Tatiana Alonso

Thesis title: Cookie Dough: Comparing Latino Chicago and Suburb College Students and the Development of Mexican-American Identity

Keywords: Mexican-American, identity, suburbs, Chicago, language, religion, family, culture, traditions, relationships

My thesis will be comparing seven college students from the north suburbs of Illinois, and five college students from Chicago, Illinois. I will be focusing on their identity development throughout their years in high school, as Mexican-Americans. Using the history of Mexican-Americans living in the United States, starting from as far back as 1848, I consider how these students’ identity compare to the very first Mexican-Americans to live in the United States. Analyzing their religion, language, social relationships, and academic achievements, I explore how their identities have been impacted or developed in a certain way because of those four specific characteristics. How different are these students simply from the fact that seven of them grew up in the suburbs and five in Chicago? Is there a real difference? Or are Mexican-Americans all the same no matter where they grew up?
Victoria F. Briones

Thesis title: Unpacking the Continued Devaluation of the Women of Ciudad Juárez

Keywords: Ciudad Juárez, women, femicide, devaluation, injustice, impunity

Femicide is the mass murder of women simply because they are women. A mass femicide in Ciudad Juárez located in Chihuahua, Mexico has broken out since 1993 and has continued for the last nineteen years. Using a feminist theoretical framework, this thesis investigates how the continued devaluation of women in Ciudad Juárez in different areas of their lives (professional and personal) has put women as a forefront target for unjust actions against them such as murder. I deconstructed the devaluation of women in Juárez through an examination of the femicide, domestic violence, and women’s treatment in the workplace. My research was primarily executed through a literary analysis of secondary sources. I conclude that this continued devaluation has escalated to such a high degree that it has become normalized within Ciudad Juárez. Women do not have any structures set into place to keep them safe, and this climate of fear and mistrust has only allowed women to continue to be marginalized and in its most severe cases die as a result of it.
Jonathan Brito

**Thesis title:** Youth Organizing and Community Empowerment: The Young Lords Organization

**Keywords:** Young Lords, social justice, self-determination, marginalized communities, gentrification, youth leadership, community empowerment, revolutionary nationalism

Portrayals of Latinos in the media have and continue to be limited to two main roles; criminals and undeserving citizens. The portrayals often attempt to convey the idea that Latinos do not have the will or capacity to effectively manage their communities. My research challenges these stereotypes by examining the Young Lords Organization (YLO) in Chicago from 1965 to the early 1970’s, via a critical analysis of their use of gang theory to effectively organize Latino youth. The YLO began as a Puerto Rican gang, but transformed into a social justice organization aimed at improving the quality of life for all Latinos through self-determination. The central research question of this study is as follows: how can marginalized communities work to organize effectively? Also does their work create self-determination and revolutionary action? Utilizing both secondary and primary sources, including interviews with Jose Jimenez, the founder of the YLO in Chicago, I will analyze the YLO methods of organizing and empowering youth through fighting urban renewal and police brutality as well as providing political education classes for the local community. My research will deconstruct the strategic avenues that urban Latino Youth utilized to create a national organization based on social and political justice.
Verally A. Calderon

**Thesis title:** Ethnic Identity Formations: A Multidisciplinary Exploration

**Keywords:** ethnic identity, ethnicity, situational identity, labels, identity choices

Through this thesis, I seek to better understand Latinos’ ethnic identity formation processes and how they change over time. I review the several key works on ethnic identity both in psychology and Latino Studies and attempt to bring them in conversation with each other. In addition, because people’s lived experiences with respect to their ethnicity can help provide additional insights to the existing literature, I interviewed four college students who identify as Latino to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in the construction of ethnic identity and of the meanings attached to them. I highlight the most salient themes in the narratives of the college students I interviewed with regard to their processes of ethnic identity formation, the meanings attached to their Latinidad, and the importance of their ethnic identity in their lives.
Eric Giron

**Thesis title:** Dime Con Quien Andas y Te Dire Quien Eres: Masculinity, Gender and Sexualities in Latino Greek Fraternities

**Key words:** masculinity, Greek, Latino, heteronormativity, gay, stigma, sexuality, gender, fraternity

We live in a time in which the Latina/o population is ever increasing and the number of Latina/os getting access to higher education is on the rise. As part of the “college” experience Universities offer their student body the option to join a Greek letter organization. However, there is a certain stigma attached to Latino organizations especially fraternities as well as the word fraternity overall that helps to create heteronormative perceptions. Members of fraternities are often seen by student body as a center of masculinity and masculine interactions. From an outsider perspective fraternities serve as a center for socialization and heteronormative behaviors. The media often portray strong images of Greek letter organizations that are not representative of the all fraternities, in particular, Latino Fraternities. The main question then focuses on how gender and sexual identities challenges heteronormative perspectives within Latino Greek organizations.

This essay attempts to destabilize the dominant and often a negative perception about Latino Greek organizations, while at the same time attempts to redefine what Latino Greek organizations are through a nonnormative approach. Here heteronormative discourses are challenged by analyzing the creation and formation of normative thoughts and discourse which are centered on a conservative agenda.
I will use statistics as well as art work to challenge normative perceptions on regards to the formation of sexual identity and gender. I will then use interviews from Latino men who are part of Latino Greek fraternities and self-identify either as gay or straight, to present a different gaze on how to challenge heteronormative perceptions about Latino Greek letter organizations on regards to sexual identity.
Eric R. Gonzales

**Thesis Title:** Gentrification: An Analysis of Grassroots Efforts in Chicago’s Northwest Side

**Keywords:** gentrification, grassroots, grassroots efforts, Chicago, Puerto Rican, cultural preservation, crime trends

This thesis analyzes the gentrification of Chicago’s northwest side neighborhoods in the context of social, cultural, and economic changes. The history of Chicago’s northwest side is not new to gentrification as can be seen through the influx of Latinos after the 1950s. The gentrification process contemporarily has changed the cultural make-up of Chicago’s northwest side neighborhoods by pushing Latino families further west and displacing them from neighborhoods such as Humboldt Park and Logan Square. The process of displacement has led to the development of grassroots organizations that aim to counter the economic changes, cost of living, affordable housing. Thus, organizations such as Logan Square Neighborhood Association and the Division Street Business Development Association emerge. Part of these counters also includes the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Paseo Boricua, and the Puerto Rican parade.

The rhetoric used by academia on gentrification and grassroots efforts have generally been the same, focusing on crime trends as a way of portraying gentrification and grassroots organizations as a battle of good versus evil. Education reform has become a new site for the cultural battle of gentrification because Latinos and grassroots organizations perceive incoming middle to upper class whites as cultureless. Ultimately, the struggle over gentrification is one of cultural preservation with Latinos seeking to retain their cultural and historical ties to Chicago’s northwest side.
Oscar Patron

**Thesis title:** From Hispanic to Latino (and Everything in Between): Complexities With Identity and the Power of Labels

**Keywords:** identity, labels, ethnicity, census, Latino, Hispanic, pan-ethnic

Categorizing social identities through racial labels is problematic, but it is particularly complex for Latinos in Chicago and has been since the 1790 Census. Research on this topic has focused particularly on the Latino and Hispanic terms. However, in this study I will add to the literature by historicizing and analyzing the complexities with the terms Latino, Hispanic, Mexican American, and Chicano. I argue that it is erroneous to categorize all Latinos under one umbrella because it produces incorrect ethnic representations. Usage and analysis of governmental documents, newspapers, and other periodicals, discussing the transformation of labels are utilized. These preliminary findings will demonstrate that the categorizing under one panethnic term has negative effects on the Latino population. Therefore, my proposal is to further educate people on the matter so that we can move beyond stereotypes as well as racial profiling.
Janette Perez

**Thesis title:** Condemned

**Key words:** Latinas, Latina Sexuality, gender norms, How the Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer, Quinceañera, mother-daughter relationship, honor code

This work focuses on the media’s representation of the Latina image and the way in which they depict Latina’s sexuality. Throughout my thesis I will demonstrate how Latinas have been marginalized throughout media to represent this sexual and erotic Latina and how it creates conflict based on how the Latino culture expects them to be. The Latino culture has implemented rigid gendered norms so that Latinas can be a “mujer decente.” Since media representations’ resemble the complete opposite, Latina’s are put at a double standard where they are applauded by media for being erotic yet are reprimanded by the Latino culture if they were to even acknowledge their sexual desires. In order to demonstrate how Latina’s are in a complex paradox I used two films: How The Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer and Quinceañera. Both films portray the identity struggle that Latinas must go through when they are to follow social expectations yet comply with their own sexual desires. Latinas are then condemned into a life of entrapment where they will embrace this pure decent Latina image or be shunned from society for letting go of these gendered norms and free their sexuality.
Jeramie J. Perez

**Thesis title:** Are They Doing What I Think There Doing? A Textual Analysis of Reggaeton and its Effects on the Latino Youth

**Key words:** Reggaeton, media, Latina/o, cultural history, Don Omar, Wisin y Yandel, Don Chezina, Calle 13, Vico C

In this thesis I aim to find out if reggaeton affects the Latina/o youth community and if there are still areas of possibility within the genre. This thesis looks at reggaeton through a historical perspective and in the way it has changed throughout the years. It analyzes music videos and lyrics to contextualize the genre and if it affects communities. This thesis goes into an in-depth perspective on how media affects Latinos through images and how pop culture affect the way youth perceive themselves within the United States. Through intensive research, this thesis analyzes how music, specifically, reggaeton, plays a role within today’s youth and society.
Nancy Perez Cambron

**Thesis title:** Biologically and Scientifically Left Behind: Failing Latina Women

**Key words:** Latina women, misdiagnosis, mistreatment, minorities, medical, science, health, gender, race, racism

“Biologically and Scientifically Left Behind: Failing Latina Women,” is a research paper that examines the ways in which Latina women have been put at a disadvantage in the medical and science fields. The methodology involved in proving this hypothesis included using historical examples provided by multiple books, authors, and articles. This will prove that racism has often led to the misdiagnosis and mistreatment of minority women. The majority of the books used for this research paper illustrate that people, especially minorities like Latina women, hold a great deal of trust in individuals that hold positions of power: like doctors and scientists. Therefore, this paper was written to educate individuals that believe that minorities are born drawn to certain diseases. This research paper is organized in the following way: it starts by discussing examples from around the time of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo until it reaches examples from this day and age. It uses the experiences and conditions of Latina women described in the materials used to prove the hypothesis. Finally, the research paper will conclude by providing ways to stop this problem. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of an education. By putting minorities in positions of power, which are achieved with an education, minorities are able to relate to the person of power.
Gabriela T. Rodriguez

**Thesis title:** From Powerlessness to Empowerment: Conversations of Domestic Violence within the Culture of Latina Literature

**Keywords:** empowerment, abuse, silence, Latina literature, hope, healing and disempowerment

Using the works of Chicana US based authors as primary texts, such as Sandra Cisneros, Achy Obeja, Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, and Carla Trujillo, this paper will analyze and critique the different representations of violence against women within Latina Literature. As suggested by these authors, there are different dynamics, representations, causes, effects, and solutions of domestic violence. Each author’s representation of a feminist consciousness is used to provide a close analysis of how violence against women is often a silent issue, meant to disempower and further silence them. Authors such as Cisneros, Obejas, Valdes-Rodriguez, and Trujillo negotiate what it means to be a Latina woman in an abusive relationship by writing stories that both critique the culture of silence surrounding domestic violence in Latina/o communities and offer what Jane Tompkins calls a “blueprint for survival under a specific set of political, economic, social, or religious conditions” (Tompkins xvii). Narratives of disempowerment and marginalization are therefore complicated by the creation of hopeful and empowered protagonists that emerge within the text. In other words, there cannot be representations of empowered women without the representation of disempowered women because this narrative strategy is necessary for underscoring the importance of telling such stories. Each author captures the experience of abuse and the impact it has on her protagonists. Collectively, the authors’ representations of violence against Latinas show us that there is no singular experience of, singular response to, or singular way of talking about abuse in Latina/o families and communities.
Jose I. Sanchez

**Thesis title:** Surviving the Times: Subsisting within the Limits and Contradictions of Neoliberalism from an Undocumented Perspective

**Keywords:** undocumented, immigration, survival, neoliberalism, history, how-to, DREAM Act, Mexico

This thesis examines my experiences as an undocumented immigrant living in the United States. I employ non-traditional evidence, such as my personal history as first person narrative, to explore contradictions and various methods of survival employed by myself and other undocumented adults. The exploration of the lived contradictions then allow me to not only critique neoliberal policies, but popular critiques of neoliberalism that situate individuals as citizens of the state; an argument that fails to account for and then displaces undocumented bodies. I conclude by discussing the ways in which the contradictions and various methods of survival not only create hope but redefine success through a lived struggle.