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Blocking the Bathroom Latino Students and the Spatial Arrangements of Student Discipline

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Abstract

In this ethnographic study of student discipline in California, I examine the spatial arrangements of the disproportionate discipline, surveillance, and banishment of Latino boys who were constructed as gang members from school and community spaces. Drawing on socio-cultural geographical theories, I argue that negative discourses, and implicit bias, together with increased surveillance in school and public space(s), contributed to the disproportionate discipline of Latino male students.



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Introduction

The relationship between a student's social location and student discipline outcomes has long been acknowledged (Skiba & Losen, 2016; Morris, 2005; Children's Defense Fund, 1975). The first study of student discipline outcomes was published in 1975 by the Children's Defense Fund. Their analysis of suspension data from 2,862 U.S. school districts concluded that the disproportionate suspension of students of color was a result of differential enforcement of "policies and practices", likely due to racial bias. Since that time, an abundance of research has shown that students of color (Gregory et al, 2011; Peguero and Shekarkhar, 2011; Skiba et al, 2002, 2011), working class students (Costenbader & Markson, 1998), students who qualify for Special Education services (Losen et al., 2012), adolescent boys (Lietz & Gregory, 1978, McFadden et al., 1992, Raffaele-Mendez, 2002; Skiba et al., 2002), the children of immigrants (Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011), and LGBTQ youth (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011; Snapp et al., 2015) are more frequently and severely disciplined in schools when compared to their peers from dominant groups. Moreover, students who occupy two or more marginalized social locations, such as male youth of color, are more likely to be punished at school.

We know a great deal about the social location of students who are likely to be disciplined in school and the negative life consequences thereof, including loss of the opportunity to learn (Rausch and Skiba, 2004), lower academic achievement (Anderson, Ritter, & Zamorro, 2017; Arcia, 2006; Rausch and Skiba, 2004), repeated suspension (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013), drop out (Anderson, Ritter, & Zamorro, 2017; Cataldi & Ramani, 2009) and greater involvement with the juvenile justice system (Costenbader and Markson, 1998, Fabelo et al., 2011; Krezmien et al., 2010). However, little attention has been paid to the social and spatial arrangements of student discipline practices, especially for Latino students. This paper is based on an ethnographic study that I conducted in a California agricultural community from 2011 to 2014 at a predominantly Latino high school. Using a socio-cultural geographical lens (Lefebvre, 1974; Low, 2009, 2014; Soja, 2009; Tuan, 1974), this study examines the spatial arrangements of discipline for Latino boys in the central boys' bathroom, the in-school suspension (ISS) room, and a nearby park.

The Cultural Turn in Geography

Space is a fundamental geographical concept whose definition has evolved with the "cultural turn" in human geography (Cosgrove, 1987). The cultural turn is a time when human geographers, influenced by sociology, philosophy and anthropology, integrated cultural perspectives into geography about the nature of space, place, and the spatial arrangements of power. The sub-discipline of cultural geography, as well as other social sciences have taken up this new lens and now understand space as socially and culturally produced and constructed (Lefebvre, 1991).

This study, which draws on the work of social scientists who have been influenced by the cultural turn in geography, examines place in a public secondary school. Lefebvre's (1991) theory of spatialization, that space is a social product, is used to understand the social practices and perceptions of space. Setha Low's theory of spatializing culture yields insight into the embodied, discursive and hierarchical features of spatial arrangements (2014). In this study, it is used to reveal the strategies of systems of exclusion, such as "physical enclosures," and surveillance (2009, p. 391). Edward Soja's theory of spatial justice is used to understand "unjust geographies and spatial structures of privilege" (2009, p. 5). When applied to the disproportionate discipline of Latino boys, these new conceptualizations of space (spatialization, spatializing culture and spatial justice) provide a strategy for identifying the

inequitable social relations that produce inequitable spaces (Harvey, 2010; Massey, 1997; Soja, 2009) in my study.

There is a need to think “geographically” about student discipline (Hubbard et al, 2002). Centering space forces us to consider the social and cultural practices that govern the design, arrangement, distribution and use of space in punishment. Centering space yields insight into how relations of power structure and are structured by space and place. With this new understanding, we can create more equitable schools for Latino boys.

Latino Students and Discipline

Despite the influence of spatiality in the social sciences, few education studies have centered space in their analysis of student discipline for Latino students. The first study to document disproportionate discipline was conducted by the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) in 1975. The data were insufficient to make any claims about Latino student discipline; however, preliminary data from Texas suggested a suspension gap between Latino (5.2%) and White (3.4%) students. Since then, researchers had inconsistently found race to be a factor for Latinos (Fabelo et al., 2011; Keleher, 2000; Rocque, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014). However, these findings were based on aggregate numbers. New data suggests disproportionality for Latinos beginning in middle school with Latinos male rates of suspension more than six points higher than White male rates of suspension at the middle school level (Losen, 2011, 2015; Mendez et al., 2002; McFadden et al., 1992; Skiba & Losen, 2016). This suggests a need for examination of the spatial arrangements of Latino student discipline in secondary school.

Like the early data on discipline disproportionality, data on the reasons for Latinos’ exclusion are inconsistent. There is evidence that Latino males are more often excluded for subjective reasons, such as “defiance” or “disruption,” two catchall terms that educators frequently use to describe a range of behaviors (Losen et al., 2014; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2003). In California, 61% of suspensions are for “willful defiance” (California Department of Education, 2014) and in the five districts with the widest White and Latino student suspension gaps, between 26% and 58% of the gap is explained by differences in suspension for willful defiance and disruption (Losen et al., 2015). Moreover, recent research suggests that educators’ implicit biases about youth of color may contribute to disproportionate discipline (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). Skiba et al. (2011) found “substantial under-referral” of White students across all categories of office discipline referrals (p.93). By contrast, Latinos had a greater likelihood of suspension and expulsion across all disciplinary infractions at both the K-6 and 6-9th grade levels, and a diminished likelihood of receiving moderate consequences for misbehavior when compared to White students.

The Ethnographic Context

Californiatown High School (CHS), the primary research site in this study, is a comprehensive public high school in California¹. The majority of students are Latino or White, and more than 50% qualify for free and reduced lunch. A small number qualify for an individual education plan (IEP)². In contrast to the predominantly working-class Latino student body, the faculty and staff are predominantly White and female with an average of nine years of experience (CDE, District and Site Data). The administrative team was led by a White

¹ The demographics of the school have been withheld to ensure anonymity of the participants.

² IEPs are educational plans mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Act, 1990, for individuals with disabilities that meet the federal and state regulations for special education.

female principal, Kelly McPherson³, as well as three White assistant principals (AP) and one Latino male assistant principal. A Latina teacher substituted as the fourth AP, as needed. The city of Californiatown is an agricultural community headed by a powerful group of White farm and business owners and police officers who supervise a majority Latino labor force.

Methodology

Because I was interested in student discipline, in February 2011, I cold-called Californiatown High School (CHS) and made arrangements with the principal's secretary to observe the instructors for a class assignment. Before I left, I negotiated with CHS principal, Kelly McPherson, to return in the fall and study her administrative team's decision-making practices around student discipline. I returned in August 2011 with an IRB approved study to observe at the site. I negotiated with Principal McPherson to return for two additional years. Due to the sensitive nature of student discipline⁴ and the ethics of researching vulnerable populations (Shivayogi, 2013), I negotiated entry for each observation with each adult participant and the student(s) in their office. Specifically, both participants and the students in their offices granted me permission to observe, take notes and/or record their conversation. Students were informed that the granting of consent would not affect their disciplinary outcome and they were free to revoke consent at any time. On several occasions, I did not observe because either an adult participant or a student in their office did not grant me permission, therefore, a limitation of this study is that the perspectives are drawn from the adult participants and students who granted me permission to observe. Due to the IRB protocol, I did not speak directly to students after negotiating entry, unless they first engaged me and only in response to a specific query such as the name of the university with which I was affiliated. Understandings of student perspectives were grounded in a discourse analysis of three years of student discipline conversations between various members of the student discipline team and students.

The data for this study derive from an ethnographic study of student discipline practices conducted at Californiatown High School from August 2011 to August 2014. The findings for this discussion were collected from August 2011 to June 2012 through participant observations, semi-structured interviews, photographs, and participant created documents and artifacts that focused on student discipline. Observations were conducted with participants in their offices, at spaces where students gathered, and in community spaces, including parks and athletic events. Observations varied by day of the week and time of day and averaged between two and three hours each. Hand-written ethnographic field notes were taken simultaneous with observation and, when permitted, were audio recorded. Whenever possible, I engaged in post-observation conversations with the participants to learn their emic perspectives (Spradley, 1979) and as a method of member checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). At the end of the school year, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the study participants to clarify data/themes from my observations, inquire into a participant's understanding of events and/or gain their perspective, define emic terms, and capture the dominant discourse for observed events. Interviews, documents, and observations were transcribed, coded and analyzed using Strauss's (1987) and Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative approach.

The participants presented in this study were members of the school's student discipline team. They include one principal, five assistant principals (AP), and one school resource officer (SRO). Principal Kelly McPherson was a white woman in her late thirties. The APs, Amy,

³ All of the names of places and participants are pseudonyms.

⁴ Students are a vulnerable population and the students observed in this study experienced arrest, expulsion, suspension and student discipline consequences from the school, state and police department.

Bella, Claudia, Lupe and Joaquin ranged in age and ethnicity. Amy was a white woman in her fifties. Bella, who self-identified as White and Chinese, was in her thirties. Claudia was a White woman in her late twenties. Lupe, a Latina teacher who substituted as an AP, was in her thirties. The fourth AP, Joaquin, self-identified as a “Mexican immigrant” male in his forties. The SRO, Officer Parker Smith, was a white male in his thirties.

A Beautiful Space Under Surveillance

CHS is a beautiful sprawling campus that closely resembles a small college. A large banner with the words “Highest High School Attendance Rate” proudly hangs on the caramel-colored stucco wall of the administration building, the main entrance to the school. The back of the administration building opens to an expansive quad beyond which are eight large buildings surrounded by athletic fields. The central bathroom, a low-slung cement block building with a flat, green metal roof, is behind the administration building. The in-school suspension room (ISS) is to the west of the administration building, inside a tall, sand-colored stucco building with floor to ceiling windows. ISS is held in a large room on the right that was once a career counseling center. The campus grounds are well-maintained with manicured grass, and young trees. Shades of caramel, sand and taupe stucco create architectural uniformity.

Like many large high schools, both written and unspoken rules of spatial capital (Convertino, 2015) governed students’ use of and movement in school spaces during both structured (class, school sponsored activities) and unstructured (passing periods, lunch) times. The black-topped walkways were painted with thick red lines, boundaries between go and no-go zones throughout the campus, while the student handbook provided explicit rules about the use of physical spaces. Additional rules governed students’ presentation of the body (Goffman, 1959) and physical movement within school spaces, including rules about public displays of affection and attire--no sagging, bare bellies or spaghetti straps. The school was easily surveilled from several points on the campus. In addition, the administration and police officer could (and did) remotely access the feed from several cameras in high traffic areas from their office desktops.

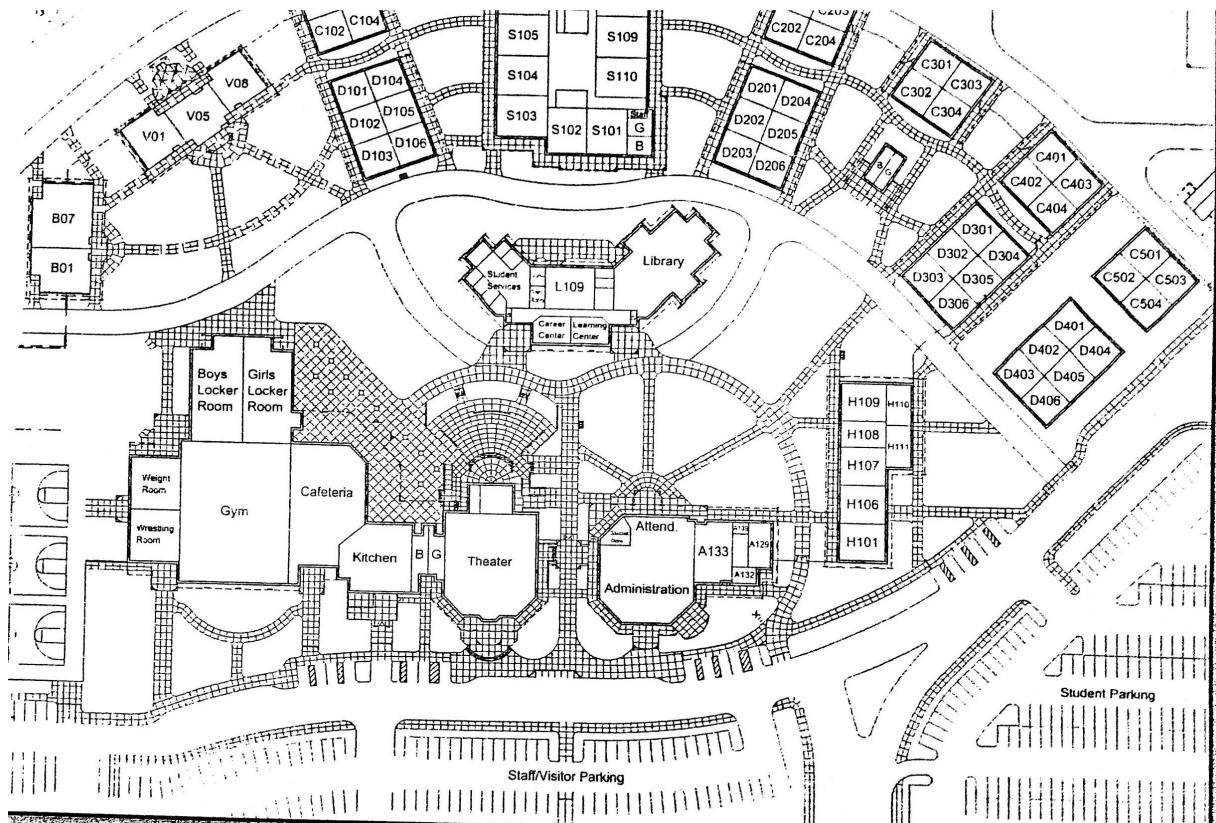


Figure 1: Map of the Californiatown High School Campus

Data from office discipline referrals (ODR) and student discipline records showed that Latino boys were more closely watched and punitively sanctioned than their peers. Most ODRs were for males however, Latino males, who made up roughly 30% of the student population, were overrepresented in every category of punishment. They were disproportionately suspended from class (47%), sent to In-school Suspension (60%) and suspended (57%). Moreover, the small number of students who had been expelled, 0.9% of the student body, were exclusively Latino males. Latinos who were regularly disciplined were frequently transferred to the district's continuation school which had fewer graduation requirements and no pathway to college. When compared to Latino males, White female students were disproportionately under-disciplined. At 13.4% of the student population, White female students received just 5% of in school suspensions and 2.8% of home suspensions.

Latino "Otherness"

School adults disproportionately noticed the behavior of and referred Latino boys (to the office) for discipline. The assistant principals labeled Latino boys who received ODRs as "goofy", "freshman", who engaged in "little impulse control stuff" and assigned consequences to "teach them how to behave" (Field Notes: May, 2012). While seemingly benign, each line of documentation had the cumulative effect of marking Latino boys as a problem. Latino students were keenly aware of the school's racial hierarchies and worked to avoid being labeled

as troublemakers e.g. gangsters. My field notes capture Latino boys in an AVID ⁵classroom discussing the gangster trope:

Students then enter a discussion about the reasons why teachers identify some students and not others. Several times I hear variations of gangster being a problem. “Little gangster” and “It’s how you come across” (Field Notes: May 2012).

Latino boys in AVID had good reason to fear being designated as a gang member. The discursive construction of Latino boys as Norteño and Sureño gang members⁶ not only created a distinct class of persons, but also served to reinforce the logic of their differential treatment.

School adults labeled a handful of Latino boys who stood under the awning in front of the central restroom as Sureños and a similar sized group of Latino boys who played handball on a wall near the cafeteria as Norteños. AP Joaquin characterized the alleged Sureños as “very territorial,” and explained that they stood in front of the restrooms with the intent to “intimidate” other students (Interview: June 2013). SRO Parker echoed the AP’s characterization, and explained that potential restroom users felt “threatened” because the boys “block[ed] the way to the bathroom” (Interview: June 2013). Although a similar sized group of White boys sat and stood in front of the library, effectively blocking the entrance with their bodies, only Latino boys were constructed as threatening and intimidating to their peers. This was well exemplified during my observation of Acting AP Lupe’s supervision:

We are walking the campus. I ask [Acting AP Lupe] what she is looking at as she walks. “Little crowds, like that [she points to a group of Latino students who are also male on the left side]. Something looks like it may be happening. I’ll just get closer.” I point out a group of White boys on the left and ask about them. She points out another group of Latino males, this time by the bathroom. As we walk, she tells me the bathroom is Sureño territory. “When there’s a big group of Sureños, other students don’t feel safe going to the bathroom.” (Field Notes: September 2012).

In labeling the boys as a threat to other users of the public space, the school officials introduced an argument for the boys’ removal from the area.

The identification of alleged Norteño and Sureño gang members was not based on a set of objective criteria, but rather subjective determinations of a student’s self-presentation (Goffman, 1959; Los Angeles Police Department, n.d.; Rios, 2011). During an interview with AP Joaquin, he explained that he could easily identify a gang member by their “dress”—“they sneak it [prohibited colors]” into their attire, “the way they posture” which he described as “looking as if they are looking at something but looking at nothing,” and their “dynamic” (Interview: June 2013). AP Joaquin explained that he found it “very, very, very easy to distinguish the characteristics” of students who were gang members (Interview: June 2013).

Like AP Joaquin, Acting AP Lupe identified Latino students as gang members based on their appearance. During an observation, we discussed her identification strategy:

⁵ Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a college readiness program created to help first generation and ethnic minority students acquire the skills they need to succeed in college.

⁶ The Norteños (Northerners) are a Mexican street gang based principally in Northern and Central California. The Sureños (Southerners) are a Mexican street gang based principally in Southern California.

I ask how she knows they're Sureños. She explains, "Just their clothing." I ask her if they're all Sureños. "Just two of them," she explains. [I notice there are six boys, but she has identified only two as Sureños or gang members. She has painted the entire group of boys as gang members.] As we walk, I ask her if she can identify the Sureños. She describes a male with a "blue Cowboy's hat" (Field Notes: September 2012).

When pressed, Acting AP Lupe could identify only one student as a member of gang based on his hat. From my three years of observations in the school and surrounding community, including high school football games, this small farming town lived for Friday night football, and many students rooted for "America's Team," the Dallas Cowboys. A blue Cowboy's hat was more likely a display of Cowboy's fandom than gang membership while a cowboy hat was likely a nod to the town's agricultural roots.

Like AP Joaquin, SRO Parker identified gang members by appearance. He described his identification process:

SRO: You have to learn who the kids are

Mari: Mhm.

SRO: And who they ass..associate themselves with. Um. The only way to figure it out is you know going, making contacts um whether if it's clothing they're wearing, graffiti on their backpacks, graffiti on their..their books and stuff like that, their work. (breathes deeply) That's how you get to learn who they are, talking to them. (Interview: August 2013)

In his study of punished Black and Latino youth, former gang member, Victor Rios, identified multiple indicators of gang membership, including "Whom the young person hung out with, who self-identified as a gang member, and how the young person interacted with known gang members" (2011, p.78). Understanding the indicators of gang membership can prevent the mistaken labeling of peer groups as gangs simply because they "share some characteristics observed among true gang members" (Lopez et al., 2006, p.300). While no one can be sure of the boys' gang affiliation because they weren't asked, it is possible that their posturing was intended to be perceived as gang-like. L. Janelle Dance's work on minority youth culture found that some youth were "assuming a hard or gangsterlike posture...merely a means to impress their peers" (2002, p. 52). This assumption is supported by the literature on identity development which suggests that some youth temporarily take on negative or undesirable identities (see Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development) such as a gang persona. The negative identities are typically temporary and youth involvement in gangs is relatively small, approximately 2% of all youth (Pyrooz & Sweeten, 2015). Unfortunately, the adults at CHS did not appear to consider identity development when they labeled the boys' peer group as gang members.

The dubious labeling practice affected the boys' use of school spaces. In August 2011, AP Joaquin began a two-year administrative tenure, and with it, a targeted surveillance of the Latino youth who stood in front of the central restroom. He believed the surveillance was a necessary safety measure to combat what he believed to be a legacy of gang violence at the school.

Removing Latino Boys from the Bathrooms

In the absence of evidence of a crime or violation of school rules, Latino boys' classification as Norteño and Sureño gang members was invoked to limit their use of school space. AP Joaquin explained:

And then I heard about the fights that had occurred that were gang related and so I said 'okay easy we are going to institute a no loitering rule and then we are going to enforce it' (Interview: June 2013).

Although no rule about loitering existed in the student handbook, AP Joaquin created one for the purposes of removing the alleged gang members from the restrooms. Like other subjective categorizations e.g. "disrespectful" or "defiant" that can be inequitably interpreted and enforced, loitering constructed the boys as not being deserving of using or being in school spaces. In contrast to his rationale for the loitering rule, the boys had been in middle school at the time of the fights. Nevertheless, the AP invoked the trope of the Latino youth gang member to implicate the boys in future crimes and justify their removal.

The new rules governed only the use of space for alleged Norteño and Sureño gang members. Other clusters of students did not have to move, an inequity that was not lost on the boys. The boys contested the AP-initiated removal by repeatedly returning to the restrooms. AP Joaquin proudly explained how he displaced the teens:

Well, um we did the due process. We reminded them, give 'em a number of reminders (Interview: June 2013).

Like other banned persons, the boys did not readily accept their banishment. AP Joaquin described their response:

It took some pushing and shoving and the kids were openly resistant. I had to haul them all the way to the office (Interview: June 2013).

The pushing, shoving and hauling were emotional rather than physical, but the violence of the boys' removal is made clear by the AP's choice of words. It was an act of both physical and emotional violence enacted to deprive them of "the right to geographic mobility" (Beckett & Herbert, 2009). The AP used the detained students as his agents:

and then um we called in a number of students to the office and issued consequences and then those students directly or indirectly delivered the message of saying "hey if we're gonna continue doing this we're going to face some serious consequences" so it was one where we went as far as having a parent meeting and the student ... and the student has never come back [to the area near the central restrooms].

In the logic of broken windows policing, the school spatially regulated perceived deviance, prevented crime and created a safe campus through the displacement of the bathroom dwellers.

Students who contested their displacement by returning to the restrooms were subject to a range of consequences upon return. In an interview, AP Joaquin (Joa) and I (Mari) discussed the consequences for loitering at the bathrooms:

Mari: And what are the other consequences? Like a parent (meeting)

Joa: (Oh the tip..) typically a parent meeting. Ah..possible ah suspension, uh in school suspension, um Friday schools. Uh the..the progressive discipline consequences that we issue if they don't comply so um

Mari: Did anybody get an in school suspension?

Joa: Yeah. Yeah.

Mari: Or a suspension?

Joa: I issued a couple of in school suspensions uh a couple of times.

Mari: Did anyone get um..get..did any one student get an in school suspension repeatedly? (Did a)

Joa: (No) but only one student did get a two day school suspension because of his history. Yeah.

Mari: Was..was it in school suspension or home suspension?

Joa: Oh no. It was in school because the whole idea is to keep 'em in school and it's also in the spirit of these um many of these students are also not very well connected, not and struggling a bit in school so we want to keep them in school but also want them to comply so it's that fine balance.

According to AP Joaquin, the most common consequence was a parent meeting; however, students received a range of consequences from Friday School (up to three hours of detention on a Friday at the end of the regular school day) to a full day of ISS based on their discipline history. Ironically, CHS' impromptu loitering rule did not meet the federal or state definition of a crime and was likely unconstitutional because, as students the boys did "have lawful business for being present" at school (California Penal Code 653b PC). Although they did not have the language to articulate their concerns, the boys had a valid legal argument against their removal.



Figure 2: Central Restrooms

Racialized Gender and In-School Suspension

Latino students were not only banished *from* school spaces; they were also banished *to* spaces. Aside from the office where they would meet with the administration, the space to which most misbehaving Latinos were sent was In-School Suspension. Teachers could send students to In-school suspension (ISS) for up to two class periods on a class suspension, per California Education Code. It was common for administrators to send students to ISS after a student discipline conference instead of returning the student to class. ISS was also a common consequence for a range of disciplinary infractions, from a disruption to missing Friday School.

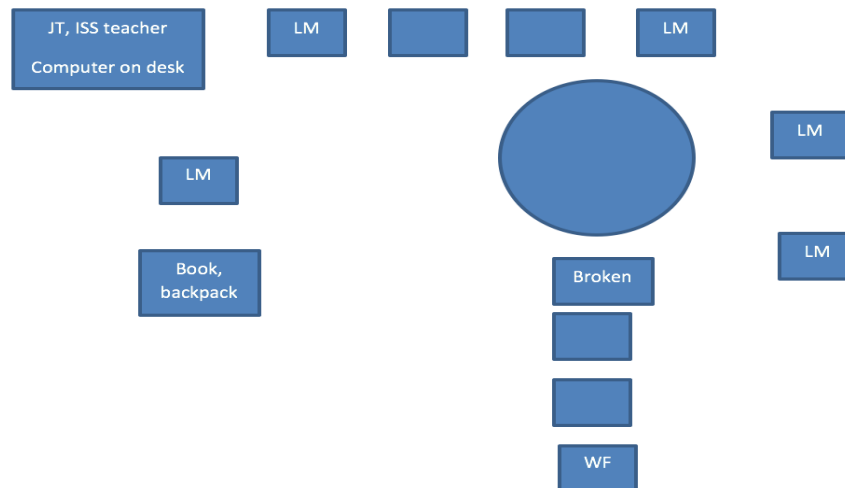
The ISS room moved three times during the year. It was initially located outside the AP secretary's office. The area was a large square space in the back of the administration building. On one side of the room was a tall gray formica counter that extended the length of the wall where the attendance secretary and other administrative staff sat. Perpendicular to the counter on the other side of the highly visible space, were nine student desks in three rows for ISS students. Parents, students and other community members had to walk through the foyer where ISS was held to enter the campus. ISS was moved two feet, inside AP secretary Abigail's office (See Figure 3). It was a sun-filled spacious room with three neat rows of school desks that faced her large writing table. Secretary Abigail, who would retire at the end of the year, had little positive to say about the students she encountered in ISS. "They just don't care," she commented to a teacher loudly enough for me to overhear her in the foyer. "There was a little bit of morality and accountability for their age that didn't happen" (Field Notes: October 2011). Soon after her comment, ISS moved to a different building altogether.



Figure 3: In School Suspension in Secretary Abigail's Office

The new ISS room had the look and feel of a cozy library. Lined with bookshelves on one side, it had a few computers, several desks, and a substantial round wooden table in the center. Perpendicular to the bookshelves and on the far left side of the room was ISS Supervisor James' writing desk and small plastic chair where students sat when they worked with him. One wall of the room was large windows with blinds drawn. Figure 4 is the layout of the room I drew during an observation. Because ISS students changed at every class period and often within class periods, the graphic only indicates a snapshot of students who were in the room at the time of my rendering. During the observation, I witnessed a rare occurrence, a (phenotypically) White female (WF) student. The other five students were all Latino males (LM).

Although ISS was a space of social and spatial exclusion, James, the ISS supervisor, worked hard to make it feel like a classroom. His enrollment in an online teaching credential and Master of Education program helped him see ISS as a valid classroom:



Key: Each square represents a desk. The round circle indicates a large table. LM = Latino male student WF = White female student. The broken desk is indicated on the map. There is a desk with books and a backpack on it. The other desks were unoccupied. ISS James' desk has a computer on it.

Figure 4: Layout of the In School Suspension Classroom on May 10, 2012

Um they have uh myself and I have a co-teacher who's here in the morning just to help out for a couple hours and we're both credentialed teachers you know or I'm almost credentialed teacher so we're not the security guards you know. We're not sit there with your hands on the desk and be quiet. We're here to help these kids. We're here to educate these kids... Yeah. It may be loud in here. Yeah, there may be groups sitting around but that's to keep the like a normal classroom environment you do small group work. You do pair work. I couldn't do individual work with all these kids just like a normal teacher can't do individual work. I have to trust my in (inaudible), and set up lesson plans just like I would any other classroom to benefit to my education and my master's program is that I'm coming up with lesson plans on the fly, different every single day. So, you know whereas other teachers plan three, four weeks in advance and they have that time to do that, I don't have time to do that. It has to be immediate. Okay I've got five students. Okay. This is what I've got to do today (Interview: May 2012).

ISS James worked to build rapport with the students he supervised. "Way to go, bud!" he exclaimed in sincere joy for a student named Gilberto with whom he had worked on a multiplication assignment. When Gilberto completed his problem, ISS James praised him again, "You got the hard one like that!" (Field Notes: May 2012).

ISS James saw himself as "the last step" for the students who "really have been in trouble". He explained:

You've got to remember this is in school suspension. These are kids really have been in trouble. You know they've g..they've had the detentions, had the parent conferences. They've had the s..teacher conferences. They've met with vice principals. I am now the last step. So, they've already gone through. We have a

seven stage plan here. They've already gone through six stages before getting to me" (Interview: May 2012).

While he did not say it outright, ISS James' comments were a dog whistle about the geographies of spatial isolation. He understood that the predominantly brown students in ISS were likely to experience removal if they didn't make it in his classroom.

There were other indicators that ISS was not a typical classroom. It was held in a building where there were no other classes. ISS students were separated from their peers in time and space, "deprived ... of the rights of membership in a political community" (Beckett & Herbert, 2009, p. 11). They had a separate lunch time to which they were escorted. Their restroom visits were scheduled. They could not go outside during passing period or talk to their friends unless they were also in the ISS room. One student's observation exposed the similarities between ISS and incarceration:

"Teacher can I go to the bathroom?" the student asks again. It is his second request. The student, Felipe, says, "**That makes it seem like we're criminals. I don't like that.**" He is referring to the request to use the bathroom. ISS James has explained he'll call on the radio to get campus supervisors to escort the students to the bathroom. They have to wait until they arrive... They're put in a classroom and not allowed to leave unless they're escorted. (Field Notes: May 2012).

During the long wait before the campus supervisors arrived only a few students needed to use the restroom but after ISS James explained that it would be their only bathroom break for the rest of the day, the entire class lined up to use the restroom. There was more than an hour left of the school day.

I asked the students why they were in ISS. Gabriela, a Latina who I knew from previous observations, and another Latino male student did not want to tell me, but the others did. One male student was assigned to ISS instead of a required 9th grade class. The other Latina explained she had spoken out of turn, forgotten to serve a five-minute detention, refused to serve Friday School and was sent to ISS. Two male students had gotten into a pseudo-fight. They had not thrown punches but one student had "stepped on" the other's chest. They were both in ISS. While ISS served as a space *to* which Latino students were banished, other sites, were spaces *from* which Latinos were banished and surveilled. Some sites, like Californiatown Park, served both purposes.

Californiatown Park

Californiatown Park is an expansive neighborhood park within walking distance of the CHS campus. Mature oak trees and a wooden gazebo provide shade from the hot California sun. The city of Californiatown hosts a popular day camp at the park in the summer. Families reserve tables under the gazebo for parties. Children swing, slide, explore the play structures, run, ride and skate along the bike path, and build sand castles from dawn to dusk. Groups of teenagers sit under the shade of the wooden gazebo awnings, talk on the swings or atop the play structures. A local elementary school uses the parking lot for their bus pick-up and drop-off. The ten-acre park, surrounded by thick green grass, is well-used.

While the residents of Californiatown enjoyed the park's facilities, CHS' Latino students likely experienced it as a space of surveillance and exclusion based on SRO Parker's own description of his activities in the park. SRO Parker not only surveilled the ten-acre park

perimeter from his car, but he actively involved the community in policing students. He explained:

[I would] Just you know walk around and talk to people. Um. If you have a you know an area that's for example you got kids hanging out at a park and cr..you know being a nuisance. You go out and you talk to the pe..the people what live around that park you know be like hey I'm so and so you know. I currently work in the schools and if you have kids hanging out here during park...during the day when they should be in school I appreciate you giving me a call (Interview: August 2013).

He distributed his card to the adults, asking them to report students who were at the park during the school day. He explained:

Yeah. Um. You know if they're not in school they're either up to no good might be getting into houses or something like that. They're not getting an education so yeah just 'preciate a call or something like that. You know they might not or they might just turn a blind eye or not pay attention to those kids sometimes or y..maybe t..got...they got your business card's hanging there they'll pick up the phone and give you a call (Interview: September 2014).

While truancy was certainly not conducive to “getting an education,” the phrase “up to no good” associated students with negative and dishonest behavior. Such discourse is common in the logics of banishment and socio-spatial exclusion which link disorder, like truancy, with crime (Beckett and Herbert, 2009). SRO Parker's reference to burglary (“might be getting into houses”) left no doubt about the type of crime in which the students may have become involved. SRO Parker's statement suggested that homeowners should be fearful, that the mere presence of youth in the parks put them at risk of a property crime.

Although he carefully avoided naming race outright in our conversation about the park, SRO Parker invoked racial dog whistles (Lopez, 2014) that linked Latinos to gang membership and intimidation. He explained that the park was a space that students who were “gang related” tried to “claim” as their “territory” and suggested that their presence prevented “other people” from visiting the park and utilizing its services (Interview: August 2014). The use of the term “gang related” together with the use of the phrases “claim” and “territory” discursively marked the Latino students at the park as intimidating gang members. When considered together, the similarity between the narratives used to describe the Latino students who stood in front of the CHS bathroom and the “gang related” “kids” at the nearby park seemed to justify the heightened surveillance of Latino boys.

As an officer of the law and member of the SWAT team, SRO Parker's assessments of school safety heavily influenced the team of novice CHS administrators. He explained that his “main purpose” was “making sure people aren't coming in with weapons or trying to hurt somebody” (Interview: August 2013). Thus, when he warned the APs to “make sure school security keeps an eye on” Latino students with suspected connections to street gangs, they did (Interview: August 2013). Not only did school adults act in the suggested ways, but they also took up the narrative of Latino gangs infiltrating the school. School adults like AP Joaquin, AP Lupe, AP Amy and the campus supervisors went to great lengths to break up gatherings of Latino boys which they rationalized as preventing gang violence at the school.

Conclusion

This study detailed the spatial arrangements of the disproportionate discipline of Latino boys at Californiatown High School and Californiatown Park. The invocation of the trope of the Latino gang member and the use of racially coded language like “territorial”, “blocking” and “threatening” unmistakably associated the boys’ Latino ethnicity and male gender with malevolence in the school and surrounding community, leading to an unfounded ecology of fear (Pinnow, 2013). The school administration and SRO co-constructed Latino boys as a threat from which other members of the CHS community needed physical protection, a fact which was not lost on CHS’ Latino students who worked diligently to avoid negative group associations. Unlike White and female students whose similar misbehavior was hardly noticed and rarely punished, Latino boys who stepped out of line were labeled as troublemakers or disruptive, and experienced socio-spatial marginalization from their peers, in addition to punishment. School adults prohibited Latino boys from gathering in certain areas of the school and segregated them from their White and female peers at school, while the SRO and campus supervisors surveilled them. These practices created a system of Latino male disadvantage in school discipline.

I did not set out to study the cultural geography of student discipline. Nonetheless, in the process of observation for this study, I could not overlook the differential treatment Latino boys received in matters of student discipline and the ways in which space was implicated. Centering space in my analysis exposed a system of Latino disadvantage in which space was alternately used to construct Latino boys as the “other” and teach them how to “behave” (Field Notes: May, 2012). A school-wide discourse about the racialization of school and community space began to emerge. All school spaces belonged to the predominantly White school staff, and community spaces belonged to the predominantly White adult community of homeowners. Temporary use of school and community spaces for youth was based on a racialized and gendered hierarchy of spatial capital (Convertino, 2015). White and female students had the most spatial capital, and the least restrictions on their movements and use of space while Latino boys had the least spatial capital and the most restrictions on their movements and use of space. In the imagination of the predominantly White and Latino faculty community, Latino boys’ racialized gender and lack of dominant social capital (Conchas & Vigil, 2012) made them incapable of occupying space without constant surveillance, punishment, and control. Latino boys were the racial “other” (Spivak, 1985).

Understanding the socio-cultural spatial arrangements yields important insight into opportunities for challenging unequal geographies (Soja, 2009) of student discipline for Californiatown High School’s Latino boys. To begin, the district and site administration should examine the unwritten socio-cultural rules governing the use of school spaces at their schools. In the same way that schools conduct equity audits to better understand the factors that contribute to inequities, school leaders who want to create a socially just school for Latino boys should audit their school spaces. A thorough audit would include information about how teachers, the SRO, administrators and other adults conceptualize who belongs in each space and the practices they engage in to reinforce these beliefs. The audit might include an anonymous staff survey, observations of human interactions in the spaces, interviews or focus groups of a representative sample of school adults discussing each space, and analysis of trends from disaggregated data, including course enrollment and discipline data focused on the use of school space. Recognizing school-wide beliefs about school spaces and Latino boys place in school space is an important first step in addressing place-based inequalities and the disproportionate treatment of Latino boys in school. This information should be shared with the staff to help them remake marginalized school spaces into affirming spaces for Latino boys.

Spaces to consider include intellectual spaces, like classrooms, as well as physical spaces, like the bathroom and other spaces where Latino boys have been marginalized. Finally, the CHS administrative team must learn how to facilitate critical conversations (or pay for professional development) about race and racialized gender with their staff and community partners, such as the SRO. The critical conversations will not only help the CHS staff recognize their implicit biases about Latino boys, but also provide proven strategies for eliminating them.

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