican-American families:

there’s different types of Mexican-American families that have different kinds of roots, you know, depending on what part of the country they’re from.....different cultures.....there’s like different sub-cultures among all the different Mexican-American groups.....There’s different language, there’s different food, there’s different customs, different way of looking at things.

He speaks of the diversity among Mexican-Americans, the diversity of attitudes and class structures, and believes that there is no one common heritage that can be highlighted. As examples, he tells me that Arizona has mine-workers from Chihuahua as well as “Hispanic-Indians.” Mario speaks and understands Spanish. He speaks Spanish, although usually only to those who don’t speak English; it was the first language he learned at home. Until kindergarten he was a monolingual Spanish-speaker. He is more comfortable in English, and with his mother he speaks both. His children “don’t want to speak

Spanish, but they do understand it.” He tries to get their interest up by speaking it in front of them, although they do not go to bilingual elementary school.

Mario has used Spanish in his work in Mexico, but in the Marines he did not usually speak Spanish since “they try to get away from all that....everybody’s a marine there’s no [color] everybody’s green.....they try to discourage that kind of ethnic grouping.”

Although he says that the U.S. is English-speaking, he highlights the importance of the Spanish in the Southwest. He would like his kids to learn Spanish but believes that it is already too late, especially since their junior high school will not offer full year language classes.

Living in the U.S. means opportunity to him, although he talks about trade-offs:

if you want an identity with your class and your people you’re probably going to stay in that class or people. If you don’t want that identity - than you might be able to get rich - which again, that seems to be the goal in America it’s it’s based on wealth and position whereas in other places people are happy being....it’s kind of like you take that choice away from people.

Regarding his children’s ethnicity he says: “Yeah, I like to tell them who they are, expose them to the culture any way I can.....We listen to music - Mexican music....We lived in Mexico....we go to ethnic restaurants....real ones - run by Mexicans.” But Mario does not take his children to fiestas such as Mexican Independence day explaining: “cause you know those are Mexican holidays...you know, I’m not a Mexican, I’m a Mexican-American.”

### **Enrique**

Enrique is a 25 year old graduate student from Flagstaff, AZ. His parents were also born and raised in Flagstaff. One of his grandfathers was from Mexico and most of his family is now in Arizona and California. He has been in Tucson for a year and a half. When I ask about his Spanish he responds:

I understand very little to tell you the truth... uh my family speaks it - my parents anyway. My grandparents do. But we were actually not taught Spanish as I was growing up. So the only Spanish that I've ever had... in high school and undergrad.

Enrique understands little Spanish and will try to speak it only every once in a while, usually in the form of greetings to family members. He has wanted to learn it and sees time as an obstacle as well as confidence.

His Mexican-born grandfather wanted him to learn Spanish, since it was his means of communication. His parents did not speak Spanish with their children:

They gave me the reason why, was when they were growing up, when they first started school - all they knew was Spanish. And I think it was.....an era in the United States.....that the system was like Hey! You're an American now, speak Ameri... - in English. And they felt they were basically segregated. They were placed in an all-minority school, there in Flagstaff ... and all Mexican kids, Hispanic kids were all placed in - certain classrooms - with nobody else and if they were heard speaking Spanish or anything they were basically reprimanded for it. ....according to them made to feel inadequate, and that it was a basically a bad thing to be made to speak Spanish, so they were brought up with the fact that it was bad to do that and they felt bad and so when they became parents they decided that they were not going to subject their children to the same - treatment as when they were first growing up.....They didn't realize at that time, in the future how times would change, and it would become an accepted part, and almost a necessity in the Southwest.

The changes Enrique mentions are the growth of Flagstaff's population, much of which is Spanish-speaking. But this community didn't have "the back and forth [border-crossings]. They became workers and worked in lumber mills and became more what Flagstaff was about - laborers on lumber and train and lived in small communities." He sees his parent's era as one of assimilation to American culture and English, since many of his Hispanic friends don't speak Spanish either. Enrique would want future children to speak another language, probably he would push for Spanish, "Because of my family background and because of its utility I think out here.....Spanish I think is here in America and it's here to stay." To him, his heritage and ethnicity are equated with communicating and spending a lot of time with family. Enrique sees his family and many of his friends' families as being "very assimilated to American ways."

## **DISCUSSION: CASE STUDIES AND BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE**

Emergent in this discourse are thematic commonalities: linguistic insecurity; issues of language maintenance, assimilation; naming and resistance to naming; of education and attitudes towards education in relation to marriage, etc. The overarching theme I see in the discourse as a whole is that of contestation and conflict. Conflict is experienced in multiple ways with both family and in engagement with the world at large, as these individuals find themselves being labeled as Mexican-Americans, as minorities.

Barth's description of ethnic groups is dependent upon the maintenance of geographic or social boundaries. It is the "ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth 1969:14-15). As such, these cases studies show a myriad of experiences and confrontations with boundaries of "otherness," in which their identities are constructed (as Mexican-American, or Hispanic) for them. This ascription of identities is contested by all interviewees in different ways.

### “DIFFERENCE” AND CONFLICT IN THE DISCOURSE

When asked if she might like any future children to know Spanish, Marcie replies that she would like for them to speak both languages but that she would have to marry a Mexican man in order for that to happen.

and I always tell them you know that I'm not ever going to marry somebody from Mexico and I don't know, I mean that's just the way that I feel, I'm not racist towards Mexicans - it's just there's just something. I don't know. I can't quite explain that - I'm not sure myself you know what it is...but the I don't know the culture and everything I don't like Mexican music

When I ask her about visiting Mexico she replies:

I don't like to. I just I don't know. I like to... stay away from there [laughter] I don't know. It's just me but my parents you know, not my parents but my like my mom and my brothers they say that I'm kind of like I'm too too much into this culture that I just don't want to, you know. They call me kinda you know, sometimes call me racist you know, because I don't wanta be any part - have any part of, you know

The collective consciousness of the “mainstream American ideology” is very present in Marcie's discussion. She doesn't want to visit Mexico, and she doesn't like the music, etc. She is accused of being “too much into this culture” and seems to reject the symbolic ethnic markers. Class comes to the fore in importance here - Marcie is on some level rejecting her heritage, at the same time as she strives to become more educated than her family.

Mexico, for Marcie, is a place where women are subservient to men, where they are required to show respect for men, similar to the way she and her siblings show respect to their parents. There is a contradiction above with her earlier statement that she wished

to marry a Mexican. Marcie proceeds to tell me that the members of her sorority have just begun to pick up on the way she is (her terms). The fact that she wants an education makes her worry that people in her family “think I’m better than them.” Teresa also feels different, she is the only one of her high school friends to go to college, she says: “they’re all married - had kids. It was so different to me.”

Inseparable from the discussion of potential assimilation is socioeconomic class. All interviewees expressed the importance of Spanish as a link to heritage as well as to opportunity. Being bilingual is viewed as important, or as an economic necessity, by many in the Southwest. The feeling of cultural dualism expressed in many of the narratives, and the cultural and/or linguistic insecurity that accompanies this dualism has caused varying degrees of inner conflict for Marcie, Teresa, Enrique and Mario.<sup>5</sup> All of them mentioned class and education in conjunction with their communities; for Marcie the conflict is the greatest. For Enrique the solution to the dualism is the acceptance of assimilation, language loss in favor of the American way, which involves social mobility. Several mentioned the dichotomy between home Spanish and school Spanish.<sup>6</sup> For many of the others education is key to such social mobility.

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<sup>5</sup> Rodriguez (in Brown and Ling 1993) echoes some of these feelings as he speaks of his linguistic insecurity and of being called *pocho*, for being too Americanized.

<sup>6</sup> This may be another example of linguistic racism as many Spanish departments teach Castilian Spanish, rather than Mexican or Latin American Spanish.

**“SIMULTANEITY OF EXPERIENCE”  
AND CATEGORIES OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER**

In light of these perspectives on difference, assimilation and class, I now turn to a discussion of potential representations of a minority identity.

Kondo and Kroskrity’s models, discussed at the outset of this paper, offer an insightful way of understanding identity and identity construction. Work in Chicana studies takes this analysis a step further - to the experiences of minority women.

Sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn suggests that literary contributions (writers of fiction) recognized early on the “existence of multiple identity categories” (Baca Zinn 1980:21) particularly gender and ethnicity. Although Baca Zinn fails to see class as an important category, she does see this literature as giving evidence of a Chicana identity constructed from the interaction of these three categories (gender, ethnicity, and class).

The idea of “simultaneity of experience” is central for Zavella, an anthropologist (1989), and stems from her view that crucial ideological and epistemological differences exist between Chicana studies and women’s studies. She therefore explains that “Chicana theorists were concerned with... how race, class and gender are experienced by Chicanas concurrently” (Zavella 1989:28). This concern for the “simultaneity of experience,” which for Zavella further differentiates Chicana Studies from women’s studies, is based on the idea that the analytic category of gender is not enough to understand the complexity of the Chicana experience. Rather, Chicanas, as well as other women of color, draw on theories that use race, gender and ethnicity as social categories (Anzaldúa 1987, 1990; Anzaldúa &

Moraga 1981; Baca Zinn 1980, Zavella 1987, 1989, 1991; Moschovich in Anzaldúa & Moraga 1981). Zavella suggests that to “understand the intersection of race, class and gender, we must explore the enormous complexity in the experiences of women of color” (Zavella 1989:31). While Zavella’s work is particularly focused on women, I believe that her theoretical attention to the exploration of complexities in the intersection of race, class, and gender can be applied to both genders.

I suggest that an extension of Zavella’s conceptualization that includes not only women of color, but men and women such as the people described in this paper. Zavella’s conceptualization of the *simultaneity of experience* is particularly useful in the borderlands context because it calls for analytic attention to and focus on issues related to the intersections of experiences, in terms of race/ethnicity, class, gender and ideological differences as well. Like Kroskirty’s repertoire, the simultaneity of experience suggests that certain aspects of identity come to the fore in different contexts. These aspects are similar, or the same as, Zavella’s categories of ethnicity, class and gender, which are historically laden categories that, particularly for U.S. minorities, carry ideologies of power relations and subaltern status. Therefore, I suggest an extension of Zavella’s usage of *simultaneity of experience* to cover the range of experiences of any member of a multi-cultural society who feels a sense of “otherness,” and is able to maneuver in multiple domains, using multiple registers and/ or languages, whose identity is, as Barth (1969) pointed out, created through the ethnic boundary. I now turn to a discussion that focuses on these categories: ethnicity and class, language and gender.

## ETHNICITY & CLASS: MINORITY STATUS AND HIERARCHIES OF POWER

It's kind of like...growing up here, a Hispanic person, at least I did, you know, I think you have a feeling of inferiority for a while because - the culture is not geared towards you, you know. Especially when you have people living in your house who **don't** speak English, they have a whole different culture, you you feel at odds - a little bit like you're living in two different worlds. [Mario]

The feeling of inferiority Mario describes is discussed in many historical accounts of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest. In his classic book on "Race and Class in the Southwest" Barrera (1979) states that

Chicano history could be said to start with the Mexican American War, an episode in the territorial expansion of Europe and European-derived societies that began in the fifteenth century. The manner in which the original Chicanos came about links Chicano history firmly with the history of other Third World people who have been subjected to the colonial experience in one or another of its forms. In this case, the imperial expansion of the United States resulted in internal colonialism, a condition which Chicanos have shared with other racial minorities.....the economic penetration which followed in the remainder of the nineteenth century eventually drew all parts of [the Southwest] within the new order. [Barrera 1979:218]

The "economic penetration" discussed by Barrera describes the steady decline in standard of living and socioeconomic position for Chicanos in the U.S. after the Mexican-American war. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that resulted from this war created a new U.S. territory in the formerly Mexican northern territories; thus emerged a newly colonized people, (although they themselves had colonized American Indians prior to being colonized). An understanding of this historical context is crucial to this discussion because of the important roles that both class and minority status play in shaping the lives

of Chicanos and Chicanas. The years following the Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty instilled a hierarchy of power between Anglo and Chicano: “Los Chicanos, how patient we seem, how very patient.....We know what it is to live under the hammer blow of the dominant *norteamericano* culture” (Anzaldúa 1987:63). This history is part of the heritage of many Mexican-American children, who early on experience the power relations of subordination under a dominant class. Hall (1991) states that ethnicity “belongs to a certain historical moment in the unfolding of global processes” and that “it is located in a place, in a specific history (Hall 1991:21). It is this history of power relations that must be taken into consideration in any study of ethnic identity:

claims to ethnicity are not the same everywhere and at all times. They have a history, and that history -- differentially stressed in different situations and at different points of conjunction -- feeds back in various ways upon the ways in which people understand who they are and where they might be at any given historical point in time. [Wolf 1994:7]

To understand any part of a Mexican-American experience is to recognize the socioeconomic disparities; Vélez-Ibáñez reports that wages earned by Mexican-Americans are eighty percent of Anglo wages (Vélez-Ibáñez 1988). Keefe & Padilla (1987) found that while education levels of Mexican-Americans grew with each subsequent generation after immigration (they only dealt with up to a triple generation-level in their study), the occupation of the male head of household was listed as “semiskilled/ unskilled” in fifty-four percent of the third generation.<sup>7</sup> Amaguer and Arce (in Zavella 1987) found that in

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<sup>7</sup> A weakness of this study is that women’s wages were not considered, thereby ignoring the contribution of female labor to household earnings.

**the early 1980's, 78 percent of Chicano workers had working-class occupations as compared with 55 percent of Anglos.**

## THE EMOTION OF MINORITY STATUS

Economic and power differentials are not the only factors contributing to the conflict-laden discourse production. Bhabha (1992) attests to the importance of the categories Zavella discusses, which are not just part of a power hierarchy:

race, gender, class, sexual minorities, the underclass, youth. [which]...must not merely be seen as conceptual categories for understanding the workings of the hierarchy of power; nor are they simply signs of social differentiation. They are also the *affective sites of political discrimination, cultural contestation, social disjunction, and "subaltern" solidarity that have been crucial in forming the historic memories and psychic identities of minority communities.* [Bhabha 1992:237-238, italics added]

Such "affective sites" are important areas for investigation, part of a simultaneity of experience, much like the sites of cultural production to which Rosaldo calls attention. These affective sites are the locus of felt categories of identity observed in Tracey's emotional description of why the label "Mexican-American" appealed to her most and applied to all of "the people who are in my similar situation - I lived on that side [North side] so I have a lot of American in me." Mario's point, that he felt "at odds" and like he was living in "two different worlds" illustrates what González (1992) has called "the emotion of minority status:"

A recurring behemoth in the literature on U.S. Mexican children, and on children anywhere, is the consistent occurrence of children from nearly identical backgrounds undertaking completely opposite trajectories in their orientation towards life... Two households, demographically and socioeconomically nearly identical, will produce gang members on the one hand, and scholars on the other...The U.S. Mexican child then, touched by many voices, will have a more amplified assortment of affective input to disentangle... Because of a history of economic deprivation and second class citizenship, the child is a receptacle for a greater number of ambivalent messages from a greater number of caregivers. The filtering out process becomes exponentially complex...the process of the

**construction of self through the exploration of affective parameters, is not only an internal, psychobiological endeavor, but an external historically constituted, and particularistic process. [González 1992:145-146]**

González stresses the importance of the affective dimension of growing up with minority status, a unique perspective that is helpful to an understanding of the conflict that surfaced in the discourse. The two levels of affective input she identifies -- internal-psychological and external-historically constituted -- place equal emphasis on history and personal emotional experience, which are both important components of identity construction. Many of the people I interviewed felt that coming to the University of Arizona made them realize that they were minorities. Teresa here describes this experience, illustrating González' two levels of input:

It was different until I came to the U of A. I realized that you're the minority - not the majority. Because like, all elementary and junior high school I didn't understand, like you're the minority. Because we grew up with the Hispanic children. I thought that we were the majority, I guess. When I got to the U of A I realized that how little of us there are.....although the Mexican culture is very strong I can still see that it's not really...

Teresa describes being warned by her sister that at the university she would be the only one "with a Hispanic last name" or "the only dark person in the classroom," which had her afraid of "sticking out," a feeling that is often expressed by minorities or immigrants. The disentangling that Teresa must do is between the voices of her home, in South Tucson, and the collective consciousness that lets her know that she is considered a "minority." Elaine doesn't want to look at this as others do, "like they're mad at the world", "I'm a

student also” she says. This discussion brings up the issue of naming terminology for her.

About Chicano she says:

I never heard that word until I got here [university] and when I heard it I... the way I heard it - really abruptly with, um like people who are very radical about it and they're I just - I think it was on the mall one day and they're like you know, “you're not Hispanic, you're not that. You're supposed to call yourself Chicano.” And so, when - just because of that every time I hear the word I think of more radical - kind of like - I just back off from that.

Here Elaine disagrees with the voice that tells her what she must call herself. The emotion of minority status is revealed in the idea that some Chicanos are “mad at the world.” The rally on campus that she mentions, told people the “truth” about the term Hispanic, which, for many, is indexical of government involvement, having been created for the U.S. Census. For others, it acts as an icon for the ignorance for and disregard of Spanish-speaking peoples, immigrants and long-time residents alike, by lumping all speakers into one pan-linguistic category. Making a conscious choice in naming becomes a political action of solidarity within the group, and part of an ideology of what Fishman calls “mobilized ethnicity” (Fishman 1977).

Naming labels are important to some and not to others. Labels such as Chicano, that was chosen by the people themselves, are important to those who want to mobilize social and political solidarity and power through language and use of ethnic terms; for them naming is a type of speech act. The term Chicano takes something from the private, intimate sphere of *la familia*, and places it out into the public arena, giving strength and

acknowledging ties between individual and shared experience.<sup>8</sup> I found that none of my interviewees liked the term Chicano. Mario told me his father saw the “word Chicano [as] a fightin’ word, that was a bad word...it used to be a slur, you know that the Americans... that was like an ethnic slur against Mexicans and a lot of older Mexicans dor’t like that word.” He also describes the Chicano movement of the 1960’s as too militant for his taste.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I see a parallel between the resistance to the term “Chicano” and the young women who witness and disagree with gender inequality, yet refuse to name themselves “Feminist” because of the radicality it indexes (c.f. Faludi 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Several people have commented, after reading this paper, that many politically active Chicanos pride themselves on full support within “the community” and would be surprised to hear the dissent, and variation of opinions expressed in my interviews.

## DECONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES OF MEXICAN-AMERICANS

Part of the emotion of minority status is the covert and overt racism experienced by all members of minority groups. In addition to the racism in Tucson, discussed above, several interviewees mentioned experiences with racism. Teresa encountered racism on a trip to North Dakota, where she explains that the people she met “had never seen anyone like me before - they were staring.” Also ingrained in her mind is an incident when she and her sister were little, when a storekeeper thought that they were going to steal something. Enrique has had experiences which left him wondering if the people were racist; in the following quote he alludes to this touchy issue in a halting tone:

I think every once in a while, you'll you'll- in the family we'll talk about a situation in which we were made to feel like, [pause] um that maybe we shouldn't have been a part of it. Or, it's like that and then- the conversation might be based on- because of the fact that we think that they felt, because we were Hispanic, that they treated us that sort of way. [Enrique]

Racism is apparent in the stereotypes of Mexican-Americans that feed the collective consciousness. Stereotypes in dominant American ideology have come from both popular culture and social scientists. Tafolla (1985) describes the image of the generic Hispanic woman, who could be Chicana, Puerto Rican or Cuban, in the figure of the “Chiquita Banana” fruit commercials. The woman in these commercials is the common stereotype of the Latina - sexy, voluptuous, and wiggling her hips, she sells her fruit along with her sex appeal. Tafolla calls such images “U.S. illusions” (Ibid:39). This type of “illusion” serves to reinforce the subordinate position of the Latina, at the same time that it recruits her sexuality to market the products of a fruit company that is exploiting workers

somewhere in Central America. The dearth of representations of actual Chicana women in popular culture, coupled with the occasional portrayal of the “Mrs. Macho Man” (Ibid.) support these illusions.

Indeed, the concept of *machismo* has been grossly misunderstood and the subject of much explanation (Anzaldúa 1987:83; Baca Zinn 1980:20; Tafolla 1985:40; Zavella 1987:11). Tafolla describes the treatment of this topic as “by far the greatest field day which ethnocentric social scientists have enjoyed” (Ibid.). The functionalist model of *machismo* often used expects that:

Mexican cultural principles of male dominance and age-based authority in decision making are considered the core of Chicano families.....with an authoritative husband-father who ideally is the breadwinner and a submissive wife-mother who cares for the home and rears the children. Mexican-American families are considered to retain these Mexican cultural norms. Values that are conducive to success in American society--achievement, independence, and deferred gratification--are supposedly absent in the Mexican-American family. [Zavella 1987:12]

Zavella suggests that the functionalist model disregards change and diversity in the Chicano community and that the model only serves to describe “the *ideology* of traditional Chicano families,” as opposed to the practice (Ibid:13). The term *macho* in Spanish refers to a good man, a man who loves and provides for his family (Anzaldúa 1987:83). Zavella explains that “Chicanos have a culturally specific version of family ideology” due to their particular history (Ibid:5).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that Zavella (1991) calls Anthropology “probably the most vilified among the social sciences for focusing on a reified Chicano culture” (Zavella 1991:318). She cites many examples of ahistorical interpretations of Chicanas that have led to misunderstandings. For example, many scholars denounce the common conceptualization of *machismo*, which homogenizes Chicano men as dominant and brutish.

**LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND  
LINGUISTIC INSECURITY**

Spanish is the language of the conqueror.....but Spanish at home is associated with [my] grandmother and grandfather [and] part of who I am.  
[Mario]

Spanish is linked to the home as well as to its people's history, and has the power of its affective, or emotional force (cf. Abu-Lughod & Lutz 1990, Besnier 1990, González 1992). Indeed, the ideology that "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity" (Anzaldúa 1987:79) is prevalent in many societies. Below, Elaine expresses surprise that a person with an "obviously Mexican name":

had no desire to know Spanish, you know, nothing - and to me that's really sad because um, even if you don't know it, you know, perfectly, at least know some Spanish -it's kind of like still knowing some of your culture - your identity. But when you completely just say "I have no desire" it's like, you know... it's kind of like, well, almost like, ashamed to be Mexican-American, or or have Mexican-American roots or whatever. But um I don't know, that's how I took it ... you know that's terrible, because you know there's nothing wrong with it and um ... that's like the most - that's like a really vivid thing.

For all interviewees Spanish is a part of their identity, whether or not they use it to communicate.

Part of Kroskrity's discussion of the "Repertoire of Identities" concept involves language maintenance. The fields of Sociology, Psychology and Communications have engendered many studies on language and identity (e.g. Edwards 1985, Gudykunst 1988). Perhaps the most eloquent and well known proponent of the importance of language in identity is Joshua Fishman. For Fishman language and culture are related in three ways:

“language itself is a *part* of culture, every language provides an *index* of the culture with which it is most intimately associated, and every language becomes *symbolic* of the culture with which it is most intimately associated” (Fishman 1985:xi). Illustrating the indexical function of language Fishman discusses, Mario does “speak Spanish to... demonstrate your Hispanity - your background ..... you might speak to some other Hispanic person.”

Within linguistic anthropology there has been much attention to linguistic ideology<sup>11</sup> and linguistic identity. Gumperz’ (1982) “Language and Social Identity” is a seminal volume in the study of language and identity stemming from the *Ethnography of Communication*. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz there argue that “social identity and ethnicity are in large part established and maintained through language” (Gumperz 1993[1982]:7).

Much of the work on language and identity does not address the multiple and dynamic nature of identity. Because, like Fishman, I view language as such an integral component and symbol of identity, I view Spanish as a factor in the maintenance of cultural identity in this community. Many issues regarding the maintenance of Spanish surfaced in the interviews. A much discussed issue is the difference between home Spanish and “school” Spanish. This is yet another difference that students from bilingual families in the Southwest must contend with. Marcie comments:

the Spanish is so much different in the classroom than it is from what I’m used to I mean.....I guess I grew up a lot around the slang or whatever, and uh the Mexican type of Spanish you know? And that’s why I’m having such a hard time because I - what sounds right to me or what I think is

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<sup>11</sup> For example, linguistic anthropologists met to discuss linguistic ideology in a recent School for American Research meeting with Errington, Gal, Hill, Irvine, Kroskrity, Philips and and Silverstein.

right is wrong, you know is wrong, and according to the grammar kinds of stuff

Marcie's parents were unable to help her with her Spanish class because they "have no idea what I'm talking about," when referring to grammar or vocabulary that she later found in a dictionary. Tracey echoes Marcie's concern that her father could not help her with her Spanish homework, because the Spanish was too different. Marcie's conclusion appears to be that what is spoken at home is "slang" and what is taught in school is "grammatical," or as another person put it "the educated type of Spanish." The gulf between home and school Spanish described can lead to linguistic insecurity:

and my dad- it's really hard because if I mess up, or whatever, he starts laughing [laughter] so so it makes me you know kinda feel bad.....I know I feel kind of like ohh... [?] but I'm not going to say anything and and then when actually, though when he actually asks me to say something I don't want to do it you know [Marcie]

I used to speak it fluently and without thinking but now I don't. I'm like more uncomfortable..cause sometimes... I'll come up with a funny sentence that doesn't make sense. ....I just think of it too much - I'm self-conscious. I like to speak it with my mom, 'cause when we're speaking.....But, I usually don't speak it very well. Occasionally with my dad - my dad will speak to me in Spanish or I'll answer him in English. [Teresa]

I think my biggest hindrance would be my confidence in being able to speak it. ....I guess if I'm trying to speak and I make mistakes it looks more harshly than if somebody else were trying to speak it and making mistakes. Maybe it's because of my background of being Hispanic and stuff, people - I've had problems with people who've said "you know, you're you're you're Hispanic and you don't know it? What? You don't even know you're own language", or whatever. That's sometimes intimidating in a way, kind of makes you second guess whether you should even attempt it or not, or if you just avoid it and make everybody not know whether you do or not, I guess. [Enrique]

Just as with the case of naming, there is a voice telling these people that they should know Spanish (indicated by the quotation marks in Enrique's excerpt). The pressure to speak it fluently and correctly is great enough to make this group self-conscious. Keefe and Padilla found that of third generation Mexican-Americans in their California study, seven percent spoke Spanish only, thirty percent were bilingual, and sixty-three percent were English monolinguals. The rate of bilingualism for the second generation was forty-two percent, which shows the decline of bilingualism the longer the family has been in the U.S.<sup>12</sup> (Keefe & Padilla 1991:38). What they do not problematize, however, is the difficulty in the definition of bilingualism, and that it has many degrees of difference.

Regarding language loss, Mario describes in the younger generation he says:

Well I think it's normal - it's the assimilation process, you know, we're in a nation of immigrants. Basically.....it's an English-speaking nation so... I think everyone has a natural tendency to assimilate - you know the younger people... I think the first wave of immigrants tends to resist it and almost to the point where the second wave gets.... diametrically opposed to that posture - they won't accept it. And the third, fourth generations kind of get back to the roots....I've watched it go in all these cycles.

Mario thinks it will be too late for these later generations - that English will be the primary language, as it has become for him.

The question of gradually increasing assimilation described by Mario is important to many. (For a discussion of attitudes towards Chicano assimilation see Trueba (1990). The old idea, still held by some, was of a "melting pot," the idea that Mario has of gradual

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<sup>12</sup> This statistic shows the ignorance of the English-only movement's fear that "Hispanic" immigrants do not learn English (1991:38)

“Americanization” which is no longer acceptable to many minorities and immigrants in this country. Rosaldo sees such representations as “a site of cultural stripping away” (Rosaldo 1989/93:209). A “salad” metaphor has been suggested by some, who see the U.S. as becoming gradually more diverse without the dissolution of individual ethnicities. The politically conservative view was expressed recently by our Speaker of the House’s comment regarding Quebec separatism, when he said that “proponents of bilingualism” in the U.S. should realize that bilingualism poses “a long term threat to the fabric of our nation.” This ideology is blind to the fact that other languages - especially Spanish - already constitute part of this nation’s fabric, and it tries to create a monolingual imagined community. Zentella (1994) refers to the English-only movement as “Hispanophobia,” while Hill (1993) suggests that covert forms of racism are encoded in popular usages of “Junk Spanish.” Linguistic racism is another source of language loss in the younger generation, the children of people who were often kept from speaking their mother tongue, or did not speak it for fear of racism (see case studies for examples). While these issues of assimilation and the racism inherent in the American collective consciousness are only explicitly mentioned by a few, they are referred to by everyone with whom I spoke. Even in this part of the country, a Southwest which used to be part of what is now referred to as “the other side,” language loss is occurring. For Marcie, Teresa, Tracey and Enrique it will be a struggle to learn Spanish now that they are past the linguistic “critical period.” And yet they continue to identify with their heritage through strong family ties and exposure to the Spanish language, and Mexican culture.

## THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

Language is a common thread in the Mexican-American community; even if people don't speak it, they have an opinion about it and most of these people wish to promote language maintenance - to varying degrees. Spanish is a link to a common heritage and their ancestors; a link to history and family. For some, Spanish is a communicative link and for others a symbolic one. For self-named Chicanos, and others as well, it appears to be explicitly both. Fishman states that: "...language is part and parcel of this web. In premobilization ethnicity it is naturally, unconsciously so, whereas in mobilized ethnicity it is a rallying call, both metaphorically and explicitly" (Fishman 1985:9). Some of the people interviewed would see Spanish as "part" (a component) and not "parcel" (the whole) of their ethnicity and identity, although Fishman's distinction between premobilization and mobilized ethnicity can be used to characterize the naming patterns described. For some, "Chicano" is a "rallying call" - a call for linguistic and cultural maintenance in the face of threatened assimilation.<sup>13</sup>

The symbolic function of language is important and salient because language is perceived to be close to the heart - it has the power of affect. I suggest that there is a continuum along which the degrees to which language functions as an identity marker increases. From a marker of ethnicity in Fishman's "premobilization ethnicity," to a mid-point where language functions as a symbol of resistance (as in the case of Mexicano

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<sup>13</sup> "It was during the Chicano movement of the 1960's that many Mexican Americans decided to call themselves Chicanos. By naming themselves they took on a new awareness of their place in society." [Rudolfo Anaya in López 1993]

following Hill 1985), to language being used as a “rallying call” in Fishman’s “mobilized ethnicity” as in nationalist and/or separatist movements in Quebec and Catalonia (see Woolard 1989) where language attains the role of political tool. Among the people interviewed, Spanish seems to play a symbolic role as in “premobilized ethnicity” - which is not to lessen the importance of using language symbolically. After turning off the tape recorder, Marcie stated that she believed that if she had learned Spanish as a child, things would be different for her (recall that Marcie feels “Americanized” and has been called “racist.”) We do not know what would have been different if Marcie indeed grew up with Spanish, but it is important to note that to her, not knowing Spanish signifies a loss of a cultural/group identity.

To further elucidate the function of symbols themselves, let us turn to Geertz’ conceptualization:

Symbol systems, man created, shared, conventional, ordered, and indeed learned, provide human beings with a meaningful framework for orienting themselves to one another, to the world around them, and to themselves. [Geertz 1973:250]

Therefore, such symbols as language allow for group and historical orientation. For Fishman language is the symbol of utmost importance to ethnicity:

Language is the recorder of paternity, the expresser of patrimony and the carrier of phenomenology. Any vehicle carrying such precious freight must come to be viewed as equally precious, as part of the freight, indeed, as precious in and of itself. [Fishman 1977:25]

The phenomenological, affective dimension of language allows it to be used symbolically, rather than communicatively, even by those who do not normally speak that language. In

a household in which little Spanish was used for functional communication, González (1991) observed that the children lip-synched the lyrics to songs in Spanish. She sees this as “ritual participation” - another ethnicity marker. The two languages then serve two different purposes: “Spanish is associated with music, with affect, with the diachritica of construction of self [while] English is the medium of informational exchange and of functional subsistence within the community” (González 1991:15). Using Spanish in this context can be seen as an “act of identity” (Le Page & Tabouret 1985). Another example of the use of language as a symbol is the English-only movement, which capitalizes on the symbolic capacity of language, and concentrates its racism into a language issue.

I have shown that language is an integral part of identity for the individuals interviewed. The category “language” needs to be added to Zavella’s “Simultaneity of Experience.” Thus far ethnicity, class, and language have been considered - I now turn to a discussion of gender.

## GENDER: HERE VS. *EL OTRO LADO*

When asked about differences between the U.S. and Mexico, my female interviewees spoke about gender differences and opportunity, while the men spoke of differences in economic opportunity. Below I discuss the oppositions interviewees made between the U.S. and Mexico.

Um. I don't know - I think - I don't think I would've liked to grow up in Mexico. There's no way that you know I would like to .. maybe if I was born there or I grew up there than it'd be different ya know? But... to me it seems like people the the young girls who live in Mexico - the girls who grow up in Mexico - it's just like - they're real like um... subservient and stuff you know - they have to always - you know- give the man whatever he likes or whatever. And I mean that's not me you know and I can't do that and if I grew up that way I don't thi... I mean - In a way I kind of am like that because... my dad he whatever - if he asks for something you have to get it for him. There's no questions asked - there's no nothing, you know. And my mom she's always - has to - if he's he's inside eating or something and he asks her something you know, she has to get it. Or I have to get it or, you know somebody. Even my older brother and me. We can't say "no, get it yourself" or, you know. And I mean but that I think that the Mexican thing is so built on respect you know, respect for your elders and especially your parents. And I don't... I wouldn't want to grow up there. I wouldn't want to live there even right now, (laughs) when I'm older. [Marcie]

Marcie is glad she grew up here. This view was echoed by all but one person who was indifferent. There is a contradiction in her belief that girls in Mexico are subservient, and her understanding of "the Mexican thing is so built on respect" that it has her and her brother serving her father.

It's such a huge difference. To me it is - as far as um how women are treated, uh, the *machismo* that exists in Mexico, um not that you not that a woman couldn't do or get a education or, a good career but I think it's a lot... harder, definitely. And it's more um the way families the differences in the families - I think they're a little bit more liberal here whereas over there... just from relatives that I see it's like over there they're married when they're, you know, eighteen! (surprised tone/emphasis) and all and uh and I... It's just such a big difference it's just such a... the culture - I

mean even though you you're both Mexican, you know Mexican on this side and Mexican on that side it's still a very big difference [mmhmm] just the way society just society and and the way um just the way women are looked upon I think. [Elaine]

Elaine's explanation "even though you're both Mexican on this side and Mexican on that side" is a very clear characterization of the ideology of concurrent difference and similarity between people of Mexican descent in the Southwestern borderlands. Although the populations have similar historical roots their experiences growing up are different.

Marcie sees the girls in Mexico as being "subservient." Elaine has a more clearly defined vision of Mexico than many of the others - she has traveled there more frequently. Elaine sees her cousins getting married young, and believes that it is harder for women to achieve success in the public sphere in Mexico. Here Aurelia gives her opinion:

tengo una cuñada que todo el tiempo dice que... que los de aquí [laughs] - tenemos costumbres muy malos y que los de allá, tú sabes que, como los padres de allá no dejan a las hijas salir sin que lleven un chaperone, no es cierto porque aquí también hacemos lo mismo nosotros. Si quieren salir a... tienen que salir con una hermana o o con un primo con la prima con [?]..... al cine o unas partes así. No salen solos. Y todo el tiempo a mí me dicen a porque pues, dicen en México que no las dejan salir a las jovencitas si no si no van los hermanos o alguien con ellos, y que aquí no, que aquí salen, pero no es cierto. Es como te di..., cada quien uh son sus costumbres, de los padres como uno cria a sus hijos.

[I have a sister-in-law that all the time says that those from here [laughs] - we have very bad customs and those from there - you know how the parents over there don't let their daughters go out without taking a chaperone, this isn't true because here too we do the same thing. If they want to go out, they have to go out with a sister or with a cousin, with a cousin to the movies or places like that - not go out alone.....well they say that in Mexico they don't let the young girls go out if the siblings don't go, or somebody with them and that here, no that here they go out but it's not true, it's like I've said, each person - it's the customs of the parents - the way one brings up one's children.]

Aurelia acknowledges that ideologies of Mexican-ness and American-ness exist, and she voices them - but she voices them to refute them. The voices of these ideologies are very clear, for example the voice of her sister-in-law at the beginning of paragraph two (I have a sister-in-law that all the time says, etc.....and this isn't true because here too we do the same thing); she also uses the phrase "dicen en México" [they say in Mexico] to introduce the voice of "Mexican ideology," which here is an ideology of control over girls. Aurelia tries very hard to convince me that, despite what her niece says about bad customs in the U.S. that give girls too much freedom, this isn't a factual claim.

There is an opposition in the tone of Aurelia's voice when she discusses "los de allá" [those from (over) there], what others refer to as "el otro lado" or the "other side." Alonso's work (1992) shows that people in Northern Mexico also use the term "el otro lado" when referring to the U.S. - usually in reference to the differences in everyday life on the other side, a life lacking in *gusto*.

Gender issues are part of these women's construction of identity, while the men have "opportunity" as part of their identity construction. This fits into the "public" / "private" domain distinction, that has been a central concern in women's studies (see Ortner 1974, and later critiques/ reconsiderations in Rapp 1979, Rosaldo 1980, Collier & Yanagisako 1987). For the men interviewed, part of the public domain (opportunities for employment and socioeconomic advancement) is indexed to construct identity - whereas for these women, gender differences and issues of family control over girls is part of their identity construction.

Their concept of “el otro lado” differs according to their experiences, to gender, their families, their generation, what part of town they grew up in, and their parents’ birthplace (i.e. whether both are Chicano or Mexican-born). Some of them have a very strong sense of “el otro lado” and others have only a vague sense based on memories and second-hand accounts. What they think of Mexico versus the U.S. is based upon these experiences and, also, their own self-identity - how much they see themselves as a part of the borderlands context, of the Southwest, of Mexican ancestry, or, like Tracey, as assimilated because she grew up in North Tucson, and all contribute to a “simultaneity of experience.”

## REFLEXIVE NOTE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

This period in anthropology, in which the importance of locating the researcher in her or his own research is being stressed (c.f. Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986), has given me reason to reflect on my interest in studying linguistic and cultural identity. My interest in identity and the role of language in identity construction is personal as well as theoretical. I grappled with issues of identity as a child growing up speaking French in New England. My biculturalism has often made me feel as an outsider, as a European in the United States and as an American when in Switzerland. Being Jewish, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, has contributed to situational feelings of "otherness", for example, during my stays in predominantly Christian Switzerland, Spain, Mexico and in the U.S. as the only Jewish teacher in a Southern school.

Like many minorities in the United States, I have felt left out of supposedly relevant discourses. At a recent conference, a paper was presented on linguistic and cultural maintenance in two French-American communities. The researcher's interviews assumed that the respondents celebrated Christmas and were of French ancestry. (The francophone community in the urban area described is likely to have multiple nationalities and religions.) When I see such research, I am reminded that I am different, not entirely American and not entirely Swiss, or even Swiss-Jewish, illustrating Barth's ethnic boundary. Applying Kroskrity's model, I have a repertoire of identities, the components of which surface when they are called upon in situational contexts and also when they are ignored.

**I have tried to apply the understanding of identity I have gained through my own experiences in the attempt to begin to disentangle the complexities of Mexican-American identity in the Southwest, and in the conceptualization of the “simultaneity of experience.”**

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have shown the importance of problematizing conceptualizations of identity construction, and expecting heterogeneity in ethnic groups such as those of Mexican heritage. In so doing, multiple layers of complexity surface and it becomes possible to move beyond ideologies of groups as imagined communities. I have illustrated the prevalence of an American collective consciousness that informs perceptions of Mexican-Americans, as it informs identity construction - this was seen in interviewee reactions to identity formulations imposed by others. The simultaneity of experience has been a helpful construct; a conceptualization intended to elucidate the concept of cultural or ethnic identity for, in this case Mexican-Americans, although the construct may be lend insight to identity construction in other minority groups. Through specific foci on race/ethnicity, class, gender, and with the addition of language to the model, this construct provides a means of conceptualizing historically conscious multiple identities located within a particular place on the hegemonic continuum between dominant and subordinate groups. The conceptual framework of "otherness," common to the social sciences, should be replaced by a *simultaneity of experience* which recognizes that all of us have multiple identity constructions, which will always seem "other" to someone. The addition of a category of "language" to this construct directs attention to the important function of language in this, and many groups.

The discourse excerpts in this paper clearly show that most models of identity are insufficient. This paper constitutes a report on preliminary findings, with a suggestion for

further studies that explore the connections between these categories of experience. The limitations of this study are that interviews were only conducted once with each participant, and that the research could have benefited from household level analysis. Research is needed to further explore these categories, and their connections to functions of language, in order to move away from reductionist models of identity and move towards models that accommodate multiple identities.

## APPENDIX

ETHNICITY, LANGUAGE BACKGROUND, AND LANGUAGE USE  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Date:

Pseudonym & Code Number:

Age:

Start time:

End time:

I. Explanation of research (se puede hablar en español).

II. Background and family history.

How long have you lived in Tucson?

Where did you grow up?

If married, where did your spouse grow up?

Where were your parents born? raised?

Where were your spouse's parents from?

Where does your family live now?

What kind of work do you do now?

II. Language Use

Do you understand Spanish?

Do you like to speak it?

Did anyone ever tell you that you should learn it?

What language(s) do you use in your work? (formally, informally)

In what language(s) do others address you?

At home, in what language(s) to you speak? to whom?

Do you speak the same language with all your family members?  
with your friends?

Do you have children?

If you have a child/children, what language do you speak with her/him/them?

(If no children): Do you think you would like to speak Spanish with your kids if you have them  
in the future?

What language do others address you in? (family members, friends, children)

Do you visit Mexico?

Have you lived in Mexico, or visited for any length of time?

If applicable, do you your children speak Spanish as well as you would like?

Do you ever read anything in Spanish? Magazines or newspapers...? and the rest of your  
family?

Do you feel more comfortable speaking with people who understand only Spanish, only  
English or people who speak English and Spanish?

Which language do you feel more comfortable speaking?

What about your spouse/family members?  
 Do you ever mix Spanish and English?  
 How do you feel about mixing languages?  
 Are there times when you speak only Spanish, or only English?  
 When you started school, did you speak English?  
 What did you usually speak at home?  
 Do you speak Spanish to your bilingual friends now?  
 What language do you think in?  
 When you are angry, are you more likely to choose one of the languages?  
 Do you want your children to speak Spanish well? Why?  
 Are there any other languages spoken at home?  
 What do you think about bilingual education?  
 What T.V. programs do you like to watch?  
 Do you ever watch programs in Spanish? What about radio?  
 And the rest of your family?

### III. Ethnicity and Identity

How do you think growing up in the U.S. is different from growing up in Mexico?  
 Do you ever talk about children or family members about being Mexican or Mexican-American?  
 Do you make it a point to participate in activities and events that make you feel a part of the Mexican community? Why or why not?

What do you think about terms like:  
 (show list)

Mexican-American  
 Mexican  
 Chicano  
 Latino  
 Hispanic

and why?

If you had to describe yourself - which term would you choose?  
 What do you think of when someone says "Hispanic"? Mexican?  
 What does it mean to be \_\_\_\_\_ (term chosen)?

What do you think the other terms mean?

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