

**DEPARTMENT OF LATINA/LATINO STUDIES SENIOR PROJECT/THESIS ABSTRACTS  
MAY 2015**

**Brian Fernandez**

**Project title:** Family Detention, Corporate Intention: The Criminalization of Brown Space

**Keywords:** immigration, detention, asylum, corporate

This research looks at the history of family detention of undocumented mothers and children in the United States, and the influx of immigration coming from Central America to the United States in the search of asylum during the summer of 2014. The research is concentrated around the different family detention centers that have been expanded upon by authorities. Additionally, the different consequences that have come from the re-establishment of family detention centers, including sexual assault to the women being detained, prison like condition for mothers and their children, and the economic benefits by private prison companies are also examined.. A key court case settlement known as Flores v. Messey is presented since this was a key in setting national policy regarding the detention, release, and treatment of children in INS custody. However, authorities are ignoring this settlement, and children continue being detained in -prison-like conditions. This research draws from journals, memoirs, archives, testimonies, and court cases. My conclusion is that the re-establishment of family detention centers is a costly alternative chosen by authorities in an effort to deter future illegal immigration into the country. In consequence, the private prison companies are benefiting in billions of dollars and reaping these monetary benefits by turning a humanitarian matter into a corporate affair.

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**Jesus Huerta**

**Project title:** Latino Baseball Players and Immigration Narratives

**Keywords:** Latino baseball players, Major League Baseball, immigration, media portrayal

This research sets out to answer the questions: What are the narratives surrounding current Latino baseball athletes? What is the true cost of these narratives and journey to the majors and how does it affect the portrayals of regular (non-athlete) migrant Latino citizens in the United States? Additionally, this paper examines the costs of major media news articles surrounding a few of Major League Baseball's top Latino athletes who joined the League with particularly interesting or controversial background stories. The paper provides a short analysis and comparison of the athletes' portrayals by mainstream media and examines how it contradicts the media representations of the average Latino migrant. The project was sparked by the increasing popularity of the sport around the Latina/o community that emerged in the 1990's and has continued to this very day. The paper begins with a short introduction followed by a brief history of the Major League Baseball system where the history and major league logistics are explained. It then provides a short player profile on a few professional athletes who were the main focus of the research. Next, it explains some modern day systematic oppressions that are faced not only by athletes seeking to migrate to the United States, but also the regular everyday citizen. The next section reflects the research findings on media portrayals of everyday citizens and explains how they are often dehumanized and devalued in the media. Finally, the overall significance and importance of this research is explained in the final pages of the conclusion.

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**Jasmin Patron Vargas**

**Project title:** Rewriting History: Examining Mexican Representations Within U.S. History Textbooks

**Keywords:** U.S. history, Eurocentrism, multiculturalism, diversity

Learning about history is extremely important as it informs people's worldviews. Textbooks, in that sense, serve as a fundamental tool for a classroom's instruction. Yet, traditional history fails to teach students an unbiased history curriculum that is not solely based on the stories of the "victors." Given this, it is important that students learn a history that presents the stories of all people who contributed to the shaping of this nation. Using critical discourse analysis, this study examined the portrayals of Mexicans in the sections of *The Alamo* and the Mexican War of the Illinois U.S. history textbook, *The American Vision*. The findings show that while the content does not overtly negatively portray Mexicans, there is a difference in the way people of color (e.g., Mexicans) and Anglos are portrayed.

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**Xavier Ramirez**

**Project title:** Social Support and Sexual Practices of Latino Men Who Have Sex with Men

**Keywords:** Latinos, gay, LGBT, Sexual Health, Sexuality

The purpose of my research is to understand how Latino men who have sex with men (MSM) utilize race, age, and sexual role (among other possible variables) to negotiate condom usage during sexual encounters. This is to understand the relationship between social support networks and safe sex practices. I am interested in whom these men turn to for support, where they receive information about sexual health, and what dynamics are at play in their decision to practice safe sex.

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**Miguel Rodriguez**

**Project title:** Water Governmentality in Chile and Bolivia

**Keywords:** governmentality, water, Chile, Bolivia, counter-conduct

Water allocation is a growing problem in Latin America. With the rise of transnational corporations further engaging in the development of countries in Latin America, the rise in neo-liberal policies had risen in open market economies in various Latin American states. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the institutions of power which have played a role in the development of water management in Chile and Bolivia. In the case of Chile, neo-liberal policies have been implemented for quite some time and have seen relative success in allocation and distribution of water, with subsidies paving the way to meet those who cannot make ends meet. In Bolivia, such water policies, known as standard adjustment programs, have been met with resistance. Much of the resistance comes from indigenous populations who fall short of payment of water when new implementations marginalize their access. Using Michel Foucault as a theoretical framework, I will analyze the systems of power which have led to the discussion of population in the implementation of new institutions of water management, as well as power in the creation of the political economy. Water management is a relevant topic of discussion as countries that face prolonged droughts are turning their heads to the south for new methods of allocation of water. This paper serves as a form of knowledge in discussing the issues associated in the implementation of new institutions in the state. Though I mention some aspects of the historical formation of the states themselves, I mainly discuss the institutions of water management of the states and how they became relevant.

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**Angelica Sanchez**

**Project title:** Performing Brownness in Pedro Pietri's *The Masses are Asses: Una Manera de Ser* Within Normative Affect

**Keywords:** spatial performativity, racialized minoritarian subject, white space, Brownness and time.

“if our experience is destroyed, our behavior will be destructive.”

R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (28)

*The Masses Are Asses* by Pedro Pietri, highlights the epitome of R.D. Laing's quote; it does so through the minoritarian subjects of the play, Lady and Gentleman. The characters' depressive position is juxtaposed throughout Brownness in time and space, a Brownness that is paralleled by the overlong whiteness. Yet, with whiteness being equivalent to dominant normative affect and Brownness being the feeling of the other, one would question how you can prove that these minoritarian subjects are racialized bodies; especially if the play does not give a distinct description of the characters phenotype or a history of their existence. With this said, this research takes a phenomenological approach in highlighting the way the world of reality and fantasy receives the racialized body.

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**Carlos Saucedo**

**Project title:** An Exploration of Latina/o Sense of Belonging and University Retention Programs

**Keywords:** Latino sense of belonging, retention programs, racial microaggression, campus racial climate

This project aims to explore Latino student sense of belonging and retention programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Through five semi-structured interviews with students within the retention program, the Latina/o Resilience Network, and participatory observations, I begin to understand why Latino students lack a sense of belonging at the University. Experiences of racial microaggressions contribute to the lack of belonging within the Latino student population. Latino students' lack of belonging in relation to racial microaggressions is enhanced by administrators' lack of accountability. By exploring the campus racial climate, I uncover that a lack of belonging experienced by Latino students is perpetuated by the lack of Latino representation on campus, the lack of history embedded into the curriculum, a lack of retention programming, and a mission that fails to achieve diversity and pluralism. Lastly, I explore the resilient efforts of Latino students that stem from retention programming. I begin to delve into the potential outcome the retention program, Latina/o Resilience Network, can have on the retention rates of Latino students. Through these explorations, an ideal peer-to-peer program can be achieved and effect change towards a positive campus racial climate.