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Performativity and the Latina/o-white hybrid identity: performing the textual self

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Performativity and the Latina/o-White Hybrid Identity:

Performing the Textual Self

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Performativity and the Latina/o-White Hybrid Identity:
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ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of Latina/o-White hybrid identity for constructions and negotiations of hybridity as performed in the lives of individuals and as rearticulated in discourse. These discourses are drawn from interviews with nine individuals, stories of my own life, and three published memoirs. Despite these different forms, all the self-identified Latina/o-White hybrid individuals speak to the difficulty of imagining and enacting a hybrid identity within today's discourse on race and ethnicity. This study articulates these difficulties as lived experience, theory, and performance come together to argue for and against hybridity as a model for contemporary identity. The project rests mainly on the theory of performativity and the theory of hybridity.

In Chapter Two, I interview nine participants. While Whiteness was consistently re-centered in their self-perceptions, this re-centering disrupts naturalness to their racial identity. Race is understood beyond the visual and into the performative. This disruption of "naturalness" allows room for a more imaginative approach to race.

In Chapter Three, I utilize the Mexican pop singer, Paulina Rubio, as a backdrop to my own theoretical and material performative embodiments of hybridity. I deconstruct the perceived hybridity of Paulina Rubio, and I theorize the lived-

experience of my own hybrid performativity. I demonstrate how hybrid performativity, while theoretically achievable, loses its material efficacy.

In Chapter Four, I do a close-reading of three memoirs written about and by Latina/o-White hybrid individuals. The range of hybridity, being thrust upon and being a strategy, is reproduced as a continuum across different hybridities of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual. The continuum moves across five hybrid-strategies for languaging identity: imposter, mongrel, homeless, bridge, and twin.

Chapter Five is a summary of the dissertation. This summary begins with a discussion a theatrical production. *La Virgen del Tepeyac*. The chapter makes the argument that the Latina/o-White hybrid individual confuses grammatical correctness, consistently placing these subjects within the subjunctive mood. The chapter rests with the conclusion that the instability of performativity, as evidenced in *La Virgen del Tepeyac* and the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, provides an exemplar of the multitude of possibilities in everyone's identity.

Chapter One:
Introduction

She begins to write a story that will not leave her alone. She would like to forget it; she would also like to give it shape, and, in shaping it, find revenge: for herself, for her story. She wants to exorcise that story as it was, in order to recover it as she would like to remember it.

--Sylvia Molloy, Certificate of Absence

Throughout my childhood I had the good fortune to travel back and forth across the U.S./Mexico border. My small South Texas hometown was only hours from the border crossing cities of Laredo/Nuevo Laredo and Brownsville/Matamoros; and my family and friends moved across the Rio Grande for things like entertainment, cheap medicine, and bulk food items. Today when I tell people who are unfamiliar with Texas that I am a Texan, they usually ask about metropolitan areas like Austin, Houston, and Dallas. In contrast, my Texas memories are filled with the grain silo silhouettes of Tynan and Orange Grove, the cow-dotted pastures of Agua Dulce and Mirando City, and the dusty farm roads of San Isidro and San Perlita. My Texas is a desolate Texas of tilled black fields or green flat ranches or fence lines that stretch miles and miles along Highway 59 with nothing but *monte* to the left and *monte* to the right. (*Monte* is a Spanish *Tejano* word for tangled, thick brush.)

Like the Rio Grande River that divides the United States and Mexico, my small South Texas hometown, Skidmore, maintains strong delineations between “White” and “Mexican.” (Mexican denotes, not a Mexican-national, but anyone of Mexican descent.) In my public school, the trend is still that college bound students (Whites) are in the A

class and the others (Mexicans) are in the B class. In town, the eastside of the train tracks is mainly for Whites, and the Westside is mainly for the Mexicans. And, of course, at death we are separated forever with the Whites and the Mexicans in different parts of the Evergreen cemetery. Growing up, I crossed the borders, and I existed in both the White and the Mexican contexts. My Spanish-clumsy tongue usually got laughs at *quincaneras*, *bodas*, and *rosarios*. And to adjust to others' English-clumsy tongues, my name changed from Shane to Chane to *Chango*.

When I graduated from high school, I left Skidmore. I tried to leave behind the local, small town racist politics that drew a heavy line between Whites and Mexicans. While attending school at the University of Texas at San Antonio, I rented a room from Ida, a Mexican woman who affectionately and symbolically adopted me as her son. I surrounded myself with other small town escapees from places like Yorktown and Agua Dulce. And I took on odd jobs in the downtown area where English was definitely the second language. Even though I left behind small town racist politics, the demarcation between White and Mexican was still heavily drawn all around me. I was living in a Spanish-named city scattered with Catholic missions older than any American Revolution New England landmarks. Yet everywhere around me it was apparent that English White culture dominated historical significance. The metaphor of race relations writ large was that of the battle of the Alamo. A lesson of the Cradle of Texas Freedom is how Texans must never forget that, although the Mexicans defeated the White Texans, the outnumbered-Whites defiantly fought till their own death. We were all supposed to be inspired by such valiant heroes. The subtext was that the Whites may be outnumbered in this city, but they will not be defeated. Remember the Alamo.

At this time in both Skidmore and San Antonio, I was White. Although I labeled myself White, my family and their friends had often let slip the secret of my Mexican father. At eight, one summertime no-school day, I lounge in my parents' bed watching cartoons on their TV. My boredom gets the best of me, and I begin to snoop through their things. At the top of their closet, I find a journal my grandmother had given my mother on her 18th birthday. The journal, a ritualistic tradition by my grandmother for all her children, contains entries written by my grandmother about my mom's life. My grandmother's concluding entry reads, "The following blank pages are so that you can pass this tradition onto Shane..." My mom tried to write a few entries, but they are scribbled through. She starts and re-starts, scribbling through words and starting over. Through these scribbles I read lines like, "your father loved you very much. He wanted to be your father, but I just couldn't stay with him..." I never tell my mother about finding this journal, but some years later I re-discover the journal and the scribbled-on pages are all torn out.

At twelve, at a community summer barbecue, an old friend of the family named Gladys sees me in a crowd of adolescents. I had not seen her for years, not since my grandparents sold their house on Cambridge Street in Corpus Christi. She cradles my face in her crooked-fingered hands, locks eyes with me through her bifocals, and says, "You look just like your father. You're the spitting image of your father. You've got his eyes. I bet you're going to be tall like him too." My White father has light, sky blue eyes, white skin that tans to a reddish tint, and stands only 5' 6".

Then at my fourteenth birthday party, my tipsy aunt makes a remark about my tan complexion. Although not swarthy, I am much more olive-complected than the rest of

my family, and I darken very easily. My aunt drunkenly quips, just within earshot, “He’s starting to look so Mexican.” I grow into adulthood hyperaware of the identity politics between Latina/os and Whites. Among other things, these politics hold the reason for the secret about my father.

Finally, when I was twenty years old, my mother told me. I learn that my White father, the man who gave me my last name, is not my biological father. She tells me that I have a Mexican father. I knew she had attempted to tell me that secret many times. I had overheard her practice it with my grandmother, her best friend, and my White father. In her practice performances, she never discloses the secret in the same way twice, yet it was always the same truth she wants to reveal. My mom’s confession made visible an invisible line the secret had drawn down my identity, a line that I am still trying to comprehend. Today, when people ask me about my “background,” I hesitate to talk about it because of the residues of secrecy. Rather clumsily, I say, “I am half White and half Latino.” If they press, I tell them I did not grow up with my Latino father. If they don’t press, I let them make their assumptions.

Usually people are intrigued that I am “mixed.” Their interest marks something larger about U.S. society—that we are obsessed with race and ethnicity. Our national history begins with a struggle to understand and qualify racial difference. Attesting to the intricacy of our past and current pluralistic struggles for meaning and autonomy, over time there have been a range of terms used for self-identification, with each label carrying varying political implications. For example, other names for “White” include European-American, Caucasian, and Anglo; other names for “Latina/o” include Hispanic, Chicano, and Spanish. In collusion with racial and ethnic history, current racial and

ethnic labeling is difficult to rely upon as definitive identity markers—especially when the individual can claim more than one classification. My identity has a complexity beyond the extant complexities of just one ethnicity. My movement between ethnicities contradicts how most people think of any identity as being staid and reliable—especially ethnic or racial identity.

It has been just over thirteen years since my mother told me about my Latino father. The night she told me the secret is the night I began to negotiate my self-identity in new ways. When I share my story, I often find other people with backgrounds of one Latina/o parent and one White parent. And I often discover that they too play between identities and face exclusion because of their hybrid identity. They too deal with confusion about who they are based upon a lineage of the two contrasting ethnicities of their parents. I have become intrigued by my hybrid identity. To address my own and others' identity issues, I have turned to academia.

The purpose of this study is to explore Latina/o-White hybrid identity for constructions and negotiations of hybridity as performed in the lives of individuals and as rearticulated in discourse. For this study, these discourses are drawn from interviews with nine individuals, stories of my own life, and three published memoirs. These very different forms allow an examination of a continuum of talk—from the often hesitant and convoluted interview, to my own attempts to combine theory and praxis in performative writing, to the literary art of the memoir, both polished and published within canonical conventions of literature. Despite these different forms, all the self-identified Latina/o-White hybrid individuals speak to the difficulty of imagining and enacting a hybrid identity within today's discourse on race and ethnicity. This study seeks to articulate

these difficulties as lived experience, theory, and performance come together to argue for and against hybridity as a model for contemporary identity.

Rationale For The Study

My dissertation project is an identity project, and as such, is nested in a long history of identity theoretical work. My project enters the conversation of identity at the intersection of ethnic identity and multiple-self identities. To understand the need for my project, I will overview three main areas: self, other, and racial other; performing an identity; and multiplicity of self and other. First, I consider the Self-Other dichotomy and how race is often figured into that equation. Second, I look at how performance helps us to understand identity. Finally, I investigate the work being done on multiple-self identities. By covering these three areas, I will argue that my project has an important place in identity work not only because it fills gaps left in the work of other identity theorists, but also because my project offers other ways to think of identity, not just for hybrid identity individuals, but for any individual seeking to articulate the multiplicity of their self identity(s).

Identity: Self, Other, and Racial Other

In Western philosophy, Benedict Spinoza (Beverley, 1999) is generally credited with asserting that self identity is formed through the negation of the other. That is, people think of their own identity in terms of what they are not. Our sense of self emerges by differentiating ourselves from those who are not us, and we struggle to draw lines and form boundaries demarcating us from them and me from you. Trinh Min-ha (1990) says that people generally think of identity as something that is not chosen, but

something that emerges from within. Like any good critical theorist, Trinh nests her discussion of identity within the power politics of today when she says:

Identity as understood in the context of a certain ideology of dominance has long been a notion that relies on the concept of an essential, authentic core that remains hidden to one's consciousness and that requires the elimination of all that is considered foreign or not true to the self, that is to say, not-I, other. (p. 371)

We are born into a culture already in action, and within this culture we struggle to understand ourselves by using the cultural resources of language, signs, and discourses. As we choose (and have chosen for us) certain identity markers, the repeated usage of these choices create a sense of naturalness. This naturalness becomes a component of our identity formations, and the naturalness is the element of identity that causes us to often forget the constructedness of our Self and the Other. Trinh points to how we are expected to have identities that are natural, not constituted; and part of the naturalness of our identities is that we have clear differences between us and them, me and you. "Identity, thus understood, supposes that a clear dividing line can be made between I and not-I, he and she; between depth and surface, or vertical and horizontal identity; between us here and them over there" (Trinh, 1990). If understanding who we are is invested in understanding who we are not, then staking an identity is just as much about the negation of who the Self is not, as it is the affirmation of whom the Self is. Similarly Kenneth Burke (1966) explicates that one's identity is a coupling of what one claims to be with what one claims not to be. For Burke, the negative defines humans, and for every affirmation of Self there is a lurking negation of Self. However Trinh, unlike Burke, notes power as a factor in the Self-Other identity formation. In our culture of hierarchy

and domination, noting the power one does and does not have is especially crucial when one's identity is nested in the suppressed "Other" in contrast to the dominant group's "Self."

In the United States, the power differential between the White Self and the non-White Other begins with the history of colonialism. However, the practice of categorizing according to race or ethnicity is much older than the history of Western colonialism. The usages and amendments of these racial and ethnic concepts have always been linked to the changing and morphing of many volatile identities, e.g., clan membership, political membership, national membership, religious membership, cultural membership, etc. Pick up any textbook on Intercultural Communication, and one of their first endeavors is to provide a brief history of how racial and ethnic identities have come into being (Gudykunst, 2003; Guirdham, 1999; Jandt, 2001; Martin, 2000; Neuliep, 2003; Samovar, 2001). A short summary is helpful to understand the current situation of racial/ethnic identity today because the summary demonstrates for us the different ways that race and ethnicity have been created and explained throughout history.

Most Western Intercultural Communication scholars choose to begin explaining race and ethnicity with the discovery of the New (to Europeans) World. In the name of religion, European explorers sought to colonize the newly found Western Hemisphere. The 15th and 16th Century explorers not only found food and raw materials different from their own, but more importantly they also found people who appeared and behaved differently. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2001) explain the conceptual problems the World held for Europeans: "When European explorers in the New World 'discovered' people who looked different than themselves, these 'natives' challenged then existing

conceptions of the origins of the human species, and raised disturbing questions as to whether *all* could be considered in the same ‘family of man’” (p. 32). Religious doctrine began to be translated to defend the enslavement and the extermination of the New World natives. Religion, also, was used to prohibit and/or monitor the intermarriage between natives and the Europeans.

In the 18th and 19th Centuries, science tried to create a classification system that categorized humans according to their different racial compositions. Biology was applied to humans, and became a way to define the Who and What of humans as a species. Fred Jandt (2001) explains, “The biological definition [of race] is said to derive from Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist, physician, and taxonomist, who said in 1735 that humans are classified into four types: *Africanus*, *Americanus*, *Asiaticus*, and *Europeaus*” (p. 7). Thus, science developed a way to interpret and assign human differences.

Today, following after the paradigms of religion and science, the concepts of race and ethnicity have come to be understood as socially constructed. Omi and Winant’s (2001) position reflects the position of social constructionists and most identity scholars today: “Race is indeed a pre-eminently sociohistorical concept. Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded” (p. 32). These relations and historical contexts, of course, shift as do the meanings behind the labels used to term race and ethnicity.

Religion, science, and now, social constructionism are all-important paradigms to use to see the different ways that history and the present have dealt with race and ethnicity. The terms “race” and “ethnicity” are often used in conjunction with one

another, and sometimes used interchangeably. However, ethnicity and race are denotatively distinct from one another. Race generally refers to one's genetic make-up and somatic properties. Ethnicity refers more to one's behavior in relation to a larger group of which the individual claims to belong. According to Martin and Nakayama (2000), ethnic identity pertains to the feelings one has about belonging to a particular group. [Ethnicity] "typically includes several dimensions: self-identification, knowledge about the ethnic culture (traditions, customs, values, and behaviors), and feelings about belonging to a particular ethnic group" (p. 122). Jandt (2001) also emphasizes that ethnicity, in addition to one's perceived identification with a group, is dependent upon one's acceptance into a group as well. Thus, traditionally, race is seen as something you are born into, regardless of your cultural surroundings. For example, you can be born racially Black. However, ethnicity is something that you must learn and be accepted into. Thus, an individual may be racially Black, but his/her ethnicity may be Jewish, Latina/o, Southern, etc.

Even though denotatively the terms race and ethnicity are distinct, connotatively they are more similar than different. Rey Chow (2002) explains that the terms "race" and "ethnicity" are often conflated and this conflation is overly critiqued by scholars:

To my mind, however, it may actually be more productive not to insist on an absolute distinction between the two terms at all times, for the simple reason that they are, more often than not, mutually implicated. Their frequent conflation is not the result of mental sloppiness on the part of scholars but rather a symptom of the theoretical fuzziness of the terms themselves, a fuzziness that, moreover, must

be accommodated precisely because of the overdetermined nature of the issues involved. (pp. 23-24)

Thus, the very circumstances that bring about talk and understandings of race and ethnicity are so similar that the terms themselves can be used in very similar ways. As Chow explains:

In its modern usage, designating a kind of cultural condition that is descriptive of all human beings, ethnicity has, to all appearances, shifted from its early, religious significance as a term of exclusion and a clear boundary marker (between Jew and Gentile, Christian and heathen) to being a term of inclusion, a term aimed at removing boundaries and at encompassing all and sundry without discriminating against anybody. (p. 25)

Today, everyone has an ethnicity, not just the Non-White. And because everyone has an ethnic identity, the term is almost a way to include everyone as one being (“we’re all ethnic”). Popularly, however, ethnicity is still not seen as something everyone has, but rather as something that is “not white.” In fact, Chow notes, “for the ideal American, ethnicity is seen as something to be overcome and left in the past” (p. 30)—to be read as White.

Although the ideal American is encouraged to forget one’s ethnicity, there are still cultural processes in effect today that bring us back to our racial and ethnic identities. On an individual level, there are still people who want the ability to differentiate themselves according to their ethnic composition, for both honorable and dishonorable reasons. And on an institutional level, there are still attempts being made by groups like the United

States government to denote the differences between race and ethnicity in general, and between the specific categories of different races and ethnicities.

Eerily harkening back to Linneaus, we are divided into five identifiable racial categories and one racial category that is set-aside for individuals who do not identify with one of the five categories. The 2000 Census counted 281 million people in the United States, categorized us by our racial labels, and then came to the following figures:

Table 1:

Breakdown of U.S. Population by Race

Racial Category	Percentage of U.S. Population
White	75%
Black or African American	12%
Native American	1%
Asian	4%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.1%
“Other” Race	6%
Two or More Races	2%

Out of 281 million people there are 35 million Hispanics or Latina/os. This figure means that 13% of the U.S. population is Latina/o. Because being Latina/o means being of a particular ethnicity and *not* of a particular race, Latina/os can/do exist as part of one of five races.

Although the categories do change with the changing views of society, these labels are the predominant ways we express our race and ethnicity. Every ten years, the U.S. Census form is delivered to every household, and people must lay claim to their race and ethnicity. Starting in 1980, citizens could mark their own boxes rather than have the boxes marked for them. And even though these claims are acts of self-determination, there are still societal rules that must be followed. For example, when one says her race

is “Latina/o,” according to Race/Ethnicity scholars she is mis-using the word race. First religion taught us that God determined all things. Then science taught us that nature behaves in predictable patterns. And now Social constructionism teaches us that we, as a society, create reality amongst one another. And even as our intellectual trajectory brings us to a point that gives the most agency to the individual (rather than Divinity or Nature), society still maintains rules that correct and override a person’s understanding and expression about the self.

Struggle between self-agency and societal-determinants is part of the process of being a social actor. Rona Halualani (2000) explains the dialectic of this struggle. “[W]e as social actors, can invoke, negotiate, challenge, and resist the identity encodings that are created for us by structures of power. However, ethnic identity is also double-sided, re-signifiable, and never foreclosed” (p. 587). Halualani, as a scholar interested in ethnic identity practices, expresses the complexity in enacting one’s ethnic identity. We participate in the social structures that create ethnic identity, and in that participation we also have the chance to alter those structures. She explains:

[T]he everyday communicative practices of identity via community performances, oral histories and narratives, and private (selective) memories contain more than meets the eye. These identity-practices reveal how a nativized, racialized, and (mis)recognized cultural group still re-assembles who they are (to be) in complicated and creative ways (although not always oppositionally). (p. 587)

Halualani, therefore, positions the social actor caught in the middle of agency and overdetermination.

Western philosophy has encouraged us to think of ourselves as having a Self-

Other split. There seems to be little room for people, like the Latina/o/White, to be both Self *and* Other. To understand more fully a way out of the limiting Self-Other split, Latina/o/Whites should be studied. While there is a body of literature on the Black/White individual (e.g., Jones 1994, Gates 1996, Rockquemore 1998, Harris 2000, Gillem 2001, Hall 2001, Rockquemore 2002), there is not much literature on the Latina/o/White identity. When I first began to look into the ways that hybrid identity individuals had been theorized or empiricized, I looked at the writings on the Latina/o-White intermarriage. Naively, I thought there would be research about the children of such intermarriages. I either found little research, or I found research that talked about the children of these marriages in a flat way. For example, in a 1966 study of intermarriage of Mexican-Americans with Whites, there is discussion of social variables like sex, class, and age; but there is not discussion of the children of such unions (Mittelbach, Moore, & Daniel, 1966). Another example of the flatness of such research is with the work of Edward Murguía (1982) who writes a complete book on the intermarriage between Chicanos and Whites, but only mentions Latina/o-White hybrid children in one paragraph. He states the pros and cons of such marriages and their choice to have children:

On the one hand, some hold that interbreeding...is very positive. A biological analogy may be made in which a hybrid plant has qualities superior to those of the two parent stock. On the other hand, some deplore the 'mongrelization,' the loss of racial and cultural purity, that occurs when there is mixing. (p. 16)

Sadly, it must be noted that Murguía is writing as recently as 1982.

Importantly, studying the Latina/o/White individual as humans with agency rather

than as hearty plants offers a different set of complexities to current theories of ethnicity. The Latina/o identity has only become an institutionally recognized identity in the 1970s. Richard Rodríguez (2002) explains that President Nixon's administration created the Hispanic as a Census category as recently as 1973. In only three decades, the group has gone from being federally unrecognized to U.S. society's largest minority group. Although they have grown in population, they are still a relatively new group to academia. Ironically, even White-ness could be considered to be an academically unfamiliar idea—maybe even more unfamiliar than Latina/o identity. Nakayama and Krizek (1995) unpackage how Whiteness is a paradoxical identity that while at the center of society, has remained unquestioned and almost ineffable. Nakayama and Krizek point out that the central political position of whiteness contributes to Whites not finding it necessary to study their positionality: “Despite the historical domination of the center and the myriad of ways it exerts its influence on the margins, our discipline has not been critical of this dominance over communication studies” (p. 292). The privileged status of Whiteness has caused it to be pervasive in all scholarship and in turn impervious to intellectual investigation. Therefore, even if Whiteness has been present, attention to it has only come as of recent times. Therefore both identities are relatively new-to-be studied identities that have yet to gain maturation in our discourse of race and ethnicity. Therefore, studying the two (Latina/ness and Whiteness) identities bound into one body may offer a new perspective on either identity, but more importantly offers a new perspective on the Self-Other dichotomy of racial/ethnic identity in general.

Performing an Identity

Irving Goffman (1959) is probably the most well known scholar across disciplines

to utilize “performance” as a key explanatory metaphor for how we convey who we are, and for how others understand who we are. Central to Goffman’s theory of identity is interaction. Goffman explains that when people interact, they seek information about one another. One can either “give” an expression or one can “give off” an expression (p. 7). The “giving” is an expression of intended messages about yourself. The “giving off” is when you provide unintended messages to the people with whom you are interacting.

Often using examples of social class, Goffman makes the assertion that we tend to want to present ourselves in the best light. However, for the minoritized individual, this may not be so easily done. There can be many factors working against an individual from her accent, the color of her skin, and even the references she makes from memory. Also, Goffman assumes that all people seek to present themselves positively. Goffman explains that we present ourselves to others, and in those presentations sometimes we must choose an identity performance that does not sit well with us, but is right for the particular audience at hand.

In the case of race, there can be heavy societal costs for “giving” and “giving off” an identity. As social actors, we perform our identities in order to create meanings with others, and the misreadings or the devaluing of our performances are due to the dominant discursive structures around us. Alan Hyde (1997) focuses on the legal discursive structures around us when he seeks to explain race as a performance of identity. Importantly, Hyde brings focus away from legal doctrine and back to the body by explaining how race is performed onto as well as through the flesh:

Race is a claim that necessarily involves the construction of a specularized body by a privileged eye.... [T]his construction inevitably performatively enacts a kind

of domination of the body by the eye. Race is thus not a thing or a state but a relationship, and the question is always not just what state has been constructed, but who is doing the construction and for what purpose? (p. 223)

Important for my work, Hyde is positing that race (and I argue ethnicity as well) is a performance. And that race exists in relationship to the other, but is enacted through the self's body.

Similarly, Jonathan Inda (2001), like Hyde, believes that the Latina/o body is not a biological fact, but is performatively constituted. Inda, following the work of Judith Butler's (1993) work on gender, sees race as not referencing a pre-constituted body, but rather through naming a body racially, there is a racial inscription of meaning upon that body. When the Latina/o body is named so, this naming is not in relation to a pre-linguistic material body that is naturally Latina/o. Rather, this naming is a performative act that naturalizes the difference or sameness assigned to the body. Also, both Hyde and Inda emphasize that the performativity of race is constructed for a purpose, and the purpose of the racial assignment often details what is at stake for that identity performance.

For Butler, any performative has a reference to an ideal that may or may not be realized. According to Butler, in the moment of the act of performativity there exists an "impossibility of full recognition, that is, of ever fully inhabiting the name by which one's social identity is inaugurated and mobilized" (1993, p. 226). Interestingly, then, race becomes an important example of the impossibility of identity formation, especially when that identity "richocets between hypervisibility and oblivion" (Williams, 1997, p. 17). For race, hypervisibility is equal to underdistinguishment and oblivion is

overdetermination. Specifically, hybrid identities of race and ethnicity complicate matters even more for performativity. Ellen Gil-Gomez (2000) emphasizes that the hybrid racial identity is a conundrum due to its reference to two different racial/ethnic groups and to neither of its ethnic groups all at once. Of the difficulty in performing the hybrid identity she says, “How to play out the paradox of embodying an oneness that should not be able to exist based on the existing ‘rules’?” (Gil-Gomez, 2000, p. 143).

Gil-Gomez successfully expands the notion of performativity by taking it out of the binaries of gender into the multiplicity of race/ethnicity. She says:

- 1) If gender is an either/or, then race and ethnicity is no such thing. While White seems to be the norm and all other races are the aberration, there is no true opposite of White. Black comes closest to being the opposite, but next to Latina/o, Asian, American Indian, etc., Black is not clearly the opposite of Whiteness.
- 2) If gender only exists in its performance, race/ethnicity is already written on the body in visual codes. These become performances that confirm, disrupt, and confuse the visual. On the racial body, somatic properties become hard to hide and harder to reinterpret within overdetermining structures.
- 3) Gender parody, as radically disruptive of gender categories, is not a good analogy for race/ethnicity. While passing is a more appropriate racial analogy, this, too, falls apart: there are some people who cannot choose to pass “for white, straight, men.”

Therefore, Gil-Gomez brings us to performativity in a way that honors the complexity of racial/ethnic discourses without too closely approximating the issues of gender with

the issue of race/ethnicity.

While the academy may be theorizing the unstable constitutions of racial and ethnic identity, there are still very material realities of racialized humans that exist within a society that makes demands upon them based upon their racial and ethnic identities. However, by theorizing about racial and ethnic identity, we are better able to see how, perhaps, these identities can be re-performed or reassigned value. And by theorizing about the Latina/o/White identity performance, I can fill holes in extant identity-performance theories.

Finally, performativity is a performance studies term very much currently en vogue. Butler (1993) does offer a way out of the overdetermining performative body—disidentification. However, when she (and Jose Esteban Munoz, 1999) speak of disidentification, it is often within the realm of individuals performing something that they are not. For both Butler and Munoz, the disidentification often involves staged productions. However, the Latina/o-White offers a way to look at disidentification that is more quotidian, and ironically, less overtly visible. By studying the performance of Latina/o-White identity, I will discuss disidentification through its subtleties rather than through a more polemic display.

Multiplicity of Self and Other

I am a child of the post-Civil Rights time; a child of a mixed ethnic coupling. I claim to be both a Self and an Other. I claim to be both White and Latina/o, and these identity claims make trouble for me. Identity is often considered to be a set of characteristics that occur innately and with consistent recurrences—all creating a knowable and even predictable Self. I move into, out of, and between both of my ethnic

identities. Sometimes people react negatively to my claims to be both identities. At other times, one identity eclipses the other, causing friction. For example, sometimes I am verbally chastised as not being Latina/o enough. Or I am told that I am too White to be Latina/o. Or sometimes I am subtly excluded from all-White gatherings because my Latina/o sensitivities to White bigotry (in the form of “just a joke” conversations) might be triggered. My identity irritates others by its fluidity, and by its unsavory quality of doubling the Self with the Other. Trinh (1990) states that in order to fulfill society’s conception of identity, individuals must follow a pattern of predictability. We must maintain a constant identity or else we will face societal punishment. “X must be X, Y must be Y and X cannot be Y. Those running around yelling X is not X and X can be Y usually land in a hospital, a rehabilitation center, a concentration camp or a reservation” (p. 371). She asserts that those who play with their identity chance being condemned as mentally ill or labeled as mentally underdeveloped. My ability and my choice to choose both ethnic identities create an unpredictable air that unsettles my friends, my community, and even my family.

For generations, a cultural apartheid existed in socially and legally sanctioned ways that discouraged interracial and interethnic sexual activity in the United States. After the Civil Rights era, more people began to resist the taboo of seeking out lovers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Now the offspring of these unions are adults, and many are seeking ways to identify themselves and to express those identities. In 2000, therefore, the U.S. Census Bureau answered the requests of children of these mixed marriages and created a Mixed Race category for individuals who refused to claim only one race (Goldstein, 2000).

In the mid to late nineties, the U.S. government struggled to re-design a census that captured the complexity of the racial and ethnic identities of the U.S. population. Suzann Evinger (1996) summarized various arguments over the Census, citing that some groups were looking for inclusion, others were looking for better identity labels, and still others were looking for a Census-dismissal all together. As the Office of Management and Budget (the group responsible for the Census) set up the Interagency Committee for the Review of Racial and Ethnic Standards, they set out to adjust the Census. They soon found themselves mired in the problem of people choosing to move between multiple selves on a test that is supposed to measure the one true self. Sensitive to the complaints of multi-racial groups, the Committee tried to find a pattern on when and why multi-racial individuals answered the questions the way they did. Evinger explains the different options that multi-racial individuals chose:

Respondents who chose the multiracial category were asked if they did so because their parents were of different races, because their grandparents or earlier ancestors were from different racial groups, because the specific group to which they belong is mixed, or for some other reason. (p. 2)

The Committee found no consistencies in answers. Then, to provide specifics on the arbitrariness of the patterns of respondents of multiple racial or ethnic backgrounds, Evinger (1996) uses the Latina/o-White as her example:

[P]eople with one Hispanic parent and one non-Hispanic parent may say yes to a separate Hispanic-origin question, but they may not be willing to say that Hispanic is their sole identification. Eight percent of respondents who saw a

combined race/ethnic question identified themselves as Hispanic, compared with 11 percent who claimed Hispanic origin when it was a separate question. Most of those who chose Hispanic as an ethnic origin but not a race say they are ‘white’ or ‘something else.’ (p. 2)

And when the Committee changed options, they found participants changing the way they chose their options.

Although the Census seeks out a definitive identity for individuals, critical theories of identity celebrate multiple selves and seek to massage the tensions around an identity that is not easily pigeonholed. Those theories that seek to keep the complexity of identity, rather than try to simplify identities, are hybrid identity and border identity.

The theoreticians who are probably most closely connected to the term hybridity are Homi Bhabha and Nestor Garcia Canclini. Hybridity is a term that is emerging as part of the active vocabulary for understanding ethnic identity in our time. Nestor Garcia Canclini has been prolific in articulating hybridity as an identity concept. His experiences, of course, feed his understandings of hybridity; and these understandings have helped many to understand the contemporary issues with identity. He says, “I understand for hybridization the sociocultural processes in which discrete structures and practices, that existed in separate form, combine themselves to generate new structures, objects, and practices” (Canclini, 1995). Put simply then, hybridity is when two separate practices come together. According to Canclini, the two spaces where hybridity is most intense are in the metropolis and at borders. In crowded cities and at the coming together of separate nations, hybridity can be readily observed.

Rather than just thinking of metropolitan areas and borders areas as physical

existences, he reminds us that mass media have created metropolitan and border areas. For Canclini, identities are now met with contradictory callings of the local and what is outside the local. Mass media make these separate callings possible. Thus, as identities are formed today, they may be harkened with contradictory summons. Hybridization forces us to notice the processes that are constantly changing and in flux. Canclini says, “The study of [cultural processes]... rather than conducing to the affirmation of self-sufficient identities, is useful in order to know about the ways of situating ourselves in the middle of heterogeneity and to understand how hybridizations are produced” (p. 18). Again, it is the understanding of the processes not the defining of the staid results that are of interest in understanding hybrid identities.

Homi Bhabha (1994) has been hugely influential in understanding and theorizing the hybrid identity. Bhabha plays with the ideas of time, space, and history to come up with a hybridized understanding of reality today that dovetails with Hall’s (1997) urging for re-signification. Hall feels that this resignification process is probably the best way to think through and out of oppressive meanings and their power constructs. Hall says, “For if signification depends upon the endless repositioning of its differential terms, meaning in any specific instance depends on the contingent and arbitrary stop, the necessary break” (p. 51). And at that break, if we can re-signify or signify differently, then previously oppressive patterns might be subverted or even transformed. Bhabha is similar in his thinking of the world. Upsetting the simple binaries of good/bad, right/wrong, and us/them is a way to get around repressive structures. He sees hybridity as offering that chance.

For Bhabha (1994a), we are in a post-colonial time when the effects of

colonialism are still felt and recreated. All around us is the colonial discourse that has assigned meaning to our lives and kept us within certain understandings of the world. According to Bhabha, an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. "Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy, and demonic repetition" (p. 66). Thus out of colonialism has come a range of standards in relation to ethnic and racial identity that has created patterns for such things as justice, truth, and merit. And it is the fixity of colonial discourse, the belief in the fixity of identity, that permits these constructs of identity to persist.

Bhabha (1994b) celebrates hybridity as the area where change can happen. For him, the hybrid offers insight into what is possible:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the necessity of thinking beyond initial categories and initiatory subjects and focusing on those interstitial moments or processes that are produced in the articulations of "differences." These spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood and communal representations that generate new signs of cultural difference and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation. It is at the level of the interstices that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (p. 269)

Therefore, the in-between or the interstitial is a key moment in identity formation and articulation for not only the development of new identity, but to explicate how that identity is performed. Like Canclini, Bhabha holds the process of hybrid identity

formation as the key. He posits that in this process is the opportunity to learn something new and possibly, in Hall's terms, to re-signify.

Separate from, but in relation to hybridity, is another theoretical paradigm that tries to explain multiple identities: border identity theory. Two of the most influential theorists on border identity are Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Gloria Anzaldua. Gomez-Pena (1996), like Canclini's and Bhabha's hybridity, celebrates the possibilities inherent within a border identity. For Gomez-Pena, border identity can have a definite political impact on society:

The presence of the hybrid denounces the faults, prejudices, and fears manufactured by the self-proclaimed center, and threatens the very *raison d'être* of any monoculture, official or not. It reminds us that we are not the product of just one culture; that we have multiple and transitional identities; that we contain a multiplicity of voices and selves, some of which may even be contradictory. And it tells us there is nothing wrong with contradiction" (p. 12).

There is possibility not just for the person with the border identity, but also for others. In order to demonstrate the difficulties, the opportunities and the ironies of border identity, Gomez-Pena writes about the identity, but he also creates performance art that projects border identity complexities. His notoriety has reached out of the art communities and into the academic communities. Theorists like Canclini and Bhabha have even used Gomez-Pena and his work to explain their own concepts of hybridity.

Gloria Anzaldua's (1999) work is also an exemplar for understanding border identity. She speaks of *la conciencia mestiza*, a state of being in which a person, who plays many identity roles, learns to know the world through its contingencies rather than

its fixities. Perhaps Anzaldua, more than any other scholar, is responsible for making border identity a commonly utilized concept. Anzaldua's work tries to express the tornness of an identity that is neither fixed nor accepted. She defines border identity as a conflicted identity:

In perceiving information and points of view, she is subjected to a swamping of her psychological borders. She has discovered that she can't hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries. The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy. (p. 101)

Like Gomez-Pena, Anzaldua speaks of border identity as complex, as forever unsettled, and as antithetical to being fully completed.

Critiquing both Gomez-Pena and Anzaldua, Pablo Vila (2003) honors the work of both writers, but also sees serious problems with their positionings. Mainly Vila wants to honor the material realities of border crossers. These material realities are constantly elided by the metaphorical and poetical writing used by Gomez-Pena and Anzaldua. For people on the Mexican side, the border is more than just a metaphor of reality. For them the border represents exhaustingly lengthy lines, humiliatingly incessant harassment, and emotionally draining debates. Vila points out the less-than-ideal conditions of border existences, and how these are elided by the work of Gomez-Pena and Anzaldua. The lesson offered is a stern one: do not over-idealize such an identity.

Using Vila as a spring board, my study of Latina/o-Whites first contributes to the theories of hybridity and border identity by moving focus away from theory and into the lived experience of ambiguous identity. Canclini and Bhabha write high theory. I plan to

merge their theories with the quotidian practices of Latina/o-Whites. The result will be a richer understanding and explanation of their theories and of material practices of identity construction. Gomez-Pena is a performance artist who writes about (and performs) his performance art. Anzaldua, while she writes about herself, only seems to write about herself and her lived experiences. Both writers come to celebrated conclusions. Ulf Hannerz (1997), an anthropologist, tries to understand the current academic fascination with borders. He explicates that when scholars write about crossing borders, whether diasporas, exiles, cosmopolitanism, synergy, etc., writing about border crossing is often coupled with creativity. Similarly, George Sanchez (2000) warns against terms like 'cosmopolitan' for their ignoring of how power manifests itself in daily racial discourse. I will approach border identity and hybridity as more than just celebrated creativity: the mundane, the not-so-free aspects, and the unpleasanties of this identity are all realities as well. Projecting a utopian view of hybridity and border existence is only part of the story.

Thus, this dissertation is an identity project that rises out of three conceptual areas: self, other, and racial other; performance as identity; and multiple self identities. My project enters the conversation of identity to further develop theoretical understandings as well as provide explanatory cultural data. Speaking specifically about the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, the project will also provide ways to re-think identity for anyone seeking to articulate the multiplicity of her/his own self-identity.

Preview of the Chapters

In Chapter Two, I interview nine participants who have one Latina/o parent and one White parent. Against a backdrop of the U.S. racial discourse on Latina/o-ness and

Whiteness, the participants explain the experiences of their identities. I divided their responses into four main themes: constructing and negotiating identities through material practices, through the visual, through discourse, and through performative acts. All the participants express living in the tensions and possibilities of their Latina/o-White hybrid identity. While Whiteness was consistently re-centered in their self-perceptions, this re-centering disrupts a naturalness to their racial identity. No longer is race naturally linked to ocular perception for these participants. Rather, race is understood beyond the visual but also into the performative. This disruption of naturalness, even if not capitalized upon, allows room for a more imaginative approach to race.

In Chapter Three, I utilize the Mexican pop singer, Paulina Rubio, as a backdrop to my own theoretical and material performative embodiments of hybridity. I deconstruct the perceived hybridity of Paulina Rubio, and I theorize the lived-experience of my own hybrid performativity. Our globalized media system is a generator for the possibility of hybridity, but interpretations of this hybridity exists at a local level. Finally, I demonstrate how hybrid performativity, while theoretically achievable, loses its material efficacy. In the realm of local practice, the enactment of hybridity is still up against powerful racial ideologies.

In Chapter Four, I do a close-reading of three memoirs written about and by Latina/o-White hybrid individuals. First, I theorize how their texts are performances. Then I discuss three performative trappings found across the memoirs: language as a binary/hierarchy trap, the performance of Whiteness, and how words produce their subjects and effects. Hybridity, following performative injunctions, is both thrust upon by late-capitalist global society and a strategy for existing within late-capitalist global

society. This range of hybridity, being thrust upon and being a strategy, is reproduced as a continuum across different hybridities of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual. The continuum moves across five hybrid-strategies for languaging identity: imposter, mongrel, homeless, bridge, and twin. Finally, I discuss how a necessary component of the creation of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, both romantic and sexual love, is left out of the continuum, but should not be left out of the imaginative possibilities of this hybrid performativity.

Chapter Five is a summary of the dissertation. This summary begins with a discussion a theatrical production. *La Virgen del Tepeyac*. Next the chapter makes a connection between theater and performance studies, placing the theory of performativity as the common denominator. Utilizing the understanding of the grammar of identity, the chapter makes the argument that the Latina/o-White hybrid individual confuses grammatical correctness, consistently placing these subjects within the subjunctive mood. In this confusion lies possibilities for deeper understandings of racial identity that goes beyond just the ocular, but includes other performative aspects of identity as well. After covering implications for further research, the chapter rests with the conclusion that the instability of performativity, as evidenced in *La Virgen del Tepeyac* and the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, provides an exemplar of the multitude of possibilities in everyone's identity.

Chapter Two:
Acting in Concert and Acting in Accord:
Performativity of Latina/o-White Identity

There are people who like to talk about the border....those who dedicate themselves to studying the border, who are very knowledgeable and talk about her like experts. I, on the other hand, am one of those who don't like to talk about the border. Right now, I'm writing these lines with a certain discomfort.

–Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, *I Don't Talk about Her and She Doesn't Talk about Me*

Minutes before my first interview participant is to arrive, I fidget in my office. I check to make sure all of the necessary materials are available. I have two copies of my interview schedule—one for me and one for my participant. I have my digital voice recorder and, just in case, a fresh set of AAA batteries. I have tissue for potential tears and bottled water for potential dry throat. I look at my silenced cell phone to make sure there are no missed calls.

The participant, right on time, knocks on my open office door. With a wide smile and a cracked voice, I stand to greet her and invite her to sit down. She glances about, not knowing where to sit because I have forgotten to clear off any of the three available chairs. In a rush, I toss books and papers onto the floor right at her feet. She politely accepts my invitation to sit, but only after carefully navigating through the materials now littering the office floor. As both of us laugh at the awkwardness of the moment, I admit to her, “You’re my first interview. I’m a bit nervous.”

This interviewing project began as a personal odyssey. I was seeking fellow travelers with a background similar to my own. That is, I was seeking individuals with one Latina/o parent and one White parent. I hoped that by conversing with these

participants, I could perhaps find a way to express myself that has been lost to me.

Guillermo Gomez-Pena (1986) optimistically states: “As border citizens, this is our great challenge: to invent new languages capable of articulating our incredible circumstances” (p. 11). At the inception of this interview project, I held similar optimism. I hoped that by interviewing these subjects, I could perhaps discover this new language capable of articulating the Latina/o-White hybrid subject.

The purpose of this chapter is to two-fold: 1) to explore how these individuals articulate their lived experience of Latina/o-White identity, and 2) to use their words as a possible bridge between theories of identity and these lived experiences. Performativity and hybridity are both theories that make claims about identity constitution—but most often without material examples to breath a felt life into these theoretical claims. Their words, I hoped, would be this breath. I sought to privilege the voices of Latina/o-White hybrid individuals, to honor their everyday experiences, and to wonder with them about the possibilities or impossibilities for agency outside of dominant discursive frames of race and ethnicity within the United States. Following Butler’s (1988) understanding of gender, I analyze these interviews to understand what ways ethnicity is constructed through specific corporeal and discursive acts, and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of ethnicity through such acts (p. 521).

I conversed with nine individuals at two sides of the United States—in Tampa, Florida, and in Fresno, California. The contexts for the interviews varied from my university office to their homes. While the conversations were all based upon the same interview script, each one was unique to the life experiences and personality of each individual. What I learned early on in the journey through this interview process is that

these participants, like myself, are not out to invent anything new. Rather, they are seeking to exist within discursive practices that are both limiting and creative.

The following table details some relevant demographic information of the participants.

Table 2

Interview Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Education Level	Area Raised	Latina/o Parent	Country
Adam	20s	Male	HS	Southwest	Father	Mexico
Anita	30s	Female	MA	Southwest	Mother	Mexico
Chip	20s	Male	BA	Southwest	Father	Mexico
Irene	20s	Female	BA	Southwest	Father	Mexico
Linda	40s	Female	PhD	Southeast	Mother	Honduras
Monica	30s	Female	PhD	Midwest	Mother	Peru
Sara	20s	Female	MA	Southeast	Mother	Mexico
Susie	20s	Female	BA	Southwest	Father	Mexico
Warren	50s	Male	PhD	Northeast	Father	Puerto Rico

The nine participants in this study range in age from early twenties to mid-fifties. Three are men; six are women. Their educational levels range from a high school diploma to a doctorate degree. Only one of them stopped at the high school level, while three are pursuing Bachelors degrees, two have completed Masters degrees, and three have completed or nearly completed their doctorates.

Geographically, the nine participants have been raised throughout the expanse of the United States. Six of the participants are from the Southwest; while two are from the Southeast, one from the Midwest, and one from the Northeast. Four of them have a

Latina mother while the six others have a Latino father. For seven of them, their parents are of Mexican heritage, while only one had a parent of Peruvian heritage, another of Honduran heritage, and a third of Puerto Rican heritage.

I located these participants through word of mouth within my community. I informed my family, friends and acquaintances of the nature of my research, the general scope of its inquiry, and the reasons for my interest in this area of study. After allowing the information to circulate, individuals soon contacted me with either an interest to participate in my research or with the contact information of others interested in participating. Then I used snowball sampling to find other participants. For the interview process, I conducted a semi-structured interview [see Appendix A] with the participants. Thomas Lindloff (1995) best sums up the qualitative interview process I adopted:

The researcher defines a purpose for such conversations to occur, and selects social actors to advance the conversational purpose. The researcher elicits talk about their experiences. Through this method the communication researcher tries to gain a critical vantage point on the sense making in communication performances and practices. (p. 165)

Towards the conclusion of each interview, I encouraged each participant to express anything not already covered by the interview schedule. I attempted to make the interviews as conversational as possible to allow the participant to control the direction and pace of the interview. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

From the transcriptions, I read for themes of frequency and intensity. While the talk was wide ranging and various, our talk, my questions, and their answers seemed to

occur against an ever-present backdrop of contemporary understandings—both academic and commonsense—about ethnicity, about whiteness, and about “betweenness.” I begin with this backdrop for the ways it always colored our conversations.

The Terms of Latina/o Identity

Latina/os and Whites have made demarcations between themselves; however the irony behind these acts of separation is that neither identity marker has its own clarity. Despite the murkiness of the terms, these words are still used by groups to clearly differentiate between one another. White is named: Caucasian, EuroAmerican, American, Gringo, etc. Latina/o is named: Brown, Hispanic, Mexican American, Mexican, etc.

One of the first ambiguities of the term Latina/o is the semantic-usage battle between it and the corresponding term Hispanic. Scholars such as Delgado (1994) have discussed the complexities of the term Hispanic within Latina/o communities. Chicano historian Carlos Muñoz (1989) argues that the term is problematic because there is nothing about Hispanic that acknowledges any connection to non-White indigenous cultures in the Americas. The political implications and potential problems associated with this term have pushed me towards Latina/o as a more encompassing term. There are many people, like myself, who have rejected the word Hispanic because of its colonizing tone, its emphasis on Spain and by implication Europe, and its orientation toward a White-skinned people.

Delgado (1998) argues that Latina/o identity is complex and cannot simply be neatly categorized. He argues that much attention needs to be placed on the context and the complex articulations of Latina/o identities that context permits. Furthermore,

Delgado (1994) fights the urges of other scholars who create a continuum of identity between Latina/o identity terms such as Hispanic, Chicana/o, and Latina/o. The impossibilities of creating a unified Latina/o representation because of issues of national origin, ethnicity, and race have been documented (Calafell & Delgado, 2004). Pan-Latina/o representations have been sparse, but they have emerged in recent years (Calafell & Delgado, 2004).

However, Zimmerman (2003) reminds us of the potential pitfalls of using the term Latina/o as an all-encompassing term: at times it only erases difference between ethnic groups, but it can also privilege the identity of one ethnic group as representative of all Latina/o ethnic groups. Others scholars such as Dávila (2001) have argued about the problematic construction of Latina/o as a marketing term for advertisers who in a sense shape, create, and delimit the terms of Latina/o identity. However, there is no other term that encompasses pan-Latina/o identities. The layered debate and complexity of the issues surrounding the use of the term demonstrate the importance of this work in sorting through and layering Latina/o identities. For me, choosing one term over the other in the interviews was problematic: how might I be including, excluding, privileging, or obscuring markers of identity in these conversations?

The Ineffable White

White identities are not without definitional problems as well. The Communication field has seen a surge in studies of Whiteness and White identity, but the seminal article on this topic remains Nakayama and Krizek's (1995) "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric." Through rhetorical interpretation of interview data and popular press, Nakayama and Krizek (1995) found that discourses of Whiteness cast it as both

everything and nothing simultaneously. They assert that Whiteness maintains its power through its invisibility and its unchartability. Because Whiteness is without definition its power circulates (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995). The undefinability of Whiteness coupled with its pervasiveness causes confusion and uncertainty about White identity.

In addition to work by Nakayama and Krizek (1995), Robyn Weigman (1999) attempts to sum up the themes and debates found in the emerging field of Whiteness studies and she finds many paradoxes in being White. For example, it is a particular yet a universal, it is a majority that can be marginalized, and it is everywhere but nowhere. Notable in her article is the fact that she never once defines White. The closest she comes to an explanation is with an explanation of the privilege of White as found in Noel Ignatiev's and John Garvey's (1996) *Race Traitor*:

The White race is a club, which enrolls certain people at birth, without their consent, and brings them up according to its rules. For the most part the members go through life accepting the benefits of membership, without thinking of the costs. When individuals question the rules, the officers are quick to remind them of all they owe the club, and warn of the dangers they will face if they leave it.
(p. 142)

While Ignatiev and Garvey argue that the best way to get rid of the problems caused by Whites is to do away with White identity, they like others have a hard time articulating what White identity is. However, Moon and Flores (2000) explain that the strategies taken by Ignatiev and Garvey do little to disempower Whiteness and instead serve to recenter it.

Perhaps Maurice Berger (1999) has the best articulations of ineffable Whiteness

when he remembers attending an academic panel discussing White identity:

Whiteness implied not a color of skin, per se, but a usually unexamined state of mind and body. Whiteness was a powerful norm that had been so constant and persistent in society that White people never need to name it. (p. 203-204)

Therefore Whiteness is an identity that is most clearly defined by its link to societal privilege and its unexamined condition. While the Latina/o identity is problematic to represent because of the complexity in terms of difference, the difficulty or complexity of representing Whiteness lies in its pervasiveness. In the interviews, my quandary was how to ask of the specific enactments of Whiteness against its backdrop of its pervasiveness murkiness.

Between the Many-Named and the Never-Need-to-be-Named

While academic intellectuals debate relativism and subjectivism, the rest of the world continues to follow a modernist essentialist perspective on life. Within the modernist penchant for truth and order lay apparently clear and rigid categorizations of race and ethnicity. Excavating the layers of identity buried within labels, Elaine K. Chang (1994) points out how identity terms are being and should be problematized because “many of us, indebted to the lessons of Bernice Johnson Reagon, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich, feel we have absorbed the lesson that not ‘all women are created equally unequal’” (p. 252). The varying disenfranchised experiences of individuals and/or the multiple affiliations may not be represented in their generalized labels; therefore labels may not always capture who a person is.

As more diverse voices are being heard in more complex ways, it is an important

time to delve into the grays of polar black and white opposites of the foundational identity terms. For example, Homi Bhabha (1994a) encourages us to understand identities from many viewpoints. In calling for more complexity in examining identity, he uses the demographic categories of class and gender as his example. Following his argument, when class or gender is connected with other demographic categories, they complexify the understanding of the identity being explained. He says:

The move away from the singularities of ‘class’ and ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organizational categories has resulted in a useful awareness of the multiple subject positions—of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation—that inhabit any claim to identity in the (post)modern world. (p. 269)

In addition, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues for the necessity of understanding the intersecting nature of race, class, and gender in order to understand how they shape experiences of oppression together. To separate each of these identity categories for the purpose of attempting to understand oppression would undermine or disempower marginalized persons. While these interviews did not try to amalgamate all the demographic categories of identity, this project does take up Bhabha’s and Collin’s call to complicate identity by examining the experiences of individuals who are not neatly within one ethnic category. However, the literature I have detailed demonstrates the difficulties of attempting to create identities in relationship to the all pervasive Whiteness and the multifaceted Latina/ness.

Following scholars like Judith Butler (1988) who assert that identity is performatively constituted, I see my participants as performers of their racial identities. I

understand that their racial identities have a foundation in the scientific discourses of biology; however, I also understand that through naming someone a specific race or ethnicity, the identity is retroactively constituted and naturalized. The racial body is not a site of biological truths, but a historically contingent socially constructed and negotiated category of knowledge. Through the reiterative power of discourse, the normalization of the racialized body occurs. These reiterations are “acts” either from the body or to the body.

Fully aware of the discourses of Latina/o and White identity, I interviewed my participants, and I was anxious to hear their own understandings of these theoretical complexities and calls. In analyzing the results of the interviews, I divide the results from the interviews into four main categories. Each category relates to the larger theme of the construction and negotiation of the Latina/o-White hybrid identity through 1) material practices, 2) the visual, 3) discourse, and 4) acts. In the interviews and in this analysis, I listened carefully for articulations of how those acts materialize by paying particular attention to the Latina/o-White hybrid individual as each performatively enacted varying ethnic identities.

Constructing and Negotiating Identity through Material Practices

The first main theme I identified was related to the issue of constructing and negotiating identity through material practice. Feminist analyses of materiality provide an important watchword in this analysis. For Teresa deLauretis (1986), asserting identity is not a goal, but is rather a place to begin listening to the multivalent, shifting negotiations of “self-contradictory identity... made up of heterogeneous and heteronymous representations of gender, race, and class” (p. 9). Jill Dolan (1993) carries

this claim one step further, “Identity becomes a site of struggle, at which the subject organizes and reorganizes competing discourses as they fight for supremacy” (p. 88).

Material practices, then, become ways to articulate and embody these discourses. In these interviews, participants describe actions and experiences of their self-enactments in relationship to the dominant ideologies about Latinas/os or Whites. For example, in describing how he negotiates his identity in relationship to dominant images in the media, Chip attempts to cast his identity through his choice of clothes while reflecting upon the ways that clothes are marked or correlated with certain subjectivities:

I’m wearing a pink t-shirt and Hurley surfer shorts so it doesn’t get much more White than that. I don’t know, I mean, what makes you Mexican? I mean, should I slick my hair back and drive around in a low rider? I eat a shit load of Mexican food. People have asked me that before and I don’t really have an answer for them. Because I don’t wear saggy jeans, I don’t have teardrops tattooed under my eyes. Whatever it is that you see in the movies, I don’t do that.

Interestingly, as Chip seeks to create a space for himself outside of dominant ideologies or stereotypes of Latinas/os, he finds affiliation with symbols of Whiteness not only through his dress, but through the discursive distance he maintains with “Mexicans.” He seems to assert an affect of Otherness or foreignness with the Mexican that he does not assert for Whites.

Similarly, in discussing his personal style and how it reflects his culture Adam states:

Maybe it’s the people I end up kicking it with. Maybe I am drawing the wrong girls. Lots of time I am wearing Dockers and collared shirts. I don’t wear junky

clothes—my clothes are expensive. I got a lot of culture, I wear dress shirts. His comments, while attempting to create agency for himself, once again disempower any potential Latina/o affiliation because he conflates a preferred middle class with Whiteness. Adam's interpretation and discussion of culture is also interesting in that he alludes to culture doubly. For him culture is about economic empowerment and an absence of non-White ethnicities. Given the uncertainty he feels regarding his ethnicity or bloodlines to culture, Adam connects to culture through economic means and, in turn, equates Whiteness to cultural capital.

However, within this theme participants did not simply discuss ways that they negotiated their appearances, but they also discussed how they chose to perform their identities against stereotypes. For example Irene described the ways her White mother dissuaded her from identifying with her Latina/o heritage:

The [Latina/o] image is to stay home and cook and clean and neither of us agreed. [My sister and I] are two females. And we have tried to break away, it has been a long chain of people who tried to break away from that aspect that women are negative, that they are only made for one reason and stuff like that.

Aware of the limited spaces for Latina subjectivity because of the pervasiveness of religion and the hegemonic use of religious symbols such as the Virgin of Guadalupe (Anzaldúa, 1987), Irene attempts to create a space for herself outside of these delineating gender ideologies. She rejects domesticity and the politics that put pressure on women on fulfilling a domestic role. While initially seeming to be liberatory, this tactic has the effect of having Irene completely disavow many things Latina/o in fear that this rejection is the only way she can escape ideological gender marginalization.

Linda actually is assumed to be so White that she actually has to ‘come out’ to people about her Latina/o side. She says:

The difficulty of coming out to people is real. Now I decided that for my classes that, you know, that’s one of the first things I do in the first few weeks. I let them get to know me, and then after the first couple of weeks, I give them something like the essay I wrote on my identity. And then I say, ‘Okay, this is me.’ Because I remember in the early years that sometimes I wouldn’t ever say anything... because of fear. How would they label me? Would they ridicule me? Because some people do.

Nakayama and Krizek (1995) teach that one of the ways in which Whiteness maintains its power is through the assimilation of difference. Therefore, in the case of Linda’s narrative, as a Latina/o-White hybrid identity, any difference she has is quickly subsumed by normative Whiteness since she does not easily fit into pre-existing categories of difference. As Nakayama and Krizek have argued (1995), Whiteness is allowed breath and complexity and, if Otherness stands in defiance to Whiteness, then it is rendered simplistic. Linda understands the prejudice that can come from others when they have a label to put on you—especially a non-White label. Furthermore, her coming out story communicates how when you give up your Whiteness, you give up safety and control.

Participants also described more private or personal actions or experiences that they performed or were encouraged not to perform. A common theme was that of family-oriented practices. For participants Irene, Susie, and Monica, being highly oriented to family gatherings and kinships was a Latina/o performance. Susie says that the difference between Whiteness and Latina/ness for her is the connection with family:

My [Latina] mom's side of the family is more family-oriented, whereas my [White] dad's side of the family isn't. I think that's one thing I would base their differences on.

She also explains that her Latina/o side of the family is much larger than the White side, and her Latina/o family members visit one another more often, while the White side does not usually get together:

[On the Latina/o side] we get together all the time, for all the major holidays.

The whole family is in California and they're from different parts of California, like San Francisco and San Jose. We all usually come together in Merced, either at our house or my mom's sister's house.... And it's just a given that all of us are going to be there. My mom comes from a larger family, she's got two other sisters and a brother. And my dad's the only child. Well he has a half-sister in Alabama, but we usually don't get together.

Both the size of the Latina/o family and their geographic closeness is a common trait for Latina/os in Susie's articulation of difference. Contrastingly, Susie's White side of the family is relatively small and dispersed in a lengthier distance from one another.

Monica has similar views of Latina/ness' relation to family and furthers the Latina/o distinction to Whiteness by pointing to the differences in food:

We celebrate the same holidays but all the food is different. You know we have tamales as well as turkey.... I celebrate Thanksgiving with my White side of the family and Christmas with the other side. So we have a traditional Thanksgiving and then at Christmas time my grandmother makes the rice and beans and all those things. Sometimes for birthdays my grandma will make a lot of those

ethnic type foods. I've learned how to make some of those things.

For Monica, the White holidays are adhered to but they have Latina/o adaptations.

Within the cultural patterns of Whiteness, Latina/ness is enacted and not the other way around.

Irene learned to perform Latina/ness on a personal level by making Latina/o food, but she needs recipes or the presence of her Latina grandmother to successfully create the meals:

I learned how to make *tortillas*. I can make *chile relleno*, but I have to go back to the recipe.... I used to make *tamales* every year with my grandma. Rice, beans, it's just a matter of being with her. Usually I am with her and, you know, she measures with her hands and stuff.

Like Monica, Irene connects to her Latina-ness through cooking, specifically through her grandmother's cooking. However, without her grandmother, she has to use recipes.

With her grandmother, she has someone there to legitimate and authenticate the performance. To perform Latina alone is to perform it with self-consciousness and self-doubt.

These themes of family and the role of food and cooking in maintaining or performing Latina/o identities are discussed by Sandoval-Sánchez and Sternbach (2001) as they write about Latina theater. Sandoval-Sánchez and Sternbach explicate that as Latinas perform their identities on stage much of the actions, dilemmas, and identities they work through happens in the kitchen during the process of cooking. Thus, they demonstrate how the kitchen is often a site for the performative of Latina/o identity.

When thinking of personal relationships and how he will construct his family,

Adam toggles between marrying a Latina or a White woman. He feels that his choice in partner will determine his ethnic performance as a family member. He uses his sister and brother as models. His brother married a Latina and his sister married a White man. His brother's nuclear family is more Latina/o with the child even having the name of a Cuban cinematic character. His sister's nuclear family, however, is White, with her Aryan-esque daughter. He says:

I get stuck between do I want a Mexican girl to keep the bloodline going, or will a White girl be on the court? My brother married a Mexican girl and they have a baby. He was born in central Mexico and his son is Antonio Miguel. Antonio comes from Tony Montana of *Scarface*. But my sister married a White guy and now she's got a blue-eyed baby girl.

Rather than considering cooking, Adam considers his own patrilineage as a personal practice. In determining who he will marry, he is determining the ethnicity of his family. He feels his courting, framed as an either/or personal enactment, will determine the more public appearance of his immediate offspring. He makes a connection between bloodlines and culture, marking in his mind the importance of genetics in maintaining and creating ethnic identities.

Monica brings it all full circle when she explains the transition she went through in college. She transitioned from performing White to performing as Latina and it was her relationship to her family that marked the transition. She says:

The biggest difference [between Latina/o and White] is the importance to family. I think that comes from my Hispanic background. Going away to college at 18, I thought, I want to get away from my parents, get away and be my own person...

which is very much the American side of being independent. But as I got older, I realized how important family is. My sister had her first baby and I want to be a *tia* he knows, not one that he never sees. I went back three times the year he was born. When I looked for jobs, I only looked out West so I can be near him.

According to the participants, Latinas/os are characteristically more focused on tight-knit family relationships, while White families often honor and expect more independence of their children. Initially, the White Monica, considered moving away to be a good choice, but then the Latina Monica reconsiders her choice. This reconsideration sides more with a Latina perspective of family. She even characterizes herself not as an “aunt” but a “*tia*.” This characterization marks her not necessarily as White but as Latina.

Interestingly, much like Irene she initially assigns freedom to White identities, seeing Latina/o identities or identification with them as restrictive to her personal freedom. However, unlike Irene who chose to perform Whiteness, Monica chose to perform Latina/ness.

For these participants, material practices such as choice of apparel, self-identification, and emphasizing family relationships mark the difference between their Whiteness and their Latina/ness. Latina/o appearance is of a lower economic and therefore less culturally valuable value than White. Also, when identifying as a Latina/o, this outing must be first couched in White normalcy. Additionally, Latinas/os have a more interdependent family relationship while Whites have a more independent family relationship. When enacting these material practices, the Latina/o-White hybrid individual constructs and negotiates his/her identities for the advantage of the individual.

Constructing and Negotiating Identity through the Visual

The second theme that I discovered concerns how other people label the Latina/o-White hybrid individual and how he/she constructs and negotiates that identity through the visual projections cast upon them. For example, some of the participants acknowledged that they were identified as White depending upon the lightness of their skin color. People either legitimized or delegitimized their Latina/ness depending upon whether the observer could link the participant's skin color to a stereotypical Latina/o brownness or a stereotypical White fairness. Observers judge the Latina/o-White hybrid individual people based upon his/her looks and make those judgments based upon preexisting dominant stereotypes of racial and ethnic groups.

According to Warren, an orphan, he was given back to an adoption agency by his widowed adopted-mother due to his inability to pass as a White infant:

I was un-adopted, and the adopted-father died, by chance, just by circumstances and the adopting-mother *un*adopted me. She gave me back to the State of New York because she was afraid that she would never be able to get another man in her life because any man that she hooked up with would think she had previously hooked up with an African American. I was so dark, and so she just gave me back.

When Warren was older, he moved around to different foster homes, and was consistently told that he was White by the foster families. Warren explains:

Having never had contact with either [biological] parent throughout any of my childhood, so not knowing or having a racial identity at that time, it's like I constantly tried to find out how to be the peg to fit.

Of course, you're force fed that you had to identify as a race. And I didn't know how to do that. I was never able to do that. I spent most of my time growing up in White families. From 5 to 15 I was with a German family, and they lived in a predominately Italian, Polish, Irish, very White neighborhood. You know, these were a mix of cultures, but Euro-cultures mostly. I was always the darkest kid in the class, complexion wise. But I would come home and my foster parents would try to say, "You're White."

Warren was at a loss for self-definition. In his youth he sought to find himself in the U.S. ethnic pastiche, and relied upon White parents to assist him in his search. Rather than allowing a non-White self-interpretation, they insisted upon him being White. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) asserts that a key strategy through which Black women can empower themselves is through self-definition. Historically, one major aspect of the oppression of Black women has been ideological in that other groups have defined them, not allowing Black women to create their own definitions of selfhood. The question of self-definition arises here as each of the participants is named by others rather having the agency to name themselves.

Susie says that she is generally not considered Latina/o because of the lightness of her skin:

Usually they're pretty surprised that I'm Latina/o or that I'm half Latina/o because they can't tell.... When I tell them, they usually can't tell by looking at me. My brother is different. My brother got all the dark features. And so I got all the German features, I guess.

By juxtaposing herself against her darker brother, she demonstrates that her light colored

skin is what delegitimizes her Latina/ness.

Chip has had similar experiences of being considered White despite his olive skin color not coordinating with his blue eyes or blonde hair. This is a contradiction that he emphasizes. He says:

Most people don't think I'm Mexican. They think I am the White guy with a tan.... A lot of people just figure I am White, then they ask me why I am so tan--- not, "What are you?" but "Why are you so dark? Do you tan?"

Irene has been grouped with White people by a professor although she does not consider herself just White. It was her light skin color that provoked the classification:

Actually my professor, Roseanne, identified me as White. We were in the classroom and she said, "yes and all you White people..."

And I said, "Hey wait!"

And she pointed to me and I said again, "Roseanne!"

And she said, "Oh yeah, you are not just White."

I didn't get offended and I don't usually get offended."

Similarly, Anita acknowledges that she assumes others do not see her as Latina/o because she is not dark:

When I'm thinking "Hispanics" I am thinking darker people so I don't think Hispanics could look like me.

While Anita is aware of dominant definitions of what constitutes Latinas/os, she has also internalized them as she regulates her own identity through these frames.

Contrastingly from Anita, Adam is often characterized as Latina/o because of his dark features:

You know, I'm not a bad person but sometimes the way people look at me.... I don't dress gangster, but I do have my hair slicked back and it's in a fade. I have darker features. Also, it's the way I talk. I'm not stupid, but I didn't go to grammar college to learn speech or anything like that. People talked to me this way as I was growing up and this is the way I learned. But people automatically stereotype me [as Latino].

Due to his physical features and speech patterns, he often has been asked if he is gang-affiliated:

It's amazing the kind of attention I draw. I got a ticket the other day, and it was the first day I got my car. All cuz I had my seatbelt off. I draw attention to myself, I guess. And people make assumptions.

If I meet a girl in the club and tell her I'm from San Limon, she'll ask me "Do you claim something?"

And I think, "Do you ask White boys that? I ain't in no fucking gang." I mean, every time.

Sometimes the physical features of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual can confuse others and they are not sure how to label the participant. When participants cannot be easily placed within pre-existing categorizations of racial stereotypes this leads to ambiguity that must be resolved for the gazer. Chip experienced such confusion while working at a coffee shop:

I kinda have dark olive colored skin but light colored eyes, which is kind of rare, especially in the wintertime. In the winter I am usually a lot darker than most everybody else. The reason I get asked about my skin is because I don't have

corresponding Hispanic facial features. I have light colored [blue] eyes but I have dark skin so people always come up and just assume things. When I worked at the coffee shop I had like ten people ask me if I was Persian or Armenian just because I have light eyes and dark skin. Or people come up and ask, “What are you?”

Irene experiences similar confusions; however much of her ambiguity is a result of her name in relation to her off-White appearance. She explains that people look for clues to interpreting which non-White group she could belong to. She says:

A lot of people assume that I have Japanese in me because of my last name—Coto. I don’t know why, but Coto sounds Japanese to a lot of people, so I get asked if I am Japanese or Chinese. I am like, “No, it’s a Hispanic last name.”

Participant Adam acknowledges that his ethnic ambiguity actually can be a strategy to help him:

I got the lighter features with the darker features, so sometimes I can get into places that other people can’t. I say last name in a White way Azcano, and people say, “Are you Greek?” I’ve been asked that a thousand times. I think, “Where do you guys get Greek from?”

In each of the participants’ cases, ambiguity can be both frustrating and empowering in that it can enable both spaces of possibility and impossibility. The participants either are trapped or they play with their potential ambiguity. Whether they are overlooked or overdetermined, their destabilized ethnic stance becomes a way to understand the malleability of ethnic identity. Their visual translation (whether a self-translation or translation by others of themselves) becomes a way understand how their own ethnic

fluxes are part of widespread interpretations of ethnicity, rather than widespread truths of ethnicity.

Constructing and Negotiating Identity through Discourse

The third theme I discovered is that of the ability or inability to code switch from Spanish and English. This theme helps to illustrate the process of constructing and negotiating identity through discourse. Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama (2004) explain that lingual code switching serves three purposes. One purpose is to accommodate the lingual abilities of the other. A second purpose is to exclude someone by disallowing them to understand what is being said. A final purpose is to demonstrate a cultural affiliation by demonstrating knowledge of a particular language (p. 230). The lingual switches made by the Latina/o-White do not neatly fall into any of these three categories of purpose. Rather, the lingual code switches are most closely linked to the category of demonstrating cultural affiliation through discourse. With the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, the ability or lack of ability to code switch closely ties to the ability or lack of ability to express one or the other of her/his ethnic identities.

Monica designates the lack of the ability to code switch from English to Spanish as being an act of Whiteness. She tells of how when she was growing up, the conversations at the dinner table with her Latina mother and her mother's Latina/o friends were often in Spanish. Her White father could not keep up with the conversations:

At the dinner table it was often Spanish, my dad doesn't speak Spanish. Being an American, he is very *gringo*, he slaughters the language. He got a D minus in college with my mom helping him. But all these Hispanics would get together,

sitting at the table eating, and the conversation would lead to Spanish. And someone would say, “Oh but we are excluding Pete” and they’d switch back to English.

Within this interaction, Monica’s Latina parent had cultural capital or an advantage in her bicultural abilities and code-switching.

Adam, again, links the inability to code switch to English from Spanish as being an act of Whiteness. At this point in the conversation we are talking about his Whiteness and whether or not he speaks Spanish:

No, I can understand it a little bit. That is from my [Latina] grandma and that side of the family when I was growing up. It can’t be that hard, ya know. Think about it, Mexicans come here and within a year they’re speaking English or understanding it enough to work a job and communicate with their boss. That is fucking amazing. Why can’t we do that in reverse? We say, “Oh it’s easier to learn English.” But come on.

For Adam, the lack of code switching is a Whiteness designator, and Whites over-justify that English is easier to learn than Spanish as an evasion for not knowing Spanish. He is poking fun at White ignorance and the way some Whites justify their ignorance.

The mother of participant Linda noticed White bias in her own daughters’ personality and behaviors. Linda’s mother pointed out the Linda did not know Spanish and, in turn, did not know Latina/o customs and behaviors. This lack of knowledge became a point of contention between Linda and her mother. She says:

As a child, when I would go back to Honduras, I would notice a separation and it bothered me. I can remember a few times when [my Latina Mom] said, “Oh you

don't have to come with me to this place.” Because she knew the *gringa* side of me was there. I could sense that when she'd say... I mean, you know, she'd get mad at me like if I... Well, Honduras is the poorest country in Central America, and I was American coming over and so, we'd have lunch or something and I'd say, “Why do we always have to eat *tortillas* and beans?...” She would just immediately label me, “There's the *gringa*.” And she'd say, “You have to learn more Spanish.”

Within the described interaction Linda demonstrates the national frames from which she and her mother understand both White and Latina/o identities. In this case, the American or the *gringa* is explicitly linked with the privileged economic space or behaviors of Whiteness.

Participant Sara has close ties to her Mexican mother. In Sara's childhood, she traveled a lot with her White father's job, and so the family became a unit of familiarity and constancy. When they did return to the U.S., they usually returned to Miami. Her mother seemed resigned to the fact that she had to teach Sara Spanish at home because she would definitely learn English outside the home. Her mother assumed that a U.S. context would overprivilege English. Sara explains:

And I actually learned Spanish before I learned English. My Mom reasoned that since I would probably be living in the United States most of my life or going to English speaking schools, I would definitely learn English in schools and not have Spanish as much. And so she decided to speak to me in Spanish and then I learned English when I started kindergarten.

The history of the U.S. educational system shows that students with weak English

skills have been discriminated against, sometimes with the help of the legal system (Santa Ana, 2004). Sara's non-U.S. born mother may or may not know that history, but either way she understands that outside the home Sara could learn English but would probably not learn Spanish. Therefore, the home becomes a space that works against the loss of Sara's Spanish-speaking abilities.

Those with both English- and Spanish-speaking fluencies named code switching as a way to demonstrate Latina/o authenticity. When asked about his Spanish abilities, Chip admits that he is not adept at Spanish, but has used it to fit in with other Latina/os:

One Spring Break we were in this little bar where all the Mexican construction workers would drink in Cancun. And here was this total White kid, me. I told the guys I was Mexican and they started laughing at me and pointing and telling each other "look at his blue eyes, he says he is a Mexican." Then I spoke a little bit more Spanish, I was almost fluent in Spanish then, so I knew what they were talking about. I knew what they were saying. I started to tell them my dad was born in Los Angeles. And they laughed at that. I said, "Well my grandpa was born just outside of Mexico City and my grandma was born in El Paso." And they said, "Oh really." And I said, "Yeah, but my mom is Irish." And they were like, "Okay, okay, let's drink with this guy." And I was telling them this in Spanish.

In this instance, Chip uses his Spanish speaking skills to create connections with other Mexicans. His Spanish speaking skills override any questions that may come with his appearance because his lingual performance secures a sense of Latina/ness—especially because those lingual skills are linked to Latina/ness itself.

Monica explains that her Spanish-abilities actually separated her from her White friend:

There was this time when my mom said something while she was on the phone with someone else. I must have understood what I'd overheard because I laughed. A White friend asked, "What did your mom say?" And I heard it so clearly it did not occur to me that he had not understood it. Then I realized she must have said it in Spanish, so I had to translate what she said.

While language can serve as a point of perceived authenticity and community for White-Latina/os to other Latinas/os, it can also reinforce difference in relation to Whiteness, thus causing confusion for individuals to self-articulate and self-understand.

Anita explains that Spanish is the way that she connects with her Latina/o side of the family. She expressed a deep connection to the women in her Latina/o family as her connection to her Latina/o identity:

You know it is really weird. I don't speak Spanish, I have a horrible accent, but my granny speaks Spanish to me and somehow I understand her because she speaks English with it too a little bit. But when someone else speaks it to me, I

don't understand it, maybe it's just her style. Yeah but when I don't understand something, she'll say it in English. But she speaks Spanish normally.

Her relationship to Latina/ness is almost strictly through a matriarchy. To fit into the matriarchal order, she communes with her mother and especially her grandmother.

During this communion, Spanish plays an important role in relationship production and maintenance. Indeed, her connection to her Grandmother comes through an ineffable

Spanish-speaking act. She does not understand Spanish except through her Grandmother, and in turn her Latina identity is only understood through this person as well.

If code switching serves to identify with others, then yet another strategy of code switching is as a protection from Latina/o discrimination. Irene explicates the reason she does not speak Spanish is because she was being shielded from the discrimination her family received due to knowing Spanish:

I wish I did speak Spanish. (self-conscious laughter) My dad never spoke to me in Spanish. My grandmother sometimes would when I told her I wanted to learn. I don't think my dad had a positive experience being Latina/o, so he didn't want to carry that with him and pass it on to me. So from the beginning he spoke to us in English.

In Irene's family, like many other Latina/o families, sometimes there is the desire for parents to cloak their children from potential oppression and discrimination by cutting all ties to symbols and expressions of differences.

Similarly, Anita's family understood that she should learn English to be better equipped in U.S. society:

My (Latina) mom doesn't speak Spanish, but because my mom was really young when she had me, my granny is the one who babysat me a lot all the time. So I was around it a lot, I just never picked it up, because they would mostly speak to me in English. So they thought it was important at the time for me to know English really well, which I would have learned anyway, but they used English around me.

Like Sara, Anita learns English exclusively as a strategy to move within U.S. society.

However, English is taught at the expense of Spanish, as if to say that Spanish is not valuable at all. This translates into a diminishing of the value of Latina/ness as well.

For these participants, lingual code switching becomes a strategy for switching and validating their performed and preferred identities. In the interactions with others, these participants create and co-create their identities. This communication interaction is more than just a lingual exchange, but an embodied practice that also incorporates language. And what these participants demonstrate so clearly is that those embodied meanings are not consistent, but rather are constructed and negotiated as and through discourse.

Constructing and Negotiating Identity through Performative Acts

The final theme I discovered when speaking to the participants was that of the rewards and punishments they received when performing either Latina/o or White identity. These consequences are tied to “acts” they embodied and performed. When Butler speaks of constitutive acts of gender, she explains that acts of gender are always nuanced and individualized by people, but these acts occur in accordance with certain sanctions and proscriptions. For Butler (1988), gender is “acting in concert and acting in accord” (p. 526)—that is, acting in public with others and acting appropriately in historically determined ways. Latina/o-White hybrid individuals constructed and negotiated their identity through constitutive acts of political and social alliances.

A constitutive act of ethnicity, for these participants, was the ever-present “choice” of naming themselves on forms. For example, both Irene and Susie explain that they signify as Latina/o when they are presented with an application that asks them to check their ethnicity. According to Irene:

If it is one of those answer things on a little piece of paper or whatever, if there is a chance for scholarship I put down that I am Latina. If there is no chance for anything at all, I just put down American.

Susie explains the same situation of choice:

The only time it really ever comes up is usually when I'm filling out an application for something. This going to sound really bad, but my [White] dad told me to mark that I'm Hispanic because there are more benefits to being Hispanic than to being Caucasian on these applications. That sounds pretty superficial to say.

Adam explains that he avoided being bussed across town by accentuating his Latina/o identity:

Always growing up my mom put me down as [Latina/o] for school. You get the better school and the first choice. If you put White and there is no room, then you're out. So all growing up, I marked Hispanic and that is how I got into school. My little half-brother, he's all White, and he had to go to school all the way on the East side of San Limon. We lived in the South side of San Limon which is nicer housing and my school was just down the street from us and my brother had to go all the way across town.

Monica says that she emphasizes her Latina/o identity when she is filling out applications, and further explains her choice:

When I fill out a form, when I was applying for colleges, was one of the times where my parents and I talked about it because I had to check the ethnic group box. This is also a time where the whole issue of race came up in my life. What

if I am right at the end as one of the top students and they are going to accept me or give me a scholarship? But what if they wanted to meet some sort of quota and they want to give it to a minority and they bump me off the list to give it to a minority?

While framed as a “choice” by the participants, these institutional acts of ethnic affiliation mask the larger construction and maintenance of U.S. culture as White. Society has been writ large as a creation of European Whites. Universities, corporations, and the government are all thriving creations of the European White, and any contribution by non-White is considered ancillary and often of little significance. Thus, the relationship between Latina/o identity to U.S. institutions is one of subordination. While affirmative action has tried to change who is granted memberships to institutions, the change has been slow and the resentment has been well-voiced. As Latina/o-Whites become part of the institutions of the U.S., they often use the advantage of their otherness to enter the institution, but their Latina/o otherness is often silenced for the rest of their stay. The public act “in concert” and the historical “in accordance” already marks acts of ethnicity as subordinate within and to the dominant ideologies of U.S. White culture.

While marking boxes on bureaucratic forms is an exemplar of constitutive acts, other acts are discursive: the talk about Latina/o-White political affiliation made by the participants instantiates stereotypic depictions of Latina/ones. The media-saturated imagination about the Latina/o is still divested with delimiting images of the Latina/o. Charles Ramirez Berg (2001) designates that some of the more popular Latina/o stereotypes are the criminal, the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady. Berg complicates stereotype by saying that the mental image

people may carry could be separate from the mediated stereotype that larger media systems have produced. However, the two, in today's highly media saturated world, do feed off of one another.

These participants seemed well-aware of the stereotypes of Latina/ness. Sometimes Latina/ness was chosen but there was a sense that the choice of Latina/o also carried a stereotypical shadow with it. Monica explains:

Something I thought of.... I was brought up here and can pass as American. I do not get discriminated against because of my background. But my [Latina] mom tells me different stories. When my mom worked at hotels in Las Vegas as a hotel manager, people would come up to her and start talking, but when she answered with an accent, they would just shut her off and talk to someone else. Recently she called her church, they were looking for people to help Hispanic migrant workers who wanted to learn more English. My mom wanted to help the Father of the Church. When she called the church and asked questions, the person would not even try to answer her questions because my mom has an accent. So I have seen my mom having issues where she is discriminated against because of how she looks or how she sounds when she is in the U.S.

Monica's awareness of the Latina stereotype that is cast on her mother is also an awareness of her own privilege. Through accent and other self-performance choices, Monica has the privilege not to be subjected to the stereotypes her mother experiences.

Irene explains how the Latina/o identity is perceived by her in her surrounding community. This perception guides how she believes she might be received for being Latina:

In the [Southwest], just in my mind, I associate Latina/os with drugs, gangs, poverty, and lack of success. You know, people who don't care. The people you don't want to be around basically.... I got that from [this area]. I mean, I just came here for school, but down at home in San Marcos, near the Mexican border, it's just as bad. That is where you get a lot of people who cross over and there is a lot of anger about people who do not have their green cards and stuff because they are taking our jobs and stuff. All the anger is economically based as to why people do not like other Hispanics. They assume that if one person is that way than all the Hispanics are that way.

Irene's statements reflect how privilege manifests itself through dominant ideologies of race and class. Recognizing the ways in which Mexicans are constructed, and perhaps recognizing her complicity with those constructions, while negotiating her place in those constructions, Irene chooses to dissociate herself from the perceived negative by locating herself within larger discourses of Whiteness. Acknowledging, denying, and distancing oneself from stereotypes are all constitutive, discursive acts of ethnicity; in short, "I am Latina, but I am not these others."

Even though some participants noted the danger of appearing Latina/o, others also noted the benefits of claiming Latina/ones—another nuance of the constitutive act performed by individuals. For example, Anita claims her Latina/ness to be more connected to non-White communities. When Anita self-claims non-White lineage, she feels she is better accepted by non-White groups. She says:

A lot of times when someone is Hispanic, or they appear to look that way, I throw in "Oh, I am too." This makes me more connected because people always say

that I look White. And so they start making judgments about me.

So when I say that they say, “Oh, you are? Oh you are. Ok.”

Well, maybe they don’t say “ok” but they get a different spin on who I am.

Anita’s narrative demonstrates that her claims to a Latina/o identity not only serve to create connection or community with other non-Whites, but that connection is augmented by an affect created by the understanding of difference. In this case, someone who seems to be a White woman initially can shift the dynamics of power in the situation through the process of coming out as Latina/o.

Similarly, Anita says coming out as Latina/o helps her when she is teaching:

Especially when I teach at the community colleges, I will say that I’m Hispanic because there tends to be a lot of diversity in the classroom. A lot of times people tend to judge me because of how I look or maybe what kind of car I drive... So once I start explaining I am half Hispanic, this is my family, I come from this, I am actually closer to that side of the family than my [White] dad’s.... It really helps people. They are more at ease. A lot of times I do not mention it if I am hanging around Caucasian people. But it just makes them feel more comfortable, or myself feel more comfortable, in that environment.

Linda has found a way to capitalize on her connection with White groups. The Latina/o organizations that Linda is affiliated with realize that Whiteness can equal power, so they try to benefit from Linda’s ability to pass for White. Linda explains:

The chair of the Latina/o caucus... he utilizes me. He puts me on committees to defend Latina/o issues. He says, “I want you on this committee because you know how to talk and I want you to work this crowd.” And I do because I know

the crowd. I am a part of that crowd too.

Linda's Whiteness is used as a benefit for the Latina/os around her because she can use symbolic face of the dominant culture to argue for the needs of the Latina/o culture.

Nakayama and Krizek (1995) and McIntosh (2000) have expressed that one of the rhetorical strategies of Whiteness is that it allows White people to talk about issues of race and ethnicity in ways that appear as if they have no self-interest and instead are ideologically neutral. This privilege is not necessarily open to people of color who are marked as self-interested when they speak about issues of race and ethnicity. Therefore, it would come as no surprise that the chair of the Latina/o caucus would use Linda's Whiteness to the advantage of the group.

For Adam privilege and power manifest themselves in a different form through his discussion of the growing Latina/o community in the United States. He feels that marking himself as Latina/o connects him with this growing community:

It is going to be a Latina/o world man. Everybody knows it. The majority of California is non-White now. Blacks are the true minority, we're taking over. Think about it, if you go to every city in California, you will find some towns with no black people in them. If you go to every community in the state, you'll find Spanish surnames. Think about that, go to New York, there are Puerto Ricans. Go to Miami, there are Cubans.... That is an advantage in itself. We're everywhere! Hispanics are becoming politicians now. They're getting the balls and actually want to step up. Things are changing. Maybe I will get a foot in the door easier because of the way I look.

While Adam clearly recognizes the potential of a growing Latina/o community and he

constitutes himself as part of this “Latina/o world,” he does not acknowledge that sheer numbers do not necessarily equal political power (Phelan 1993).

What these participants help to expose is that ethnic identity is also constructed and negotiated through the acts of their realities. There are socially sanctioned categories that become opportunities for self-expression, even if that expression is never fully self-legitimized or never fully a true option. Through applications, relation to stereotype, relation to cultural groups, the acts of these participants are intentional and strategic actions that help to constitute their ethnic identity.

Conclusion

When Judith Butler proffered the term “performativity” in 1988, she helped to theorize identity in a way that incorporated past, present and future. For Butler, performativity functions when individuals participate in actions that reference previous actions. These actions, through their repetition over time, bring with them a momentum of authority due to their repetition. And as these actions are repeated over and over and then recognized consistently by society, they are considered natural due to their familiarity. In their naturalness, these actions are expected for future iterations.

Since her explication of performativity, others have joined the conversation to enhance and extend Butler’s ideas. The discussion of performativity often centers on gender, while scholars like Munoz (1999), Inda (2001), and Gil-Gomez (2000) have tried to redirect the conversation to race. Race enhances the discussion of performativity by moving the concept out of the male/female dichotomy to attempt to account for multiplicities of identities outside of a dichotomous range. While race is often discussed as a White/Other dichotomy, there are still a range of types within Other. Also, these

Others can become dichotomous to one another (for example, African American/Caribbean Black).

Each of the participants in this study has poignantly described the tensions of the possibilities and impossibilities of White-Latina/o hybrid identity. Though it seems there are moments of possibility and agency, such as the participant's ability to manipulate a problematic system of power to benefit themselves, it seems that each of the individuals is still caught up within the discourses, ideologies, or trappings of dominant constructions of race and ethnicity. The participants cannot create spaces of hybridity, rather each of them is caught making gestures back and forth between identities. What they demonstrate is that language, skin color, and claims of affiliation are important to authenticate oneself to a culture. The ways and the reasons for those affiliations are laden with political problems, however.

Gloria Anzaldua (1999) expresses the difficulty of claiming a non-White identity. She also expresses how limiting any ethnic identity is, often corralled into specific ways of being within any chosen group. To explain this idea she says:

Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. (p. 81).

Anzaldua adeptly describes the close proximity between a person's identity and his/her lingual abilities. Of course, lingual expression is much more complicated than simply speaking words. Context, power, audience all play a part in the who and the how of that lingual expression. In Anzaldua's argument, lingual expression is a privilege that

legitimizes others. Most importantly, she theorizes the lived experiences of herself and others who can identify with her. For Anzaldua, theory should represent and express lived experience.

Through analysis, it is clear that the participants pushed at the limits of White performativity, but often they come to their ethnic limits. Performativity maintains its hold because the reiteration of a citational racial code must tap into the force of the citation. Sarah Leigh Foster (2002), using Michel de Certeau, brings the body into lingual expression. Our actions can be considered a type of speaking about ourselves and our worlds. Foster states: “The acts of walking or cooking, like speaking, all operate within the fields of a language-like system; individual bodies vitalize that system through their own implementation of it” (p. 129). Taking a Fosterian approach to Anzaldua statement, “I am my language,” enables a variety of constitutive acts to be considered communicative performances. And, as Anzaldua reminds us, there are groups—specifically non-White racial and ethnic groups—that are trained to be ashamed of their own communication practices and to keep silent. If a reiteration is not linked to a recognizable or to a respected system of codes, then the reiteration fails to hold the identity. With the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, those iterable utterances changed depending upon the context or the purpose. However, because the participants are conscious of the enactments they had to make within the performativity of their identity, there seems to be possibility for resistance.

Consistently the identity of the Latina/o-White hybrid identity individual is discursively framed as a choice as participants spoke of negotiating and constructing their identities at points of materiality, the visual, language and constitutive acts. These

“choices,” however, are still practices of inclusion and exclusion with Whiteness as their center. In the language of performativity, instead of “choice,” the optimistic route lies in reiteration with difference to relocate Whiteness. While Gomez-Pena calls for a “new language,” the Latina/o-White hybrid is enacting options of performativity. A “new language” though requires resisting reiterations that are required for recognition. To create a new language is not to tap into the power of a system or reiterations. To exist within these reiterations while waiting for moments of subversion is still to gain recognition that could possibly offer others new ways to think of these participants or themselves.

On my odyssey to find others with a similar hybrid identity, I have also been seeking models for easily negotiating and constructing my own identity. I found no models for simplicity, but I did find performativity to be as creative as it is confining. Even if Whiteness is at the center, it is being recognized and held accountable. Alan Hyde (1997) emphasizes that the racialized body is never just a factual object. Rather, he states:

The body is never beyond or under discourse but folds its discursive creation in front of it wherever it walks, so that it would never be possible to imagine the body as natural. A statement about races, or about ‘looking different than’ someone, could only be heard as a performative that creates a particular discursive body, never as a description. (p. 240)

As a repertoire of performatively-possible identities become enacted by the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, the power of performance is offered not as an antidote to the poisonings of dominant ideologies, but at least as a vision of multidimensionality for all

humans searching for ways out of harmful discourses. That metaphor—vision—perhaps captures us again in the tyranny of the visual for racial/ethnic construction. But these Latina/o-White individuals testified powerfully that although the body is never beyond or under discourse, it still falls outside the naturalized “White/Other” binary. Outside the “natural,” takes us into the realm of the imaginative—and therefore into new possibilities.

Chapter Three
Paulina Rubio y yo:
Questioning Hybrid Performativity

“Al otro, a Borges, es a quien le ocurren las cosas.”

“The other one, the one called Borges, is the one things happen to.”

--*Jorge Luis Borges* “Borges y Yo”

In May 2002, I ventured to Mexico City to study “Postcolonial Ethnography.”

While I had come to one of the world’s largest metropolises to improve my epistemological skills—the processes by which I might know “others”—I also came to Mexico City to know myself; or better said, to discover, uncover, or even recover parts of myself. Since the time my mom disclosed that my biological father was/is Mexican, I have struggled to try to understand what, if anything, I could claim of Latina/o-ness and of Whiteness. In my early twenties, I also began to inform the world that I am gay. Therefore, both my Latina/o and my gay identities have been braided together in an inseparable way—as discovery, as knowledge, and as material effects in the world.

Some categories of identity are generally bestowed upon a person at birth (e.g., you are labeled female or labeled Black at birth). Butler (1993) writes of the announcement “It’s a girl”:

In that naming, the girl is ‘girled,’ brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that ‘girling’ of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this

naturalizing effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm. (pp. 7-8)

While gender is naturalized as binary (either male or female) at this “founding” moment, racial categories are exceedingly problematic for performativity: how to point to a “founding interpellation” for a hybrid identity? For a growing awareness of sexuality outside of heteronormativity? Performativity is realized for marginalized people when we understand our one-down position in the hierarchy of privilege. Acquiring knowledge about the intentional constructions of that one-down position is tough to do, especially since knowledge is honored and controlled by those in power invested explicitly or implicitly in maintaining their one-up position.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) explains how the categories of race, class and gender are utilized by dominant groups to subjugate and disenfranchise others. In the acquisition of knowledge about oneself, there is danger of self-hatred depending upon the cultural scripts available. As Hill Collins reminds us: “knowledge is a vitally important part of the social relations of domination and resistance” (p. 221). Often those in less powerful positions first have to learn how to re-interpret dominant discourse about themselves so that they can then empower themselves.

My identity trajectory has been precarious because I came into my identities at a later age. With these newly discovered and enacted identities I had options (albeit unsavory) to avoid and deny. I have sought public visibility, and therefore recognition, for identities that often have offered me less social capital and sometimes more cultural burden than identities aligned with dominant ideologies and privileges: my gayness versus my possibility for passing as straight, my Latina/ness versus my Whiteness.

While in Mexico City, a city that dated back to some of the initial colonizers of the Western Hemisphere—I was seeking to find myself amidst a cosmopolitan backdrop. In a city of extreme opposites, I was seeking a way to have my two sides come together to create one identity.

Concurrent to my time in Mexico City, Paulina Rubio, a Mexican pop star, was readying to release her album, “Border Girl.” Already the gay bars were playing her pre-released song “*Si Tu Te Vas*.” I watched her video on Mexican television and danced to her music at the clubs. I admired her sultry poses on billboards and counted the days until I could actually purchase her CD. Already, I had small exposure to her in the United States with the song “*Yo No Soy Esa Mujer*,” but quickly I was becoming a fan. My memories of Mexico City are inseparable—not unlike my gayness and Latina/ness—from Paulina Rubio. Her songs and her images were both backdrops and centerpieces during my time there—places and moments to remark on my own performative embodiments of hybridity as theory and materiality.

This chapter attempts to put performativity in conversation with hybridity. Both can be viewed as theories of everyday cultural practices, as resources for self-determinacy, and as always local, material embodiments. These views, however, have their limits: in the hegemony of white U.S. culture, in the limiting and limited repertoire of performative acts available for people outside normative boundaries, and in global, mediated constructions of Latina/o. My goals in this chapter are to complicate the binaries of racial identity through hybrid performativity; to question the performative construction of Latina for its material effects; and to fund the high theory of both performativity and hybridity with examples of everyday practice.

Performativity has quickly become a theoretical way to explain the constitution of the racial body in U.S. discourse, specifically the hybrid body. Inda (2001) asserts:

'Race' ...resolutely does not refer to a pre-given body. Rather, it works performatively to constitute the racial body itself, a body that only procures a naturalized effect through repeated reference to that body. [Racial performativity] is not a singular act of racial body constitution, but a reiterative practice through which discourse brings about the effect that it names. (p. 88)

Over time, the reiterations bring about a naturalized effect and a racialized body is created in U.S. discourse that actually never materially exists before or beyond the act of naming any one body in a racialized way. "The racing of a body is a never-ending process, one that must be reiterated by various authorities and in various times and places in order to sustain the naturalized effect of 'race'" (Inda, 2000, p. 88).

Naturalizing the "hybrid" body, however, is complicated. How to account for multiplicity of geographies, nationalities, ethnicities, social economic statuses, and border crossings? Using racial performativity as my theoretical compass, I trek through my own identity to explore the complexity of a hybrid identity that moves over the U.S./Mexico border in both physical and ideological ways. Rather than locking culture into self/other binaries, this chapter complicates simple opposites.

Gloria Anzaldua (1990) explains the ambiguity of identity in mixed-ethnic individuals, which she terms the "new *mestiza*":

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality,

she operates in pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (p. 379)

Influenced by Anzaldua, my definition of hybridity is a both/and existence in which we operate within contrasts trying to hold their differences together. Holding differences together adds one more job to the “to do” list of performativity in my attempt to complicate racial binaries with hybridity.

The limitations of performativity—as always already implicated in the power structures it produces—find Latina/o an increasingly precarious subject position, too easily and often marked materially as poor, illegal, uneducated—especially for women. As Paulina Rubio enters U.S. Latina/o discourse she is producing and produced through Latina/o performativity. Although she seeks a hybrid identity status, she is read as Latina and then considerations and values are given to her through that reading. As Shane Moreman exists in U.S. race discourse, he is often read as White although he seeks to be read sometimes as Latina/o and sometimes as hybrid. The ways our meanings are constructed and utilized by others and ourselves provide a glimpse into how the discourse around hybridity exists and is changing. Ultimately, I demonstrate how the everyday performances of Paulina Rubio map and are mapped by limits and excesses of hybrid performativity specifically through my Latin/White body and my borderland contexts. The determinate performances that we make still must be made within a discourse that is unforgiving of self-determinacy—except a self-determination that recenters White as privileged and Latina/o as ancillary to Whiteness.

Taking my cues from Borges' essay, "Borges Y Yo," this chapter utilizes self-expression, not self-indulgence, as a mode of gathering and analyzing cultural data. To accomplish my goals, I use performative writing as my method of inquiry. Della Pollock (1995) goes to great lengths to define performative writing. She says:

For me, performative writing is not a genre or fixed form (as a textual model might suggest) but a way of describing what some good writing does...

Performativity describes a fundamentally material practice. Like performance, however, it is also an analytic way of framing and underscoring aspects of writing/life. Holding "performative writing" to set shapes and meanings would be (1) to undermine its analytic flexibility, and (2) to betray the possibilities of performativity with the limitations of referentiality (p. 75).

In one sense, Pollock has given scholars a *carte blanche* to write as they would like and not to worry about the limitations of form. However, for me, she is highlighting how the process of writing is important to consider in the results of the writing. I have crafted and culled a story of myself and my world to try to say something about myself in my world. This is not an objective piece, nor does it aim at being a fictionalized piece either. Rather, I write myself at the crossing of various discourses of race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationhood, and class. Performative writing admits that I have placed myself in text, that I have made decisions about my and others' representations and that I have tried to hold my analysis and critiques to standards, not of objectivity, but of a politically-infused and politically-inspired subjectivity. Performativity and hybridity, too often written in high theory without "teaching" exemplars, are ripe for writing moments that

attempt to capture, not “reality,” but how identities are enacted in real moments and how those identities have material consequences in the real world.

Michel de Certeau (1994) expresses that the everyday practice of life should not be overlooked as “the merely obscure background of social activity” but should be looked into deeply to understand social practices of social identities (p. 474).

Foregrounding my mediated relationship with Paulina Rubio, I hope to bring the quotidian practice of pop star usage out of obscurity and into clarity as an act of significance within the mundane acts of everyday life.

Paulina Rubio is a hybrid product of mass media and globalized times. Yet her (re)production of hybridity is a fiction. For me, she is object lesson and cautionary tale to discuss how my own identity is influenced by the same forces that influence Paulina Rubio’s image (re)production in the United States. In the end, for both of us the hybrid identity, while theoretically important, it is not always performatively possible due to the matrices of race; however, only through attempting these transcendences can change occur.

Paulina Rubio: ¿Eres la persona que te dices?

A composite of the twenty English-languaged interviews of or articles about Paulina Rubio spanning from June 2001 to April/May 2004 show that she has been in the Spanish-language media for most of her life. Born June 17, 1971, she is the daughter of a famous Mexican actress Susana Dosamantes. Her parents divorced when she was a child, and she lived with her mother who traveled throughout Latin America and Europe as an entertainer. In the 1980s, Paulina Rubio started a career of her own, joining a youth

singing act named *Timbiriche*. In the 1990s, she began a successful solo singing career, becoming a hit Mexican solo singer.

Then, in 2002, she began a new leg of her career with her album *Border Girl*, seeking to come into the English-language market:

By the time she crossed over to the English-speaking market in 2002... Paulina had recorded five top selling albums, and earned gold and platinum sales status in Mexico, Italy, Spain and many other Latin American nations. Multiple Grammy nominations and the prestigious Onda and Amigo awards certified her mega star success. (Holsten, 2004, p. 44)

Record producers were hoping that her album would be a crossover success and they were far from disappointed: “Released June 18 [2002] in the U.S., Latin America, Spain and Italy, *Border Girl* entered the Billboard 200 at No. 11 and Spain’s charts at No. 14” (Llewellyn, 2002, p. 44). And her album made her a media presence in previously unknown markets. “[*Border Girl*] introduced her to new countries and extended her popularity from the Americas to Europe and Asia” (Valazquez, 2004, p. 30).

The album, *Border Girl*, is a compilation of songs that help to serve Rubio’s hybrid identity goals by being a cross-lingual production. Four of the songs have both an English-language and a Spanish-language version. Also, three of the English-language songs were previous Spanish-language hits for Paulina Rubio. Another of the English-language songs is a famous Spanish mariachi ballad. Additionally she covers a KISS hit in English. And the remaining three of the English-language songs are original to the *Border Girl* album.

Within her global marketing, Paulina Rubio marks herself as trying to do something different. With her album and within her interviews, Paulina Rubio lays claim to purposefully controlling her identity. One headline reads, “No Rules: Paulina Rubio Does Whatever She Wants—With Her Music” (Holsten, 2004, pg 42). Another headline reads, “Paulina Rubio is cool, collected, and armed with a new album that crosses every border” (Morales, 2004, pg. 80). Following upon consistent themes of self-determination (“does whatever she wants”) and transcendent identity formation (“new album crosses every border”), I analyze the content of the twenty articles for ways that she enacts a hybrid identity as understood through Anzaldua (1990). Although she is often touted in the U.S. as a Latina artist, in practice she claims to try to do much more with her projected image and music. Her image and music become ways for her to express a hybridity of inspired content and projected self-identity.

Paulina Rubio’s music is celebrated by her as being a blend of many influences. In her CD booklet, she comments on her musical range of influences and the resulting range of her musical product. Her words are sometimes misspelled and her lines are sometimes grammatically incorrect. Therefore, not everything is clear in meaning—adding to the composite-feel of her sentiment:

Here is my special “Miss Coctail” of dance, chill out, ambience, mex hip, hip hop, drum & bass jungle, *batacuda*, *ay hay mi mariachi*, why so pop?, it’s be-bop glam, in the house, progressive, afrobeat, eurobeat, breakbeat! To my fans!!!!, this is f---in’ great album is for you all! (Rubio, CD booklet, 2004)

The misspellings and misnomers leave me questioning her intent; and this question adds to her mystique and floating signification. Additionally, my attribution of intent here

leaves me insecure. Maybe this passage in her CD insert is just a result of poor proofreading, and she has never seen these lines written in this manner. Maybe it is an awkward translation from Spanish to English. In her popular press photos, she is consistently visually flawless, and in her interviews she admits to perfectionism. Thus, the lines stand out with intensity as intentionally skewed toward a meaning of multiplicity. Again, it is her celebration of the many that is important here. She draws from a wide variety of sources to create a hybrid sound.

In interviews she is more centered in her comments, but they still follow the same philosophy of polyglot. She refers to various ingredients in the recipes for her songs: rancheras, mariachis, dance, hip-hop, rock and pop. She labels her new style. “‘It’s called folklore futurista,’ Rubio explains, ‘and it’s the power of culture with instruments: Brazil, trumpets, Mexico, flamenco guitars, Spain, accordion, Colombia’” (Martinez, 2004, p. 27). In another interview she is quoted on her musical style, “futuristic folk” (Holsten, 2004, p. 42). The singer also expresses her source of inspiration as being based upon many different cultural experiences. “‘It’s important that you don’t forget your roots,’ she says, ‘but you can also draw from other cultures’” (Morales, 2004, p. 80).

Her source of self-identity, indeed, becomes just as variegated as her musical influences. Through her many firsthand experiences traveling abroad, Paulina Rubio has discovered the beauty in the various cultural offerings from around the globe. She has imbibed those offerings and become what she has experienced. The daughter of a famous actress, young Paulina Rubio is raised in Mexico City, Los Angeles, and Madrid and is therefore privy to many cultural orientations as she is growing up. From her youth to her adulthood, she is subjected to many different cultures. “I was born in Mexico and

raised in Spain,' Rubio says, explaining her mix of styles in perfect English. 'It's not something prefabricated'" (Cobo, 2004, p. 58). Although raised in Spain, she travels extensively. "[S]he spent her early years traveling around with her mother to sets in Mexico, the United States, and Europe" (Morales, 2004, p. 82). In her travels, she learns other languages. "Paulina spent a great deal of time in Europe, learning Italian and French and becoming attuned to the cultural mores of European societies" (Holsten, p. 43). She assumes an identity that is nested in Europe, Latin America, and the United States. "I've always been here and there, so you could say that I grew up comfortably in three different cultures" (Rubio as cited in Valazquez, 2004, p. 30). Her various locational upbringings and visits work their way into the identity of her music:

During a Madrid promotional visit, Rubio said of the album title [*Border Girl*]: 'I want to reflect what I am—a girl who has lived in Mexico, Spain, Italy, New York, and now Los Angeles and whose music carries a fusion of all those styles. My adolescence was a contrast of cultures. (Llewellyn, 2002, p. 44)

Hence she becomes the bordergirl and creates an album that utilizes the polyvocality of her bordergirl identity.

Angharad Valdivida (2004) warns against the tendency to over-romanticize hybridity, for me, this warning applies to the bordering of identities as well. She says:

To some hybridity might suggest a playful space, where one can try on different identities. Indeed, studies of contemporary ethnicity...suggest that hybrid traces are very useful for commodification purposes and the marketing of ethnicity. In fact, ethnic ambiguity is a most useful strategy as it has the potential of speaking to different segments of the audience with one economical image or set of images.

As such, hybridity and its accompanying strategy, representational ambiguity, certainly have their uses within late capitalism. (p. 5)

For Paulina, her border existence seems to obscure border existences for those seeking entry into the United States from Mexico. For people on the Mexican side, the border is more than just a playful metaphor of reality. For them the border represents exhaustingly lengthy lines, humiliatingly incessant harassment, and emotionally draining debates. Cynthia Wright (1998), for example, documents the complexity of the Mexican women working along the U.S./Mexico border as they try to avoid exploitation from many facets (gender, nationality, corporations, etc). Pablo Vila (2003) points out the less-than-ideal conditions of border existences, and how these are elided by the work of such scholars as Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Gloria Anzaldua—and I add Paulina Rubio. The lesson offered is a stern one: do not over-idealize such an identity. He says, “For scholars doing border studies from the Mexican side of the line, it is difficult to see the border as mere metaphor, as the epitomized possibility of crossings, hybrids, and the like” (p. 314). However, for Paulina and her marketers, the border is just that, a hybridity and a possibility for crossing.

At the inception of the *Border Girl* release, in a Mexico City gay disco in *La Zona Rosa*, my friend Bernadette and I are having drinks and sharing personal stories. Men (and a few women) move onto and off of the dance floor as Bernadette recounts a story of troubled love followed by true love. One particular song packs the floor, Paulina Rubio’s “*Si Tu Te Vas.*” The Spanish-languaged lyrics dart in and out of Bernadette’s English-languaged love stories providing a melodic punctuation for her romantic tales. “*Y nadie te dio tanto amor como yo... Si tu te vas, que voy hacer?*” Unlike most

American discos, Mexico City club goers know routines for particular songs and, particularly, for this Paulina Rubio song. The dance form is hard to describe. With the right arm, dancers make the letter S from their crotch to their chest, and then they do it again from behind their heads and into the air above them. On a big screen TV, Paulina Rubio's video seduces the club dancers in their movements. During Bernadette's conversations, I watch men mimic their diva, Paulina Rubio, moving as she moves and mouthing her words.

On the dance floor, it is hard to find a pattern of identity. There is a range of ages, masculinities, genders, and styles. As with any public spot, heterogeneity is common. However, in this gay bar, arguably most people are there to celebrate their aberrant sexuality or to at least thumb their noses at societal pressures of the heterocompulsive. As the group of (mostly) men dance, it is unclear whether the bar patrons are enjoying Paulina Rubio for her leanings toward hybridity. It is also unclear the motivations Rubio has to portray and enact her hybridity. Although this is Bernadette's first and last time to visit the bar, I have frequented the place often. Sometimes I find someone to teach me the dances on the dance floor. I have managed to master Paulina's moves to her latest video and perform them on the dance floor in unison with the others when she sings. In this space, my gayness, along with the other patrons is not a hindrance to be hidden but a quality to be highlighted.

Although Rubio's motivations cannot be definitely deciphered, her move to utilize hybridity speaks to the current marketability of a multiplicity of identity. Indeed, the gay bar may be the perfect place for watching this currency enacted. Both Frederick Corey (1996) and E. Patrick Johnson (2000) speak to the gay club as a space where

contradictory identities find a home together. For them, the gay club is a space where multiplicity of identity is played out against other patrons and even against the multiple identities within one's body. In speaking of an Irish gay pub at the beginning of de-legalization of homosexual identity in Ireland, Corey points to the varying and conflicting identities of the gay patrons who perform and subscribe opposing identities.

What is notable about The George, though, and what makes it a significant cultural space, is that the identities coexist under one roof. The identities are played out not as separate, self-generating refrains, but as refrains that exist in relation to the other refrains in the collective assemblage. In this way, being queer is performed in relation to its difference from being homosexual, lesbian, or gay; being gay or lesbian is played out as neither queer nor homosexual; and homosexuality is a historic refrain. (p. 157)

Similarly, of the Black gay bar, Johnson shows how the secular and the spiritual merge.

He writes:

Drawing upon a longstanding tradition of blurring the sacred and the secular in African American culture, African American gay men embed their own secular traditions—house/club music, voguing, dragging, snapping—within black sacred traditions to provide a more liberating way to express all of who they are. (p. 108)

Like those gay spaces, this particular gay bar is a site for the hybridity—but there are still real limitations to that hybridity. Bernadette and I decided to descend to the basement of the bar. In the basement, there is less room for socializing and only room for dancing. The music is much louder and personal space is minimized. To get to the

basement, you can enter a separate door on the street, or you can descend down a spiral staircase at the back of the bar. I warn Bernadette, “Only men are allowed in the basement, so... So you have to act like you’re a man.” She has had a couple of beers. Her glassy eyes squint at me, and she agrees with an insecure smile.

We walk to the back of the bar and into the men’s restroom. At the back of a hallway-like bathroom stands a bouncer. Past two stalls and a long urinal trough, he officiously postures himself in front of the descending metal stairs that lead down to the men-only basement. Bernadette and I saunter through the restroom, careful not to step in puddles of unknown liquids. Two drunk men sway at the urinal. One man has his hand on his hip holds his penis with the other. The second man steadies himself with both palms on the wall. A mirror stretches the length of the communal mirror, allowing them to watch Bernadette and me pass by.

Undaunted, Bernadette follows me past the bouncer and then starts down the spiral staircase. Three steps down, the bouncer says to Bernadette, “*No! No puedes pasarte.*” I hop up the steps to intercede. I plead, “*Por favor. Ella es una hermafrodita.*” I am not sure that this is the correct word. I am hoping this term, like gay, lesbian, and homosexual, is a cognate that is shared by both Spanish and English. I am hoping, too, that Bernadette’s body is a cognate that could be understood as either gender or both genders at the same time. Bernadette stands silent and motionless, not offering anything up that might tilt the bouncer towards disbelief. The bouncer glances up and down her body. He tells me that I can go down, but she cannot. Finally, without much pleading, I concede to the bouncer. As we walk back through the piss-scented men’s room slumped-shouldered and a bit embarrassed, I am more conscious of Bernadette’s gender and her

limitations for passing as a man or even a hybrid hermaphrodite. Valdivia (2004) asserts: “Against, or in relation to, overly celebratory approaches to the *jouissance* of the hybrid, we have to consider the tensions and pains of hybridity—the fact that it is not all fun and profits” (p. 5). It is also important to remember that part of the pain of hybridity is that it cannot always be conjured up on command.

Moving as She Moves and Mouthing Her Words: Hybrid Performativity

My South Texas upbringing brought a musical mixture of Spanish and English. This lingual distinction of Spanish and English is often blurred in South Texas public and private contexts. For example, for New Year’s Eve I went with my white grandparents to the Beeville, Texas, Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall to drink vodka and bring in 2004 . A chrome and glass jukebox against wood-paneled walls is the bar’s main attraction. The New Year’s crowd is transitory with elderly couples and groups coming and going, but never dropping the bar’s attendance below twenty people. As the different groups form and disperse, the juke box is approached by many patrons. The music, not always current, ranges in singers and songs: Willie Nelson, Pedro Infante, Freddy Fender, Patsy Cline, Juan Gabriel. The disco, pop, teeny-bopper music of Paulina Rubio would never be found here amongst these aging military men and women.

After the halfway mark is reached on the vodka bottle, my white grandfather, an old WWII navy sailor with a tattooed-right bicep leans over and asks me, “In Fresno, do they mix the music like this?”

I nod as I answer, “Yes... well, it depends on where you go, I guess.”

He sits up straight again and pours himself some more Skohl vodka while nodding his head. He begins a story about how the VFW is experiencing a divide

amongst its members like he's never seen before. "The Mexicans sit at that end of the bar. The Whites sit at the other end of the bar." He shakes his head and stirs his vodka-7 with his right ring finger. "I hate to see that."

I glance around, looking for exceptions to the segregation, but I see few. After Willie Nelson sings "...blue eyes cryin' in the rain..." a Mexican patron gets up to drop her quarters into the jukebox. Then Pedro Infante croons "...*por un amor, he llorado de gotitas de sangre del corazon...*"

The VFW is a context that demonstrates how the practice of ethnicity can be an act that separates groups. Stuart Hall (1997), however, offers us a hopeful view of ethnicity when he says that a new theoretical set of discourses is converging around identity. Where these discourses intersect, new cultural practices emerge (p. 42). Maybe this new set of cultural practices can bring out social change. As Hall believes, identity is dynamic and never a completed entity. It is consistently a negotiation of meaning through and across context, time and space.

The VFW Hall in Beeville, Texas argues with Hall: there are times and places when people prefer to maintain rather than transcend their ethnic differences. The juke box musical selection becomes a way for patrons to express their allegiance to one side of the ethnic divide. As Earl Shorris (1992) explains, most bilingual artists do not mix the languages. As culture is so closely tied to language, when the languages are not mixed, the cultures are not mixed either. Shorris says, "Not even in Vikki Carr or Joan Baez or Linda Ronstadt—all of whom are Latinas or have a Latina/o parent—do the musical cultures marry. They sing in Spanish or English, they are Mexican or American, never Mexican-American" (p. 58). Shorris uses broad strokes to paint culture, blending

language with cultural identity, but this melding is a common belief among many. As the varying bilingual abilities of U.S. Latina/os show, language does not necessarily equal to a cultural identity. Bilingual artists, be they U.S. born or international, usually do not mix the two languages, and in places like the VFW, these lingual delineations help the patrons keep their lines of ethnic differences well-marked.

On the U.S./Mexico border, my South Texas world was (and when I go home still is) a mixture of Spanish and English. This Spanglish linguistic environment is the one in which I am most comfortable. Moving in a Spanglish lingual mode puts me in a mood of clever poetics. Anzaldua (2000) comments on a similar experience in her own life:

The way I grew up with my family was code-switching. When I'm my most emotive self, my home self, stuff will come out in Spanish. When I'm in my head, stuff comes out in English... So the body and the feeling parts of me come out in Spanish and the intellectual, reasoning side comes out in English. (p. 266)

Similarly, for me, Spanish is a language of comfort and familiarity, while English is about correctness and formality.

Differently from Anzaldua though, it is the performative moment of code-switching that is most exhilarating for me, not the moment of arrival to a different language, but the transitioning between the languages that gives me thrill. For example, my Mexican-American uncle is Frank to most people. To me, he is *mi Tio Panchito*. At family gatherings we will joke with one another in broken Spanish and English, sometimes making fun of English-only family members without their knowledge. To start a sentence in Spanish and then finish it in English, or visa versa, has an elating effect on me. To demonstrate that I feel a deep affinity for a friend, I will speak in both Spanish

and English. Enacting the movement between the two, enacting the lingual switches is my way of demonstrating kinship for someone. In those lingual moments, I am enacting a hybrid performativity, not calling reference to one racial body but trying to reference both and neither at the same time. When I move between languages, I confuse the “who” of who I am and rest in a hybrid state. Or better said, my language becomes my performative moment that contains possibilities for self and its construction in the historical moment.

With my White grandparents, I speak the only language they know, English. The President of the VFW, a Latino man in his late-50s, walks by and my grandfather stops him to announce my arrival to Beeville. He says, “Joe, this is my grandson Shane. He’s finishing up his PhD in Tampa, Florida, and is working in Fresno, California. He’s a professor.” Joe kindly and blandly shakes my hand.

My grandfather continues: “The VFW helped Shane get his start. He won the VFW’s ‘Voice of Democracy’ scholarship contest and gave a speech about the United States Constitution right out front of here. He was just a freshman in High School and he gave that speech right under the flag pole out there.” Both of my grandparents are chest-swollen with pride. I sit up straight, attempting to mirror their pride.

Joe raises his eyebrows, makes a face like he learned something new, and pats me on the back. He says, “Good job, son. Nice to see you tonight. Happy New Year.” Then he moves onto another table.

Within earshot of Joe, my grandfather gruffs: “See, I don’t care if you’re Mexican or White. You need to treat people better. This guy is just rude.”

My grandmother, with her years of experience at calming down this drunken sailor, tries to smooth things over: “Oh, James. Now come on, it’s New Years. Don’t be that way.”

I can feel the unintended but still evident racial tension in my grandfather’s comment. Although my grandfather claims that Joe’s identity is irrelevant to my grandfather’s criticism, he still calls Joe’s racial identity to the forefront. The public context makes this announcement precarious. My own Latina/o identity feels held accountable for Joe’s behavior, even if my grandfather says that race is not a factor. In this context of racial tension, race is always a factor.

Judith Butler (1988) argues that the performative act of gender is a public action. She elaborated that gender is not a radical choice, or a project for and of the individual, or imposed or inscribed by language. At the same time, she argues that bodies do not pre-exist the cultural conventions that signify them. For Butler, gender is “a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo. In its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status” (p. 520).

The performativity of race can be outlined in much the same way: performing the racialized body is not a radical, individual choice, nor does language impose or inscribe ethnicity as a “blank slate.” Utilizing Merleau-Ponty, Butler argues for a phenomenology of the body, particularly damning to the biological, geographical, or physical essentialisms of race and ethnicity. For Merleau-Ponty, the body’s appearance is not predetermined by an interior essence, but the body’s expression is the “taking up and rendering specific a set of historical possibilities.” Butler weaves phenomenology of the body with Austin’s performative utterance to arrive at her conclusion: “the body is a

historical situation...and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation” (p. 521). And the theatre provides Butler’s metaphor for how gendered bodies perform/how racialized bodies perform: “Actors are always already on stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just at the play requires both text and interpretations within the confines of already existing directives” (p. 526).

Both Paulina Rubio and I perform Latina/o—as gendered bodies, with scripts that require interpretations, within cultural restricted corporeal spaces, and enacting Latina/o within “already existing directives.” Hybridity enters this picture in an examination of the mundane performances of Latina/o that can be part of a “critical genealogy” of hybridity. A critical genealogy requires an expanded notion of “acts” of Latina/o constitution—as socially shared, historic, and performative. While the performative holds out possibilities of transformation, hybridity may foreclose those same possibilities.

Hybrid performativity is a way to disrupt the reality of dichotomous racial relations and a way to envision how to overcome the limits of the discourse on race. The act of self-subscribing to hybridity might not be a revolution, but it is the seed, the beginning to a new envisioning of the self both in doing and in thinking. In the VFW Hall, along the borderlands in general, within U.S. discourse, Latina/o is defined against Whiteness. Noticeably, Paulina Rubio is an absent option on the VFW juke box. She sings a style of music not honored here. Her hybridity is not necessarily geared toward this older, rural audience.

As Paulina Rubio enters U.S. discourse, she is trying to market herself as someone who transcends those dichotomies. Through marketing, she creates a fiction of

herself to counter an existing fiction of race. As Inda (2001) explains:

If 'race' is a social fiction, then the meaning of 'race,' and hence the constitution of racial bodies, is fundamentally unstable and open to all sorts of resignifications. Simply put, no project of racial domination can be predestined to hold racialized bodies in positions of subordination. (p. 75)

In marketing herself and in producing a multilingual album that draws from many sources, Paulina Rubio tries to transcend simple racial categories. However, when I look for her in my reality, I still find her locked into Latina/o performativity, into the “existing directives” that are historically, socially, and culturally operant. For example, I still, to this day, have not found one White person who knows who she is—only Latina/os.

Globalized Media as an Opportunity for Hybridity

Paulina Rubio's marketing efforts have placed her around the globe, and people are using her music in the everyday cultural production of their own lives. In my own life, Paulina Rubio follows me. In January 2004, in the San Antonio International Airport, I am leaving Texas after spending New Years with my grandparents. I am waiting in a terminal to board a plane for Fresno, California. Walking the horseshoe of gates in the terminal, I wander around, reading the different signs and symbols available.

Since this is San Antonio, Texas, the color palette of any place that tries to market itself as authentically Tex-Mex is an array of pastels: pinks, blues, greens, and yellows. On the walls are mural-like paintings of chubby Mexican-looking people dancing. In the center of the horseshoe is a “last chance” Tex-Mex airport restaurant, offering itself as the final opportunity to partake of South Texas. Remember the Alamo? Where Whites

may be outnumbered in this city, but they will not be defeated? The nested airport restaurant, at a real borderland of material privilege, promises an authenticity.

While I wait for my boarding call, I scan the crowd waiting with me. I am cruising. It is 6:30 am, and although I am not serious about finding a gay lover in a dead end airport terminal, I am still intrigued to see if anyone is about. A range of young military types, dressed in their Air Force Blues, lounge about the terminal. There are two men, one white and one black, in dressy casual clothing talking on cell phones. A fifty-ish heterosexual couple glowers at one another.

I glance over to the Mexican restaurant. There are certain places where you can always find gay men working—banks as tellers, retail department stores as sales clerks, and restaurants as waiters. The waiter at this particular restaurant has spiked up hair with dyed bangs. He is about 5' 5". He is Latino. The music that he is working to, piped through the tiny, tinny speakers, is Paulina Rubio. I can hear her singing—maybe with a bit too much vigor for this early in the morning—“*La luna te dira que yo te quiero ver, El sol te seguira alla a donde tu estes.*” I smile because I recognize the CD, Paulina Rubio’s “Border Girl.” I smile because I have found another gay man... and another Latino. At this moment, I am relying on racial codes that society uses to designate the “Latina/o.” As Alan Hyde (1997) posits: “Race is a claim that necessarily involves the construction of a specularized body by the privileged eye” (p. 223). As I watch him sweep, I am saddened a bit. As a 30-something light skinned professor, I am seldomly assumed to be “Mexican.” Although there are many that veer in other directions, he represents a group with a racial coding that also helps to structure his life path.

This moment of finding the gay Latino within the artificial staging of Mexicanness is a moment in which the ethnic individual is used to authenticate an artificial Mexican staging. The context is enhanced not only by the gay Latino but also Paulina Rubio. For the staging, it is her Spanish voice, and if anyone recognizes her, her Mexican heritage that serves to decorate the scene, creating a backdrop for airport passengers to enjoy Mexican culture one last time. Rona Halualani (2000) says:

[W]e can gain additional insight into ethnicity by re-engaging ethnic and cultural identity as the complicated interrelationship between structural forms of identity (e.g., governmental categories, official histories, legal constructions) and cultural forms of identity (e.g., the enacted expressions and speaking practices within a group, the everyday living, verbal performances, and social interactions of a group). (p. 587)

At this space in the restaurant, I see the merging of a structural form of capitalist commodification of ethnicity with the cultural identity form of a Latino man working to get paid. The two are intertwined and interdependent upon one another. And like the Latino waiter, Paulina Rubio's music is intertwined with the commodification of ethnicity. She becomes both text and context at this moment. She is part of the structure as well as the cultural form. The waiter catches me eyeing him. I look him up and down. He smiles. The flight attendant calls me to board the plane, and as I leave, Paulina's song plays as the waiter sweeps and mouths her words.

In the current age, globalized media systems offer opportunities for audiences of all types to interact with symbols and meanings from other cultures while remaining within their own culture. Paulina Rubio stands to profit from this globalized media

system as she seeks to enact herself as an interstitial being, a bordergirl. As James Carey (1988) explains the media become part of the understanding of and the creation of reality.

For Carey:

Reality is not a given, not humanly existent, independent of language and toward which language stands as a pale refraction. Rather, reality is brought into existence, is produced, by communication—by, in short, the construction, apprehension and utilization of symbolic forms. (p. 25)

Media systems provide particularly potent symbolic forms for us to construct our realities. It follows then that Paulina Rubio's entrée into this system is an act to redefine reality via a globalized media system. Raka Shome and Radha Hegde (2002) attend to the ways that globalization shape the dissemination and the understanding of media messages and, for this chapter, shed light on how Rubio's sounds and images have material effects. Globalization and hybridization inform each other as processes that are generative. Nestor Garcia Canclini (1995) helps to explain the process of hybridity: "I understand for hybridization that sociocultural processes in which discrete structures and practices, that existed in separate form, combine themselves to generate new structure, objects, and practices" (Canclini 1995, p. 14). According to Canclini, the two spaces where hybridity are most intense are at the metropolis and at the borders. Rather than just thinking of metropolitan areas and borders areas as physical existences, he reminds us that globalized mass media have created metropolitan and border areas in which we exist. Thus, as identities are formed today, they are met with contradictory callings found within globalized media. Canclini says, "The study of [cultural processes]... rather than conducing to the affirmation of self-sufficient identities, is useful in order to know about

the ways of situating ourselves in the middle of heterogeneity and to understand how hybridizations are produced” (p. 18). Again, it is the processes not the staid results that are of interest in understanding hybrid identities.

For us to understand the mediated hybrid presence of Paulina Rubio, we should see it in its material terms. Shome and Hegde (2002) argue, “Globalization as a phenomenon produces a state of culture in transnational motion—flows of people, trade, communication, ideas, technologies, finance, social movements, cross border movements, and more” (p. 174). Materially then, Rubio, her ideas and her products move through and around national structures on this planet.

Globalization happens within and through permeable and unstable national boundaries—relying on local needs and interests. Shome and Hegde explain:

In fact, our assumption...is that the shifting fault lines of economic and cultural power in our current times, and the scale and speed at which these lines are re/shifting, are producing new forms of articulations and disarticulations, new configurations of power, and new planes of dis/empowerment that cannot be equated with any other period. (p. 174)

Indeed, the local interpretations of Paulina Rubio opportunities for newly constructed meanings and newly provided subversions to established systems of domination. One local interpretation could easily feature the visual—how Paulina Rubio is portrayed to be seen: with the attendant cleavage, curves, costuming, and direct gaze of high fashion *and* the come-hither look of Playboy centerfold—with more clothes. This easy Mulvey-read of “to be looked-at-ness” is laminated with money: nothing about Paulina Rubio is “cheap”—the carefully coifed hair, the beautiful clothes, the diva make-up. Class—in the

“old sense” of the word—is written all over her as produced by intense labor and many professional hands.

The symbolic systems that are provided through globalization and that produce Paulina Rubio are not necessarily from groups whose identity politics are liberated: the music industry has a clear investment in affirming feminine beauty and offering Paulina Rubio as a new pentacle of perfection. As a reiteration of feminine performativity, Paula Rubio images reaffirm gender norms. As a reiteration of Latina identity, however, the “read” is not so simple. For example, Valdivia (2004) warns that the Latina image stands to both deconstruct as well as reconstruct racist imagery.

Latina actress can play a broad range of characters, including black, white, and everything in between, through providing casting directors with an easy way to foreground the few famous Latinas out there who by virtue of ambiguity slip into these roles. This presents both an employment opportunity as well as the possibility for seeing more people of color on the screen and in print. However, the second effect is that hybrid Latinas and ethnic ambiguity also provide mainstream culture with a chance to displace and replace blackness. Blackness, once more, gets pushed to the [left] margin. (Valdivia, 2004, p. 15). As Carey reminds us, the symbols themselves are not necessarily what creates our reality, but our interpretation of those symbols. Valdivia stands firm to point out that images, in this case Paulina Rubio’s image, still is invested within a system that privileges her light skin color over the skin color of someone darker. Thus, within these dominant media systems, there are dominant translations of the symbols within that stand to serve some communities over others.

Stuart Hall provides a way to understand how local interpretations of globalized symbol systems might provide a way out of the current discourse of ethnicity and its dominating symbols. Hall (1997) gets us to understand if we buy into the notion of signification, then we can also buy into the notion of resignifying a signifier. Indeed, Hall feels that this resignification process is probably the best way to think through and out of oppressive meanings and their power constructs. He says, “For if signification depends upon the endless repositioning of its differential terms, meaning in any specific instance depends on the contingent and arbitrary stop, the necessary break” (p. 51). And at that break, if we can re-signify or signify differently, then previously oppressive patterns might be subverted or even transformed.

Homi Bhabha (1994a) similarly believes in the liberating possibilities of resignification. Upsetting the simple binaries of good/bad, right/wrong, and us/them (and their corresponding identity terms) is a way to get around repressive structures. Bhabha sees the process of hybridity as offering that chance of resignification. For Bhabha (1994a), we are in a post-colonial time when the effects of colonialism are still be felt and recreated. All around us is the colonial discourse that has assigned meaning to our lives and kept up within certain understandings of the world. He argues:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy, and demonic repetition. (p. 66)

Thus out of colonialism has come a range of standards in relation to ethnic and racial identity that has set up patterns of such things as justice, truth and, merit. It is the fixity of colonial discourse, the belief in the fixity of identity that permits these constructs of identity to persist.

Bhabha (1994b) celebrates hybridity as the area where change can happen when he says:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the necessity of thinking beyond initial categories and initiatory subjects and focusing on the interstitial moments or processes that are produced in the articulations of ‘differences.’ These spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood and communal representations that generate new signs of cultural difference and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation. It is at the level of the interstices that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, and cultural value are negotiated. (p. 269)

Therefore, the in-between of the interstitial are key moments in identity formation and articulation for not only the development of new identity, but also the explication of how that identity came about.

Riding a globalized media wave, Paulina Rubio is a hybridized identity being that is resisting fixity in a post-colonial culture. Her album wants to reach more than the audiences that have previously known her and seeks to span into the realms of non-Spanish speaking, non-Latina/o identified audiences. To do so, her “handlers” are clearly articulating standards of beauty that affirm and “naturalize” femininity—as young, as curvaceous, as sexy. To market Paulina Rubio, as “border girl,” hybridized and

globalized, radical and reaffirming, resistant and revolutionary, requires that gender be articulated in very traditional ways. In short, global hybridization trumps gender performativity. She may be “border,” rearticulated as wealthy, multilingual, and talented, but she’s still very much a *girl*.

Indeed, the waiter in the airport restaurant might be situated in much the same way: a commodity mobilized to articulate an authenticity; a young man working for a paycheck. Paulina Rubio’s “over the top beauty,” her song lyrics, her diva status are appropriated by him and by me to say something different about sexuality, desire, the “to be looked-at-ness” of gay cruising. Or are we back in the same old articulations? Remember the Alamo? I seek to be a hybridized individual who can be more than White and more than Latina/o. I am seeking out spaces and media that allow and encourage such a hybridized identity. During this time of globalized media and possibilities of hybridity, both Paulina and I must have audiences and communities ready to recognize and accept.

A Hybrid Identity Foreclosed

Paulina Rubio postures herself as someone of hybrid identity, an identity that recognizes many ethnic and national sides, claims all of those sides, and is free to move from one side to another. Her hybridity resists, in U.S. dominant discourse on race and ethnicity, the labeling of Latina/o. She does not shun a Latina identity; however, she adopts a more cosmopolitan and globalized persona. Yet her attempts to position herself as more than Latina fail. The reasons for this failure lie in the popular utilization of Latina/o media by U.S. Latina/os and the permeability of the boundaries of the nation-state.

Her identity metamorphoses are not easily mastered or even accomplished. Latina/os do not have a common biological descent; nor do they all claim a common national descent. This lack of common claim throws a generalized Latina/o identity into a state of ineffable identity status. However, there are still areas where Latina/o identity gets shaped—like the mass media. According to George Fox (1996), it is the media that help tie Latina/os together despite their multiple geographical pasts and presents. He explains:

The relationship between group identity and group territory is tied to the traditional relationship between place and information access.... By severing the traditional link between physical location and social situation...electronic media may begin to blur previously distinct group identities by allowing people to ‘escape’ informationally from place-defined groups.... By the same token, the media also permit people to ‘enter’ group informationally, facilitating the formation of new group identities. (p. 7)

Latina/os no longer need the geographical locale to find identity because mass media provide the locale for them. Paulina Rubio has grown up in the spotlight of Latina/o media. A U.S. comparison to her might be Janet Jackson or Drew Barrymore. As she comes to the U.S., she is not a new star because she has been a Latina media star for years. Thus, as she tries to create herself anew, some of her audience still remembers who she was before “Border Girl.”

Additionally, even though she is entering the United States, the border she crosses shifts and moves. Geographic locales are not necessarily defined by the national structures that claim them. That is, because a person lives in the United States does not

necessarily mean that the person's citizenship or national identity rests with the country's larger identity. Angharad Valdivia (1999) helps to explain how the nation-state is a concept that no longer necessarily captures the identities of all individuals. Valdivia (1999) admits to the problems that the nation-state concept makes for Latina/o identity individuals, but rather than bemoan the problems, she celebrates them. She lays out the complicated pockets of people who cloud the issues of us-versus-them that the nation-state identity claims need for self-sustaining authenticity claims. She says:

I have been careful not to use the term U.S. Latina/os because it is such a problematic demarcation. Latina/os who live in the United States could have been here for centuries... Other Latina/os may come from Puerto Rico which is, but also is not, part of the United States.... Then you have the whole Central American and South American migratory patterns.... How can you maintain an us-versus-them terminology? How do the media, popular culture, music, and dance fit into this schema? (p. 483)

Therefore, Paulina Rubio, while in the United States proper, is associated with a group, "brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of" ethnicity (Butler, 1993, p. 7), that is not only well-acquainted with her, but their movement is just as varied as hers—and now they are in the U.S. as Latina/os.

Paulina Rubio is trying to be a star during a time when the Latina/o identity is still forming and reforming. Within U.S. discourse, Latina/o is one ethnic label separate from other ethnic labels. The irony to this is that the U.S. Latina/o identity is still being formed and explained. Richard Rodriguez takes a bleak tone when expressing the

contradictions and confusions within the Latina/o community as we try to formulate exactly who we are. Richard Rodriguez (2002) writes,

The other day I read a survey that reported a majority of Americans believe most Hispanics are in the United States illegally. Maybe. Maybe there is something inherently illegal about all of us who are Hispanics in the United States, gathered under an assumed name, posing as one family. Nixon's categorical confusion brings confusion to all categories. (pp. 122-123)

Rodriguez captures the sentiment of the American public on the image of the Latina/os, and he also captures the confusion of Latina/os who are struggling to understand our own autonomy.

Unlike Rodriguez, Fernando Delgado finds possibility in the ambiguity of the Latina/o identity. Delgado (1998) marks this lack of definition as valuable rather than crisis-causing. He says: "I reject the need to categorize, control or construct what Latina/o identity terms might be. Instead, I demonstrate that Latina/os can be many different things when, as subjects, they put identity terms into their everyday communication practices" (p. 424). Delgado, attempting to textualize ethnic identity, acknowledges and honors the multioptional discourse labels of "Latina/o" identity. At the same time, he asserts that Latina/os do not become lost identities in a vernacular jungle, but they still find ways to identify with one another and with cultural icons at large. With a globalized Latina/o identity, and decaying nation-state boundaries, Paulina Rubio becomes one of those Latina/o icons that attracts and maintains the Latina/o audience.

In referring to the United States, Roman de la Campa (2001) makes a strong opening claims when he says:

America's hold on the universal imaginary has withstood the test of time. As a distant moment of discovery, a hemispheric maker, or the naming of a powerful modern nation. America's claim to unique transcendental dimensions continue to seem natural—if not necessary to peoples, nations, and academic traditions. (p. 1)

De la Campa argues that America (which for him is synonymous to the United States) is influential and that influence is powerful. Looking at America now, Paulina Rubio and I are asking for the U.S. to see itself spilling out of the boundaries of its current self-understandings. De la Campa says, "It becomes crucial to remember that the invention of America has always been an arbitrary exercise in location, a site not far from the lines of utopia and nostalgia" (p. 1). We both ask the United States to revamp the utopia and nostalgia to include more than the melting pot and the Spirit of '76 but also *la raza cosmica* and *Cinco de Mayo*... and possibilities yet unforeseen.

Race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference—these are all socially performed and materially constructed meanings that exist in human discourse. Moreover, and most importantly for this chapter, they are performed. They are arbitrary and contestable and their significance is dependent upon the context. At the same time, Butler argues, we are "compelled" to live in a world where these theoretical claims are adamantly contradicted in the "real world," where commonsense holds that gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual preference are stable, polar, discrete, and intractable. The success of theorizing globalized media systems and calls for hybridity remains to be seen—especially in my life.

In the winter 2003, I leave a closing gay bar with my friend Carlos. The crowd is mostly Latina/o with a smattering of White, Black or Asian clientele. All night I have been speaking English, Spanish, and Spanglish. All night I have been listening and dancing to Spanish music, English music, and music mixing both Spanish and English. Riding shot-gun in Carlos' gold '97 Thunderbird, I play DJ on the car stereo. Flipping through the stations, I find "Sexi Dance" by Paulina Rubio. The English version goes, "Don't stop me now. Surrender to the beat. Just you and me. Just like it used to be. Set your heart free, when we're together." The Spanish version goes, "No pares no...."

As Carlos pulls away from the bar to head back to his apartment, we begin singing her song. Both of us are mocking her "S" dance. As the song is concluding, I turn down the music to ask Carlos a question. Suddenly we realize that we are singing different versions of the song. He is singing the Spanish version; I am singing the English version. Both of us laughing, I ask, "Is she singing in Spanish or English?" In my drunken stupor, I try to turn the song up again but accidentally change the station. I cannot locate and re-capture the station with her song on it. I insist, "Carlos she was singing in English." He responds, "No *mijo*, YOU were singing in English, she and I were singing in Spanish. Your *bolillo* side got the best of you." (*Bolillo* is Mexican slang for "White person.")

Just then a beer bottle explodes against the side panel of the Thunderbird, flung from a car in a parallel lane. Carlos' license plate frame reads "Who's your Papi now?" and above that frame is a gay rainbow flag sticker. He decided to decorate his car this way four years ago when he could no longer hide his gay identity. I have always

chastised him for using his car as a way to advertise his gayness. At this moment, I wonder if that's why we got pegged.

Someone from the other car screams "*jotos*" (Mexican slang for "faggot") and speeds away. I quickly survey our surroundings. Most of the gay bars in Fresno are located on the "Mexican" side of town. We've just left the gay bar, an area that lacks street lights. Visibly angry, Carlos floors the gas pedal and races to follow the car.

"Carlos," I plead, "What are you going to do if you catch them? Come on. Let them go."

He refuses with a shake of his head and continues to run lights and round curves.

I think to myself, "If we stop, and he gets out, I'm taking the chance of being a White gay guy on the Mexican side of town. This could be bad." Then I begin to rehearse my plan, "Well, I'll just talk Spanish and butch myself up and play up my Mexican side. I won't let my gay *bolillo* side get the best of me."

Finally, we stop at a red light. They keep going. Carlos is breathing hard. We watch as their tail lights grow smaller in the distance. He turns to me and says, "If *you* hadn't been with me, *I* would have fought them."

"Well," I maintained, "If the cops would have come, *I* would have done all the talking." We both laugh at the differences we are demarcating. Our laughter also marks our successful escape from potential violence and rage: the ever present material danger of our sexualities in White and Latina/o, heteronormative U.S. discourse.

Paulina Rubio's music enters the United States at a volatile time for Latina/o identity. Young Latina/os find her as a mediated pop star that they can perform in various venues. We can sing like her in our cars, we can dance like her in our clubs, we

can dress like her in daily life. The moment that her performance becomes part of the performative of Latina/os is the moment when she is no longer the cosmopolitan, self-determining, polyglot.

Here in the United States, Paulina Rubio becomes part of the performativity that hides its own genesis, reinstates racial and ethnic essentialisms, and punishes individuals for performing race, gender, or sexuality incorrectly. The material realities of a celebration of Latina/o identity are dangerously at odds with White culture. As she crosses the border to be the next Latina superstar, she has the freedom to cross back and forth playing a game of semantics that benefits her most. However, the Latina/o population... wherever you draw the line... gets stuck in long lines waiting to cross to the United States or on the side of town that is less desirable. Maybe one day the Latina/o image will become as Paulina Rubio is portrayed—polyvocal, self-determining—but until then both sides of the border are not quite ideal.

Stuart Hall (1997) encourages us to think about the global and the local when considering our ethnic identity and the ethnic identity of others. In the opening of “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” he responds to another of his articles. He writes:

My argument was that we need to think of the processes which are now revealing themselves in terms of the local and the global in those two spaces, but we also need to think of these as more contradictory formulations than we usually do.

Unless we do, I [am] concerned that we are likely to be disabled in trying to think through those ideas politically. (p. 41)

Hall argues that global and local identities may both be lived identities, but they are constructed in very different ways and have very different circumstances around their enactment. To speak of a global identity (e.g., a third-world born woman) is very different than to speak of your local identity (e.g., a middle-class Mexican grocery clerk). Their differences in construction and enactment must be noticed and honored if we are to understand and/or improve the conditions of either identity.

For Paulina Rubio and myself, *Paulina Rubio y Yo*, a hybrid identity really rests at a global and theoretical level. The identity is cast from a mixture of identities and a vision for how those identities can be played against each other, as a denial of each other, or even in combination with one another. However, the local, not the global, is where the hybrid identity loses its efficacy and is not as easily enacted. My car, my speech, my friends, my grandparents—these are contexts and enactments of my identities that are privileged by dominant ideology and are performed on a thin line between danger and pleasure. For Paulina Rubio and myself, the enactment of multiple identities is not always a choice.

Chapter Four
Memoir as Equipment for Living:
Hybrid Performative Identities

Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself. (I am large. I contain multitudes.)

--Walt Whitman, Song of Myself

In 1999, my professor slips a book catalog into my department mailbox. Circled in green ink is *How Did You Get to be Mexican?: A White/Brown Man's Search for Identity*. She has scribbled in the margin, "I think you'll like this!!!" I read the description of Kevin Johnson's book and call the 800 number to order it. The day it arrives, I peruse the book's back cover to get a feel for the text. I learn the book is "A readable account of life spent in the borderlands between racial identities." The other pull quotes describe the memoir as a "portrayal of the struggle for identity;" and about "a sensitive young man who did not fit neatly;"--"Johnson's struggles reverberate beyond him." These descriptions do not characterize the author as being in control of or at peace with his identity. Indeed, they do not offer the reader a vision that the memoir will resolve any of Johnson's struggles or misfittings. I read it from cover to cover, hoping to clarify the confusion in my own White/Brown journey. Like the author, I, too, have a Latina/o parent and a White parent. Like the author, I have a White first and last name. Like the author, if I had a memoir, the title would most likely be a question rather than a statement.

Two years later, a colleague places a *New York Times Book Review* in my department mailbox. With a blue highlighter, he has underlined the title and author—*American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood* by Marie Arana. While skimming the book review of a memoir about a woman with a hybrid identity born of a Latino father and a White mother, I walk directly to a department office computer and log onto amazon.com. A week later, I again study another cover, searching for parallels to my own experiences, trying to find solutions to my own identity qualms.

Arana's book cover descriptions convey comfort with her identity, rather than it being an identity that subsumes all aspects of her life. Arana's cover reads:

But only when she immigrated with her family to the United States did she come to understand that she was a hybrid American whose cultural identity was split in half. Coming to terms with this split is at the heart of this graceful, beautifully realized portrait of a child who was a north-south collision, a New World fusion.

An American *chica*.

While there is definitely turmoil in the description of Arana, this turmoil is cooled to a fusion of wholeness. She has come to terms with her identity. The memoir is not about the divide; it is about the completeness of who she is. Again, I read the book cover to cover.

Sometime the following year, I am in a Barnes and Noble bookstore. My right index finger strums a shelf of books in the Social Science section. At the end of the Hispanic collection and at the start of the Native American section, my finger stops at a svelte orange and yellow spine, Luis Alberto Urrea's memoir *Nobody's Son: Notes from an American Life*. I sit cross-legged on the floor. Urrea's cover reads: "In prose that

seethes with energy and crackles with dark humor, he tells a story of what it means to belong to a nation that is sometimes painfully multicultural.” The thrust of this mini-review is in how Urrea belongs to society. He is not tossed side-to-side, alienated, or estranged; rather he is an active and in-control member of this society. Urrea deals with the difficulties of his membership, but it is his maintenance of not rejection of that membership that is key. I read halfway through the book before an intercom voice announces that all sales should be made now because the store closes in fifteen minutes.

My careful reading of both the book covers and their contents is related to Kenneth Burke’s (1973) notion that literature is “equipment for living.” Using the proverb as his example, Burke argues that all literature is borne out of a recurrence of salient situations. That is, in our reality we are noticeably confronted with recurrences that need naming in order for us to make sense of these situations and understand the meanings they bear upon our lives. Burke (1973) further explains:

I submit that such naming is done, not for the sheer glory of the thing, but because of its bearing upon human welfare... The names for typical, recurrent situations are not developed out of “disinterested curiosity,” but because the names imply a command (what to expect, what to look out for). (p. 83)

For Burke, a literary work of art becomes a way to word reality. In this wording, then, we textualize what it is that affects us but also reshape that effect through our naming.

For Burke then that literary work is:

the strategic naming of a situation. It singles out a pattern of experience that is sufficiently representative of our social structure, that recurs sufficiently often

mutandis mutates, for people to ‘need a word for it’ and to adopt an attitude towards it. Each work of art is the addition of a word to an informal dictionary.

(p. 83)

For my interview participants and myself, our patterns of experience as a Latina/o-White hybrid individual have been difficult to word.

In the interviews, I heard participants seeking to use their agency to resist the bifurcating discourse of Whiteness versus Latina/ness, but they often found themselves caught in an either/or understanding of their own identity. In my own story, I found that enacting hybridity, while theoretically desirable, was materially difficult at best. In the close reading of these memoirs, I hope to find how the realm of the artistic offers possibilities outside of materially divisive racial discourse, to explore how these authors have worded their patterns of experiencing Latina/o-White hybrid identity, and to discover what attitudes this wording helps them and their readers to adopt. Following my study of interviewees and my own study of myself, I am looking towards these literary works as equipment for living within my own hybridized identity.

With Burke’s advice, I have come to each of these memoirs hoping my journey from their first to their final lines will help me write my own book—a dissertation—on questions of ethnicity, hybridity, and performativity. When read individually, the final lines of each memoir have *not* brought me to the epiphanies for which I had hoped. “Only time will tell whether this nation will live up to its reputation as the bellwether of freedom, equality, and justice for all” (Johnson, p. 182). “I don’t know where I am going” (Urrea, p. 184). “A bridge” (Arana, p. 309). When read in combination, however, they combine to offer a hopeful parallax view of cultural identity, skewing

currently understood and practiced views on what it means to be Latina/o, to be White, to be both, to be neither. These memoirs, when read together, offer a way to understand how hybrid identities are performatively enacted.

Textual Production of Hybrid Performativity

These memoirs appear at a time in U.S. culture when issues of Whiteness and Latina/o-ness are particularly thorny and often in conflict with one another. This divisiveness can be linked to a history of conflict. Marco Portales (2000) says the negative responses to Latina/os can be found in literature that dates as far back as:

Francis Parkman's 1847 text, *The Oregon Trail*. Before that, attitudinal differences and downright dislike between Anglos and Hispanics gave rise to the American war with Mexico in 1846, to the Alamo (1836), and perhaps can even be traced back to the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada. (p. 49)

Hundreds of years later, book reviews of these three memoirs are centered on the racial tensions that mark the need for these texts. For example, early in each text, the Kirkus reviewer of Johnson's memoir marks the conflicting identity background in Johnson's work: "The son of a Mexican-American mother and an Anglo father, Johnson ponders life as a 'mixed-race' man in the racially charged atmosphere of America." Yxta Maya Murray (2001), while not reducing Arana's work to only racial conflict, still focuses on the racial conflict as the necessary crux of her work: "Her heritage gives her a Janus-like perspective, but sometimes the effort of juggling her two souls can leave her exhausted" (p. 1). Bing, Simson, and Zaleski (1998) also comment on the cultural bifurcation theme of Urrea's work: "The son of an Anglo-American mother and a Mexican father, Urrea muses on the frustrations and logical fallacies of anti-Mexican racism as he traces

the often-forgotten multicultural origins of Anglo-American culture and language” (p. 381). Each reviewer begins with the primary thematic conflict of the memoirs—racial contradiction within the same body. The reviews end with summative observations of the writers’ styles. For Johnson: “A thoughtful story, told somewhat indifferently.” For Arana: “A rich and compelling personal narrative” (p. 1). For Urrea: “[A]t its best, Urrea’s staccato phrases build up to a vivid, often brutal image” (p. 381).

Gloria Anzaldua (1999) explains how these writings can be considered performances in their own right. Of her own work, she says:

My “stories” are acts encapsulated in time, “enacted” every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and “dead” objects (as the aesthetics of Western culture think of art works). Instead, the work has an identity, it is a “who” or a “what” and contains the presences of persons, that is, incarnations of gods and ancestors or natural and cosmic powers. The work manifests the same needs as a person, it needs to be “fed,” *la tengo que banar y vestir*. (p. 89)

Ellen Gil-Gomez (2000) further interprets Anzaldua’s perspective of text to say:

[Anzaldua] feels that the writing itself is a mode of performing identity—both directly and indirectly. The work lives without her by its side to give it context and so it is interpreted again and again... (p. 142)

Thus the product, as well as the process, of writing is a performance. The process of creating the self through text allows a persona to exist that is interpreted over and over by other readers. These interpretations are important as possible empowerments of the reading audiences. Anzaldua, like many, resists finding the truth of identities, but rather,

as Gil-Gomez emphasizes, Anzaldua allows others to interpret and find meaning in her multiple selves, even risking interpretations Anzaldua might not approve or appreciate. Gil-Gomez says: “She, though, chooses to allow this negative judgment in order to allow space for the ambiguity of the racial/ethnic identity that she embodies” (p. 143). Through a close reading of these texts, then, I am looking for how these works are a performance of the authors’ Latina/o-White hybrid identity—and in turn become my performances.

My own close readings of these texts are ways to witness and to produce these authors’ performances. As Anzaldua emphasizes, if given the opportunity, our words take on lives of their own. She explains that artistic productions have a power in their performance. She notes that: “Invoked art is communal and speaks of everyday life. It is dedicated to the validation of humans; that is, makes people hopeful, happy, secure, and it can have negative effects as well, which propel us towards a search for validation” (p. 89). Anzaldua further critiques Western cultures because they “behave differently toward works of art than do tribal cultures” (p. 90). In Western culture we hoard art or witness it with a careful antiseptic gaze.

Donna Haraway (1991) agrees that literary writing helps people find and express meaning in their lives—especially for people of color. She explains that:

Writing has a special significance for all colonized groups... Contests for the meanings of writing are a major form of contemporary political struggle.

Releasing the play of writing is deadly serious. The poetry and stories of U.S. women of color are repeatedly about writing, about access to the power to signify. (pp. 174-175)

Mary Strine (1998) also helps to bring notice to the political backdrop of aesthetic productions when she writes:

More recently, important scholarly efforts have been made to rethink the study of literature and the aesthetic in a measured way, recognizing that literature, in being imaginatively responsive to its social and historical location, is at once an always politically inflected cultural form and a uniquely engaging and empowering social practice. (Strine, p. 315)

While these memoirs benefit from a power to represent and to signify, my critical reading of these memoirs is to understand how the writers perform their hybridity. When Anzaldúa says that written work “needs to be ‘fed,’ *la tengo que banar y vestir*” (p. 89), I am reminded that I have a relational power with these works. I attend to them but I also collude with them to help me understand my performance of my own life. Elizabeth Bell (1998) positions this power—to interpret, to give meaning, to make meaning—within the reader, and therefore within myself. Bell argues that sponsoring reader’s choices:

[S]hifts the burden of locating ‘meaning’ from the postmodern text to the performer and teaches that performance is always a pleasurable and dangerous accountability—not to ‘certainties’ in the text, or to authorial intention, or to canonical tradition, but—to the ‘spin’ put on it. (p. 59)

Therefore, my reading is not toward universals. Instead, my reading of these memoirs risks searches for spins on meanings.

In an Anzaldúan way, I feed the works, bathe them, and dress them. I am nurturing them so that they may say something more about hybrid ethnic identity than has already been said by my interviewees and myself. Strine (1998) affirms that literature is

a production of the culture in which it exists and an important site for understanding cultural complexity. Additionally, she acknowledges that: “Postcolonial minorities and marginalized groups worldwide have been especially sensitive to the ways that literary representation functions performatively as a site of global struggle for cultural recognition, self-determination, and community rebuilding” (p. 316). These three writers have used the memoir as strategies to explicate their identities, arguably for recognition, self-determination, and community rebuilding.

An analysis of these three memoirs provides a glimpse into the understanding of how, through embracing hybrid identity, they and therefore all individuals might find a way out of the limitations in discourses of cultural “authenticity.” However, as Bell and Strine emphasize, it is a careful and self-aware approach to the literature that allows for more possibilities in interpretation than limitations. Remembering Anzaldua’s ideas on the performance of literature provides ways we can self-consciously approach literature. She acknowledges that: 1) text as stories moves through the body as a performance “everytime they are spoken or read silently;” 2) there exists a referential quality to context and to discourse since the text “contains the presences of persons...incarnation of gods and ancestors or natural and cosmic powers;” and 3) the textual interpretation is ultimately with the reader as she/he feeds, bathes and dresses the stories. Anzaldua’s approach to text, then, echoes performativity’s emphasis on materiality, history, and agency. In Elin Diamond’s (1996) words, performance is the “thing doing” and also the “thing done.” Anzaldua insists on this recognition when she writes: “I write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become” (p. 93). And in reading hers and others’ words (the done), we do those myths.

All three authors claim more than one cultural identity. Johnson is born in the United States to a Mexican-American mother and to a White father. Arana is born in Peru to a Peruvian father and a White-American mother. Urrea is born in Mexico to a Mexican father and a White-American mother. All three of them experience phases of rejecting and accepting various parts of their identities. All three spend the final parts of their books as adults in the United States attempting to come to terms with who they are. As each author struggles with performative issues of identity, they share common impediments to fully comprehending and expressing themselves. These impediments become trappings of identity. The word “trappings” is meant as a double entendre that expresses the doubleness of their travails to self-discovery. In one sense, trappings are the material resources used to express the self. In another sense, trappings is used to mean the traps or the limitations set upon the expression of the self.

Like the trappings of performativity, John Tullock (1996) summarizes this doubleness of “performativity as not only being constitutive of power but at the same time being implicated in that which it opposes” (p. 66). For example, Butler (1993) asks, “When and how does a term like ‘queer’ become subject to an affirmative resignification for some when a term like ‘nigger,’ despite some recent efforts at reclamation, appears capable of only reinscribing its pain?” (p. 222). All the authors detail events in their lives in which their performative “doing” of identity found them implicated in the very power structures they attempted to reclaim: language, Whiteness, and harmful effects. Not unlike the participants in my interviews, these writers testify to the multiple ways these structures too often foreclose agency in powerful iterations of norms for language, ethnicity, and violence. As trappings of performativity, Latina/o-White identity finds

itself caught in matrices of history, politics, and relationships that shut down possibilities for iterations of hybridity. At the same time, the concept of hybridity offers the performance of identity a series of strategies for hopeful and liberatory ways of being. This close reading of three memoirs is then divided into two parts: first, I discuss the three performative trappings of Latina/o-White identity common to all three memoirs; second, I propose a continuum of strategies these authors utilize for realizing hybrid selves. The strategies find and use hybridity as resources for the multiplicities of meanings and opportunities inherent in language and in a languaged identity.

Performative Trappings: Language as Binary/Hierarchy Trap

First, all the authors related incidents or events in which they experienced language as a binary/hierarchy trap. All three authors utilized language as a way to claim or reject either their Latina/o or their White identities at some point in their maturation. The significance of language as binary is they are pushed into a polarity of Latina/o or White identity through a polarity of Spanish or English. The significance of language as hierarchy is that Spanish always lies below English in this hierarchy, in both preference and in privilege. Johnson, for example, tells of a moment when he is running in a marathon and is warned by a man on the street to beware of an approaching bus behind Johnson.

A guy looked at me and yelled in a friendly tone, “Hey, *Ese*. *Ese*, there is a bus behind you. Watch out”.... I looked back at the guy, who looked to be Mexican American. It then struck me that he had called me *ese*, Spanish slang for dude or man. Did he see me as a Mexican American? Why? How? Did I look so obviously Mexican American? Or had he called me *ese* out of habit? Perhaps it

had nothing to do with me or how I looked or ran. I pondered the question for the last three dreadful miles of the race and for a long time thereafter. (pp. 3-4)

For Johnson, this moment either happened because he has been identified as Latino or because the man using the slang term is Latino. Spanish is inextricably tied to Latina/ness. Indeed, Johnson explains that he learns Spanish as a way to retain a Latina/o connection. He explains, “In spite of all the pressures I felt, I never did completely forsake my Mexican American heritage” (p. 85). To prove this statement, he explicates that he took four years of Spanish in high school, even choosing Spanish over calculus his senior year. He spoke to his mother and his grandmother in Spanish, talked to co-workers in Spanish and even read Hemingway in Spanish. All of these actions are support for his claim that he never completely forsook his Mexican American heritage. For him, Spanish is equated or at least encased in that heritage.

Arana and Urrea are less prescriptive in how language designates their Latina/ness or Whiteness, but they do have explanations that speak to the binary/hierarchy trap. Urrea’s father attempts to force the adolescent Urrea into speaking Spanish so he does not lose his Latina/o connection. His father refused to allow Urrea to succumb to the monolingual status of a White American: “He used to tell me I was no *God-damned gringo*. I was, however, white. *Speak Spanish, pendejo!* was a common cry when I spoke some unacceptable English phrase” (p. 8). Language is the link to either Whiteness or Latina/ness. As Urrea matures, his father continues to pressure him to speak Spanish by summoning Mexican Spanish speaking cousins to hang out with Urrea so he could improve his Spanish:

I was speaking in too *pochó* a manner: not enough rough edges in the words, not enough disdain and wit inherent in my pronunciation. My *r*'s were not hard enough, the *g* and *j* sounds lacked the heft of phlegm at the back of the palate to really sizzle. I had learned, to my utter shock, that the wrong emphasis on the wrong consonants could lead to humiliation, insults, even violence. I remember one of these men giving me tequila in the fifth grade, then cigarettes, in order to roughen the far borders of my words. I apparently had a garden on my tongue, and the men were demanding a desert. (p. 112)

Urrea's father tries to connect Urrea to Latina/ness by connecting Urrea with his Spanish tongue. For Urrea's father, Urrea was speaking like a *pochó*. *Pochó* is an insult used by Mexican nationals against U.S. born Latina/os, intimating that they have lost their connections to Mexican culture. When this loss of culture occurs, usually there is a corresponding loss of the finesse of the Spanish language. In Urrea's case, his father tried to get Urrea to shake his *pochó*-ness by improving the way Urrea spoke Spanish, by helping Urrea to speak more like a Mexican, not necessarily a Mexican-American. Urrea's understanding of the difference between *pochó* Spanish and Mexican Spanish is that *pochó* Spanish is softer, even less macho. His father's henchmen assisted Urrea in giving his language a sharper edge and thereby sharpening his Latino identity. There is no longer just an English-Spanish binary here, but Urrea exposes a binary within Spanish itself. His father makes clear the Mexican Spanish is preferable to US Spanish. However, Urrea's reflexivity demonstrates that his father's preference is not necessarily his own.

Arana also experienced a trapping based upon language at an early age. When

she was only four years old, her parents and two siblings left her in Peru while they visited family in the United States. She was required to stay with her grandparents and her aunts. A power play ensues between four year-old Arana and her Peruvian relatives. She differentiates herself from them through language, claiming solely one part of her identity. She proves her difference from the family to a male suitor of one of her aunts: “‘I am not Peruvian,’ I said finally, in as large a voice as I could muster... ‘I’m an American. *Un yanqui*. My name is Campbell” (p. 122). Her rebellion against the Peruvian family culminates with her dashing out of the house, chasing after a car that appears to have a White woman at the wheel. The Whiteness of the female driver is significant as Arana chases after a symbol of Whiteness, a symbol akin to her White mother.

The suitor catches four year-old Arana, brings her back to the house, and then presents her: “‘Here is Miss Campbell,’ he said ceremoniously in English, wheezing and swabbing himself with a handkerchief” (p. 123). When he returns her, he mockingly honors her difference in identity by presenting her in her newly preferred language, the language that sets her apart from her Peruvian family and therefore divests her of Latina/o-ness.

As Arana matures and the family moves to the United States, she tries to speak English rather than Spanish. In Wyoming, her foreignness is tested by the locals as they make fun of her speaking abilities. In response to the locals, she asks her teenage cousin if he thinks she talks funny:

I was remembering the large woman on the Pullman train, the old man who had

growled at us in Rawlins, every gringo that raised his eyebrows when [my brother] and I walked into shops, chattering. (p. 198)

Her cousin rejects her lingual insecurities and follows his rejection with an activity of authenticity that does not involve speaking—chewing tobacco. Arana is searching for ways to authenticate herself as White and to connect with her White family. Participating in the antics of her cousin is a way that she can do this. Of the experience, she says:

It took more than once—a great deal of hollering along the way—but I got so that months later, by the time I left Wyoming, I could hold my tobacco and squirt it from the side of my mouth just like him. (p. 199)

The act of spitting itself is not inherently White, but the lesson is learned from a White person, Arana sees White authentication in the mimesis of an act that does not rest upon her pronunciation and articulation of the English language.

Then later in her life, as a teenager, she finds U.S. friends who can teach pronunciation in a more mainstream manner so that she might fit in and feel more like someone from the United States:

Suzi and Sara became [my brother's and my] tutors... You said okay, not o-keh. You went to a movie, not a cinema. You caught colds, not constipations. You wrote on a clean, spanking new sheet of paper. Not a fresh shit. (p. 266)

These lessons offered her and her brother a chance to blend and to even become invisible amongst a background of U.S. English speakers who would see imperfect English as a reason to isolate and alienate. At this point in her life, she is the sole Latina in any of her respective U.S. contexts. When she tries to speak English more correctly, she is trying to blend into Whiteness.

For these authors, language is a double-bind trap of performativity. That is, the authors are anchored in worlds that demand an either/or of language. For the authors to be either Latina/o or White, they must assume either Spanish or English tongues. And it seems that English wins out over Spanish, even when the context would prefer Spanish. Elin Diamond (1996) asserts that the realities of our identities are in the material doing of our identities. We repeat a category of identity and therefore provide a socially recognizable performance of that identity. If there is no recognition, then we risk invalidation and alienation by our surrounding community. These power differentials of the lingual demands experienced or assumed by the authors are important to note. Boundaries are set and language marks those boundaries for privilege, for access, for participation on a map skewed with English as its heartland and Spanish at its borders for marginal “citizens.” Their passports—all authors write in English—are very much about the politics, not of hybridity and the bilingual—but of the rigid restraints of performativity as both expression of historical norms and impositions of those norms.

Performative Trappings: Performing Whiteness

Besides language, the stylizations of performative acts in relation to their “dual” ethnic identity become a trapping for the authors. All the writers, at some point, perform “whiteness”—with often painful self-consciousness and guilt. In his teenage years, Johnson has the ability to pass for White. To help secure his passing, he practices habits of Whiteness. These habits are defined as White through his own implications, not necessarily through society’s prescriptions. For example, living in Southern California he surfs with his friends. His surfing friends were White and he “emulated them and

wanted to be accepted” (p. 84). Although he passed for White, he still had moments when he was reminded of his Latina/ness:

I got a surfboard and hung out at the beach, though I was never much of a surfer. Walking to the beach with friends from Torrance through Redondo Beach, we passed a series of streets with Spanish women’s names, like Juanita, Irena, Maria, Elena, and Lucia, and the reminder of my roots made me feel uneasy about betraying my heritage, though of course I kept this to myself. (p. 84)

This is an interesting remark because at this point he is not saying heritages (plural) nor is he saying one of his heritages. Rather he sees his enactment of Whiteness as a betrayal of his Latina/o heritage. Often Whiteness is seen as having no connection to the past while non-White, read here as Latina/o, is connected to a historical lineage. While Johnson tiptoes by these names, careful not to pronounce them, he tiptoes beyond a Latina/o past, too.

Similarly, Arana finds practices that can help her transform from one ethnic identity to another, in her case from Latina/o to White. In elementary school, she finds a White friend to emulate and uses the emulation of this gangly red-headed White girl as a chance to emulate Whiteness:

I spent a winter trying to do things the O’Neill way, although I never would have admitted it. I... gorged on Wonder Bread, wailed with Chubby Checker, wheedled a pair of loafers, scored a perfect attendance at Calvary Episcopal’s Sunday school, made sure I could Peppermint Twist. (pp. 272-273)

She admits that when no one was looking, she would still revert to games and performances that made her feel more Latina, like imitating the witchdoctors of Peru.

Pretending to partake in magic became a way for her to remember an identity that is losing its efficacy for agency, which in her case is Latina.

As she becomes more acquainted with her estranged U.S. White extended family, she begins to delineate between their actions and her Peruvian family's actions. Then she vows to learn the ways of the U.S. White family. As a child of five or six, she is a student of culture and labels actions according to whether they are Latina/o or White. Of the White Americans she says:

They didn't need to fill the air with chatter, these *gringos*, unburden their hearts, peck each other noisily on the cheek. They could sit stonily by, staring down at their hands, and communicate. They could tend a dying mother without touching her. ...I vowed to learn how to do all of that someday. But first, I'd learn how to spit. (p. 182)

In her youth, she began to emphasize differences between her Peruvian family and her American family. For her, Whiteness finds its home not necessarily expressed in words, but in silences, stillness, stoicism, and spitting.

For both authors, Whiteness becomes more than just a set of somatic materializations, but it is also a set of stylized actions to be performed. Interestingly though, both Johnson and Arana demonstrate a type of privilege in that they felt they could assume White. For these particular Latina/o-White hybrid identity individuals, skin can pale to White. However, there are still difficulties in performing Whiteness. A performance needs an audience who is willing to believe. In the case of Johnson and Arana, those audiences must first recognize Whiteness in their skin tones before they are willing to find Whiteness in their actions. It is the somatic rendered through the visual

that allows passage way to the stylized acts of a White performativity. Importantly though, these textual renderings of themselves do not necessitate a paling skin. As Gil-Gomez (2000) says of selves created in literary texts, “This textual existence is important to consider when theorizing identity and performance because it is a unique performance that escapes the visual” (p. 142). The tyranny of the visual is ameliorated as readers focus instead on these stylized actions for understandings of how their Whiteness is enacted and lived.

Performative Trappings: Words that Produce Their Subjects and Effects

A third trapping that the three authors encounter is how words produce their subjects and effects. All three face the stifling labels applied to either ethnicity. These labels work to limit the imaginations of the authors, imaginations that could free them from the limitations of being either one or the other ethnicity. Also, the labeling usually forces the authors to choose either one side or the other. Often the choice is unmistakably to choose Whiteness over Latina/anness. Within the US context, Whiteness is a dominant discourse while Latina/anness is the alter-discourse. Therefore, the choice encouraged through context and institution is often Whiteness.

Urrea references a poem by Wendell Berry, “Do Not Be Ashamed.” The poem explains how those in control force the subjugated to be embarrassed about themselves. Rather than pointing to just one controlling group, Urrea highlights how many groups attempt to disempower others and, in return, empower themselves. As the poem explains, this empowerment comes through the scripting of the other by the dominant group. The disenfranchised are told what to say about themselves and how to be ashamed of those labels cast upon them. Urrea likes to read Berry’s poem at graduation

commencements and envisions how the students react to the ominous “they” that disenfranchises the “us”:

You can almost see thought bubbles above the students’ heads as they listen.

Honkies, some are thinking. *Liberals* and *minorities*, and *commies*. And certainly *666* and the *Antichrist* bubble about up in the air: *Hispanics*, *Yankees*, *blacks*, *queers*, *Democrats*. *Women*. *Men*.

My mother thought: *Mexicans*.

My father, a Mexican, thought: *gringos*.

I, for one, think *They* are the ones with the words. You know, the Words. The ones they called my dad and me—like *wetback*. *Spic*. *Beaner*. *Greaser*. *Pepper-belly*. *Yellow-belly*, *taco-bender*. *Enchilada breath*. (p. 7-8)

Urrea’s examples are potent illustrations of how words can carry pain in their reiterations—spoken not to reclaim an “affirmative resignification” in Butler’s terms—but to continue to produce their harmful and violent effects. Urrea’s examples are words that are performative, producing subjects they name and therefore reproducing the politics of those subjects as well. And as he demonstrates, seizing control of those meanings is not so easy considering that the reiterations carry with them painful re-inflctions.

Similar to Urrea, Arana has an experience of labeling used against her. A senile curmudgeon approaches her and her brother on the streets of Wyoming and scares them into thinking that maybe they do not belong in the United States with the White population. In the scene, she and her brother are approached:

“What you younguns doin’ sitting there?” he said finally drawing himself up by his bony shoulders. “You spick-a-da Spanish? You Mexican or what?”

We stared back at him, speechless.

“On the wrong side-a town, ain’tcha?” he continued. “Suppose-ta be across those tracks over there on the nigga side, ain’tcha, now?” Spittle was gathering in the corners of his mouth, and his stubbled chin was trembling.

“Cat got yer tongue?” he said. He took his hands from his pockets and wiped them against his little protuberance of a gut. Then he stamped on the grass and clapped his hands at us, but the sound was little more than a pathetic thwap. A bird scooted across and flitted into a tree.

“Well, go on, git!” he screamed. “Git!” His tiny eyes were burning and red.

“You deaf’r sumpin? You li’l chiggers don’t belong here and yew know it!

Whole damn Mexico gonna come up here and take over uf we don’t watch out!”

(p. 272)

Arana contemplated the old man’s words for a long time thereafter. She stood in the mirror and looked at herself anew, wondering what he had meant exactly and whether such clear delineation between “them” and “us” were really possible.

As evidenced in these sections, language is a tough system to circumvent. Invested in meanings are either-or delineations. Thus, if you are *this* then you are not *that*. Also, meanings are hierarchized. Therefore, either this or that is *more important* and *more powerful* than the other. Additionally, when considering the binaries of Latina/o-ness and Whiteness, Whiteness becomes a trump to Latina/o-ness. This trumping of Whiteness creates predicaments for the Latina/o-White hybrid individual.

Bryant Alexander (2004), in examining accusations made upon him about “acting White,” attempts to deconstruct the power Whiteness in his own Black identity. He writes:

When [the phrase] is directed at me, it is a signifier that lands on a resistant signified. So I resist the accusation of “acting White” on the grounds of its vindictive and derogatory intention and that it is culturally/racially alienating. Yet within that accusation there is a kernel of unorganized or maybe indigenous theorizing that suggests the performative accomplishment of Whiteness, which can be separated and projected on anybody.” (662).

While Alexander’s black/white dichotomy raises complications not necessarily parallel to the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, at the same time, he expresses how whiteness is a “performative accomplishment” and explains “acting white” as a phrase that “signals a collision between history, race, and expectations of cultural performance” (p. 622). Material production of bodies is a special kind of “collision” for these authors that is reliant upon a history of race and culture. As they struggle with Whiteness, they struggle with the monolithic requirements of racial categorization in which all non-White identities are required to forget their connections to anything that is not White. And if that memory of being non-White is upheld, then the performance of being non-White is nonetheless very difficult. Unlike Alexander, whiteness is not always hurled at them with “vindictive and derogatory intention;” nor is their relationship to Whiteness always “culturally/racially alienating.”

The trappings of performativity—on, in, and through the body—are always about consequences. Meanings are accrued, become sedimented on the human body and that

human becomes invested in those meanings. Violent effects, the tyranny of Whiteness, and the binary/hierarchy of Spanish and English are all trappings the authors experience as they realize their identities in performative moments. If my analysis were to end here, then performativity would be locked into harmful iterations, producing bodies subject to incorporated histories of racism, racial “purity,” and ethnic “authenticity.” These trappings constantly foreclose the possibility of two cultures existing within one body—not unlike Haraway’s (1991) description of Sojourner Truth: “she was a black female, a black woman, not a coherent substance with two or more attributes, but an oxymoronic singularity who stood for an entire excluded and dangerously promising humanity” (p. 92).

Sojourner Truth’s question, “Ain’t I a Woman?” is echoed in Urrea’s movement through various us/them combinations, demonstrating that relationships can change depending upon the subjectivity of the person. Arana’s experience with the old man demonstrates various us/thems that are possible assumptions by others of her (e.g., being from Mexico; being aligned with blacks). These incorrect assumptions leave open possibilities for other assumptions: the performative thing done is not necessarily a constant in the equation of their identities. There are, apparently, many variables for this equation. If Urrea can show that there are many us/thems, then surely the options are limitless. If the old man in Wyoming gets so many assumptive details wrong, then there are many more details that can be assumed by the Latina/o-White hybrid individual for the purposes of agency and strategy and, most importantly, for survival. Hybridity, with its multiple, dynamic, and fluid ways of being, offers strategies to resist and to transform the trappings of performativity.

When Performativity Meets Hybridity: Beyond the Trappings

Lisa Flores (1996) explicates that Chicana feminists used literary-style writing as a way to craft a homeland for the purposes of redefining who they were in a space that would honor them. “The creation of discursive space means that the margins are transformed into the center of a new society, and the disempowered are empowered” (p. 152). Likewise, these memoir authors have used their memoirs as a space to create themselves anew. Of the Chicana feminists, Flores says:

Chicana feminists use their writing style as a means to connect to others. In their anthologies and their books, Chicana feminists combine a mixture of poetry, prose and stream of consciousness. They jump from English to Spanish to Indian to Spanglish, with no warning and no apology. (p. 152)

When I read Flores’ article, I panic because I begin to wonder, what, if anything is different from the authors I have chosen to examine and the Chicana feminists? Chicana feminists as well as these writers feel the presence of multiple borders in their lives. And while all of the Chicana feminists seek to utilize their mixed heritages, some of them even fit the Latina/o-White hybrid identity label that I have chosen to scrutinize. For example, Cherrie Moraga (2000) says, “I am the daughter of a Chicana and Anglo. I think most days I am an embarrassment to both groups” (p. xiii).

And then it dawns on me. It is the memoirs’ *attention to Whiteness* that makes them different: unlike the Chicana feminists, these authors grapple with Whiteness as a necessary component of their lives that they neither want to dismiss or destroy. In reading Anzaldua and Moraga, Whiteness is a perspective that is to be cast off. Anzaldua, for example, makes many references to Whiteness in negative fashion. For

these Chicana feminists, Whiteness is to be grappled with but also to be defeated. For the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, however, Whiteness is part of the picture and to do away with a part of herself. And this dismissal is impossible.

For this analysis of Latin-White hybrid memoirs, Valdivia (2004) provides a helpful explication of current uses of the term hybrid. She notes that Marwan Kraidy (2002) sees the term as a developed identity out of our late capitalist global society. Valdivia states: “[Kraidy] proposes that we foreground this concept as it ‘needs to be understood as a communicative practice constitutive of, and constituted by, sociopolitical and economic arrangements’ that are ‘complex, processual, and dynamic’” (p. 4). She goes on to explain that hybridity is a way to reject essentialist notions of gender, race, and ethnicity and to reaffirm that there is no purity at any level of culture. She asserts that Canclini and Bhabha come at hybridity from different positionings. Canclini is more interested in the socio-cultural hybridity and Bhabha in the literary and psychoanalytic approach. While never outright defining ambiguity, she tries to account for all the elements of the hybridity: the scientific (heredity), social constructed (discourse), and even the strategic (choice of representation). Hybridity, it seems, is both thrust upon individuals within this late-capitalist global society and is also a strategy to exist within such.

In my reading of the memoirs, hybrid identity is doubly articulated as both thrust upon and strategic, not unlike Diamond’s “thing done” and “doing.” Hybridity as a concept of identity, however, adds three important adjectives to Diamond’s explication of performativity: complex, processual, and dynamic. The complexity arises out of each author’s relationship to Whiteness; the processual implies a developmental movement

through identity as strategies are tested, rejected, and employed; and dynamic speaks to the fluid, constant “doing” that is interactional, historical, political, and material.

Reading the memoirs together, I have found five strategies of hybridity that rest on a continuum between hybridity as performatively thrust on the person and hybridity as performative agency. The five strategies, in the language of the authors, are imposter, mongrel, homeless, bridge, and twin. While several of these terms might be “fighting words,” they are also important terms for Burke’s notion of “strategic naming of situations.” Importantly, “imposter” and “mongrel” occur at the “thrust upon” end of the continuum—reflecting oppressive discourses of racial and ethnic “authenticity” in contemporary US discourse. “Bridge” and “twin,” less racially loaded terms, occur at the agency end of the continuum, selected by the writer to describe her own performances of hybrid identity.

These strategies are not necessarily discreet typologies from one another. Rather, they overlap one another, are fluid entities, and are malleable for the moments of difficulty and opportunity. As hybrid performative moments, they are complex, processual, and dynamic. As strategic names for situations, they are permutations and discretions of identity enacted and employed by these writers as their hybrid identity is both thrust upon them and is a resource for agency in existing in the current racial discourse.

A Continuum of Strategies of Hybrid Performativity: The Imposter

At one end of the hybridity continuum, the imposter identity reflects current US racial discourses of “purity,” “authenticity,” and a concomitant history of oppression. For the authors, this “strategy” may seem to be a trapping of performativity, the “thing done”

outside the writer's control. Instead, due to their possibilities of shifting ethnic markers—language, color, and performing Whiteness, the imposter is a hybrid space: it is a moment in which the person's identity is still defined by their hybridity, but they are able to choose—at dynamic moments of interaction—to engage the world strategically. All three of the authors expressed feelings of being an imposter: not fulfilling the requirements of the moment and at a loss amid racial discourse that demands wholeness, completeness, and authenticity. This strategic engagement, however, bring a variety of associations. For Johnson, the imposter is thoroughly negative; for Urrea, the imposter is a temporary bother; for Arana, the imposter is empowering. All three writers, however, find the imposter status thrust upon them by others.

Johnson is probably the most conflicted of the three authors. Arguably, his entire book is centered on the imposter-hybridity strategy. He, out of all the authors, fails to really ever get beyond the conflictual issues of the Latina/o-White hybrid identity. Johnson's explications of his identity fall within a Goffmanesque understanding of performance. He writes of himself as if he is putting on various masks, often with a real, albeit questioning, identity underneath these masks. Butler (1988) writes of Goffman:

As opposed to a view such as Erving Goffman's which posits a self which assumes and exchanges various 'roles' within the complex social expectations of the 'game' of modern life, I am suggesting that this self is not only irretrievably 'outside,' constituted in social discourse, but that the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication. (p. 528)

Johnson's constant worry—as he writes about himself and about who he is to the reader—is very much about “interiority.” That he turns this interior monologue into

literary discourse is an important shift. This becomes a “publicly regulated and sanctioned” proof that a self exists—prior to any performance of that self.

Johnson’s “names for the situation” are negative ones as he constantly interrogates his own imposter strategy throughout his life story. In college, he felt as if he did not belong, that his admission was a mistake: “I was sure I was a fraud, convinced that I was not as ‘qualified’ as my Harvard classmates. An affirmative action admit. A person destined for mediocrity, perhaps even failure” (p. 39). At an advanced stage in his law school education, he was never convinced it was his hard work that earned him the invitation to attend prestigious events and be on important committees. When he was appointed to the committee that would implement the first affirmative action plan for the Harvard Law Review membership, he said:

I have no idea whether I was invited because of my racial background, which was known to those who knew me well, or because I was dating an Asian American woman and was thought (perhaps erroneously) to have some good will with the minority community. (p. 45)

When applying for law professor jobs, he again feels the backlash of strategizing his hybridity. He writes:

Along with assorted biographical and employment history, the form asks about racial background. For as far back as I can remember I have classified myself as Chicano, but before I checked that box, I wondered aloud to my wife Virginia what I should do. “Are you ashamed of being Mexican?” she asked. I checked the Chicano box but worried that law schools in search of a bona fide Latino might view me as an imposter. (p. 121)

Finally, once he has a job, he worries that maybe he is not a legitimate pick for the occupation. He writes:

Despite the relative peacefulness of academic life, I do experience moments of awkwardness and racial uncertainty. [My wife and I read] a front page article about the hiring of three new ‘professors of color,’ myself, Arturo Grandara, a Chicano from southern New Mexico, and Evelyn Lewis, an African American. There had been no minorities on the faculty the year before. My worry about teaching began in earnest. The students and faculty, I feared, might not really be getting the minority professor they wanted. I was glad there were two “real” minorities joining the faculty with me.

He places himself as an illegitimate person of color, despite Latino memories and Latino heritage. Johnson’s strategic choices and constant naming of his hybridity as “fraud,” are evidence of the imposter as “thrust upon“ in this continuum. Just as Goffman’s approach to role-playing aptly describes Johnson’s strategy, his concomitant discomfort is also explained by Goffman in *Stigma* (1974). Passing and covering are very much about fear of discovery and questions of legitimacy in one’s claim to a social role.

Urrea, too, finds an imposter-hybridity thrust upon him when he is interviewed for a Mexican newspaper. Although he was born in Tijuana, Mexico, Urrea is told by the Mexican reporter that Urrea is not a true Mexican. His identity is splintered into many types:

I was any number of things: I was an American, I was “just” a Chicano, I was a *norteno*, (which in Mexico City, is like saying you’re one of the Mongol horde). I was lauded for speaking Spanish “just like” a Mexican, or chided for having what

amounted to a cowboy accent. That I was born in Tijuana didn't matter a bit... That I was an American citizen was apparently a faux pas. That I wrote in English was an insult. That I was blue-eyed, however, allowed me to pass for Mexican high society. (p. 10-11)

Unlike Johnson, Urrea carries no self-conscious guilt or name-calling for the splintering of his identity. Instead, he carries a bit of anger, a bit of awe, and class consciousness. He receives this feedback in Mexico City, one of the largest cities in the world. In this huge metropolis, the contradictions are plentiful—giving Urrea evidence not of his fraudulent claims to ethnicity, but of the multiplicity of ways to mark ethnic identification. He also takes solace in another kind of trump card: he was able to “pass” for Mexican high society. While Johnson enjoys the economic privilege of the professional class in the United States, so Urrea enjoys the “imposter” status of the elite in Mexico.

Urrea also finds balance in the contradiction when he looks to the Aztec culture upon which Mexico City was founded. He says, “In the great museum, you can see a famous Aztec mask. One half of it is a smiling face. The other half is the skull” (p. 11). Like the smile of the Aztec, Urrea can control some ways of being in the world; like the skull side of the Aztec, he has little control over substructures, or over meanings that people impose on him.

Arana embraces the imposter: when she realizes that can play many parts, she begins to enjoy all of her possibilities. She writes:

I found myself looking around, assessing what kind of power was available to me. There did appear to be some: With Peruvian children at Roosevelt, I begged I

was really a *gringa*. With *gringos*, I crossed my eyes and retreated into Spanish.

With sissies like Margarita, I played the queen. I did what I could. (p. 219)

The imposter-hybrid strategy, Arana admits, plays with “lies,” as if there is a truth somewhere of her identity that she manipulates. She even gains a bad reputation for being a liar, but she knows she has earned this reputation—for the right reasons. She says:

Lies. I was so good at them. More to the point, I loved them so. Why not? If I could slip from English to Spanish, from boys to ballet, from pledging American allegiance to swearing on life I was a Peruvian, from church to church, from Campbell to Clapp—why not from role to role, truth to truth? Lies. Thank you, God. You gave me skill. (p. 252)

Interestingly, she says that she moves from role to role and from truth to truth, recalling Goffman’s notion that social roles are dramatically realized in their performances. For Arana, the imposter is not about deception in multiple role playing, but each role has its point of reference borne out of her familial ties. She has no need to feel shame for the different roles she plays. They are all based upon a cultural identity to which she is connected. Unlike Johnson and more similarly to Urrea, she recognizes the different roles she can play and honors them rather than worries over their validity.

Arana does acknowledge that her multiple-role playing is not so easily performed by other social actors. In her adult years she has an African-American friend who explained her own imposter identity to Arana. Carol says that in black neighborhoods, she acts black. She has two dialects, personalities, senses of humor, ways to shake hands and saying hello—“one for the world you’re trying to make your way in, another when

you're home with your kin" (p. 271). Perhaps Arana's link to Whiteness allows her to move within different worlds more easily and less suspiciously. For her black friend, being seen as an imposter has negative consequences. As a matter of fact, her friend has internalized those consequences and now Carol is not just afraid that people will perceive her as two-faced, but she also fears she *is* two-faced. Arana, on the other hand, has not internalized the negative notions of imposter-hybridity. Arana says:

But even by the age of ten, I had gone one giant step past Carol: I was flitting from one identity to another so deftly that it was just as easy to affect a third. I could lie, I could fake, I could act. It was a way for a newcomer to cope in America. You can't quite sound like your schoolmates? Never mind! Make it up, fashion a whole new person. *Act the part*, says the quote under my school photo, *and you can become whatever you wish to become*. Invention. It was a new kind of independence. (p. 272)

Arana embraces the imposter that is thrust upon her, yet it is not an embrace that all can make. She takes the opportunities as they come, capitalizing on aspects of her identity even if others cannot or refuse.

A Continuum of Strategies of Hybrid Performativity: The Mongrel

While the imposter-hybrid concerns guilt or freedom borne out of the thrust-uponness of the hybrid identity, it still has validity as one strategic answer to the questions that Latina/o-White hybrid identity individuals face in daily interactions with others. Still, "imposter" implies a truth of identity—materially, politically, and historically—that the performance somehow masks. Arana and Urrea find other strategic

ways to language their own identities, to “name their situations” productively, and to move from a Goffmanesque “role playing” mask to a different ontology of self.

In this continuum of hybrid performativity, the next strategy is that of the mongrel. The mongrel-hybrid is similar to the imposter-hybridity with one primary difference—in the mongrel-hybridity the individuals own their conflicting differences. While “mongrel” is one of those fighting words, not unlike “queer,” both Arana and Urrea reappropriate the term from both science and dog breeding to explain their interior differences and to find models in their exterior world. They begin to relearn their world in its multiplicity and rather than cower from that multiplicity, they start to embrace it. Both Arana and Urrea lay claims to international places of birth, Peru and Mexico respectively; while Johnson is born in the United States. For Arana and Urea, their birthplace marks them as mongrels. They are tied to a land that is linked to a cultural identity. As both Arana and Urrea move between the two national contexts of their birth countries and the United States, this “shuttling back and forth” is one cause of the mongrelization of their identities.

Arana and her siblings identify themselves as “half-*gringo*.” For example, when Arana’s family is threatened by the local Peruvian Police who try to abduct Arana’s brother, she says of her older brother, “They were here because the son of Don Jorge, a little half-*gringo*, would make a good buffer, a portable human shield” (p. 104). Like Jorge, Arana considers herself to be half-*gringa* too. While in Peru, she locates her identity in a half-ness and, in her case, this halfness is status quo plus the *gringa* half.

As she tries to understand what it means to be half, she tries to locate the *gringa* half of her within a stratus of Peruvian racial identities. She wants to locate herself

within the layers of cultural identities, hoping to find the layer that is half *gringa* and half Peruvian and thus removing the contradiction or confliction within her identity.

Recounting the “racial powder keg” history of Peru, she knows the Moche were conquered by the Incas, who were subsequently conquered by the Spaniards. The intermixing of these groups created a wash of varying colors and types. Today, a history of racial segregation has resulted in a stratus of color:

Peru today is a salmagundi of races, infused over the centuries by slave shipments of Asians, Africans, and Caribbeans, but the specter of racism haunts it. Who are the forty families who continue to make up the moneyed oligarchy? Spanish-blooded whites. Who are the seventy percent of the national population who live in extreme poverty? The indigenous. (p. 115)

For Arana, however, her identity is outside this hierarchy because mixed in with her Peruvian blood is US blood. She cannot find herself in the layers, and therefore is a mongrel composed of different parts.

Arana soon realizes that her identity combinations in Peru are what define her identity better than the racial stratus that Peru or even the United States offers. While the meaning of mongrelization carries with it a negative charge, as if one is impure or even a biological accident, she embraces that mongrelization through not resisting it. She feels fortunate to be a product of chance. She levels out her experiences that are linked to her identities and places them next to each other rather than above and below one another. She calls herself someone who was meant to be:

I was meant to go between the *apus* and Elk Mountains, meant to sit on a crate with Antonio [Peruvian indigenous man], meant to play conquistadors with

Georgie [full-blooded brother], meant to watch sunsets with Grandpa Doc [U.S. white grandfather], meant to weave dreams about my mother, meant to plumb the Arana past. (p. 304)

She lays all the experiences next to each other, each one as precious as the next, each one representing an element of her identity, each one at peace with the other.

Urrea's mongrelization is similar to Arana's because he is coming out of a culture that has a set of identities not commonly understood or recognized in the U.S. Urrea explores the idea that Mexican is a multilayered typology, at one point commenting: "Even on my Mexican side I'm Irish" (p. 27). Urrea toys with his ancestry on the Mexican side, providing a list of mongrel typologies (p. 30). His cousin is Apache. Another cousin is Mayo. His second cousin is Black. His neice is German. One branch of Urreas are Chinese. Another branch of Urreas are Basque. His Great Grandmother is Tarascan. His paternal Grandmother is Irish. And some of his cousins are even Hubbards.. These typologies confuse the two pure dichotomous labels that compose his identity. Note, the two dichotomous labels change. They could be Mexican/U.S., Brown/White, Latina/o/White, etc. However, just within the Mexican, Brown, Latina/o label of Urrea lie such disparate ethnicities as Basque, Chinese, and Apache. These disparate identities serve to complicate an easy labeling of Urrea.

Indeed, the Aryan-esque qualities that tie him to Whiteness, his blonde hair and blue eyes, are actually inherited not from his mother's side of the family, but from his father's Mexican side of the family:

If you trace the Urrea bloodline back far enough, you find that our Aryan looks are attributed to the Visigoths, when they entered Spain and generously dispersed

gallons of genetic material in every burning village. And one of the Visigoth warriors who blitzed our part of Spain, siring many blond ancestors of mine, was Urias. Urias—Uria—Uria—Uria—Uria—Uria. (p. 30)

Transformation happens in the spelling of the name with a movement from the Urias to Urrea, similar to a genealogical anagram. In deed, his family can be considered an anagram game of sorts. Rearrange the Urreas, and any combination of identities, from Chinese to Black to Mexican indigenous, emerges. Like Arana, Urrea does not let the re-combinations intimidate him, rather he celebrates them as, not a matter of fact, but a matter of perspective. He understands more fully that the reality of his ethnic presence is based not so much on an ethnic past but rather the current ethnic discourse.

Both Arana and Urrea reconcile the conflicting qualities of their Latina/o-White hybrid identity by excavating a past and comparing that past to the present. Geographic ties—to countries, to cultures, to histories—are resources for rearticulating “mongrel” outside its scientific terminology. Johnson, locked in his imposter strategy, has no such geography to draw from as resource for understanding his sense of self. However, this mongrelization is both symptomatic of the current time as well as symptomatic of past heritage. For Arana, she comes from a historical place that has multiple layers of identity due to many ethnic groups crossing. She realizes she is just one more combination of ethnic variables, but also realizes that she does not need to hierarchize her combination against the others. Rather she lays her own combination side by side of the others. Urrea, too, realizes that the contradictions of his identity are a product of the current discourse on race and ethnicity. He views his ethnic past like a game of chance in which the competing variables just happened to create who he is today. There are many

combinations that could have resulted, and he is just one. Arana and Urrea both make peace with their mongrelization.

A Continuum of Strategies of Hybrid Performativity: The Homeless

The homeless-hybridity contrasts with the mongrel-hybridity in that the homeless-hybrid strategy focuses not on geographic lineage, but rather on a lack of place.

Homeless-hybridity is about not claiming a lineage or a heritage as a definer of the present identity. Rather, there is a denial of a clear link between the present identity and the history of the family and culture. Therefore, the homeless-hybridity is likened to a math problem in which the denominator is zero. The numerator still has a value, but when divided by the denominator, there is no numerical outcome. Urrea best exemplifies this homeless-hybrid status when he talks about how our experiences of reality are mediated through language. He says:

I was going to write, “Meanwhile, back home...” But where is home? Home isn’t just a place, I have learned. It is also a language. My words not only shape and define my home. Words—not only for writers—are home. Still where exactly is that? (p. 82)

He begins to question the source of words. If words are home, then he begins to ponder where home could be and from where home originates.

Then he describes how “Hispanics” are really immigrants in their own land, a group of people who can claim historical linkage further back than many Whites, but are still considered less native to the United States than Whites. He links the expatriate status to the ubiquity of the English language in U.S., and the ignorance that the English language is really rooted in many other languages. To prove how hybrid the U.S. English

language is, he provides a list of English words that are actually Spanish (Savvy, Patio, Florida, Nevada, Machete, Bonanza, etc). He provides a list of English words that come from various other cultures:

English! It's made up of all those untidy words, man. Have you noticed?
Native American (*skunk*), German (*waltz*), Danish (*twerp*), Latin (*adolescent*),
Scottish (*feckless*), Dutch (*waft*), Caribbean (*zombie*), Nahuatl (*ocelot*), Norse
(*walrus*), Eskimo (*kayak*), Tatar (*horde*) words! It's a glorious wreck (a good old
Viking word, that). (p. 15)

Since language is home and the U.S. home language has been white-washed as being White American English, then for Urrea, there seems to be no place for the Mexican.

To resolve the lack of space, however, Urrea embraces the hybridity of the language, even if this hybridity is not evident to English-speakers. He rests on the fact that this hybridity cannot be wrung out of the wet rag of language. He says, "I love words so much. Thank God so many people lent us theirs or we'd be forced to point and grunt" (p. 16). Urrea's words seem to say that there is a home there for many types of identities, even if the predominant identity does not understand that. It is the hybridity of word sources that provides promise for anyone looking for a home in the United States.

A Continuum of Strategies of Hybrid Performativity: The Bridge

The next hybrid identity strategy is that of bridge. The bridge is a popular metaphor used to describe the in-between status of disenfranchised individuals and is perhaps most popular because of Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua's (1984) book, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. The bridge-hybridity

is characterized by the writer's strategic attempts to language a connection between Whiteness and Latina/o-ness, as if they are a mediator or even a medium.

Arana begins her memoir by harkening to the image of a bridge. She says of her identity that she is standing in the middle of a bridge, between the identities of her father and mother, between two worlds, between a South American man and a North American woman. She says, "They were so different from each other, so obverse in every way. I did not know that however resolutely they built their bridge, I would only wander its middle, never quite reaching either side" (p. 3). She compares herself to her friend's child. Her friend is a woman from the Amazon rainforest who is married to a White American man, and together they have a child. Arana watches the child look back and forth between the child's mother and father. She says of the child: "How delicate a bridge she was between the northern man and southern woman" (p. 4). Then Arana follows with, "What I thought of was me."

In describing her adolescence in New Jersey, she writes that she is the translator for her father and she is the good American daughter for her mother. As she moves between her father and her mother, she is enacting a bridge-hybridity strategy. This movement is a connecting between the two. Her father watches Arana and her sibling's acclimation to the U.S. and comments on it. Arana says:

In Peru I had always thought he and I were similar, that Mother was the different one. But here in Summit, I felt more kinship with my mother, my father the odd one out. "You kids are turning into *gringos*," he'd say, staring at us in amazement. But I knew our mother was the only *gringo* among us; she was it a full hundred percent. They were wholes. They were complete. They were who

they were. They would never *become* anything like the other. We children, on the other hand, were becoming others all the time, shuttling back and forth. We were the fifty-fifties. We were the cobbled ones. (p. 264-265)

Arana also ends her memoir with the bridge metaphor. At the conclusion of her memoir, she questions whether she is a third space between two cultures. She wonders if she is “the pivot, the midway crossing?” (p. 305). Her final words to her memoir are: “I, a north-south collision, a New World fusion. An American *chica*. A bridge” (p. 305). The poignancy of the bridge-hybrid strategy lies in how it holds the two differences separate from one another, and then privileges the Latina/o-White hybrid as being able to understand both. One value of the hybrid-bridge strategy is in how the Latina/o-White hybrid is a conduit for others. We can assist the Latina/o and the White in understanding one another. One detriment of the bridge-hybridity is that the Latina/o-White hybrid is never completely a member of either culture, but is relegated to being a perpetual outsider.

A Continuum of Strategies of Hybrid Performativity: The Twin

The final hybrid strategy is that of the twin-hybridity. This status seeks to address the disadvantages of the trappings of the Latina/o-White hybridity as well as it seeks to enhance the advantages of the other hybrid-status identities. In the twin-hybrid strategy, the Latina/o-White hybrid individual acknowledges the two-ness of his/her identity and lives in that two-ness. Rather than double-edged imposition of performativity, the twin is a doubled identity of excess. To return to the mathematical metaphor, one-half plus one-half is more than one. Also, it is called the twin status because it is linked so closely to the various metaphorical shadings of twins. The hybrid individual feels they can be

either twin identity without being guilty in their double play. Their twinning, rather than thrust on, is strategically employed as agency.

Arana admits that she juggles “two brains” in her head (p. 74). There is a duality to her identity that she discovers and then utilizes. At a young age, she began to make parallels between seemingly disparate symbols. She sees Jesus and Peruvian Sun Gods, between witches and Buddha, between the New Testament, the Torah, the Koran, the Upanishads, guiding local legends, and *historias* (p. 74). She first begins to feel a division in herself at a young age when she observes the class and ethnic difference between herself and a Peruvian indigenous child. Then, later in life, she lives in whole fashion within both of those divisions.

As a young child, she learns feminine behavior as a performance. She begins to understand the difference between the expectations placed on Latina girls and *gringa* girls: close your legs, sit prettily, walk daintily (p. 144-5). These moments helped her to see a difference in expectations placed upon the Latina and the White woman. She says:

[B]y the time that I was grown, I knew there were two women I could be—the Latina or the *gringa*—and that at every juncture I would need to choose one. I picked my way through life, deciding to try one identity and then the other. I transformed myself into an all-American in high school; became Peruvian again in college. I was a good Latina in my first marriage, going to the altar with the first man who ever touched me, hanging my future on his, never reaching for him in bed. And then I was the good *gringa* in my second, throwing out all the rule books and following my heart. (p. 145)

In learning the different parts, she learns to play the different people. Her identities are like twins to one another. They have the same body, but they are the own separate person. They share a similar background but have an autonomy all their own.

The twin identities, separate from one another, exhaust the same body that they share. Arana has to learn when and where to perform her different identities. The twin-hybrid is always on guard for cues that maybe the other twin should be filling in at this moment in this context. Even if they are separate, sometimes they are not exclusive from another. Arana explains:

It is exhausting, the transit between worlds, that two-way vertigo. I was half and half.... But I hardly thought I was better off for it. I had two heads, two hearts. I was as unwieldy as Siamese twins on a high wire: too awkward for equipoise, too curious about the other side. (p. 194)

There is still a self-consciousness in the twin-hybrid identity, but that self-consciousness is not the guilt associated with imposter-hybrid status, the “lies” of the multiple-role performer, or the “half” gringo that serves other purposes. Instead, the twin strategy concerns agency—a constant fluid, dynamic, and complex conception of identity that not only survives within US discourses of race and ethnicity, but thrives in the performances it creates.

Johnson, Urrea, and Arana all speak to the ways that their hybrid identities are both thrust upon them as a series of expectations and as resources for agency to language their identities. As a continuum of strategies, each writer names the “recurrent situations” they inhabit. As hybrid individuals, their identities are fluid, dynamic, and complex because they are always already interpolated in a history of racial discourse that demands

authenticity, purity, and identification with or against White discourse, practices, and institutions. Johnson, Urrea, and Arana cannot answer those demands. Their strategic answers run on a continuum of performances of hybridity.

The mongrel-hybridity offers opportunities to call upon different heritages of the individual. The homeless-hybridity offers opportunities to resist obligations to a heritage past but rather create meaning and home where one is. The bridge-hybridity offers opportunities to link both sides of identities to each other—without becoming or “being” either one. And finally the twin-hybridity is a way to separately be both identities and realize that neither necessarily has to pay tribute to the other. These different hybridities are some strategic answers to the problems of the trappings of the Latina/o-White hybrid identity.

Hybridizing Art with Love

In nurturing these memoirs, I have found these works tend to the particular lives articulated, but also express more generally the challenge of being alive in, on and through an identity that is mystifying at worst and freeing at best. These authors spoke of their critical engagement with the world, and in turn, provided equipment for living within the Latina/o-White hybrid identity and within the contradictions in anyone’s life.

Gloria Anzaldua (1999) opens her essay “*La conciencia de la mestiza*” with a recognition of José Vasconcelos’ vision of *la raza cósmica*. In the late 50’s and early 60’s, Jose Vasconcelos wrote *Obras Completas*, and within these four volumes he developed the idea of *la raza cósmica*. In the prologue to *La Raza cósmica*, he writes: “The central thesis of the present book is the distinct races of the world tend to mix more and more until they form a new human type composed of a selection from each of

existent lands” (1958, p. 903, as cited in Haddox, 1967). He believes that this mixture stands to create a better human. Victoria Bru de Caturla (1959) emphasizes that he is not proposing a new eugenics of the human race, but rather he believes that this mixture of groups will be inspired out of sexual attraction and love. She writes:

Inspired by the same artistic genius which marks his philosophical works, he assigns as the law of this process of ethnic fusion an aesthetic eugenics which will be directed by a mysterious sense of pleasure in the presence of the better and more perfect (which has been obscured by the utilitarian and rationalistic forces in present-day society). (p. 58, as cited in Haddox, 1967)

Out of love and attraction comes a human race of mixtures. Because these people are conceived in love and attraction, they offer the possibility of a world that is more accepting. Anzaldua’s essay, which begins with Vanconcelos’ vision, follows with the difficult psychic restlessness that children of *la raza cosmica* face. With these new possibilities, come new difficulties of identities.

In trying to finish this chapter, I perused books within my own small library. Sometimes the books were tangentially related to my topic, but out of desperation and distraction I flipped through their pages nonetheless. In Phillip Lopate’s (1994) edited collection, *The Art of the Personal Essay*, two of my own typed pages fell out and landed at my feet. I picked them up to read an essay I had written in 1996 about the day my mother told me that I am half-White and half-Latina/o. Later in my life, I published this essay, but only after culling out and watering down many, many details. There is a passage that I did not publish because, at the time, I thought the contradiction was too

strong and would need too much explanation. When my mom told me about my Mexican father, she also tried to explain the relationship:

She said, “We dated for a long time. He really loved me. I just couldn’t marry him.” She doesn’t explain. “He wanted to move to California. We planned to meet up and leave for California, but I never showed. I chickened out. I never met him where we planned to meet.”

Until re-finding this essay, I had forgotten these details of love. Richard Rodriguez (2002) speaks to the sexual side of race and argues that race is about sexual attraction and taboo: “The word race encourages me to remember the influence of eroticism on history. For that is what race memorializes. With any discussion of race, there lurks the possibility of romance” (p. xv).

Anzaldúa emphasizes that her written works become performances for others as they read them. As I have read these memoirs, I have found strategies for a performativity of hybridity. When I tell people, “I am half-White and half-Latino,” I have told them little about me. The subject and predicate can be reversed to “Half-Latino and half-White am I.” In the performative statement, there is no performance. When I think “I am half-Latino and half-White,” I also am sometimes at a loss for the performance of who I am. However, when I say that I have possibilities with my hybrid identity and that I participate in those possibilities, then the “I” of who I am belies the range and depth of myself. The range and the depth of who I am is now more nuanced through my performances of these memoirs. Performing these memoirs’ words, I have learned performance strategies for myself. Elizabeth Bell (1995) explains the self-lessons of performances. She emphasizes that a pleasure-centered economy is an important part

of learning to live within and resist dominant discourses on our bodies and our identities. When we stand within the self during a performance and feel the pleasures of the words and our new imaginations about our bodies and our identities, we learn to re-think the possibilities of our existences. She permits that: “‘Standing within the self’ is the operational ethics of this performance aesthetics for its emphasis on pleasure, materiality, and agency is *a priori* to the relational valorization of text, other, and ‘dialogic’ ecstasy” (p. 112). Therefore, the lessons learned about the self can be just as, if not more, valuable than the lessons learned by and through textual analysis. Still, the lessons taught in these memoirs—about language that creates selves as imposters, mongrels, homeless, bridges, and twins—say nothing about love. A hybrid performativity should speak of familial love: parents, siblings, children, grandparents, *abuelos, primos, y hermanas*. These, after all, are the people who create us.

A hybrid performativity should speak of sexual desire, too. Vasconcelos was onto something when he emphasized that the mixture of the races was valuable for the world. Out of pleasure, differences would come together to create even more difference and even more pleasure. I am quick to be reminded of the lesson of Valdivia and Anzaldúa that hybridity is not all *jouissance*. However, as Rodriguez (2002) says, “[W]e live in a nation whose every other impulse is theatrical, but whose every other impulse is to insist upon ‘authenticity’” (p. 67). Valdivia’s and Anzaldúa’s warning is a strong lesson that with an embrace of hybridity comes a responsibility to critique who/what this embrace of hybridity serves. The Latina/o-White hybrid individual feels the beat of these impulses and is loyal to both. And to critically live within in those contradictions is, truly, the most pleasurable way to live.

Chapter Five
A Grammar of Hybridity in the Subjunctive Mood

Becoming allies means helping each other heal.
--Gloria Anzaldua, *Allies*

In December 2004, a friend calls with a last minute invitation to see the production of “La Virgen del Tepeyac” staged by El Teatro Campesino. She’s my adventuresome friend, an East Texas high school teacher turned Doctoral Education Professor who is always up for a road trip. Ear to the phone, I stand in my apartment shaking my head, readying to say “no.” I am reluctant to give up an evening of writing to see the production of a story I have known since childhood. The story of La Virgen de Guadalupe can be considered a Christmas season tradition for Catholic Mexican-Americans, much like “The Nutcracker” for White people. Scanning my disheveled makeshift home office, she says that she will do all the driving, it only takes three hours to get there, and we will definitely return that night. Stressed from writing and re-writing my dissertation, I decide to escape into the holiday season and my “no” becomes “yes.” Upon hanging up the phone, I look up news about the production on-line, finding the following article:

Celebrating more than a quarter of a century of tradition at the beautiful Old Mission at San Juan Bautista, El Teatro Campesino returns with the 2004 production of LA VIRGEN DEL TEPEYAC, its biennial spectacle of vibrant music, sacral theater and Aztec dance.

This special Christmas offering, dramatizing the four apparitions of Our Lady Of Guadalupe to the Indian messenger Juan Diego in 1531, is a reenactment of the miraculous events that inspired the religious rebirth of the Indigenous Mexico, a mere ten years after the Spanish Conquest.

Appearing in the powerful vision of light and faith one early morning in December, the Mother of Christ spoke to newly baptized Juan Diego in his native Aztec language. She asked him to relay a request to the Bishop of Mexico that a temple be built in her honor on Tepeyac Hill, where the Indians had worshiped Tonantzin (Our Mother) for centuries before the arrival of the Conquistadores.

Adapted by Luis Valdez from 17th century text, El Teatro Campesino's La Virgen Del Tepeyac is performed and sung entirely in Spanish and Nahuatl (Aztec), with accompanying librettos for English speaking audiences. Attended by tens of thousands of faithful followers, farm worker families or urban theater aficionados over the last three decades, the spirit and music of the play provide a highly moving and joyous experience for all, transcending any language barriers and touching the spiritual essence of the holiday season.

Arriving late, my friend and I skulk into a side door of the church-turned-theatre. We scoot into a pew behind a young Latina/o couple holding a toddler in a Dodgers-themed outfit. Except for the inquisitive toddler, no one seems to notice our late arrival. Everyone is focused on the cast, dressed in Aztec plumage, singing "Paloma Blanca." Hearing the song takes me back to my own childhood. As they sing, I too sing in a low tone, remembering a childhood of South Texas Christmases, seasonal visits to the Catholic Churches, and a lifetime of contemplation of Virgin Mary apparitions.

The play progresses up and down the nave, and I am lost in the story as if this is my first exposure, my first interpretation. All performances offer multiple sites for concentration and interpretation. From playwright to director, actor to audience, script to body—there are many possibilities for understanding a production. Elin Diamond (1996) explains that while there are multiple sources for interpretation, they are still based upon shared cultural understandings: “Every performance, if it is intelligible as such, embeds features of previous performances: gender conventions, racial histories, aesthetic traditions—political and cultural pressures that are consciously and unconsciously acknowledged” (p. 1). Diamond asserts: “[I]ndeed performance in all its hybridity would seem to make the best case for interdisciplinary thinking” (p. 7). These multivalences of meaning allow for various interpretive experiences.

During my own interpretive experience of this play, my mind spins as I try to land my concentration. Here I am watching Luis Valdez play the character El Obispo. Valdez is often credited as one of the men responsible for helping to shape what Chicano means on a national level: “A major force in [Latino] theater, [he founded and runs El Teatro Campesino]. Through it, he has done more than anybody else to make the theater, at a grassroots level, a tool for social and political change for Chicanos” (Meyer, 20011, p. 277). Here I am watching the story of La Virgen de Guadalupe—an apparition tale that helped to bring the indigenous people into the folds of the Catholic Church. I have been to her apparition sites on three different continents and in four different countries (i.e., United States, Mexico, Venezuela, France); I have even studied one of her apparitions in Florida during my Master’s program. Here I am in the Mission San Juan Bautista—a structure that helped to “conquer” the New World, and to “settle” what is now California.

I grew up visiting the missions of San Antonio, where they helped to “settle” what is now Texas. I did my graduate work making weekend drives to St. Augustine, the first Spanish settlement in the New World. The Spanish contribution to U.S. history has always been more tangibly real to me than any New England tale of colonies.

My performance-studies sensitive mind spins with possibilities for the meanings of my surroundings. As I watch the performance, the baby boy in front of me drops his Dodgers baseball cap. I smile, pick it up, and hand it back to him. This night is a night that his young mind will not be able to remember, but this night is a time for me of history, materiality and agency that I will never forget. Spinning together the Chicano movement, the Catholic Church, and the residues of Spanish colonization—I am written with the traces of this performance. For me this performance represents the thing done (the historical with its material effects) and the doing (reinscribing and reinventing Latina/o-ness). This performance becomes a moment of awareness of performativity. “As soon as performativity comes to rest on a performance, questions of embodiment, of social relations, or ideological interpellations, of emotional and political effects, all become discussable” (Diamond, 1996, p. 5). I am hyper-aware of my own questions of attachment to and critique of this production. I monitor the performance as a “contested space, where meanings and desires are generated, occluded, and of course multiply interpreted” (p. 4). An audience member speaks French and English, but little Spanish, and she leans over to me to interpret “obispo” for her. “Bishop,” I whisper back. The baby spins around to look at us, *as if* he were ready to answer her question if I could not.

La Virgen del Tepeyac reminded me that the theatrical is never outside of performativity. Indeed, the theater requires the audience to read the production through

its various texts (costume, body movement, stage, etc.) and understand the iterations of these meanings either within or without the guidance of dominant discourse.

Performance studies scholars, like myself, pay keen attention to these various texts for understandings of how micro-processes of performance recreate and resist the macro-process of culture. Widening performance to exist beyond the stage, performance theorists see performative aspects in the everyday life and focus on those everyday instances. My dissertation project moves beyond the theater to understand the Latina/o-White hybrid individual from a performance perspective.

Overview of Significant Findings within the Chapters

The purpose of this study is to explore the performativity of the Latina/o-White hybrid individuals and his/her relationship to the constructions and negotiations of hybridity within the current discourse of race and ethnicity. For this study, I focus on interviews with nine individuals, use stories from my own life, and analyze three memoirs. These very different forms allow me an examination of a continuum of discussion—from the often hesitant and convoluted interview, to my own attempts to combine theory and praxis in performative writing, to the literary art of the memoir, both polished and published within canonical conventions of literature. Despite these different forms, all the self-identified Latina/o-White individuals speak to the difficulty of imagining and enacting a hybrid identity. This study seeks to articulate these difficulties and imaginings as lived experience, theory, and performance come together to argue for and against hybridity as a model for contemporary identity.

Janelle Reinelt (1999) expresses the relationship between the quotidian and the theatrical for performance theorists. While respecting the history of theater and the

manifestations of its cultural contributions, performance theorists are pushing past the doors of the theatre to explore performativity in a range of cultural performances and in everyday, mundane performances. These theorists are “committed to articulating an acute awareness of cultural differences and historical specificities, producing work on race, gender, and sexuality as they are asserted and inscribed in performance: as they become performative” (p. 202). In work on performativity, race has more recently been addressed. Previous to performativity’s application, race was consistently considered within the realm of the visible. Using the invisibility of sexual orientation as juxtaposition to race, Reinelt writes: “In the United States, race and sexual preference have been constituted as binary opposites in a visual economy of readable identity. Race, understood as the manifest truth of melanin, forms the polar opposite of the ‘hidden truth’ of sexual preference” (Reinelt, p. 226). However, the theory of performativity expands possibilities for understanding race rather than just limiting understandings of race to the ocular. This dissertation has sought to provide examples of the performativity of race using the Latina/o-White hybrid individual as exemplar.

In Chapter Two, I interview nine participants who have one Latina/o parent and one White parent. Against a backdrop of the U.S. racial discourse on Latina/o-ness and Whiteness, the participants explain the experiences of their identities. I divided their responses into four main themes: constructing and negotiating identities through material practices, through the visual, through discourse, and through performative acts. All the participants express living in the tensions and possibilities of their Latina/o-White hybrid identity. While Whiteness was consistently re-centered in their self-perceptions, this re-centering disrupts a naturalness to their racial identity. No longer is race naturally linked

to ocular perception for these participants. Rather, race is understood beyond the visual but also into the performative. This disruption of naturalness, even if not capitalized upon, allows room for a more imaginative approach to race.

In Chapter Three, I utilize the Mexican pop singer, Paulina Rubio, as a backdrop to my own theoretical and material performative embodiments of hybridity. I deconstruct the perceived hybridity of Paulina Rubio, and I theorize the lived-experience of my own hybrid performativity. Our globalized media system is a generator for the possibility of hybridity, but interpretations of this hybridity exists at a local level. Finally, I demonstrate how hybrid performativity, while theoretically achievable, loses its material efficacy. In the realm of local practice, the enactment of hybridity is still up against powerful racial ideologies.

In Chapter Four, I do a close-reading of three memoirs written about and by Latina/o-White hybrid individuals. First, I theorize how their texts are performances. Then I discuss three performative trappings found across the memoirs: language as a binary/hierarchy trap, the performance of Whiteness, and how words produce their subjects and effects. Hybridity, following performative injunctions, is both thrust upon by late-capitalist global society and a strategy for existing within late-capitalist global society. This range of hybridity, being thrust upon and being a strategy, is reproduced as a continuum across different hybridities of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual. The continuum moves across five hybrid-strategies for languaging identity: imposter, mongrel, homeless, bridge, and twin. Finally, I discuss how a necessary component of the creation of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, both romantic and sexual love, is left out of the continuum, but should not be left out of the imaginative possibilities of this

hybrid performativity.

Performativity & the Latina/o-White Hybrid Identity: Performing the Textual Self

In writing the introduction to the tenth anniversary publication of *Gender Trouble*, and in consideration of the critiques of the work, Judith Butler (1999) reflects upon the relationship between race and the theory of performativity. She writes:

[T]he question is not whether the theory of performativity is transposable onto race, but what happens to the theory when it tries to come to grips with race. Many of these debates have centered on the status of ‘construction,’ whether race is constructed in the same way as gender. My view is that no single account of construction will do, and that these categories always work as background for one another, and they often find their most powerful articulation through one another. Thus, the sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once, and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis. (p. xvi)

Butler’s reflection on race and performativity calls for a reading of “multiple lenses” when examining the enactments of identity. Her call is what this study seeks to answer. With the interviews, with my own story and with the memoirs, multiple lenses were utilized throughout. Since the ocular is not reliable for the hybrid individual, my lenses were outside of the visual. Stretching the metaphor of lens, I tried to attend to details beyond the visual and into the aural (e.g., language) and affect (e.g., emotion). Not only in our self-enactments but in our readings of the world, a multiplicity of meaning and interpretation is inherent in the understandings of the Latina/o-White hybrid individual. In the split between Latina/o-ness and Whiteness as they are attached to issues of class, gender, and sexuality—I sought to demonstrate the layers of the identity

of the Latina/o-White hybrid individuals.

In examining the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, I have sought to push at the limits of the theory of performativity. Through my participants, my "self" and the memoir authors, my underlying question has consistently been one of agency. In each chapter, I am most curious about whether or not the Latina/o-White hybrid individual can find and can enact agency due to their identity. Butler argues that self-expression is still dressed in language and the linguistic politics therein. Thus she is warning that expression is not without its politics. She writes, "I am not outside the language that structures me, but neither am I determined by the language that makes this 'I' possible" (p. xxiv). Therefore, we are delivered to others within the "grammar that establishes my availability to you" (p. xxiv).

The Latina/o-White hybrid individual is not grammatically correct. We confuse subject/verb agreement—sometimes we are one, sometimes we are two. We pollute a sentence with more than one language—sometimes Spanish, sometimes English, sometimes Spanglish. We switch up vocabulary as we go along—mongrel, twin. In English, "My name is Shane." In Spanish, "*Me llamo Chango.*" I move from subject to predicate while still in the same body. Our words' etiology branches and borrows as do our complex family trees. From the unsettled participants, to my own frustrations, to the visionary memoir authors—we move between the linguistic and the theatrical, between the languaged and the enacted, between thrust upon and the strategy. In these moments of grammatical adjustment, we meet the demands of dominant discourse and sometimes we only approximate those demands. Importantly, in these moments, is the answer to my question of agency. In these moments, there is agentic enterprise—for the interview

participants, for myself and for the memoir authors.

Our situation is not unique, however. Heterosexuality, femininity, middle-classness—these identities are just as unsettled and offer just as many possibilities for ranges of performativity as the Latin-White hybrid individual. The difference between these status quo identities and us is that the grammar of these status quotidian identities has been well-established and promulgated. The Latina/o-White hybrid identity is still within various facets of novelty. “Hispanic” has been relatively recently coined and understood. Whiteness is very recently under intellectual scrutiny. Hybridity as an identity is most recently being considered and weighed.

Therefore, the imaginative possibilities of the Latina/o-White hybridity lie in its grammatical awkwardness. This identity draws upon two identities that have two different relationships to privilege. For the Latina/o, cultural capital has been lost or has never been accessible. For the White, cultural capital has been unfairly gained as entitlement or is threatened to be redistributed. For the Latina/o-White hybrid individual though, cultural capital is in abundance—and this is the default. In the experience of racial difference between both Latina/o and White, the Latina/o-White hybrid individual understands the zero-sum paradigm of racial discourse—and we understand the constructedness behind that paradigm. Reallocation, apportioned quantities, limitations—all of these assumptions of cultural capital create subjects that insecurely demand greed, punishment and retribution. Under these assumptions of scarcity emerge individuals who dictate a grammar of pessimism. For the Latina/o-White hybrid individual though, our grammar is more optimistic. Our grammar is consistently in the subjunctive mood: *as if* the toddler in front of me in the church were ready to answer the

question.

Our excess of cultural capital allows us to understand the fictions of reality as desirable foundations for our "selves". Our excess of cultural capital allows us to understand theoretical performativity as composed of materiality, history, and agency—and all three of these elements are in excess, not in short supply or finite qualities. While performativity is productive, "the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of style" is inherent in the Latina/o-White hybrid identity (Butler, 1988, p. 520). And while our identity is not outside the grammar of performativity, it is outside the correct grammar of racial identity and therefore within the racial identity's clumsy yet creative grammatical structures.

Implications for Future Research in Hybridity

Performance Studies research should theorize Latinas/o identity as a Communication process. Performativity provides such a vehicle for the study as it is "embedded in 'liturgy' but also as 'ludic excess, as limited by 'canonical theatre' but also as 'political intervention,' as 'citation' but also as transformative practice" (Tulloch, 1999, p. 10). Between "rules" and "play" between art and politics, between saying and doing, performativity is productive for communication research. Within the extant literature on Latina/os in Communication, there are problems of specificity. For example, much of the current work that does address Latina/o populations remains ethnically specific, focused predominantly on groups such as Chicanas/os (Delgado, 1998a, 1998b; Flores, 1996) or Puerto Ricans (Cordova, 2004; Milburn, 2001). Furthermore, the types of Communication studies are narrowly relegated to rhetorical studies (Calafell and Delgado, 2004; Cordova, 2004, Delgado, 1999, Flores, 1996; Flores

and Hasian, 1997; Jensen & Hammerback, 1985) and media studies (Delgado, 2000; Flores, 2000; Valdivia, 1998, 2000). In addition to the rhetorical and media studies approaches, only a small amount of studies have employed qualitative or performative methods (Calafell, 2004; De la Garza, 2004; Delgado and Calafell, 2004; Martinez, 2000). Against this backdrop, this dissertation has added to Communication scholarship by bringing to light issues that seek to create more complex and layered understandings of Latina/o identity by specifically examining White-Latina/o hybrid identities.

This body of research also points to three implications for future research. While my study looked at Latina/o-ness and Whiteness in combination with one another, studies theorizing Latina/o identity that deny a recentering of Whiteness can break the binary/hierarchy trap. My own study was critical of Whiteness, and I realize that Whiteness is a component of racial politics that cannot be denied. How to theorize Latina/o identity without necessarily paying homage to the power of Whiteness? This most obvious way to accomplish this could be to look at other hybrid racial/ethnic identities that are not in combination with Whiteness.

A second implication is to continue doing performance studies work that addresses hybridity, and to always keep that work centered on the political implications within hybridity. Guillermo Gomez-Pena (1996) says “Once the hybrid model is depoliticized, we will have to look for another paradigm and a new set of metaphors to explain the complexities and dangers of our times” (p. 13). Many metaphors have been used: border, subaltern, bridge. However, our ideological, social, even geographical realities shift—and so should our metaphors for explaining our complicated subject positions. Janelle Reinelt (2002) drawing from Robert Weimann reminds us that we are

in a new information age that raises questions of audience competencies in deconstructing our performativity. She says:

[C]hanging conditions of authorship and reception need constant examination in order to avoid the premature acceptance of the foreclosure of invention and creativity,... the challenge of our postmodern moment is to examine the resilience of authority in representation, and the conflict that inevitably marks it. (p. 213)

Performance studies work on our more and more complicated relationship to text and performance should be maintained—pushing through the limits of current languaging of current reality. To name that metaphor here would be pre-emptive. My own research has gone in the direction of, maybe, “grammar,” or “love,” or “the subjunctive.”

Within the realm of race, there should be more attention to children of mixed-coupling and how they do or do not resist current racial discourse. Additionally, there should be attention to other identities as well, e.g., bisexuality, hermaphrodites, partial physical impairments. Within the identity of these “not quites” and “sortas” are identities of wholeness that may allow us to heal ourselves from the painful discourses of either-or. From within the fluxing experiences of these identities will come the metaphors “to explain the complexities and dangers in our times.”

My final implication was inspired by a relatively recent *TPQ* journal. In the April 2004 issue of *Text and Performance Quarterly*, is a Performance in Review titled, “Paul Bonin-Rodriguez’s *Memory’s Caretaker*: A TPQ Forum.” Following the review are an artist’s statement and five responses. When I received this journal in the mail, my eyes widened and then narrowed upon reading the name Bonin-Rodriguez. I thumbed to page 182 and began to read the performance, eager to hear another Latina/o-White hybrid

individual's story. In Bonin-Rodriguez's artist statement he explains his identity: "I wrote *Memory's Caretaker* in stages.... Because I had been invited as a Latino, I felt a need to speak to how I experienced my hyphenated participation in Latinidad, as a constant and complex arbitration of belonging and not from within and without" (p. 182). And there it was—the hybrid performative moment where he explains his last name and in turn his identity. Bonin-Rodriguez goes on to explain his experience with the history, materiality, and agency of his hybrid performativity.

The disappointing responses to Bonin-Rodriguez's work speak to the final implication for my own research. The responses failed to adequately or seriously consider the possibilities inherent in his Latina/o-White hybrid identity. Each respondent of course, finds his/herself in his work: the gay White catholic, the queer performance theorist, the storytelling expert, and the Mexican American feminist. By having five different respondents, we get five different approaches to his work; but somehow that does not seem to be enough. Through these five responses we get a different sliver of perspective about Bonin-Rodriguez's work. I would prefer to see one respondent respond five different ways, or even all the respondents respond five different ways. If there is one lesson from my dissertation and from being a Latina/o-White hybrid individual it is that there is never "one" anything. Multiplicity of meanings can be found in anything that is languaged. Since language is semantically unstable, then the self is just as unstable. Since grammar is malleable and alterable and is composed of rules that were made to be broken, then the grammar of a person's identity is much the same. Rather than each finding only his/herself in the performance, each should find their various selves in the performance—and express those various selves.

At the end of Bonin-Rodriguez's performance piece, his grandmother passes away saying the Rosary. De la Garza (2004) explains: "As Catholics, we are taught to pray the rosary as a way to reach Mary, the mother of God... The rosary is about the mysteries in the life of Mary. Joyful mysteries, sorrowful mysteries, and glorious mysteries" (p. 56). His ending brings me back to the beginning of this chapter—with attention to the Virgin Mary.

If you Google my image, you will find only one photo of me on the Internet. I am wearing a pressed, white button down shirt, and behind me is "Ida." She is my *comadre*—for lack of a better explanation (godmother in Spanish, but also often used as a term of endearment for an adult with whom you are close). As an undergraduate, I rented a room from her at 1216 W. Russell Place. Her husband had passed the year before, and quickly, she became my friend and my parental influence. The day that picture was taken was the day of my college graduation. In Bonin-Rodriguez's piece, I discovered that he and his grandmother lived only blocks from Ida and me in San Antonio. I know well the places he mentions. Ida and I—like Bonin-Rodriguez and his grandmother—frequented the Luby's Cafeteria on McCullough, the park at Woodlawn Lake, the Walgreen's on San Pedro.

In Fresno, on the night that my friend picks me up to go to see La Virgen del Tepeyac, I am on the phone with Ida. It has been months since we have spoken, and after receiving her Christmas card in the mail, I miss her too much not to call her, despite being pressed for time. On the card envelope, her hand writing has become scrawl. On the phone, her voice is thinner than I have ever noticed. I begin the phone call by singing "Paloma Blanca" and she warbles right along with me. When my friend knocks on the

door, I apologize for the short phone call explaining I am going to a play. She excuses with me a laugh and says, “I love you. I love you. I love you. God Bless you *mi’jo*. Hurry home.”

That night at the play, I notice the “in Corrections” of the play, and wonder if they are subversive spins. Aztec dancers are played by blonde haired, blue eyed actors. Spanish church clergy are all played by black haired, brown skinned actors. And most noticeably, the Virgin de Guadalupe, the paragon of chastity, is a bit sexy. These creative reiterations of the cultural, sexual and historical meanings are instabilities that I cannot label as definite subversions. However, I am hopeful. Just as the Latina/o-White hybrid individual, exists and resists within the performativity of race—it is the instability of that performativity that leaves the performance of ourselves and all others open for a multitude of possibilities.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of South Florida

Information for People Who Take Part in Research Studies

The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in a minimal risk research study. Please read this carefully. If you do not understand anything, ask the person in charge of the study.

Title of Study: Latino-White Hybrid Identity: Performing the Textual Self

Principal Investigator: Shane Moreman

Study Location(s): CSU Fresno, Speech Arts Building, Room 35

You are being asked to participate because you have one Latino parent and one White parent.

General Information about the Research Study

The purpose of this research study is to understand the communication processes individuals use as they try to make sense of, understand, and perform their multiple ethnic identity, as a result of having one Latino parent and one White parent.

Plan of Study

I will present an informed consent form to you to read. Then I will go over the informed consent form and answer any questions you may have. Then you and I will both sign the informed consent form.

Next, I will turn the tape recorder on and you will answer questions about your identity. The interview will follow a flow that is unstructured and has open-ended answers. Once the interview has concluded, I will turn the tape recorder off. The total time for the interview will be one hour or less. Also you will only meet one time. The days and times we meet will remain flexible so as to accommodate your schedule.

Payment for Participation

You will not be paid for participation in this study.

Benefits of Being a Part of this Research Study

By taking part in this research study, you may increase our overall knowledge of Latino-White hybrid identity individuals. Also you potentially help us understand how multiethnic individuals of any background can and do explain their identity.

Appendix A (Continued)

Risks of Being a Part of this Research Study

The only risk from being part of this project is the discomfort you might feel when talking about yourself.

Confidentiality of Your Records

Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board and its staff and others acting on behalf of USF may inspect the records from this research project.

The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way. You are free to adopt a “pseudonym” for yourself. I will only identify you by that name. I will be the only person with access to the data. All data will be kept locked in a filing cabinet in my office. Research investigators are required to keep all research related materials, including all IRB correspondence for no less than three (3) years. If, at the end of 3 years of study completion, I find the data is no longer needed then I will destroy it. If the data is still needed after three years, it will continue to be locked in a filing cabinet in my office and then be destroyed.

Volunteering to Be Part of this Research Study

Your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to participate in this research study or to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive, if you stop taking part in the study.

Questions and Contacts

- 1 If you have any questions about this research study, contact
 - a. Shane Moreman 559.278.2994
 - b. Dr. Elizabeth Bell 813.974.6833
- 2 If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-5638.

Appendix A (Continued)

Consent to Take Part in This Research Study

By signing this form I agree that:

- 1 I have fully read or have had read and explained to me this informed consent form describing this research project.
- 2 I have had the opportunity to question one of the persons in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.
- 3 I understand that I am being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to participate in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.
- 4 I have been given a signed copy of this informed consent form, which is mine to keep.

Signature of Participant Printed Name of Participant Date

Investigator Statement

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above research study. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands the nature, demands, risks, and benefits involved in participating in this study.

Signature of Person obtaining
Informed Consent Printed Name of Person
Obtaining Informed Consent Date

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

The day is [day of the week].

The time is [time of the day].

I am Shane Moreman and I am here with [Participant's Name].

1. How do you explain your ethnic background?
2. How was your ethnic background explained to you?
3. When is your ethnicity ever a topic for you?
4. When is your ethnicity ever an issue?
5. Was there a particular age when you became aware of your ethnic background?
6. Are there advantages to having both a Latino and a White parent?
7. Are there disadvantages to having both a Latino and a White parent?
8. What do people assume about your ethnicity?
9. Tell me a story about when someone completely understood your background.
10. Tell me a story about when someone completely misunderstood your background.
11. Is there anything I did not mention or ask that you would like to bring up?

Appendix C: Letter of Support

Dr. Kathy Adams, Chairperson
California State University, Fresno
Department of Communication
5201 North Maple Avenue M/S SA46
Fresno, California 93740-8027
PH: 559.278.4546
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April 6, 2004

University of South Florida Institutional Review Board
Division of Research Compliance
12901 Bruce B. Downs BLVD, MDC35
Tampa, FL 33612-4799
PH: 813.974.5638
FX: 813.974.5618

Dear USF Institutional Review Board:

Mr. Shane Moreman is a newly hired faculty member in the Department of Communication at California State University, Fresno. He is currently completing his dissertation and will be conducting interviews in his faculty office located in the Speech Arts Building, Room 35.

The reason for this letter is to confirm the appropriateness of this office for his proposed interview procedure. The office is perfectly conducive for such interviewing. Also, the office meets all regulatory standards (e.g., ADA) and is easily accessible for the research population he is interested in interviewing. Additionally, Mr. Moreman has projected only a minimal risk for participants, and if participants decide to withdraw during the interview procedure or thereafter, his office would not provide any adverse or unanticipated problems with such a withdrawal.

I have read his IRB proposal and I find his office to be appropriate for Mr. Moreman to conduct his dissertation research in the IRB approved manner. Also if there are unanticipated or adverse effects of the interview, his office is located on campus at CSU Fresno and therefore has adequate provisions to handle such events.

If you have any questions regarding this off-site research, please feel free to contact me at the above address, phone number or email.

Sincerely, Dr. Kathy Adams

About the Author

Shane Moreman's intellectual work doesn't "focus" doesn't "address," doesn't "represent," and doesn't "center." Rather, Moreman's work blurs, avoids, perverts and uproots notions of race and ethnicity at local, national and global levels. An underlying theme in much of his work is not to help create voice for the disempowered, but to help open the ears of the privileged.

He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1996. He received his Master of Arts Degree in Communication from the University of South Florida in 1998. He received his Doctorate Degree in Communication from the University of South Florida in 2005.

While finishing his doctorate degree he took a job as Assistant Professor in the Communication Department at California State University, Fresno.