

LATINA TEACHERS' ETHNOLINGUISTIC IDENTITIES, SOCIOCULTURAL
ROLES, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

by

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(Under the Direction of Linda Harklau)

ABSTRACT

This multiple-case study of six Latina language teachers in a new Latino community demonstrates how factors other than race impact student-teacher relationships where racial congruency exists. To further the discussion on the recruitment of Latina/o teachers, this study asks, *How do Latina teachers' ethnolinguistic identities impact their relationship with students, their sociocultural roles, and their classroom practices?* Conducted in the state of Georgia, where less than 2% of teachers self-identify as Latina/o, school personnel who worked with Latina teacher participants were also interviewed to better understand the context of the schools and the expectations others had of Latina teachers. Observation and interview data were collected over the course of an academic year, then coded and analyzed inductively and recursively. As teacher educators, administrators, and policy makers continue to recruit teachers of color to meet the needs of students of color, more information is needed to address how race affects the professional positioning of teachers of color and how social contexts impact student teacher relationships where racial congruency exists.

To fill this gap, this study reveals that "Latina" teachers often contest the term "Latina" and other ethnic descriptors. Moreover, even though Latina/os are deliberately recruited for their linguistic lagniappe, administrators prioritize factors other than ethnicity when looking at teacher candidates to ensure their students have effective teachers to pass standardized tests. This study also draws attention to Latina teachers' perceptions of their value added attributes, and considers Latina teachers' roles as cultural and linguistic interpreters. This study calls for safe spaces and culturally responsive pedagogy in classrooms to promote student and teacher inquiry. Lastly, this study examines Latina teachers' instructional methods through a culturally responsive lens, and asks if being Latina dictates whether or not a teacher employs culturally responsive methods. Results from this study may provide directions for ways to better support teachers of color, in particular, Latina teachers, as they negotiate both their ethnic identities and their emerging roles as bilingual and bicultural faculty in new Latino communities.

INDEX WORDS: Latina Teachers; Bakhtin; Critical Race Theory; Majoritarian Tales; Internalized Racism; Culturally Responsive Teaching; Identity; Teachers of Color; Student-Teacher Relationships; Interpretation; Language Ideology; Language Policy; Hybridity; Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Education; Qualitative Research; Multiple Case Study

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my parents, who inculcated in me a sense of pride in my home culture and my home language. To my father, who modeled the value of hard-work and who repeatedly asked that I study, as it was his belief of knowledge, “*nadie se lo puede quitar.*” And to my mother, who modeled the practice of “*aguantar,*” and advised, “*no se quede atras mi’ja.*”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recent demographic changes in the U.S. have brought about a boom in the number of students of color who attend U.S. public schools (Fry, 2007). The largest of these groups are Latino and Black students. In 2005-06, Latinos accounted for 19.8% of all public school students, up from 12.7% in 1993-94. During this same period, Black public school enrollment also rose slightly—to 17.2%, from 16.5%—while the White population fell sharply, from 66.1% to 57.1% (Fry, 2007). In contrast to the rising racial diversity in the student population, however, the teacher pool across the U.S. remains largely White (Banks & Banks, 2000; Milner, 2003). Even though the percentage of teachers of color has recently increased, from 13% in 1999-2000 to 17% in 2003-04 (NCES, 2007), the gains are modest and they fluctuate. A case in point is the dwindling representation of Black teachers with 20 or more years of experience (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Furthermore, teachers of color are more likely to teach at the elementary level than at the secondary level (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). For example, Henke et al. (2000) point out that only 29% of new Hispanic teachers entered the profession at the secondary level.

The underrepresentation of teachers of color is not a new phenomenon in U.S. history. As a result of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s and 1970s, college students of color have had more career options than ever before; accordingly, fewer have majored in Education. Even as fewer people of color entered the field of education, many teachers of color retired during the 1980s and 1990s (Dilworth &

Brown, 2008). Consequently, the recruitment for teachers of color intensified during the 1980s and 1990s (Darling-Hammond & Dilworth, 1997), and professional organizations (e.g., Carnegie Forum on Education, 1986; Education Commission of the States, 1990) made national calls to recruit teachers of color (Ford & Grantham, 1997) under the premise that teachers of color would automatically relate to students of color because of a shared minority status. These notions are recurrent in the speeches of Education policy makers, although emerging literature contests this premise. Furthermore, as Delpit (1995/2006) argues, the mere presence of teachers of color does not assure that they will be heard.

Problem Statement

Noting the significant impact teachers have on students, researchers have recently called attention to the importance of quality teacher-student relationships (Cornelius-White, 2007; McCombs, 2003). And while numerous studies have been conducted to better understand student-teacher relationships in K-16 classrooms, the literature that explores the nature of relationships among teachers of color and students of color is limited. When studies do address race, participants are often “clumped” (Lugo-Lugo, 2007) into racial panethnic groups. Thus, most studies fail to identify how factors other than race (e.g., socioeconomic status, nationality, generational status) impact student-teacher relationships where there is racial congruence. Furthermore, although emerging research describes how minority teachers form teacher identities (Aguilar, MacGillivray & Walker, 2003; Galindo, 2007) and how students of color and teachers of color interact (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Burant, Quioco, & Rios, 2002; Weisman, 2001), limited

work actually juxtaposes these two bodies of literature (see Weisman & Hansen, 2008 for example).

Two years ago I conducted a pilot study in northern Georgia revealing that within-group differences among Latinos (e.g., nationality, socioeconomic level, linguistic proficiency) impact student-teacher relationships among Latina teachers and Latina/o students (Colomer, 2009). Given the impact panethnic heterogeneity had on Latina/o student-Latina teacher relationships, I propose this study to understand how Latina/o teachers respond to their social worlds.

As teacher educators, administrators, and policy makers continue to recruit teachers of color to meet the needs of students of color, more information is needed to address how race affects the professional positioning of teachers of color and how social contexts impact student teacher relationships when there is racial congruency. Looking at six Latina teachers, this study asks, *How do Latina teachers' ethnolinguistic identities impact their relationship with students, their sociocultural roles, and their classroom practices?* Accordingly, the guiding questions for this study are:

- 1) How do teachers' conceptualization of their own ethnic identities impact their relationships with students?
- 2) What is the value added of recruiting and hiring Latina/o teachers?
- 3) What is expected of Latina teachers and what do Latina teachers expect of themselves because of their ethnic status?
- 4) How do Latina teachers negotiate multiple languages and sociopolitical experiences in their classrooms?
- 5) Are all Latina teachers equally successful in applying culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms?

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Recent demographic changes have brought about a boom in the number of students of color who attend U.S. public schools (Fry, 2007). While other ethnic minority students (e.g. Asian, Native American) are part of the umbrella term students of color, Latino and Black—namely African Americanⁱ—students are the largest groups of students of color in the U.S. In 2005-06, Latinos accounted for 19.8% of all public school students, up from 12.7% in 1993-94. During this same period, Black public school enrollment rose slightly—to 17.2%, from 16.5%—while the White population fell sharply, to 57.1% from 66.1% (Fry, 2007).

While the nation's student population is becoming more diverse, its teachers remain largely White (Banks & Banks, 2000; Milner, 2003) and the number of teachers of color is in fact declining (Ford & Grantham, 1997; Irvine, 1988). Moreover, Gay and Howard (2000) remind us that “86% of all elementary and secondary teachers are [White] European Americans. The number of African American teachers has declined from a high of 12% in 1970 to 7% in 1998. The number of Latino and Asian Pacific Islander American teachers is increasing slightly, but the percentages are still very small (approximately 5% and 1% respectively). Native Americans comprise less than 1% of the national teaching force” (pp. 1-2).

ⁱ All Black students are often grouped together, however, I call attention to the within group differences (e.g., Black African immigrants, Black Caribbean immigrants) of the Black students enrolled in U.S. schools.

This decline has generated much concern among educators, including professional organizations (e.g., Carnegie Forum on Education, 1986; Education Commission of the States, 1990) that have made national calls to recruit teachers of color (Ford & Grantham, 1997). Indicative of policy makers' interest in recruiting more teachers of color was former U. S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley's (1998) endorsement of these arguments. He explained,

If we are to be responsive to the special demands and great opportunities of our nation's pluralistic makeup, we should develop a teaching force that is diverse, as well. Many of the increasing numbers of students who will be filling our schools in the next decade will be children of color. Many will be sons and daughters of immigrants. Children *need role models*—they need to see themselves in the faces of their teachers. We need teachers who can *relate to the lives of diverse students*, and who can connect those students to larger worlds and greater possibilities. We need teachers from different backgrounds to *share different experiences and points of view with colleagues*. This sharing enriches and empowers the entire profession and students from all backgrounds (p. 19, as cited in Gay, Dingu, & Jackson, 2003, emphasis added).

Here, Riley highlights the themes that most frequently arise when justifying the need for more teachers of color. Although I will highlight other reasons for why teachers of color are recruited, serving as a role model for students of color is the most often reported benefit of employing teachers of color. Riley continues to say that teachers of color can “relate to the lives of diverse students” and that teachers of color will be able to “share different experiences and points of view with colleagues.” Again, these notions are recurrent in the literature however, as I will discuss later in this chapter, emerging literature contests the premise of assuming that all teachers of color automatically relate to students of color because of a shared minority status and as Delpit (1995/2006) argues, the mere presence of teachers of color does not confirm that they will be heard.

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the sorts of expectations imposed on teachers of color by school institutions and by the teachers of color themselves. In order to understand how institutions and teachers of color themselves have come to position the presence of teachers of color as critical for the success of students of color in U.S. schools, I will first take a short glimpse into the history of U.S. Education. Second, I will look at both the institutional expectations of teachers of color and the institutional barriers teachers of color have had, and continue to have, to attain those expectations. Third, I delve into what teachers of color hope to accomplish when they enter the profession and the factors that influence their ability to reach students of color.

A Historical Account of Teachers of Color in the United States

The impetus for this chapter is the increased demand for teachers of color in U.S. public schools. Yet, the notion of recruiting, training, and hiring more teachers of color is not a recent phenomenon. In this section I take a brief historical look at the education of students of color from a few select communities and the roles of teachers of color in those communities to better understand what has led to the current context of teachers of color in U.S. schools. While this overview is not exhaustive, it does provide a glimpse into the challenges teachers of color have faced over time.

The discussion of teachers of color in the U.S. emerged as early as the late 1800s. During slavery, African American teachers represented the only formal education for African American youth (Ford & Grantham, 1997); thus, upon the abolishment of slavery, arguments were made for the importance of African American teachers teaching African American children (Gordon, 1994; Hawkins, 1994). Yet, the lack of government support brought about impediments to the education of African American students.

Namely, the government in the South did not fund public schooling for African American students; therefore, the education of African American students depended on the generosity of Northern philanthropic organizations and churches (Dilworth & Brown, 2008). Importantly, however, “while there was a strong advocacy for Black teachers’ social practices (i.e. community, leadership, and role modeling), African American educators consistently argued that improved educational outcomes must equally occur through sound educational training and professionalism” (Dilworth & Brown, 2008, p. 427).

The schooling of Native American students resulted in a form of cultural annihilation where they were taken from their families on the reservations to study at off-reservation boarding schools such as the Carlisle School founded in 1879 (Reese et al., 2001). By the early 1900s, a growing number of Native American teachers worked at these off-reservation schools where they incorporated culturally informed practices into their pedagogy (Dilworth & Brown, 2008). Their presence helped Native American students “cope within a school context that devalued American Indian culture” (Dilworth & Brown, 2008, p. 433) Similar to African American educators who called for the “educational training and professionalism” of African American teachers, in 1928, the Merriam Report underscored the importance of race and culture to Native American education and called for the post secondary training of Native American teachers (Dilworth & Brown, 2008).

In California, Chinese immigration mushroomed between 1849 and 1882 (Dilworth & Brown, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Although this demographic shift increased the number of school aged Chinese children, Chinese children were not

allowed to enroll in U.S. public schools until 1858, when San Francisco passed a law stating that Chinese students could only enroll in segregated African American schools. Moreover, by 1871, exclusionary laws claimed that Chinese American children had no legal claim to education and so they were barred from public education from 1871 to 1884 (Dilworth & Brown, 2008). Because of these restrictions, Chinese parents placed their children in Chinese language schools that were privately operated and maintained, and where teachers were bilingual, lived in the same community, and helped students negotiate being both Chinese and American (Dilworth & Brown, 2008).

The Mexican American experience resembles the Native American experience in that public schools instituted “Americanization” practices by banning the use of Spanish in schools and by removing all curricular content and pedagogical practices associated with Mexican culture (Dilworth & Brown, 2008). Moreover, not only did exclusionary policies keep Mexican American students from speaking and maintaining Spanish, but the schools made no effort to teach Mexican American students English so many Mexican American children did not enroll in school (García, 1981). As a result, Mexican American community leaders opened their own schools with Spanish speaking teachers who taught Mexican children to become literate in both English and Spanish (DeLeon, 1982). By the early 1900s, Latino community leaders in New Mexico were able to develop a bilingual teacher training school, “Spanish-American Normal School at El Rito” to educate “Spanish speaking *natives* of New Mexico for the vocation of teachers in the public schools of the counties and districts where the Spanish language is prevalent” (Dilworth & Brown, 2008, p. 428, emphasis added).

As I demonstrated in this abridged account, the education of students of color in the U.S. has often been compromised. Aware of U.S. schools' inadequate and discriminatory practices, communities of color have nurtured their own teachers and have supported their own schools to close the academic and social gaps in students of color schooling experiences. For the better part of two centuries communities of color have argued for the academic training of teachers of color in their communities to teach their youth. Nowadays, while heritage communities are still prevalent, more students of color are enrolled in the same schools with their White peers. In what follows, I discuss institutional expectations of teachers of color in more current schooling contexts where the presence of teachers of color is not proportional with the students of color enrollment.

How Institutions Position Teachers of Color

Institutional Expectations of Teachers of Color

Although the need for teachers of color is frequently linked to closing the achievement gap of students of color, the contributions of teachers of color are viewed more in the social and relational arenas than in academic arenas (Gay et al., 2003). Whether directly or indirectly, teachers of color serve as mentors, role models, disciplinarians, advocates, cultural translators, and surrogate parents for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ford & Grantham, 1997). Of these roles, the most commonly mentioned in the literature are those of *role models to students of color* (Dee, 2004; Ehrenberg, 1995; Ford & Grantham, 1997; Kennedy, 1991; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Loehr, 1988; Stewart, Meier, La Follette, & England, 1989) *advocates for students of color* (Arce, 2004; Burant, Quioco, & Rios, 2002; Ford & Grantham, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto & Bode, 2012), and more recently, *representatives of professional*

diversity to White students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ford & Grantham, 1997; Loehr, 1988; Witty, 1982; King, 1993).

Serving as Role Models to Students of Color

The institutional expectation for teachers of color is that they serve as professional role models—not only to inspire students of color to pursue teaching and other professions—but also to illustrate that education is not only for White people. “Without sufficient exposure to minority teachers throughout their education, both minority and majority students come to characterize the teaching profession—and the academic enterprise—as better suited to Whites” (Loehr, 1988, p. 32). Similarly students from low-income backgrounds might not have out-of-school opportunities to meet professionals of their own race or ethnicity (Gay, et al., 2003). Likewise, Valenzuela (1999) found that newly arrived immigrants often had greater aspirations because in their native country they lived among Latinos that were professionals (e.g., doctors, lawyers, businessmen and businesswomen) whereas Latinos born in the U.S. were less likely to see Latino professionals. In the same vein, Kennedy (1991) recommends that if “we want students to believe that they themselves might one day become scientists, writers, or mathematicians...then they need to see diverse examples of such people, including at least one who looks like they look” (p. 660).

Acting as Advocates for Students of Color

Because of how people of color have been historically marginalized, teachers of color continue to be recruited as advocates for students of color. Quijano and Rios (2000) contend that “ethnic minority teachers bring sociocultural experiences that, in the main, make them more aware of the elements of racism within schooling, more willing to

name them, and more willing to enact a socially just agenda for society . . . and schooling” (p. 487). In the same vein, Ladson-Billings (1994) found that success and resilience among Black students who were academically “at risk” could be attributed to those African American teachers who took an interest in them and provided moral and political support. King (1993) refers to this type of teaching as "emancipatory pedagogy"—a pedagogy that is culturally affirming and responsive to the needs of Black and other minority students (Ford & Grantham, 1997; King, 1993).

Representing Professional Diversity to White Students

Similar to students of color, White students also see few people of color in professional capacities. For this reason Ford and Grantham (1997) note that teachers of color have a positive influence on the development of White students as it provides them with a sense of diversity. Supporting the notion that teachers of color provide a positive influence for White students, Carol Juneau, who chairs the Montana Indian Education Association, suggests that Native American teachers can counter the stereotypes that others have of Native Americans (Gay, et al., 2003).

Barriers to The Recruitment of Teachers of Color

As noted above, teachers of color are sought by institutions to serve as role models and advocates for students of color and to model to both students of color and White students how people of color are capable of attaining professional positions. However, while institutional expectations for teachers of color are high, the barriers to attaining professional status are equally high.

Although *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* was touted as instrumental to the formation of a more equitable education for students of color, communities of color

continued to struggle to attain an equitable system of education for their children. An unexpected outcome of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* was that as an exceedingly large number of Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs or were demoted. Furthermore, this seminal court case dictated that White school boards and superintendents were now in control of critical personnel decisions, such as hiring, firing, and transfers, in previously all-Black schools (Irvine, 1988). As a result, African American teachers and administrators in the South were either dismissed or demoted, and the schools hired White teachers and administrators to deal with the increase in student population (Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). Moreover, in Louisiana, the new position of “sub-principal” created for African American administrators lacked the power of positions created for Whites (e.g., curriculum supervisor, area principal, supervising principal, curriculum coordinator) (Arnez, 1978; Torres, et al., 2004). These changes resulted in 39,386 documented cases of Black teachers losing their jobs in 17 southern states, between 1954 and 1972—while at the same time many of the Black community’s most competent teachers were reassigned to schools in the White community (Irvine, 1988).

In addition to not having an equal standing with White teachers in the public school system, people of color face other obstacles in choosing to become teachers. The factors that contribute to the decreasing number of teachers of color are multiple. First, there has been a decline in the number of college students who declare teacher education as their major (Irvine, 1988). This decline could be attributed to poor or negative experiences people of color may have encountered as K- 12 and post-secondary students (e.g., poor student-teacher relationships, inadequate career guidance and counseling)

(Ford & Grantham, 1997). Second, there has been a decline in students of color enrolled in college overall (Irvine, 1988). According to Ford & Grantham (1997), college participation rates by minorities continue to be below that of White students. Third, the range of career options for people of color has widened (Irvine, 1988; Quioco & Rios, 2000; Su, 1994) and other disciplines aggressively recruit minority students—particularly in science and math-related disciplines (Dilworth, 1990). Lastly, the institutionalization of teacher competency tests has decreased the number of teachers of color (Gordon, 1994; Irvine, 1988; Kennedy, 1991). As documented in the assessment data from the National Teachers' Examination (NTE), minority students perform less well than their White counterparts on standardized tests for teaching (Bianchini, Kimble, Pitcher, Sullivan, & Wright, 1995).

Although the above factors depress the number of teachers of color in schools of education, fear of being perceived negatively or of being looked upon by other teachers as being “less than” also contributes to people of color not entering the profession (Burant, Quioco, & Rios, 2002; Gordon, 1994). One particular participant in Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios’ (2006) study felt challenged by the stereotype that Latinos should only teach Spanish. Likewise a number of other participants in this study felt they had to prove themselves and so one of their coping strategies was to set the bar high for themselves—and their students—which resulted in teachers of color being perceived as either “too tough, crazy or freaks” (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006, p.19). In addition to proving themselves in their content areas, a participant in Maylor’s (2009) study felt the expectation to be ‘twice’ or even ‘three times as good’ as a role model because if Black

teacher role models failed to be that good then the probability was that they would not be recognized (by staff and students) as positive role models.

Although teachers of color continue to be recruited with the expectation that they will be role models and advocates to students of color and models of diversity to all students, a number of institutional barriers still exist. Without taking measures to combat underlying ideologies, such as racism, institutions will continue to challenge teachers of color. The unexpected repercussions of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* serve as a reminder that policy should be thought out carefully and should include the voices of all stakeholders. Thus, if postsecondary institutions continue to recruit teachers of color without modifying curricula to empower teachers of color by encouraging them to embrace their heritage or if schools continue to hire teachers of color without creating a safe and supportive work place, then recruitment efforts will be in vain and institutional expectations will not be met.

How Teachers of Color Position Themselves

Teachers of Color Position Themselves as Role Models

Just as teachers of color are positioned as role models, the literature suggests that teachers of color frequently position themselves as role models for students of color (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006; Cunningham & Hargreaves, 2007; Irvine, 1988). While I have focused primarily on the research conducted in the U.S., the demand for teachers of color is increasing beyond the borders of the U.S. In a study conducted in England, for example, Bennett (2007) found that the majority of Black pre-service teachers in a particular teacher education program chose teaching as their profession so they could serve as role models to Black “at risk” students.

In the US, Foster (1993) noted that African American teachers in her study felt it was important that they provide African American students with an understanding of their role in the community and the world. Furthermore, Adair (1984) argued that Black teachers viewed themselves as ethnically responsible for preparing Black youth for their future leadership roles in the enhancement of the quality of life for Black people. In the same vein, a Latina participant in Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios' (2006) study of U.S. Latino pre-service teachers felt gratified that she was able to bring "a different element; one that children would not get from a teacher [who] is not Hispanic" (p. 20). Another participant felt her presence showed "younger children of color that it is possible to get into agricultural education" (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006, p. 20). And yet another concluded that it was the responsibility of "well-educated" and "articulate" professionals of color to provide "authentic" ideas about being a person of color (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006, p. 20).

Teachers of Color Challenge Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes

The potential to challenge racial-ethnic stereotypes and to replace them with acceptance of people of color as professional individuals is also suggested to be motivation for teachers of color (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006). Milner (2003) considered a person's cultural and gendered understanding of their experiences and how that understanding altered their worldview his or her "cultural comprehensive knowledge." Reflection about this knowledge influences teachers' instructional planning and decision making. Thus, teachers whose race or ethnicity match that of their students' race and ethnicity are not better teachers for students of color because of that characteristic alone, rather, teachers of color with a developed critical consciousness are

the ones who can lead communities of color out of social oppression and foster contexts wherein ethnic minority students flourish (Burant, Quioco, & Rios, 2002).

According to Foster (1990) African-American teachers hold a philosophy that seeks to achieve pride, equity, power, wealth, and cultural continuity among African American children. Foster (1990) believes that African American teachers accomplish this goal by going beyond the subject matter. They help African American students value achievement, as well as understand the personal value, the collective power, and the political consequences of academic achievement rather than failure. When teachers of color instill the benefits of academic achievement in students of color, teachers of color not only challenge racial/ethnic stereotypes, but they provide students of color with the social and academic skills needed so that they too are prepared to confront these stereotypes.

Delpit (1994) asserts that White teachers might misunderstand or misinterpret the behavior of minority students and deprive them of appropriate instruction by labeling them as special education or simply not understanding or valuing the diverse understandings and learning styles that students of color bring to the classroom. In a recent study a colleague and I (Colomer & Harklau, 2009) found that some Latina teachers of color positioned themselves as advocates to ensure their Latina/o students needs were met. In one case, a participant—Magda—took it upon herself to bring books written in Spanish to school so Latina/o students would have reading material they understood. Magda built a small library of Spanish books in her classroom for Latino students at her school since “they didn’t have any other teacher offering them that.” She reported that even “huge, big, mean looking kids” who were otherwise unenthusiastic

about school would nonetheless come and borrow Spanish reading material. In doing so, other teachers and administrators began to see that Latina/o students did in fact have an interest in school.

In a separate case, Margarita took it upon herself to keep a close eye on Latina/o students' studies and counseled them continuously. She shared the example of one student who the counselors had wanted to keep in a lower track because he spoke very little English when he first enrolled. Margarita shared,

Oh my word, it's so exciting to see like X, for example, he's a junior, and he is...totally on track for graduation, passing all of his classes...he [had] very little, very little English, I mean from little to nothing when he came and I was just checking his grades the other day, and absences and everything to make sure that he's doing what he's supposed to be...he's passing everything! I am like so excited, I'm like, you go boy, you show these people that you can do this! You are college material! You can do it!

In the above excerpt Margarita acknowledges Latino students' abilities and ensures their placement in college bound courses. Furthermore, she underscores her role as the Latino students' advocate by "othering" the counselors, "you show these people that you can do this" (Colomer, 2009).

In response to the misunderstandings White teachers may have of students of color, Latino teachers of color in Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios' (2006) study professed pride in inspiring their students in ways that White educators could not. Working in the rural U.S., they were often the only teachers of color in their schools and so they desired to bring a multicultural perspective to the schooling enterprise. Moreover, these participants emphasized the sense of satisfaction that came from awareness that they were fulfilling cultural and linguistic responsibilities, not only as role models to students of

color, but also to White students who would likely not otherwise be exposed to persons of color.

Factors That Influence Teachers of Color Ability to Reach Students of Color

Although teachers of color may have high expectations for themselves to combat the obstacles students of color might face, the literature suggests that they endure a number of challenges of their own.

The Acculturation of People of Color

A real, yet difficult topic to discuss in both colleges of education and K-12 schools is race and how race affects social interactions in school communities—specific to this conversation—how teachers of color are positioned by institutions and by themselves because of their race/ethnicity.

In a race-conscious society, the development of a positive sense of racial/ethnic identity not based on assumed superiority or inferiority is an important task for White people and people of color. The development of this positive identity is a lifelong process that often requires unlearning the misinformation and stereotypes we have internalized not only about others, but also about ourselves. (Tatum, 2001, p. 53)

Drawing from Tatum (2001), Milner (2007) describes the notion of people of color “internalizing misinformation and stereotypes” as being “kidnapped” into believing that they are inferior and so they themselves concentrate on negative attributes of communities of color. In line with these concepts, the more acculturated a racial and ethnic group becomes, the more the group adopts the mainstream perception of teachers.

Flores and her colleagues (2008) contend that acculturation has had another detrimental affect on the education on students of color. They found that a teacher’s acculturation level (e.g., ethnic and social class differences) could result in pedagogical and curricular mismatches that would ultimately have a negative impact on the

achievement of students of color. An example of acculturation is the loss of potential teacher candidates' heritage language. Because Latinos are often not taught Spanish in schools with the goal of superior language proficiency, they tend to become English dominant adults. Thus, schools may find individuals who are willing and determined to become bilingual educators; yet, these individuals may lack the required academic language proficiency (Flores, Keehn, & Pérez, 2002).

Where the demand for Spanish-English bilingual teachers is high, Latinas/os are often heavily recruited for their assumed proficiency in both English and Spanish, and their ability to relate with Latina/o SOC. However, because not all Latina/o teachers have a “critical identity consciousness” (Urrieta, 2007), they may not be prepared to teach Latina/o students more effectively than teachers of other ethnicities. As Weisman & Hansen (2008) assert,

It would be erroneous to assume that just because a teacher is from a home culture that is different from the mainstream this teacher will know how to provide culturally responsive instruction or, more important, be conscious of practices that perpetuate inequality and be willing to challenge them. Life experiences and the degree to which individuals have accommodated and assimilated into the dominant culture shape their perspectives (p. 4)

Even when teachers of color are employed, they may choose to identify with the majority. In their study of ten Latino pre-service teachers enrolled in a California Bilingual Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development credentialing program, Weisman & Hansen (2008) found that the participant who identified more strongly with the White students in the suburban schools did not want to be associated with the negative stereotype image of Latinos, especially Mexicans, and she stressed that her cultural background was not Mexican. Similarly, in a study of Latinas who struggled to negotiate their Latina teacher identity Aguilar, MacGillivray, and Walker (2003) found

two overarching strategies Latina teachers employed to navigate school discourse: 1) silencing or distancing themselves, or 2) internalizing the values and perspectives of the school and its teachers.

In addition to negotiating their identities as novice teachers, novice teachers of color also experience a new form of “practice shock” when SOC question their cultural identifications (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). Thus, it can not be assumed that teachers of color are better prepared than White teachers to succeed with SOC (Sheets, 2004); instead, teacher educators must take steps to support the cultural knowledge of teachers of color and to prepare teachers of color to negotiate sociocultural issues in politically laden schools.

Modeling Cultural Sensitivity in Teacher Education Programs

While some Latina/o teachers lost the proficiency of their home language to acculturation, Subedi (2000) found that some Asian American teachers felt the need to co-opt White values and identities if they were to be successful and accepted in the school community. However, their identity negotiation began before they began to teach. Teachers of color in teacher preparation programs often feel excluded, invisible, or silenced so they refrain from voicing their insights (DePalma, 2008; Feuerverger, 1997). This sense of invisibility experienced in predominantly White colleges is in accord with Su (1996) who pointed out that students of color “have fought to enter higher education and professional training, only to find that the place was not quite created for them” (p. 123).

Existing research and theory suggests that teachers of color feel out of place because they are never provided a space to talk about the meaning of racism in schooling

or are taught how to challenge the system. Although this socialization happens to all novice teachers, scholars believe that the effects are greater for teachers of color (Clarke & Flores, 2001). Teachers of color experience a disruption in their worldview when their vision for schooling, and their personal and cultural identities collide with traditional teacher education and schooling contexts. Consequently, Burant, Quioco, & Rios (2002) suggest that many of the teachers of color who succeed and persist in the profession endure powerful socializing pressures to minimize their cultural capital and appear to be like all the other (mainly Euro-American) teachers to be successful in the profession. The irony lies in the fact that teachers of color experience a school system that negates their cultural knowledge yet years later the same system assumes they will know how to be culturally responsive in their teaching (Aguilar, MacGillivray, & Walker, 2003).

When Students Do Not See Teachers of Color as Role Models

Although many teachers of color enter the profession with the desire to serve as a role models for students of color, teachers of color acknowledge that adopting such a position can be stressful because being a role model brings the expectations of being a perfect person of color and/or being representative of the entire community of color (Bennett, 2007). Moreover, “matching” in role modeling discourse is not only misguided, but it is likely to founder where students do not recognize the teacher of color standing in front of them as a role model (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Carrington & Skelton, 2003; Gordon 1994; Maylor, 2009). Additionally, Maylor (2009) found that while some teachers of color did not regard themselves as role models or even desire such a role, they acknowledged that they were positioned as such by parents, particularly where they were the only or one of a few teachers of color in their school. Still, regardless of whether or

not they had chosen to be role models, teachers of color felt the pressure of working with students of color who did not see them as such. When Maylor (2009) noticed that the students of color in her study felt uncomfortable around the teachers of color in her study, she attributed these feelings to the class difference, whether perceived or real, and to the fact that at a societal level people of color were not regarded as authority figures.

Teachers of color often enter their careers with high expectations for themselves. Many hope to be role models for students of color, and even more challenging, they hope to confront racial/ethnic stereotypes by bringing multicultural perspectives to schooling. Yet, people of color endure acculturation to the mainstream culture in varying degrees. Paradoxically, the more teachers of color acculturate the more difficult it becomes for them to convey cultural sensitivity to students of color. Consequently, teachers of color create a chasm between themselves and students of color. In light of the distancing that can occur between teachers of color and students of color, colleges of education cannot assume teachers of color are innately culturally sensitive and should prepare teachers of color to deal with the possibility that students of color may not relate with them as easily as they might expected, and in some situations, students of color may not consider teachers of color role models.

Conclusion

Over the course of an academic year I shadowed six Latina language teachers in northern Georgia with the expectation of contributing to the scholarly conversation of Latina teachers. My participants' experiences both support and challenge findings from previous studies, thus, their voices and practices require the attention of teacher educators and school administrators who recruit Latina teachers. Guided by the research question,

How do Latina teachers' ethnolinguistic identities impact their relationship with students, their sociocultural roles, and their classroom practices? I specifically asked:

- 1) How do teachers' conceptualization of their own ethnic identities impact their relationships with students?
- 2) What are the value added attributes of recruiting and hiring Latina/o teachers?
- 3) What is expected of Latina teachers and what do Latina teachers expect of themselves because of their ethnic status?
- 4) How do Latina teachers negotiate multiple languages and sociopolitical experiences in their classrooms?
- 5) Are all Latina teachers equally successful in applying culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms?

In the following chapters, I present data, and my analysis of these data, to support these inquiries. As each question delves into a unique aspect of Latina teachers' perceptions and practices, I present each chapter in its own theoretical framework. In the fourth chapter, I show that my participants contest the term "Latina" and other ethnic descriptors imposed upon them. In the fifth chapter, I reveal that administrators claim to prioritize factors other than ethnicity when looking for effective teacher candidates; yet, Latinas/os are deliberately recruited for their presumed cultural and linguistic expertise. In the sixth chapter, I share Latina teachers' perceptions of their value added attributes, and consider the impact majoritarian tales have on Latina teachers' relationships with their students of color. In the seventh chapter, I draw on critical race theory and argue for safe spaces to promote student and teacher inquiry. Lastly, in the eighth chapter, I consider Latina teachers' instructional methods through a culturally responsive lens, and ask if being Latina dictates whether or not a teacher employs culturally responsive practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As teacher educators, administrators, and policy makers continue to recruit teachers of color to meet the needs of students of color, more information is needed to address how race affects the professional positioning of teachers of color and how social contexts impact student teacher relationships when there is racial congruency. Looking at six Latina teachers, this study asks, *How do Latina teachers' ethnolinguistic identities impact their relationship with students, their sociocultural roles, and their classroom practices?* Accordingly, the guiding questions for this study are:

- 1) How do teachers' conceptualization of their own ethnic identities impact their relationships with students?
- 2) What is the value added of recruiting and hiring Latina/o teachers?
- 3) What is expected of Latina teachers and what do Latina teachers expect of themselves because of their ethnic status?
- 4) How do Latina teachers negotiate multiple languages and sociopolitical experiences in their classrooms?
- 5) Are all Latina teachers equally successful in applying culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms?

Theoretical Perspective

The questions I explore in this study are dependent on the context, current and historical, in which Latina/o teachers find themselves; thus, I consider a qualitative study appropriate. It is important to note that the essence of this study is based on perception (e.g. how Latina/o teachers themselves perceive their roles in a school context) and

interaction (e.g. the relationships Latina/o teachers form with Latina/o students). Accordingly, constructionism is the epistemological underpinning of this study. Constructionist epistemologies hold that “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world;” thus, “meaning is not discovered, but constructed” and so “people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (Crotty, 2003, p. 8-9).

In line with this epistemological stance, I approach this study from an interpretive position because the Latina/o teachers (units of analysis) represent an underrepresented group (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005). Interpretivism refers to an “assemblage of theoretical variants that guide approaches to qualitative research”(Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005) and will be used to provide a “pervasive lens” on all aspects of this study (Creswell, 2007). Likewise, interpretive research acknowledges that multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, this study relies on qualitative inquiry because it “attempts to understand, interpret, and explain complex and highly contextualized social phenomena” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 17). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry “does not isolate single variables to test their effects using control groups versus experimental groups” nor does it “attempt to generate causal laws that are presumed timeless and universal” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 17). Instead, qualitative researchers follow an interpretive perspective and maintain that reality is constructed when individuals interact with their social worlds (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative studies are conducted to better understand the meaning people have constructed, that is to say, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they

have in their world (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam, there are four main characteristics of qualitative research. First, qualitative research seeks to grasp the insider's view (emic) versus the researcher's outsider's view (etic). Second, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. Third, qualitative data usually involves fieldwork. Fourth, qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy (Merriam, 2009) by building toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained from the field (Merriam, 2009).

This study is further grounded in the precepts of qualitative case study. A qualitative case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 2009, p. 46). Thus, it is appropriate for exploring the “real-life context” of my participants (Yin, 2009, p. 18) because a case study is anchored in real-life situations and results in rich and holistic accounts of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, insights gained from case study research provide tentative hypotheses that structure future research and inform relevant policy.

Multiple Case Study Method

A multiple case study “involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within” (Merriam, 2009, p. 49). For example, a study of six teachers in one high school, would be considered a case study of the school with six subcases. However, in this study, I included six teachers, at more than one site, who shared a common characteristic (Stake, 2006).

Setting And Participants

The current literature provides little detailed information about Latina teachers in new Latino communities, or about the impact these sociocultural contexts have on the relationships Latina teachers maintain with their students. Because this study seeks to fill that gap, understanding the context in which the participants of this study worked and interacted with each other is necessary. Moreover, demographic changes in the state of Georgia are illustrative of national demographic shifts that have impacted public schooling in the U.S. Settlement patterns have shifted markedly and new immigrant communities are springing up in the Midwest and Southeast (Massey, 2008). Furthermore, the redirection of migration flows to emerging gateway states has caused Latino population growth of unprecedented proportions in these regions over the last two decades (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). This demographic phenomenon, sometimes termed the “new Latino diaspora” (Hamann & Harklau, 2010; Hamann, Wortham, & Murrillo, 2002), has brought about striking and relatively sudden changes to the demographics of public schools in affected areas.

State of Georgia And Rustle County Demographics

During the 2010-2011 school year, Rustle County School District had a larger Latina/o student population (25%) than the state average (12%) (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). The White student population (32%) was lower than the state average (44%), as was the Black student population (29%) to that of the state average (37%) (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). The Asian population in Rustle (10%) far exceeded the state average (3%); however, the other ethnic populations represented in the county (i.e., Native Americans and those who self identify as multiracial) comprise less

than four percent of the student population and less than three percent of the state average student population (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). With respect to the district's EL population (labeled LEP on the state's website), Rustle (16%) had over twice the state average (6%). The district's average for students enrolled in ESOL (7.2%) was also higher than the states' average (4.1%). Students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program were comparable, as 52% of the county's student body depended on the program, as did 57% of students in the state of Georgia (see Table 1).

Baymeade Middle School And Kreston Middle School Demographics

At the school level, Baymeade Middle School closely mirrored the average demographics of Rustle County School District; however, Kreston Middle School did not. One third of Baymeade's student population was White, where only 3% of Kreston's student body was White. The Black student population at Baymeade was nearly one third (32%), and nearly a quarter at Kreston (23%). The differences among the Latina/o student population were also noticeably different as Baymeade's student body was a quarter Latina/o, and Kreston's student population was mostly Latina/o (62%). The Asian population at Baymeade was 6% and 8% at Kreston. Both schools had 4% of the other ethnic populations represented in the county (i.e., Native Americans and those who self identified as multiracial) (see Table 1). The EL population at Baymeade was 7% but only 1.6% was enrolled in the ESOL program. At Kreston, the EL population was nearly one quarter (23%), and 8.6% was enrolled in the ESOL program. With regard to free and reduced lunch, 56% of Baymeade's student population depended on the program and most of Kreston's student population (91%) depended on the program for school meals.

Identifying Latina Teachers

Participant selection for this study was criterion-based (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Meaning, the participants I selected matched a predetermined list of attributes that directly reflected the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). The following criteria were used to identify sample cases, that is to say, possible teacher participants for this study: 1) they were Latina/o; 2) they taught in Georgia; 3) there was a Latina/o student population at the school where they taught; and 4) they taught a language in middle or high school (Spanish, ESOL, or Language Arts). I looked at a range of similar contrasting cases to strengthen the precision, validity, and stability of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To identify potential participants, I contacted a Georgia Department of Education (GDE) representative for a list of Georgia schools that included the following information: 1) student race; 2) teacher race; and 3) Latina/o teachers' content area. I obtained information via e-mail because the GDE does not post its most current year of school demographics online. Upon receiving this information, I narrowed the list to include only middle and high schools located within a one and a half hour's drive from UGA. Because only 1.8% percent of teachers in the state of Georgia self-identified as Latina/o (Georgia Department of Education, 2012) (see Table 2), the pool of possible participants for this study was limited. Due to the small selection pool, I did not limit my criteria to Spanish teachers, the content area the majority of Latina/o teachers taught; however, I did set the criteria to Language teachers to ensure the scope of the study did not become overwhelming.

With this added criteria, I further narrowed the list to only include districts that employed at least three Latina/o teachers in each of the following content areas: Spanish, ESOL, and Language Arts. Only four districts met all criteria. Due to the proximity of Rustle County to the University of Georgia (UGA), my base, I looked closely at Rustle's school clusters (the cluster of schools that fed into one particular high school) and found that the Crowley cluster employed the most teachers who met the criteria for this study. After both the UGA and the Rustle County School District Institutional Review Boards approved my study, I invited all identified Latina/o language teachers to participate in my study.

In addition to these teachers, I identified more Latina/o teachers when I met with school administrators to ask for permission to conduct my study at their schools. Meaning, not all Latina/o teachers marked the "Hispanic" box when they completed their personnel paperwork. Thus, even though Baymeade and Kreston showed 17 teachers who officially identified as Latina (see Table 2), there could have been more. Of the Latina/o language teachers identified and contacted, seven agreed to be in the study, six female teachers and one male teacher. All teachers were middle school teachers. Two worked at Baymeade and five worked at Kreston. Because only one male teacher was willing to participate, I decided to focus on the six Latina teachers.

Latina Teachers

In what follows, I provide a snapshot of each Latina teacher. First, I describe Concepción, the only Latina teacher who came to the U.S. as an adult. Then, I portray Soledad and Marilyn, who came as young girls to the U.S. with their families. Lastly, I present Marcela, Taylor and Christina, all born in the U.S.—Marcela to Cuban parents,

Taylor to Honduran parents, and Christina to an “American” mother and an Argentine father. See Table 3 for a more condensed interpretation.

Concepción Salazar. Concepción was born and raised in Puerto Rico. Upon getting married, she moved with her husband to the state of Washington, but returned to Puerto Rico five years later when she divorced. After living in Puerto Rico for 12 years, she spent over twenty years in Connecticut with her son, and had only recently moved to Georgia to live with her son and his family.

Concepción had fond memories of both Puerto Rico and Connecticut, mostly because of her ties to family and church. An only child, Concepción recalled having a wonderful childhood because of her close relationships with extended family members allowed her to travel around the island. Moreover, although her family was not particularly wealthy, she never lacked anything.

I had the support of the family because in Hispanic countries, the family is your support. And I mean you...never need anything because they're all there for you. I had no brothers or sisters, and I don't really miss that because my cousins were my brothers and sisters—we grew up together.

Concepción attended a private Catholic school, run by American nuns, for middle and high school; thus, she learned English at an early age. In addition to English, her schooling kindled her religiosity. However, it wasn't until she lived in Connecticut and worked with the Hispanic Ministry that her faith developed. Her spirituality gave her the strength to overcome the prejudice against Latinos, especially Puerto Ricans, at the time in Connecticut. “My faith really, really grew in Connecticut...I guess due to that, I didn't really mind the prejudice and I was able to speak against it.”

A religious woman, she found solace working as an ESOL teacher at a local church. She earned a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's degree in Education in

Puerto Rico. She later earned a six-year degree in Connecticut. She described the six-year degree as a step between a Ph.D. and a Masters, and called herself, as did everyone else, Dr. Salazar. Concepción was certified to teach ESOL, Language Arts, and Social Studies, however, she taught Language Arts at Rustle because it was “what they had available” when she applied. In addition, Concepción knew the ESOL Coordinator at Rustle Middle School, a former colleague from her years in Connecticut.

Concepción, a sixth grade Language Arts teacher, had over forty years’ experience as a teacher. She had taught adults, high school aged students in Washington, Puerto Rico, and Connecticut. However, her experience with middle-schoolers was limited to her time at Kreston Middle School, where she had taught Language Arts for four years. Concepción’s average commute took over 45 minutes. As a result, she was less involved with the school community. “I’m not from here, I just come here to work. If I have work to do, I take it home because I don’t want to stay here at night...I don’t get involved here at all.” Moreover, she planned to work one more year and then retire.

Soledad Hirsch. Soledad came to the U.S. from Cuba when she was about four years old. She, her two younger siblings and her parents moved to Massachusetts, to a town that was mostly White with few Latinos besides her and her cousins. Thirteen years later, her sister was born. Soledad did not consider to have been raised in poverty. “I wasn’t poor, but my family early on was working, both mom and dad worked early on.” Soledad’s parents both had a grade school education. Her father worked as a janitor and her mother worked in a factory. “So when one was not at home with us, the other one was working, so they kind of traded off.”

Soledad’s family moved to Florida when she was in junior high. In Florida,

Soledad's relatives owned land, so her father bought his own property and worked in construction. At that point, her mother became mostly a stay at home mom. Soledad had a hard time fitting in with Cuban immigrants in Florida, and underwent a culture shock. "Some of them were just, oh, God, annoying! They were like a different culture. These people really act like this? ... These people are mean, they're like vicious, they're like loud-mouths." At home, Soledad's family spoke Spanish; however, Soledad never learned Spanish formally, "I could look at it and make it out and read, just by what it sounds like to me." In high school and college Soledad learned French. Her parents didn't encourage her to study Spanish, as they did her younger sister, who was born in the U.S. Because Spanish was offered at the elementary level in Florida, her sister learned Spanish grammar, while Soledad did not.

When I asked how her ethnicity impacted her schooling, she reverted to her linguistic skills—at that time—Spanish dominant. "When I was growing up, there were no ESOL programs. And luckily, I started in school from the get-go, so I knew Spanish at home, but when I went to school, I learned English right there." Although no one spoke English at home, Soledad learned English "right away" when she entered kindergarten. Her stance was "I guess the expectation was that I learn it, and I did." She had no recollection of ever struggling in school because of language.

Soledad majored in English and minored in teaching at a four-year university in Florida. However, she completed her degree in Georgia when she moved with her husband. Soledad chose the teaching profession because it allowed her the flexibility to be at home. Soledad started her career in a neighboring county, where she taught middle school for five years. Tired of a 50-minute commute, she applied to Baymeade, 30-40

minutes from her home, where she had taught Language Arts, and Social Studies for twelve years. Although she taught sixth grade Language Arts and Social Studies, Soledad was ready for a change. She wanted to teach high school Government, Economics, or History. “Not Language Arts, I have a degree in that, but I don’t want to teach that. That’s not where my interests lay.”

Marilyn Lara. Marilyn’s first two languages were German and Spanish, as she was born on a military base in Nuremberg, Germany to Puerto Rican parents. The daughter of a Colonel with top-secret clearance, Marilyn was raised in a very privileged home. She explained that in the military, “You’re identified by your status, what your rank is. You get more respect and more privileges the higher up you go...So that form of elitism was just kind-of inbred in us.” The summer her family was stationed in Panama, they flew to Puerto Rico for the first time.

I met my cousins who could not speak one word of English, and they met me, who couldn’t speak one word of Spanish...and you should have seen us...there was a love between us. So they ate American food, we ate Puerto Rican food.

After a summer in Puerto Rico, Marilyn’s family—her parents, four sisters and a brother—lived in Panama for five years. By middle school, Marilyn’s father was stationed in North Carolina where her image as a Spanish-speaker was shaken.

Although Marilyn grew up in various linguistic and cultural contexts, she did not consider teaching K-12 ESOL until later in life. When she felt, “the Lord told me I was a middle school teacher.” After working in corporate America for twelve years, Marilyn substituted for ten years. While she was a part-time substitute she taught professionals beginner Spanish and served as the Vice-President of the Hispanic Center, a non-profit institution that reached out to people, for the sake of the gospel, and taught them English.

Marilyn then became an educator, and had worked in the public school system for five years. She had taught ESOL for two years in different county schools when she became displaced. Meaning, the school budget was insufficient to hire her. However, the principal at Kreston—a school 40 minutes away from her home—hired her as an ESOL stellar substitute for a year. The following year an eight grade ESOL position became available and she had held that position for two years.

Marcela Vargas. Marcela and her younger brother were both born in Indiana years after her parents and her older sister left Cuba to start a new life in Indiana. In order to leave Cuba, Marcela’s father, who had a grade school education, voluntarily worked in a Cuban “concentration camp,” as he and his pueblo called it, and slept in concrete cells without ceilings where guards would throw food down to the workers.

When her family arrived in the U.S., the government offered assistance only if they moved to Indiana. No assistance would be given if they stayed in Florida. Expecting a home and employment, Marcela’s father was shocked when he arrived to Indiana and found neither. To provide for his family, Marcela’s father worked at a coal mine, where he suffered from bronchitis, and to earn extra money he sold ice cream during the summer. When Marcela turned five, her family moved to Florida, and she felt it was socially a “step up” for her family. Her mom stayed at home to raise the children, while her father worked and went to night school to learn English.

Although she had always loved education and school, she also had a passion for acting. Marcela had received a full scholarship to study theatre, however, her father discouraged her from acting because he saw it as a hobby and not as a career. As a result, Marcela decided to become a teacher, and earned her teaching degree at a four-year

university in Florida. Having taken some acting classes, Marcela believed that it was in all teachers' best interest to take at least one acting class because "it [acting] teaches us to think fast."

After teaching at an affluent charter school for nine years in Florida, Marcela needed a change. With regard to her five years at Kreston, Marcela explained, "I wanted to work in a place where I was needed and could feel a sense of purpose." When Marcela left Florida, her assistant principal suggested Rustle County. Marcela recalled having four interviews scheduled for Rustle County alone, and attributed the interest in her application to the fact that Rustle County was looking for Latina teachers. Furthermore, she was certified to teach Language Arts, Spanish, and ESOL. "ESOL was a big thing," she added. Marcela, a seventh grade Language Arts teacher, admitted that she knew nothing about the City of Crowley or Rustle County. "I go to work and I go home. I don't live anywhere near it."

Taylor Garza. Taylor is the child of Honduran immigrants. Her parents arrived in New Jersey in June of 1977. A year later Taylor was born and named after the street where her family first lived in New Jersey. Given the timing of her birth, Taylor now jokes with her mother and says, "I'm that baby." She explains, "I have humor about it, I guess, because I'm legit." During the late 1970s Taylor's family grew. Her little sister was born and her two older brothers, who were born in Honduras, joined the family in New Jersey.

Although her parents arrived in the U.S. with visas, their visas expired. As Taylor explains, "They went through the process and got papers and got jobs and all that stuff. That wasn't a big deal back in the late '70s." After living in New Jersey for seven years,

the family moved to the city of Crowley, Georgia. Today, most of her family members are residents, though Taylor and her little sister are the only U.S. citizens of her parents' nuclear family.

Taylor attended Kreston Middle School and Crowley High School as a child.

While a student at Kreston Middle School, she was greatly influenced by her sixth grade teacher, Ms. Peters, who became Taylor's role model and life-long mentor.

Number one, she cared... There was a short time she lived in Bolivia, so I think automatically she somehow related to me. Her father was a doctor and worked in Bolivia, and she really just kind of took me under her wing and kept track of me, even went to my high school graduation, my college graduation, my baby shower, so she's everywhere still to this day. She always still keeps up with me.

As a student, Taylor was a cheerleader, a peer leader, and the school interpreter.

She was the token Latina as there weren't many Latinos in the area and she was one of the few Latinos at Kreston Middle School and later, at Crowley High School. Even though Taylor willingly accepted the role of buddy interpreter when new Latinas/os enrolled, Taylor was a self-proclaimed "hater" and distanced herself from Latinas/os. When her Latina/o peers saw that she did well in school and participated on the student government, they called her a "sell out." However, she was aware of her actions. "I discriminated against my own kind." Moreover, it wasn't until she graduated from college that she started to have a different perspective of Latinas/os.

Taylor, a teacher of five years, began her teaching career at Kreston Middle School. She attended a four-year university in Georgia and majored in Public Relations. Upon graduating, Taylor worked in the Public Relations field in Georgia and then Arizona; however, she returned to Georgia to raise her family. Without a Bachelor's degree in Education, Taylor substituted full-time at Kreston Middle School and took the

PRAXIS, but there were no job openings in the Crowley school cluster so she took a non-teaching job. Two years later, the Literacy Coach from Kreston Middle School informed her that a position had opened and within two weeks, Taylor took a pay cut and began to teach. Taylor taught for four years as a provisional teacher before attaining alternate route certification through the Rustle Teach Program. She taught eighth grade Language Arts and was enrolled in a Curriculum & Instruction/ Administration master's program. Taylor enjoyed teaching Language Arts and chose middle school because she wanted to work with students before they "become grown, where what you say matters."

Christina Fontana. Christina's parents, her mother a White "American" and her father a White Argentine, met in El Salvador while her mother served with the Peace Corps. After living in El Salvador for a year, they moved to the U.S. where Christina was born in a small North Carolina mountain town. Because her father had to learn English, Christina heard very little Spanish at home. Christina recalled learning only a few words, such as agua and ocito during her childhood. When Christina was two, her parents divorced and she stayed in the mountain town with her mother, while her father moved to a larger city in North Carolina. When Christina was seventeen, her mother remarried and Christina described her stepfather as, "Very anti-illegal immigration...and he associates Spanish with illegal immigration. And like my mom was volunteering at a clinic translating, and he gave her such a hard time, she had to stop." Christina pointed out that when she visited home and her stepfather was around, neither she nor her mother spoke Spanish.

As an adult, Cristina was shocked to learn via Facebook that she had an extended family in Argentina. Via Google, she learned that they had been looking for her and her

father.

I found this ad in a paper, it was like “Buscando a Sergio Fontana y su hija” [Looking for Sergio Fontana and his daughter] and it was like Cristina, C-R-I-S-T-I-N-A and then O-F-E-L-I-A, my middle name is Ophelia, but it’s O-P-H-E-L-I-A.

Once she located her half-aunt, Christina continued to communicate with her newfound family, “Now, suddenly, I have a family and ...there’s suddenly a connection from a different country that I never had.

Born in the early eighties, before the Latino boom in North Carolina, Christina went to school with mostly White children. Although one of her elementary classmates would not play with Christina because of her brown skin, Christina fondly recalled getting along with a little Latino in the second grade.

I really liked him because we could talk... and I never met anybody in the school that was Hispanic before... There was just like we had something in common, that our parents are from another country, or that we had a parent from another country and nobody else did.

During her senior year in high school, however, the first Mexican family moved to her small town. With limited Spanish skills, Christina embraced her “senior project” to work with the Mexican newcomers. “I spoke my broken Spanish and like they tried to talk to me, and I’d help them with their homework and things like that...I mean, there was nobody.”

After teaching Spanish in South Carolina for two years, Christina moved to Georgia and had taught at Baymeade Middle School for five years. Christina, an eighth grade Spanish teacher, had grown-up around teaching, as her mother taught Spanish at a private college in North Carolina. Moreover, even though Christina graduated from the Foreign Language Education program, she credited her Spanish teacher preparation to

attending foreign language conferences with her mother and visiting numerous Spanish-speaking countries. Christina, who lived forty minutes from the school, chose Baymeade simply because, “They hired me.” She enjoyed working at Baymeade, because the teachers knew each other and they sometimes got together out of school. Christina even went to Costa Rica with a few of her colleagues during one particular summer break.

School Personnel

To further investigate the context where Latina teacher participants worked, I interviewed Baymeade and Kreston school personnel. Because each school site was unique, the specific school agents interviewed at each school (e.g., counselor, assistant principal, ESOL chair) were not the same (see Table 4). To identify participants, I employed theoretical sampling of school personnel as the study progressed (Merriam, 2009). Meaning, the titles and the number of key informants were identified over the course of the study. In all, five school agents were interviewed at Baymeade Middle School and ten at Kreston Middle School.

Data Collection

Subjectivity

As a qualitative researcher, I am the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, thus, my observations and interviews are filtered through my own perceptions of reality (Merriam, 2009). My ethnicity as a Latina and my previous experience as a Latina teacher in a non-traditional Latino community contributed to my perception of the data collected for this study and how the participants responded to me as I observed and interviewed them. To enhance internal validity, I employed the following strategies, as suggested by Merriam (2009): 1) I asked a colleague interview me at the outset of the

study to clarify my biases (e.g., assumptions, worldview, theoretical orientations); 2) I triangulated the data by employing multiple forms of data collection (i.e., interviews and observations); 3) I conducted long-term observations and; 4) I asked peers to comment on my findings as they emerged. Below I detail how I collected data and explain how each form of data helped to answer the research questions guiding this study.

Interviews

I interviewed teachers to gather data that informed all of my research questions. First, teacher participants' insights revealed whether they echoed or contradicted scholarly policy regarding the effects of teachers of color and the desirability of having a racially diverse teacher population. Second, Latina/o teachers' interview responses indicated their perceptions of how they navigate their identities and roles in new Latino schooling communities.

I conducted three separate thirty- to ninety-minute interviews with Latina/o teachers. These interviews took place during the 2010-2011 school year, one at the beginning of the year, one at the end of the first semester, and one at the end of the school year. I conducted in-depth interviews with these Latina teachers, because they were the units of analysis in this study. I took a three interview approach because "people's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their and the lives of those around them" (Seidman, 2006, p. 16). Thus, "the first interview establishes the context of the participant's experience, the second allows for participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs, and the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them" (Seidman, 2006, p. 17).

In addition to interviewing Latina teachers, I conducted a thirty- to sixty- minute interview with 15 school agents who worked with the six Latina teacher participants to attain their perspectives regarding a diverse teaching force. Because these educators worked daily with Latina teacher participants, their input enriched the data by either re-voicing or contradicting the scholarly policy and/or Latina teachers' perceptions and actions. These interviews took place during the 2010-2011 school year. All interviews took place at a time and location suggested by the participant.

Observations

As a participant observer, I will make observations of the Latina/o teachers' classrooms and shadow the teachers throughout the day during site visits. My expectation is to observe each participant who agrees to be in the study at least twice during the Spring semester of 2010, after IRB approval is attained, with the purpose of building rapport with the teachers and of becoming familiar with the settings. Moreover, during all observations, I expect to engage in informal conversations as they present themselves (Merriam, 2009). Between August, 2010 and May, 2011, I will observe six Latina/o teacher participants once every other week, approximately 18 visits each. Observing teachers over the course of three semesters will inform the second guiding question of this study, how Latina/o teachers navigate their identities and roles in the school communities where they work. While interviews gather teachers' perceptions, the observations will inform how Latina/o teachers' actions mirror their perceptions.

Data Analysis

As espoused by Merriam (2009), data analysis and data collection are simultaneous activities in qualitative research; furthermore, analysis began with the first

interview and the first observation. Furthermore, because analysis occurs concurrently with data collection, the process of data collection guided my understanding of the context and my research questions guided my process. Before I began to collect data, I streamlined my questions to organize my thoughts. I wrote analytical memos as I collected and analyzed data to reflect upon the data and to relate emerging issues to larger theoretical issues (Merriam 2009, p. 136). Initially, these memos suggested reformulations of my research questions. Later on, they dealt with concepts, themes, and events that informed the final analysis and write-up (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As is common in qualitative research, I coded the data inductively and recursively, and generated more analytic memos that informed my analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008).

I conducted three interpretive and analytical forms of writing because in-process analytical writing heightens and focuses interpretive and analytical processes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). First, I wrote asides, which were mostly descriptive in nature and made up the bulk of my fieldnotes. In addition, I wrote commentaries in my fieldnotes, contained in separate paragraphs in parenthesis, to explore problems of access, to document my emotional reactions to events in the field, and to offer tentative interpretations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Lastly, I wrote in-process memos after completing the field observations each day. In-process memos required more time as they were highly analytical. Moreover, they guided the study and addressed practical, methodological questions such as: What questions should I ask to follow up on this event? (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As data gathering and data analysis are conducted simultaneously, the data (i.e., recorded interviews, fieldnotes taken during interviews, observations, and memos) were transcribed immediately after collected in

Microsoft Word and were transferred to ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data program, to facilitate coding.

Conclusion

In what follows, I provide a literature review to explain how this study contributes to current scholarship on Latina teachers. I then delve into the methodology of this study. I provide an overview of my participants, the school context, and the steps I took to collect and analyze data. In the five subsequent chapters, I present my findings that are guided by the following questions:

- How do teachers' conceptualization of their own ethnic identities impact their relationships with students?
- What is the value added of recruiting and hiring Latina/o teachers?
- What is expected of Latina teachers and what do Latina teachers expect of themselves because of their ethnic status?
- How do Latina teachers negotiate multiple languages and sociopolitical experiences in their classrooms?
- Are all Latina teachers equally successful in applying culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms?

In chapter four I address the first question and learn that my participants contest the term "Latina" and other ethnic descriptors. In chapter five, I look at the criteria administrators prioritize when they consider teacher candidates and how ethnicity and bilingualism impact teacher candidates' prospects. In addition, I reveal Latina teachers' perceptions of their value added. In chapter six, I consider Latina teachers' role as cultural interpreters. In chapter seven I study the role of authentic discourse in culturally responsive classrooms, and in chapter eight I consider Latina teachers' instructional methods through a culturally responsive lens. I conclude with chapter nine, as I reflect

upon the lessons learned from my participants and make suggestions for teacher education programs.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF CONTESTED ETHNIC IDENTITIES ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LATINA TEACHERS AND THEIR STUDENTS

As my study progressed, I was often reminded of Norma González and her realization that the language practices of barrio and non-barrio speech eluded the prefabricated niches she had molded when she conceptualized her investigation of language socialization in Mexican-origin homes (González, 2001). Just as González moved beyond the “framed” notions of language (2001, p.18), I continuously reassessed the terminology I selected to label my participants. Although I use the term “Latina” throughout this and forthcoming chapters, I purposefully reveal Latina teachers’ contestation of “Latina” and other ethnic descriptors in this chapter to underscore the complexity that emerges when members of pan-ethnic groups are “clumped” (Lugo-Lugo, 2007) together and expected to automatically connect with each other because of ethnic congruency. Moreover, I present this chapter through a Bakhtinian lens to reveal these teachers’ consciousness formation as they come to understand their own identities as Latinas and, more specifically, as Latina teachers in multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-class school communities.

In this chapter I address the guiding question, *How do teachers’ conceptualization of their own ethnic identities impact their relationships with students?* Specifically, I consider:

- 1) How do Latina teachers relate to the term “Latina” and other descriptors of their ethnicity?

- 2) How do Latina teachers negotiate multiple cultures and languages?
- 3) How does being Latina factor into Latina teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students?

Understanding The Tensions of Identity

In the excerpt below, Gloria Anzaldúa unveiled the tensions of hybridity as experienced by Latinas who have crossed socioeconomic worlds as a result of accrued educational capital.

It means being in alien territory and suspicious of the laws and walls. It means being concerned about the ways knowledges are invented. It means continually challenging institutionalized discourses. It means being suspicious of the dominant culture's interpretations of "our" experiences, of the way they "read" us (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxv).

I chose Anzaldúa's voice to set the tone for a Bakhtinian framed chapter because she highlights the Latina experience. Herein, I provide an overview of Bakhtinian concepts that guide my understanding of the tensions Latina teachers undergo for their own growth and consciousness development, and for their own identity formation in multicultural contexts.

Mikhail Bakhtin grounded his theories in literary discourse; however, his precepts also provide insight to social behavior. In particular, Bakhtin maintained that the ideas of those around us influence our own understanding of the world. He argued, "the ideological becoming of a human being...is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341). Thus, the process of determining our own ideologies, and developing our own consciousness, depends on our transaction with and response to authoritarian enforced discourse.

Separating internally persuasive discourse and authoritarian enforced discourse can result in a collision between differing ideologies (Bakhtin, 1981). While negotiating terminology can be challenging for bilingual Latinas, negotiating the value systems embedded in multiple cultures creates even more tension for Latinas. Bakhtin described the dialogic tension between two belief systems as hybridity. That is to say, the tensions of hybridity arise when centripetal and centrifugal forces act against each other. Centripetal forces maintain a unitary language, whereas centrifugal forces act against the centralization of a unitary language. When the voices that align with established precepts (centripetal) and those that push against long-standing dictums (centrifugal) collide, our consciousness grows.

In the case of individual identities, Hermans & Kempen (1993, p. 78) argued that the self, primarily constructed through language, is a “highly contextual phenomenon” that remains dynamic. Linking his work to Bakhtin’s notions of centripetal and centrifugal forces, Hermans (1984) suggested that an individual’s identity constantly underwent centripetal and centrifugal tensions, subject to both unifying and individualizing forces simultaneously. Consequently, individuals represent themselves in some unified way to the world, yet they also need to allow for dialogue among a range of identities to remain in transaction with the world (Fecho et al., 2010).

Moving forward, I present six Latina teachers’ perceptions of their ethnic identities, their negotiation of multiple cultural and linguistic norms, and how these perceptions influenced their relationships with students in multicultural contexts.

“Latina” and Other Contested Terms

When I first described my study to potential participants they each reacted

differently. Some were eager to participate; however, others agreed with hesitation because they did not consider themselves to be “Latina.” Christina shared that she did not identify with the term “Latina” because her mother always told her that she was not “Latina,” even though her father was Argentine. Soledad, who was born in Cuba and converted to Judaism upon marriage, was also hesitant because she identified more as an American Jew than “Latina.” Marilyn, a fair-skinned Puerto Rican agreed from the start, but questioned the overarching categorization of “Teachers of Color,” as she considered “Color” to mean “Black” and so she thought it did not include her.

Terminology surfaced as a critical element of this study when I realized that by choosing the term “Latina” I was imposing my own ideologies of Spanish-speakers in the U.S., and unknowingly, marginalizing the very teachers I had identified as “Latina.” Intrigued by participants’ contestation of the existent terminology used to label ethnicities in the U.S., I encouraged these Latina teachers to choose terms with which they identified and to explain why the current and more commonly used terminology was too confining. By giving Taylor, Marilyn, Christina, Marcela, Concepción, and Soledad the opportunity to name themselves, they painted a clearer picture of who they had become and how personal trajectories influenced the terms with which they identified. In what follows, I provide a review of the terms these “Latina” teachers chose and why they chose these terms. I then elaborate on how both the context and the audience influenced the terms these Latina teachers used to describe themselves.

Defined for Documentation

Most teachers noted that they used the term “Hispanic” when filling out official documents. Soledad shared, “I don’t call myself Hispanic-American. Hispanic is fine

when I'm doing something that I have to show what ethnic group I am, I'm Hispanic." In line with this use of the term, Christina explained that "Hispanic was a word created by the U.S. government for the census purposes to clump everybody together from Spanish speaking countries." Accordingly, Marilyn defined "Hispanic" as, "very antiseptic, dictionary, no flavor, just bland vanilla, no personality, a label, like a medical term, dictionary term... it's identification code."

Christina was the only participant who did not identify as Latina or Hispanic when she filled out forms. Instead, she marked Caucasian, as her mother taught her to do.

Since I was a little kid...she'll mark it out and write 'Hispanic is not a race'... So I've always just done that. I mean, if somebody asked me if I was Hispanic, I'd probably say, 'No, my mom always tells me I'm not.'

However, Christina pointed out that changing the term would only change the label, and not her identity. Furthermore, she seemed perplexed by the possibility of having a choice. "Can you change? I mean, can you suddenly say that you're Hispanic? It would be nice...because I like having the connection." Nevertheless, by the end of the study, Christina remained confused about the term that best described her, "I don't know, just what am I? Like what do I categorize myself as? I have no idea." When asked how she'd fill out her next application if she had a choice, she responded, "I don't want to change... It would be weird. They'd be like we hired you as Caucasian, and now you're what?" Feeling the need to decide, Christina just threw her hands up and said, "I'm American."

Whether teachers marked Hispanic or Caucasian, they resigned to these terms, even though none felt either of these terms captured their true identity. Even when given the freedom to name themselves, these teachers felt limited to pre-determined labels others had either created or chosen for them. In Christina's case, even though she longed

to connect with her Spanish-speaking roots, she could not free herself from her mother's mandate to be "Caucasian." Thus, even as an adult, Christina did not feel entitled to claim her Latina identity.

Defined by Others

Although many teachers gave in to naming themselves "Hispanic" for the purposes of documentation, some were less accepting of the terms others prescribed. In Marilyn's case, she did not identify as a "Latina," because a very clear image came to mind when she heard the term. "Latina is another way to identify a female Hispanic person that's got a little bit of hoopla in her... I see Latina as just very feminine and out there with the femininity." For Marilyn, "Latina" limited her identity to the stereotypical notions of a sultry woman, and she preferred a term that positioned her as an educated and professional woman. Soledad faulted the generational gap for her disposition towards the term. "No, I don't call myself Latina, I didn't grow up with that. I think that's more of a modern type thing."

Taylor, on the other hand, was ambivalent towards both "Hispanic" and "Latina." As a child, Taylor's father influenced how she defined herself. He would tell her, "I know you were born here, but when they look at you, *tiene cara de India* [You have a Native American face], you say Honduras, you're Honduran, your culture, who you are." Thus, if a Latina/o asked about her ethnicity, Taylor explained, "I know what they're asking me. I look Latino, so I say Honduras." In college, Taylor's international classmates complicated her phraseology as they called her "Grindia" a hybrid term that fused "Gringa" a commonly used term to describe a female "American" and "India" the Spanish term for Indian, or Native American. After negotiating her "ethnic label" for

years, Taylor embraced the hybrid term “Hispanic American” and explained, “When I say ‘Hispanic American’ it’s because I want you to know that I am second generation here. That’s how I’m defining myself.” In Taylor’s case, the terms “Latina” and “Hispanic” were acceptable, but they were both too confining because they isolated her identity to her home culture, and failed to acknowledge her English-speaking, Americanized identities that also contributed to how she defined her self.

Overall, these teachers distanced themselves from “Latina” and other ethnic labels either because they did not want to be associated with the image the terms connoted, they did not feel they belonged to a sole community, or they did not consider a particular term to encompass their complex and layered identities that had evolved over the years.

Multiple Linguistic and Cultural Worlds

Many teachers shared the frustration of being positioned between two cultures and languages. From childhood to adulthood, teachers experienced the tensions of constantly negotiating the mores of the social worlds they traversed.

Straddling Cultures

Although Christina felt that she was bi-cultural as a child, she was not eager to stand out among her White friends. “There were no other people that were culturally diverse, why would I label myself anything different from them?” Regardless of the terms Christina used to describe herself, as a child, she loved to travel with her mom, a White Spanish teacher, because Christina longed to connect with a latent part of herself. On a trip to Mexico, Christina preferred to say nothing and blend in, than to speak English and stand out. On a visit to Argentina, a little girl added to Christina’s linguistic insecurities and prolonged Christina’s silence in Spanish.

When I went to Argentina, I finally felt like I fit because I looked like the other people there. And [the little girl] told me, ‘You could definitely pass for an Argentine, if you just don’t open your mouth.’ Oh, well, I just won’t open my mouth!

Even as a child Christina longed to unearth a culture she felt more than she understood. As a result, Christina became a Spanish teacher, an avid traveler, and attended cultural events to deliberately surround herself with Latinas/os.

Similar to Christina, Marilyn’s affiliation with a Latina/o meet-up group made her feel more “Hispanicity.” As a group, members would visit local restaurants, and share traditional practices of their home countries. In Marilyn’s case, she felt her hair was the primary indicator of her heritage, thus, as she began to feel more “Hispanicity,” she started to style her hair more naturally so that it looked “fuzzy and curly.” Moreover, her daughters encouraged her to style it naturally and told her, “That’s who you are. You’re acting like you won’t accept your ethnicity in this country.” In response to their urging, she defended why she sometimes chose to straighten her hair, and why she had done it for so many decades:

There’s nothing wrong with blending in in order to make things work. If that’s what it takes to make things work, you’ve got to make things work...I had to fit in. I had to survive. I had to improve my life. I didn’t know any better. And I did excel. To me...straightening my hair and wearing gringo clothes...that was okay, I did everything to try and improve my life here. But now, there’s so many Latinos here who are making it, there’s no reason for me to have to do that. I now feel very comfortable. It’s so in to be Latina. I mean, look at the actors and actresses. Look at the musicians. It is in.

Marilyn took extra measures to leave her Spanish-speaking self dormant among her White friends and colleagues during her early years on the mainland. Yet, after years of repressing her Puerto Rican roots, she enjoyed the freedom of being seen as a Latina, but only after the dominant culture began to acknowledge Latinos.

For Taylor, her ethnicity was “pretty much everything...it’s who I am, it’s part of every single aspect of my life...but again, when I say my ethnicity [it] is being Hispanic and American.” Because Taylor claimed two ethnicities, she constantly negotiated between the two. “Sometimes people make me feel like that, like I have to choose a side, are you Hispanic or are you Americanized? And I’m like, I am both.” Thus, Taylor balanced two ethnic identities because she felt entitled to both. Raised in two separate cultures simultaneously—encouraged by her parents to speak Spanish and act Honduran at home, while required to speak English and act American at school—Taylor lived-up to the conventions of the White community and the Latina/o community when she crossed into these worlds.

Soledad focused on what she considered to be the good of each culture. For example, the role of family in the Cuban culture resonated with her. Yet, there were practices of the Cuban culture that she less willingly embraced.

I guess growing up some of the things I didn’t appreciate was the...very strict culture with females and that kind of thing. And then, American culture was too laid back and too open, so you kind of just take the good from each that you like and you evolve from that.

Soledad, also raised to balance two cultures, acknowledged how her own worldview had “evolved” by negotiating the value systems of her Cuban heritage while living in the US. As she spent more time with her Jewish family, however, she distanced herself further from her Latina roots.

Between Languages

The tension of balancing two cultures was also evident in Latina teachers’ orchestration of language. Dual language proficiency was challenging for many Latina teachers during childhood and adulthood. Taylor, who spoke English without a Spanish

accent, once confused her college roommates as they cleaned their dorm together when she asked for Ajax.

I didn't know it was Ajax until I got to college because my mother would call it, 'Go get A-hax. So I was cleaning in college, I was like, 'Can y'all go get the A-hax?' They were like 'what?' [And I responded], A-J-A-X. They're like 'Ajax?' I'm like, is that what you call it?

By helping her mother clean her home on the weekends, Taylor learned the pronunciation of cleaning products by hearing her mother. Consequently, she adopted the modified pronunciation into her own idiolect. "It's hard being bilingual, it's hard speaking more than one language when you have parents that come and they adopt languages, they adopt words." Although Taylor maneuvered agilely through both worlds as an adult, her hybrid language sometimes caught up with her. While she valued being bilingual, and she laughed at the sometimes compromising situations in which she found herself due to her tinged lexicon, she was also frustrated by the adulterated variety of English her parents spoke and modeled for her. Yet, it was because of her parents' open use of language that she was able to build a solid foundation in both Spanish and English.

Unlike Taylor, who bonded with her mother through Spanish, Marilyn's parents rarely spoke Spanish with Marilyn or her siblings because their teachers had insisted that Spanish at home would impede their English acquisition. Thus, when Marilyn re-learned Spanish as an adult, amid her father's jeers, she recalled, "It's like I invaded a secret, private world between my mom and him [father]. I wasn't allowed in." Limited Spanish skills also made Christina feel like an outsider. English was Christina's "home-language" during her toddler years while her father learned English. As an adolescent and adult, she spoke Spanish with her parents only during certain circumstances. With her mother, a Spanish teacher, she spoke Spanish to practice. Paradoxically, with her father, an

Argentine, she spoke English. Her conversations in Spanish were less frequent with her father because he questioned her ability to speak Spanish.

I'm a little nervous, actually, to talk to him [father] in Spanish because he doesn't think I can. He asks me sometimes. He says, 'Can you communicate in Spanish?' Yes. But that makes me so nervous because I'm afraid he'll be...so picky, hearing all the little things. Instead of like just being impressed, being picky. So now, I don't want to [speak Spanish with him].

Therefore, for Christina and Marilyn it was the lack of Spanish language input at home during their childhood and adolescence that cost them a part of their linguistic heritage as adults. While they both longed to speak Spanish, their parents intentionally withheld that aspect of their identity.

From a parental perspective, Soledad explained that maintaining her heritage language and passing it on to her children was complicated because her husband only had basic Spanish skills. That being the case, Soledad was excited that her daughter studied Spanish in school. "Maybe she can help me speak it better because I don't speak it that often, so when I do have to speak it, it's like, I have to think about it a lot." Thus, Soledad struggled to speak her heritage language, as she was no longer immersed in a Spanish-speaking community, but found hope in the possibility of maintaining her heritage language through her daughter's Spanish classes .

Language barriers within families were not unique to Soledad, as Concepción also found it challenging to teach her grandson Spanish. She explained that her son no longer spoke Spanish at home because a few boys refused to play with her grandson at church for speaking Spanish and he did not want his children to feel humiliated. Even later, when her grandson took Spanish at school, her son refused to speak Spanish at home.

Concepción, who lived with her son and his family, felt silenced at home because her son had given in to the authoritative voices of his English-only brethren.

For many of these teachers, the tensions of maintaining their heritage language began in their own homes. However, the earlier they began to negotiate their hybrid languages and cultures the better prepared they were to successfully navigate both worlds. Even if misguided, these Latina teachers needed the freedom to explore, as learning to navigate these worlds continued into adulthood.

Latina Teachers' Perceptions of Their Relationships with Students

Personal experiences and contextual circumstances influenced Latina teachers' relationships with students. Overall these Latina teachers felt racial congruency was not a determining factor in their relationships with students. Below, I use their descriptions to reveal factors that might contribute to and those that might detract from their relationships with students.

Relationship Boosters

Some teachers noted that their ethnicity did not impact their relationship with students. A case in point, Concepción explained, "My relationship with my students is the same with all groups. My ethnicity or theirs has nothing to do with our relationship." Taylor concurred with Concepción's position and reasoned that she maintained a relationship with certain students because she had something—other than ethnicity—in common with these students. Moreover, Taylor, who belonged to Alpha Kappa Alpha sororityⁱⁱ, felt she related with Black students because of her own experiences with her Black friends and Black husband, and because she had mostly taught Black and Latino

ⁱⁱ AKA is the oldest Greek-lettered organization established by African-American college-educated women.

students. On the other hand, Taylor was more hesitant to describe her relationship with White students, and admitted that they intimidated her.

That's one of my intimidating teaching moments when I have a White kid in the classroom...I feel like I have to censor myself and I don't know why because I'm not saying anything wrong, but sometimes I feel like I'm getting too Latino power.

Thus, Taylor's experience with crossing cultural barriers taught her to tread lightly. By maneuvering between Black, White, and Latina/o worlds, she developed practices that allowed her to exist in multiple worlds—even though this sometimes meant she had to compromise her voice—as she did in her own classroom when she fell silent in the presence of White students. Although Taylor considered race to sometimes play a part in establishing relationships with students, she credited the success of these relationships to the cultural insights she gained from working with or living among people of different ethnicities.

Just as the cultural understandings Taylor came to know over the years contributed to her relationships with her Black and Latina/o students, Christina noted compatible personalities as elemental to the establishment of relationships with her students. To better convey her position, Christina described the students with whom she had a better rapport.

The ones that I can joke with, those are the ones that I connect with...Like...with the Latino students...I have the girl...that's very talkative, outgoing, friendly, funny, she makes jokes, I like to joke back with her, I connect with her. I like her a lot. Then I have this girl, she's a Latina girl that sits in the front, and she doesn't care about class, she always wants to pass notes or talk, she doesn't do her work, and I don't want her in my class. So I mean, it's like within each group, there's those kids, so I don't think, necessarily, it matters.

Reflecting upon her incompatibility with some Latina/o students, Christina felt like-minded personalities trumped ethnic congruency when comparing factors that influenced student teacher relationships.

Relationship Barriers

Echoing Christina, Marcela questioned whether racial congruency influenced her relationship with students. In Marcela's case, her school context, specifically the sociopolitical circumstances, influenced how her students responded to her words. Namely, when Marcela shared her experiences as the child of poor immigrants to encourage her students to strive for a college education, she noticed that her Latina/o students sometimes disregarded her message. Although she knew many of her Latina/o students hoped to attend college, a number of them were undocumented and the passing of the Georgia Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011 was imminent. Thus, contrary to what Marcela advised, her students considered college attendance in Georgia unattainable.

Christina was also cognizant that the school context influenced her relationship with students. She longed to work with students with whom she identified. Even though a number of her students were bilingual Latina/o students, these students' hybrid experiences were different than her own.

With the immigrants there will probably be more people like me that are half and half...so maybe I can help them have confidence that... they can still learn their language or the language of their parents.

Christina looked forward to working with students who negotiated their linguistic and cultural identities the way she did—as the child of one immigrant parent and one non-immigrant parent.

Soledad also pointed to generational differences to explain why she might not always relate with Latina/o students. However, in her case, the social, political, and economic issues upstaged cultural and linguistic themes. In Soledad's opinion, the Latina/o students at Baymeade distanced themselves from her because they felt,

I come from a **different socioeconomic** that I'm different than they are or I'm not approachable like they are or maybe **I vote a different way** than...their parents do...some of my Hispanic kids, because **of their issues with immigration** and that kind of thing, I don't think that they see me as maybe being someone who can relate to them. They might see **me more White**, I think.

Soledad underscored the social construction of race by describing most of her Latina/o students as members of a lower economic status, children of politically liberal individuals, and non-US citizens. Because she did not belong to these categories, she presumed her students saw her as White.

Discussion And Implications

These Latina teachers echoed González (2001), who asserted that the term "Latino," although adopted as the most "politically correct" form of reference, was rendered nearly meaningless because it was all-inclusive. The term "Hispanic," conceived by the U.S. government for census purposes, was an even less effective term for capturing these Latina teachers' identities. Nevertheless, even when given the opportunity to name themselves, some teachers acquiesced to certain pre-determined ethnic terms and "selectively assimilated the words of others (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341). Important to note, even though the government acted as the authoritative voice for prescribing the term "Hispanic," parents also played a decisive role in how Latina teachers defined themselves. Furthermore, their Latina consciousness continued to develop, or fade, in response to the dispositions of those with whom they engaged. Thus,

the extent to which they embraced their “Latina” self was a product of multiple social forces.

The tensions inherent in responding to an authoritative voice were evident as the identity to which Latina teachers displayed allegiance depended on the context in which they found themselves. For example, even though Christina longed to claim her Argentine ancestry and Spanish language, she chose not to identify as a Latina while growing up in a predominately White community. Paradoxically, while in Argentina, or speaking with her father, Christina fell silent, as her English accent singled her out as not belonging to the community.

Taylor, on the other hand, had no choice but to negotiate both languages from an early age because she was her parents’ voice in an English-speaking society. Over time, she learned to weave Spanish and English, and to vocalize her hybrid identity. Although Taylor was ashamed of her occasional linguistic faux pas, she commanded multiple varieties of Spanish and English across domains because she had freely spoken both languages since childhood. Soledad, who had begun to lose her Spanish skills on account of living in a predominately English-speaking community, indirectly maintained her own heritage language through the foreign language program at her daughter’s school.

However, some Latina teachers sometimes felt threatened to voice their Latina identity. For example, Spanish was not spoken in Concepción’s home because her son had deferred to pervasive English-only ideologies and had prohibited Concepción from passing on her linguistic heritage to her grandson. Just as Concepción silenced herself in her own home, Taylor took to the same practice in her classroom. Although these teachers very much valued their Latina identity, they submitted to the centripetal forces in

their surroundings; thereby, censoring themselves, and leaving a part of their identity dormant. In Concepción's case, racist ideologies were evident in the words of her grandson's potential playmate. However, in Taylor's classroom, the handful of White students she taught said nothing to suggest that her teaching materials or methods were questionable. Perhaps, then, the practices Taylor appropriated in response to White students' presence was a learned reaction after years of surviving as a Latina in a White world. As Bakhtin asserted, "sooner or later, what is heard and actively understood will find its response in subsequent speech or behavior of the listener" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69). Moreover, these teachers' need to silence themselves evolved into a survival skill and became an acceptable norm in their lives.

Keeping the power of White mainstream ideologies in mind, I consider the ongoing formation of Latina teachers' ideologies. Soledad, who never shared any of her immigrant experiences with her students during any of my observations, presumed her students saw her as White because she belonged to a higher economic status, she was politically more conservative than their parents, and she was a US citizen. In a race-conscious society the development of a positive identity is a "lifelong process that often requires unlearning the misinformation and stereotypes we have internalized not only about others, but also about ourselves (Tatum, 2001, p. 53)." In line with these concepts, the more acculturated Latina teachers became, the more they adopted mainstream society's perceptions of the Latina/o community, thus, distancing themselves from their students by pointing out their differences.

Conclusion

The primary take-away message of this chapter is the need to affirm diversity within pan-ethnic groups and to consider the possibility of a “mismatch” when clumping racially congruent students and teachers. Like teachers of other ethnicities, Latina teachers may require time and reflective thought to establish relationships with students—Latina/o and non-Latina/o. Differences within the Latina/o pan-ethnic community and acculturation to the White mainstream community sometimes kept these Latina teachers from relating with Latina/o students. In fact, some related better with students from other ethnicities because they shared lived experiences.

Given these insights, what might teacher educators learn from these Latina teachers? We can work towards creating culturally sensitive curricula that encourage pre-service educators to work towards affirming their diversity (see Nieto & Bode, 2012). By engaging in self-reflective exercises, pre-service teachers might learn to negotiate their own identities (e.g., ethnic, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, religious, etc.). Such practices will spur educators to acknowledge the multiple, non-static identities of which they and their students are woven, thereby nourishing the development of their “critical consciousness” over the course of the teacher education program and into their teaching practice. How about school administrators? What role might they play? This question is more thoroughly addressed in the next chapter as I reveal the criteria administrators consider as the most beneficial of the Latina/o teachers they recruit.

CHAPTER 5

“TIPPING POINT OF THE SCALE”: PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EFFECTIVE LATINA TEACHERS

In the previous chapter, I revealed that many Latina teacher participants did not associate with the term “Latina” or other ethnic descriptors. In this chapter, I focus on the false assumption that all Latina teachers have the potential to provide their respective school with Spanish-English translation and interpretation services. Although Latina teachers are often considered to be balanced bilinguals, this is an ideal concept because it is rare that anyone is equally competent across all domains in both languages (Baker, 2006; Valdés, 2003). In addition to limited interpretation skills, tapping bilingual teachers as school interpreters raises other concerns, such as logistical complications, and professional insecurities (see Colomer & Harklau, 2009; Colomer, 2010). Here, I explore Latina teachers’ linguistic lagniappe by asking, *What are the value added attributes of recruiting and hiring Latina/o teachers?* Specifically, I consider:

- 1) Does Latina teachers’ ethnicity figure into recruitment and hiring, and if so, how?
- 2) How do Latina teachers perceive their ethnicity figures into their roles at their school?

Recruiting Latina Teachers

Although administrators entertained the notion that Latina/o teachers contributed value added cultural and linguistic expertise to their schools, most reported that when they recruited potential teachers they prioritized other criteria. These included: 1) a candidate’s ability to navigate the school and district culture, 2) a candidate’s credentials to teach multiple content areas, 3) and a candidate’s effectiveness in the classroom.

Nevertheless, efforts were made to recruit Latina/o candidates because administrators deemed their ethnicity a “bonus” to an already effective teacher. Administrators at traditionally non-diverse schools often shared that recruiting Latina/o teachers was more challenging, yet, they continued to seek Latina/o applicants because they presumed these teacher candidates would contribute Spanish-English interpretation skills and academic Spanish skills to their school community.

Searching for The Ideal Candidate

Administrators reported that they sought teachers who could navigate their school and district culture. For example, a Kreston administrator emphasized that “color” was not considered during the hiring process at her school; instead, she and her colleagues were more concerned with the candidate’s ability to “promote and project” the Rustle Way. “We don’t look at color, we don’t look at creed or nationality, we look at passionate, caring teachers who are able to promote and project the Rustle County.” The Rustle Way referred to the way in which the county implemented a state mandate to teach character education. Character education values (including, but not limited to: school pride, patriotism, citizenship, respect for the creator, tolerance, respect for others, cooperation, loyalty, and virtue) were correlated to the academic curriculum grade level books. The academic curriculum, an administrator explained, “detailed exactly what teachers were to teach and students were to learn,” and aligned with standardized assessments (e.g., ITBS, SAT I, ACT) and state-mandated curricula, assuring that students were prepared for state tests, such as the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHS GT) and the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT).

Another Kreston assistant principal shared that teachers of color were not hired simply because of their ethnicity or race. Rather, administrators at Kreston Middle School recruited “highly qualified teachers” who adhered and supported the school motto “committed to creating a culture of excellence by working hard and being nice.” She added,

We are not just going to hire a Hispanic or Black or Asian teacher because they’re Black, Hispanic or Asian, quite naturally. We want the top notch. We want a highly, highly qualified teacher. And we want a teacher who understands the importance of understanding our culture.

In addition to promoting the school culture, administrators sought candidates with broad areas of expertise to meet the school’s academic needs. In a district with quickly growing and changing demographics, school personnel needs were a moving target, and teachers with multiple credentials were especially valuable. For example, a Kreston administrator explained that a candidate with multiple certifications was always more appealing to him than a candidate who was particularly strong in one field. “You always want to look at candidates with a broad base of education so their certification will have more flexibility built-in for the needs [of the school].”

Baymeade administrators considered similar criteria when recruiting their teachers. An administrator recommended candidates who showed the potential to be “effective” in the classroom. “My basic premise is the effectiveness of the teacher. I don’t care what color. If you’re a good teacher, you can reach them all [students].” Another Baymeade administrator echoed the notion that ethnicity was not the primary criteria when recruiting teachers. “It has to be more than just because they’re Latina. It has to be because they’re really willing to work with students, they have a love for what they do.”

Providing a more emphatic response, a Baymeade counselor scoffed when asked her opinion regarding the strategic recruitment of Latina/o teachers.

You recruit good teachers and stop with the color and the this and the that. If you want to be a teacher, then come on board. What that means is you care about kids and you know your subject and your passion is this. And I don't care if you're Greek or Cuban or from Iowa, I don't care... The kids in this school know who the good teachers are... regardless of race... and they know who likes kids... regardless of race.

She continued to explain that even Latina teachers could employ less effective teaching strategies not beneficial to students. "They could have a Latina sitting up at the front [who says], 'Get out your book, turn to page 32. If you're chewing gum, you're out of here.' It's the quality of the teaching." At Kreston, an assistant principal took a similar view, "If they're a poor teacher, they're a poor teacher, no matter what color they are."

When participants were asked how their school responded to the call for teachers from different backgrounds, many initially avoided discussing the role of race and focused on the characteristics of an effective teacher. Some participants even lauded the "colorblind" viewpoint of their faculty members. Moreover, Latina teachers, as all other teachers, were expected to meet the needs of their respective student body and to promote the school culture. In their search for effective teachers, administrators focused on culture, that is, their school's culture and the potential ability of each teacher candidate to understand, navigate, and champion the school culture.

In Search of The "Bonus" Effect

In spite of their general adamance that they did not pay any attention to teacher race or ethnicity, administrators did concede that being a person of color was considered a "bonus" for strong candidates. As one Kreston counselor shared, "I think it's a bonus. You've got a good teacher that can teach anywhere, anybody, anything, and yet, if that

teacher is... Latino or African American or what have you...then it's a bonus." Similarly, an assistant principal at Baymeade regarded a candidate's ethnicity as a "bonus" to a qualified candidate. In addition, she suggested that ethnicity would be a deciding factor if all other criteria were equal among candidates. "I think you weigh everything else first, and...that part [ethnicity] could be the tipping point of the scale."

Given the potential "bonus" administrators perceived teachers of color contributed to their schools, efforts were made to recruit them, in many cases, Latina/o teachers specifically. A Kreston administrator noted that schools in the district had previously organized recruitment trips to teacher fairs in Miami; however, such efforts had been in vain and they no longer took place. Nevertheless, the desire for Latina/o teachers remained, as the Kreston administrator added

Latino applicants get a really good look...It doesn't mean that they're hired every time, obviously, because they have to interview well and they have to be articulate, and all those other things matter more. We don't hire folks just because they're Latino, but if they're good and Latino, they're a pretty good candidate for us.

Although many administrators underestimated their efforts to purposefully recruit Latina/o teachers, a Kreston faculty member insinuated otherwise. In particular, this Kreston faculty member was concerned that hiring Latina/o teachers chiefly because they looked like the students or because they were bilingual could potentially have a pigeonhole effect where non-Latina/o teachers might be deemed less effective than Latina/o teachers in schools with diverse student bodies.

I feel that it's everybody has got to speak Spanish and everybody's got to look Hispanic or be Hispanic to the point where I'm kind of like, man, I'm glad I got hired... I think it becomes a little too high up on the list...I see the call for duty, but I think that like anything else, they're going to begin to pigeonhole and we're going to begin to put a person in a classroom who just falls apart within two months...because she looks like the kids and sounds like the kids.

She added:

I feel like maybe the language might cause a little bit of tension, worrying that if we're not bilingual or if we don't become bilingual soon, or that any of the new teachers aren't bilingual that we might miss out, because that's my concern, we're going to miss out on some creative people simply because they don't speak Spanish.

Although pigeonholing Latina/o teachers was a concern for some faculty members, Kreston administrators were committed to hiring more Latina/o teachers, and explained that in part, they acted in response to the superintendent's position on hiring more faculty of color. "Our superintendent, has always taught us that your faculty should be a representation of your students," a Kreston administrator shared. She described her recruitment of teachers of color as "deliberate" and explained that she communicated often with her contacts at the district human resources department, and local colleges and universities to learn of new teacher candidates of color.

At Baymeade, administrators were also aware of the superintendent's commitment to hiring more teachers of color. However, one Baymeade administrator admitted that the numbers of their teachers of color were not representative of their student body, but assured that it was "not for a lack of trying." Just as Kreston administrators communicated with district human resource contacts, Baymeade administrators begged for the applications of candidates of color. A Baymeade administrator reiterated how difficult it was to hire teachers of color when the pool of candidates of color was so limited.

There are just not nearly enough minority candidates. I mean, when you open up a position and you have 100 applicants for it and there's not a minority candidate in the applicant pool, what do you do? You've got to fill the position.

Even when Baymeade administrators did receive applications, they faced another barrier—their student body was perceived as being too White—even though their student body was only one third White. “People will interview here and they’re interested in being in an even more diverse school. We’re not diverse enough, which I think is funny,” remarked a Baymeade administrator. Thus, because Baymeade was located in an affluent White neighborhood, it projected a false impression of its student body, and Latina/o candidates averted a school culture they read as conservative White middle class, when in reality, it was much more complex.

In practice, Latina/o teachers were deliberately sought after. However, such recruitment efforts caused some faculty members to wonder if the search for Latina/o teachers overshadowed the aforementioned criteria for hiring effective teachers, and disclosed an underlying anxiety about inter-ethnic relations and tokenism when hiring Latina/o teachers. On the other hand, even though much effort was devoted to the recruitment of Latina/o teachers, administrators noticed that their school cultures either attracted or repelled Latina/o teacher candidates who preferred to work in majority minority schools.

Bridging a Linguistic Gap

The “bonus” Latina teachers provided their schools was their willingness to use Spanish during interpretation and translation events and to make learning more accessible to Spanish-dominant students through academic Spanish. A Baymeade administrator described the need for Latina teachers in a nutshell, “In our demographic, if they are willing to use their translation skills, if they are truly bilingual, they are our greatest advocate, they’re our greatest asset.” Moreover, a Kreston administrator was proud to

have a number of bilingual staff and teachers on her team, and sought to hire more because she needed faculty who could communicate with her students and their families.

She explained,

When my Latino parents come in, they appreciate that there are folks here that are able to communicate with them and we don't have an attitude of well, this is America, you need to speak English. This is America, and yes, folks need to learn how to speak English. But the truth of the matter is I'm not going to not serve my stakeholders because they may not speak English...the doors are open, this is your school, and when you get here, there will be people here who can help you with communicating what it is we are all about here at Kreston.

Even though Latina teachers' bilingualism was valued, a Baymeade administrator was aware that not all Latina teachers were sufficiently comfortable with their linguistic skills to interpret.

Some of them do not feel as skilled at translating because maybe they themselves weren't truly raised bilingual or some of them are a little bit uncomfortable with some of the things we need them to translate...When you're dealing with heavy discipline or heavy special ed situations, they're afraid they may not have the language that they need...or they may be so worried they'll say the wrong thing that there's litigation involved.

Nevertheless, a Baymeade counselor emphasized the urgency with which she approached Spanish teachers to interpret, "Sometimes we're just desperate...I don't care how many pauses, ahs you do." She was also aware that teachers who interpreted often crossed into counselor mode. "They almost put on the counselor hat and they try to—I know they're not translating or letting me know what they're talking about. They'll just give me like a synopsis."

When Latina teachers were asked to interpret for events outside their classrooms, logistics were quite unwieldy. A Baymeade counselor explained that each time a parent arrived and needed an interpreter a substitute was sent to the teacher's classroom. The

need for Spanish-English interpreters was so great at Baymeade that an administrator took that into consideration when she prepared the master schedule.

We've even tried to stagger the schedules of our bilingual faculty to give them a period off to help. We can't make it work—and fortunately, those folks have been incredibly generous. I mean, they give up their planning period, they come in early, they stay late. We compensate them the best we can, but there's no money. We try to give them leave time, it's not official, it's off the books... We do everything we can to recognize the value that they add. I mean, they're a huge value added piece and I think they hear that over and over again, but no, if I could write them a check, I would. My greatest gap as an administrator is my monolingualism. It kills me on a daily basis... I probably try to speak to three to four parents every day that I can't communicate with. It's awful.

A Baymeade administrator further expressed the pressing need for interpreters, “We grab teachers. We grab our Spanish teachers. We grab the people that speak that language... if we had somebody to do that, we wouldn't have to worry about it.” However, a Baymeade counselor explained that they did not have a school interpreter because their school lacked the funds to hire an extra staff member.

In addition to serving as school interpreters, Latina/o teachers' ability to use Spanish as a teaching tool was also highly valued. A Kreston administrator specified bilingualism as the foremost characteristic possessed by Latina teachers that contributed to Latina/o students' learning—especially as it pertained to closing the achievement gap.

If the Latino teacher can teach them the meanings of concepts in their own language, if that's what's necessary, look at the gap that that would bridge for them to be ready to learn at high levels in English if they could know what the meaning is in their own language... and see, that's the thing, that's the thing... we have to close the achievement gap. And any tools, any extra things that we have to throw into that pot to close that achievement gap quicker, that's what we need to do.

What drove administrators to recruit Latina/o teachers so intensely?

Administrators indicated that their greatest motivation for hiring Latino/a teachers was to have faculty on board who were bilingual. In addition to bridging communication gaps

between school administrators and families, as school agents, Latina teachers were expected to use their interpretation skills to acquaint family members with the school culture, and to close academic gaps between Spanish-dominant English Learners (ELs) and their English dominant peers by using Spanish for classroom instruction as needed.

Understanding What Latina Teachers Consider as Their Value Added Attributes

In this section, I share what Latina teachers considered as their value added attributes to their school. As noted above, administrators focused on hiring “effective” teachers who had the “bonus” effect of being Latina and could potentially act as school interpreters. As I will show below, Latina teachers’ responses often echoed those of administrators and counselors. When asked how their ethnicity contributed to their role at school, some teachers explained they felt called to teach at a majority minority school. Furthermore, many Latina teachers considered their teaching skills as their most valuable contribution to their schools, even though they were often tapped as interpreters and translators, responsibilities that sometimes interfered with their teaching duties.

On Being *La Maestra del Pueblo*

Taylor chose the teaching profession solely because she wanted to teach at Kreston, her alma mater, so she could reach out to Latina/o students in her own community. “I’m here because I feel like the students can see themselves in me.” In addition, Taylor revealed that being Latina at Kreston allowed her to take an almost kinship role with Latino/a students, bringing her closer to them than they were to their other teachers. “Here at Kreston ... I could be like that tía [aunt] to them [Latina/o students].” She went on to share that she had established this relationship over the years in different capacities.

Even when I left to go to high school, I always came back to do community service here. Winter breaks or summer, when we would get out early and then during the summer I'd come. I've been subbing since I was 18 at this school. My mom would say, 'Soy la maestra del pueblo, [I am the teacher of the village.]' the village teacher, like joking, but it's just I've always had a love for the kids in the community here.

In line with being "la maestra del pueblo" Taylor chose Kreston Middle School because of its high Latino population.

I stay working here because back in the day, there weren't Latino teachers. And sometimes I think when you have that Latina teacher, you look at and number one, you can speak to her in Spanish and you feel like you can relate, you get that relaxing, okay, good, I can finally speak to somebody.

Furthermore, she said that she would not consider teaching at Baymeade Middle School because it did not have a large enough Latino population.

Marcela, who had previously taught at a more affluent and predominately White school, was also strategic in choosing Rustle. "I looked at these kids and they were me... When I came here, [I thought], 'I can offer them hope, support.'" However, her intentions weren't only for Latina/o students. In fact, Marcela questioned whether racial congruency was required for students to consider a teacher as their role model.

There are many students that do not see anyone like them in the classroom and do fine. A great teacher is great regardless of his or her ethnicity or any other defining factor. What is important is that students have a caring, knowledgeable, structured, and responsible teacher.

Marilyn also hoped to reach all students by being an effective teacher. Although she did see herself as a role model, it was not because she was Latina. Instead, she attributed being a role model to the caliber of her instruction, and explained, "I just see role model as that of a teacher, no matter what their race is or whether I'm Latino or not." She went on to share:

[I'm a role model] by being an excellent teacher, not a sloppy, I'm just doing this

to get paid teacher. By being an excellent teacher to them where they leave the classroom [saying], ‘You know, Ms. Lara, I really like this class.’

Latina teachers chose to teach at Kreston because they felt they could be effective teachers to the students enrolled at that school. Moreover, although some Latina teachers attributed their language skills as a motivating factor to work at a school with a 62 percent Latina/o population, being a competent teacher to all students was paramount for most Latina teachers.

Linguistic Duties

When asked what their colleagues expected of them because of their ethnicity, each Latina teacher’s immediate response was that she was asked to translateⁱⁱⁱ. Thus, Latina teachers seemed to experience their identities as Latinas/os at their schools as largely defined and shaped by their presumed bilingualism in Spanish. With no protocols in place for requesting an interpreter for daily events at schools, Latina teachers were frequently tapped as interpreters with little warning. During the time I spent at the schools, I observed many instances where teachers were called from their classrooms, during instructional time and planning time, to interpret.

In one case, an English monolingual teacher knocked on Taylor’s door, as she taught, and asked her to interpret because he had a new Spanish-speaking student. Agreeing to do so, Taylor stepped out into the hall, and occasionally peeped in the door to make sure her students were on task. When she finally returned, after more than ten minutes, she walked to where I was sitting and whispered, “Eso es lo malo, que me buscan para traducir.” [That’s the bad thing, they look for me to translate.]. Taylor

ⁱⁱⁱ Translate is officially used to describe the action of written language exchange; however, it is commonly used to describe the action of oral language exchange, which is formally termed interpretation (see Colomer, 2010; Colomer & Harklau, 2009)

pointed out that although Kreston did not have an official school interpreter, the school did employ a number of bilingual faculty members (e.g., teachers, clerks, the registrar, the greeter, an assistant principal, etc.). Nevertheless, her colleagues continued to seek her for the favor of interpreting because it was less involved to knock on her door than to set up a time with another bilingual school staff member.

While teachers welcomed the opportunity to serve as linguistic brokers, the added work was burdensome and some became resentful. Taylor sarcastically posed the question, “It’s kind of like, ‘Okay, I have this parent in English, can you call him?’ I can’t do that to somebody else.” Taylor was not alone. More than half of the teachers had at one point refused to interpret. Marilyn shared that she sometimes denied the call to interpret because interpretation requests frequently took her entire planning period. Yet, even after refusing, she was often coaxed into interpreting.

This meeting might take the whole time, all my planning. And that’s when I try and back out. And they’re like... ‘we need somebody, please.’ And I’m like, ‘Okay, I’ll do it.’ So I get put on the spot for that.

Even though teachers became annoyed when interpreting infringed upon their class time, many felt guilty when they did not step-up. In line with heeding to the call to serve, Taylor took communicating with parents a step further—she gave parents her personal cell number.

It’s easier to go ahead and just call me because you’re asking me about your child—and I’ve never had anybody abuse my number ever, thankfully—than to call the front office, “Alguien en español por favor,” [Someone in Spanish, please.]...So it cuts all the gatekeepers up there.

She pointed out how grateful parents were when she gave them her cell number, but she also revealed that other teachers questioned her judgment. In response to her colleagues’ doubts, she reminded them how her mother struggled to communicate in English.

Other teachers are like ‘You’re crazy’...My teammates have always been non-Latinos, so that’s why when we share the information, they’d be like, ‘Okay, you give yours, we’re not giving [ours].’ And I’m like, ‘But you don’t understand. I remember my mom struggling, I remember my mom needing a translator or wishing somebody would understand.’ I kind of keep my mom in the back of my head.

By far, bilingual Latina teachers took on the role of interpreter more than any other role expected of teachers of color. Because some Latina teachers felt a connection to the Latino community through their own personal experiences, turning down requests was a point of contention. However, once the time commitment to interpret began to infringe upon their teaching obligations, these teachers felt compromised and tried to deny interpretation requests.

Linguistic Insecurities

In addition to being overburdened by the time commitment, some Latina teachers preferred not to interpret because they questioned their linguistic skills. In fact, Christina revealed that she asked not to be tapped to interpret.

I hate that. I’ve, actually, asked them not to ask me because it makes me nervous. Because here I am, they’re calling the person that’s Spanish, and what if I make a mistake? I get so nervous, I can hear a mistake. Like I get nervous and spinney, like I can’t even think... those conferences are really important material, and like what if I say something wrong and the kid fails and they’re like the translator told me—that’s a lot of pressure. I don’t like that.

Marilyn also considered her language skills insufficient for some interpretation events, but brought dictionaries to meetings when staff members persuaded her into interpreting for meetings she felt unsure about.

I’m not a 100% Spanish speaker, but because of my name and because I teach ESOL and because they’ve heard me speak Spanish, they think I can speak perfectly. When I’m a beginner advanced...I push myself. I’ll bring a book, my Spanish/English [dictionary] if there are words, like in a formal contract, words in there that I don’t understand, then I will look it up in the Spanish dictionary and then I know exactly what I need to say. That puts me on the spot.

For Latina teachers, their bilingualism facilitated communication with students and parents; however, for many teachers, it also made them responsible for a lot more work than their non-Spanish speaking colleagues. In addition, it positioned them as experts in a field for which they were not trained. Furthermore, because many monolingual faculty, staff, and administrators framed Latina teachers as perfect bilinguals, they were unable to empathize with Latina teachers' linguistic insecurities.

Discussion And Implications

The expectation to recruit teachers of color at Rustle School District mirrored a national trend, as policymakers in at least thirty states had adopted policies to diversify the workforce by 2003 (Education Commission of the States, 2003). At the school level, although the call for diversity was heard, diversity took a back seat to the call for better test scores. Moreover, although schools worked towards providing students and parents with bilingual teachers and staff with whom they could communicate, the underlying expectation for Latina teachers was that they, as school agents, take on the school voice and ensure that parents and students understand the school culture.

Both Rustle administrators' efforts to recruit teachers of color and how teacher candidates of color responded to such intense recruitment resembled national trends. First, administrators took various measures to recruit Teachers of Color from a very limited pool of candidates. Secondly, teachers of color preferred to work in majority minority schools (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Once hired, Latina teachers who were sought for their linguistic "bonus" delivered these resources in varying degrees. Feeling answerable to both the needs of their schools and their Spanish-dominant students and families, Latina teachers felt obligated to interpret even when they did not have the skills,

time, or both. These data support findings in emerging studies of bilingual teachers (Colomer & Harklau, 2009; Colomer, 2010); however, further research is needed to learn what administrators and universities might do to resolve the positioning of bilingual faculty as interpreters without training and/or compensation.

Conclusion

Bilingualism is in a continuum, thus, while some Latina teachers might know enough Spanish to interpret, others may not. Furthermore, Latina teachers, even if bilingual, may not know enough academic Spanish to mediate instruction for ELs. As the call for more Latina teachers increases, teacher educators need to consider the resources we must provide Latina/o teachers if they are to fulfill the linguistic expectations others have of them. One possible solution might be to create courses in university Spanish departments that build upon the linguistic skills of those Latinas (and others) who speak Spanish by teaching them grade-specific academic Spanish for various content areas. These courses could also include language used to meet school-wide needs (see Colomer & Harklau, 2009), and could be co-created with school personnel to ensure inclusion of words and phrases most needed in local school environments. Important to note, these courses should be offered to all educational professionals with a basic understanding of Spanish, as teaching Latina/o students is the responsibility of all school agents. To meet the call for more effective teachers of color, a closer look is needed at classroom practices (see chapter seven and eight). For researchers, Villegas & Irvine (2010) conducted a review of literature and revealed effective skills among successful teachers of color—one being the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy. Additionally, Villegas & Lucas (2002) provide guidelines for teacher educators to help teachers of all ethnicities to

understand culturally responsive theories and to implement culturally responsive practices.

CHAPTER 6

“NOT TO BE PRO-LATINO”: THE IMPACT OF MAJORITARIAN TALES ON LATINA TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

In the previous chapter, I focused on Latina teachers’ linguistic contributions to their school community and pointed out that their ability to interpret, to translate, and to provide academic language in Spanish varied. As school districts continue to recruit Latina/o teachers to meet Richard Riley’s (1998) expectations, “Our teachers should be excellent, and they should look like America,” a closer look at Latina teachers’ actual cultural contributions to schooling communities is needed. In this chapter, I echo Urrieta’s (2007) position that not all Latina teachers have a “critical identity consciousness.” Furthermore, I consider how majoritarian tales impact Latina teachers’ perceptions and practices.

Recent studies document that Latina teachers sometimes struggle to negotiate their Latina teacher identity, in turn, they distance themselves from Latina/o students, silence themselves in school contexts, or internalize the mainstream values and perspectives of their colleagues (Aguilar, MacGillivray, & Walker, 2003; Weisman & Hansen, 2008). To further this discussion, I look to the perspectives of administrators, other school agents, and Latina teachers as I address the guiding question, *What is expected of Latina teachers and what do Latina teachers expect of themselves because of their ethnic status?* Specifically, I consider:

- 1) Do teachers’ status as Latinas have special/particular ramifications for how they are perceived and the roles they take in school?

- 2) How do Latina teachers perceive their ethnicity figures into their roles at their school?

Majoritarian Tales

Majoritarian tales, that is, narratives that teachers may have internalized through their own schooling, fuel deficit perspectives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Moreover, many majoritarian storytellers argue that cultural assimilation is key for students of color to succeed academically. These inaccurate constructions of the knowledge of students of color position the norms of the dominant class as standard (Fránquiz et al., 2011). Consequently, when Teachers of Color are not taught to identify and to challenge deficit perspectives commonly found in schooling contexts, they are susceptible to majoritarian tales and fall victim to internalized racism. Internalized racism, as defined by Perez Huber and his colleagues (2006), “describes the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy where Whites are consistently ranked above People of Color. Because People of Color experience the impact of racism in their own unique way, internalized racism can have a range of consequences; thus, how deficit narratives influence teachers of color is not uniform. However, when Teachers of Color do give in to majoritarian tales, they compromise their expectations of students of color. With this in mind, Kohli (2008) underscores the importance of race in schooling, specifically teacher education, and argues,

When we talk about increasing the numbers of Teachers of Color, it becomes important that teacher education programs begin to encourage these teachers to reflect on their own educational experiences and how the belief in White cultural superiority may have penetrated their values or worldviews. (p. 180).

The possibility of blinded acculturation exists among Latina teachers who have not been encouraged to take a critical view of their world. In the following section, I present the

voices of administrators, faculty, and Latina teachers to reveal schooling contexts in which majoritarian tales persist and how Latina teachers either dispute or sustain these deficit beliefs.

A Closer Look at Ethnicity And Relationships

Overlooked Identities

School personnel credited Latina teachers for sharing cultural insights about Latina/o students. Although one Baymeade assistant principal considered Baymeade teachers' colorblindness a positive attribute, "The best thing about this staff, a lot of them don't even see color when they talk to each other," another recognized the need for more multicultural education and affirmation. She pointed out that many people, especially local parents, held a misconstrued perception of the Latina/o culture. She explained that parents often clumped Latinas/os into two distinct categories:

I would say Latinos are lumped into two categories. They're the people who are almost White, and then there are people who are day laborers, yard men, blue collar, working class. [Community members think], 'The almost White ones we can handle, but it's the other ones'...the interesting thing is they want their children to all learn Spanish so they can communicate with their workers. And they will tell you that. They want their kids to be able to speak to landscapers and to maids.

Given the benefits so many faculty members named of having Latina teachers on board, it was interesting to learn that many could not name the Latina teachers on their staff. Yet, when Latina teachers did stand out, it was mostly their "home grown" attributes that positioned them to better relate to students.

At Baymeade, few administrators or counselors could name the handful of Latina teachers of the eighty-one teachers on their staff. As one counselor reflected, "I'm not even sure if one of our Spanish teachers, if she's Hispanic or not, I don't think she is." In

fact, a Baymeade assistant principal said there were no Latina teachers who taught sixth grade—overlooking Soledad Hirsch. A couple of Baymeade faculty members even named the ESOL teacher, a French woman who spoke Spanish, as being a Latina faculty member. Moreover, the French ESOL teacher, who was mistaken as Latina, was often praised for her work with Latino students. As a Baymeade administrator shared,

Here at our school, we don't have that many teachers with that background. But the ones that I believe we do have are able to make that connection...like I said, [the ESOL teacher]...she understands where they come from and where they're going, and when she sees her kids succeeding, she is their biggest cheerleader.

At Kreston, faculty members were mostly aware of the Latina teachers; however, when asked for an example of how the presence of Latina teachers impacted the school, administrative and faculty members always described Taylor Garza. For example, a Kreston faculty member drew attention to Taylor's ability to relate to students because of their shared experiences. Moreover, she maintained that Taylor had broken the negative stereotype of what the community expected of Kreston students. In effect, graduating from college and becoming a professional made Taylor a role model for her students—both Latina/o and non-Latina/o—but also distinguished her from what the local community expected of Kreston students.

She has the Crowley experience, she has it on all levels. She is, one, Latina, she has parents that came here, she was the first legal one born here on soil, she is bilingual, she is also Crowley born and bred, she's lived other places, but born and bred here, graduated from Kreston, graduated from Crowley High School. So on all of those levels, I feel that that gives them [students] somewhat, I don't know, the comfort level is noticeable, I don't know how to explain that, but many students just immediately start to talk to her and not even necessarily, it doesn't necessarily even matter the race, but many students that also happen to be Hispanic feel comfortable going to talk to her just because of being able to relate to any number of her situations.

But she also gives a different perspective, like she is an independent woman, she graduated from college, she went straight after high school, she also was in a PR

career and then wanted to come back to teaching, which many people would see a demotion of certain aspects. So I feel like, as much as they might seem like, oh, she's just like us, then she'll throw something in there where they realize, wait, no, she's not, so it kind of gives them a different path to think about because she had the same circumstances and yet **she does what they're told they're not going to be able to do.**

To what extent can Latina teachers educate their colleagues and students about “Latina/o culture” if they blend into the school culture so much that their differences go unnoticed? If Latina teachers at Baymeade passed as White to many of their colleagues and students, how much of an impact could their “Latina” identity truly have on anyone? Ironically, Taylor, who stood out to many as a Latina role model, did so because she had broken free from the negative expectations the Crowley community maintained of Kreston students. Taylor challenged and pushed back against Crowley’s tenets through her act of teaching. As part of her journey, Taylor returned to the same system from which she had broken free to work with Latina/o students and to teach them to think beyond the norms and boundaries of Crowley, so they might navigate a world outside Crowley.

Distant Realities

Even though administrators, counselors, and faculty acknowledged benefits of having more Latina/o teachers on board, they pointed out instances where racial congruency might not have a positive impact on student-teacher relationships. A Kreston faculty member explained that a Latina/o teacher raised in more privileged socioeconomic conditions might not automatically relate to Kreston students. A Baymeade assistant principal held a similar stance and attributed chasms between students and teachers within the same pan-ethnic group to students not recognizing teachers as sharing their lived experiences. “Maybe the child feels like, well, you don’t

really understand what I'm going through, so even though we are the same ethnicity or racial background, you don't really get it."

A Baymeade administrator took a similar position, and attributed misunderstandings to divergent value systems among Latina/o teachers and Latina/o students. The Latina/o families, with whom he worked, valued working hard and providing for their families. From his perspective, Latino boys aged 16-18 either wanted to or felt they needed to grow up faster because they saw their parents work. On the other hand, he noticed that Latina/o teachers had parents or other adults who in their lifetimes had stressed a value system that prioritized education.

The values aren't the same. The Latina teacher, Latino teacher, understands good and well what an education means and how it can impact your life. And they get frustrated with some of the kids that, 'Ah, whatever, I'm not doing anything.'

With regard to teachers, a Baymeade counselor explained that Latina/o teachers took on the norms of a teacher. "They became a teacher...it means they've already bought into White middle class stuff." To illustrate her point, she highlighted how one Latina teacher who did not have a traditional Spanish surname frequently passed as being White. "She's American...value-wise, 100% red, white and blue. I don't even think they [students] know that she's—her name doesn't even—I mean, she doesn't advertise that."

Faculty members provided multiple reasons for why Latina teachers might not relate with Latina/o students. They suggested that in some cases, Latina teachers had adopted the values of teachers—which in their discourse—many conflated teacher values with White middle class values. By doing so, Latina faculty members were more likely to take on the norms of the school culture and less likely to relate with Latina/o students.

Thus, faculty frequently emphasized how Latina teachers' teacher identities sometimes superseded their Latina identities in schooling contexts.

Latina Teachers' Perspectives

Overall, Latina teachers were expected to coordinate cultural events to promote the "Hispanic" culture. In addition, some Latina teachers shared personal stories to explain both essentialized and real Latina/o experience(s) in the US.

Cultural Events

Kreston's Hispanic Night was a highly anticipated event. Concepción pointed out that both Latino and non-Latino faculty were involved in its orchestration; however, some felt the event was mostly planned by Latina/o teachers and teachers who taught Spanish or ESOL. As Taylor explained, "Typically, if it's a Hispanic night, it tends to be Hispanic teachers... We got an email from the committee chairperson, and... all the Spanish-speaking teachers were on the email."

However, not all Latina/o teachers were actively involved in cultural events. For example, Marcela chose not to attend Hispanic Night because "Latino Night is a mess." In her opinion, it was "a bunch of families who come to get a free meal and they bring even more people from family." Moreover, Marcela often felt she had too much on her plate and could not volunteer to spend time practicing a dance routine with students when she had to spend so much time preparing lessons for her students to master basic academic skills. Thus, Marcela chose not to participate in an event that essentialized Latina/o culture and overlooked Latina/o students' immediate needs in her own classroom.

Sharing Stories

It was uncommon for Latina teachers to discuss their Latina culture, or their experiences as Latinas in US schools with their colleagues; yet, these topics did make their way into conversations. As a Spanish teacher, Christina was asked about cultural events, such as “Cinco de Mayo” but rarely was she approached about Argentine culture. Marcela and Soledad’s colleagues knew they were Cuban, but they did not recall events when they elaborated about their experience as immigrants. Soledad shared, “Most of it comes from them figuring out that I speak Spanish, and that may lead to, ‘Oh, I didn’t know you speak Spanish,’ and then you end up, yeah, I’m Cuban, and that’s about it.”

Taylor’s conversations were more intentional, in terms of her personal identity as a Latina, she actively set out to educate her colleagues. Yet, her concerns weren’t always with non-Latinos. “Also within Latinos, we don’t get it. We’re so different; we’re not all the same.” Of all teachers, Taylor was the most vocal about her family history because she wanted to use her story to help her colleagues better understand Latina/o students’ struggles in school.

Everything. Everything. Just everything. I tell my story, when my parents got here, what education meant to us, even though it meant something, the words, college, SATs, none of that was really around me. I kind of had to learn it. I mean, like my mom knew I had to continue my education, but she wasn’t like, honey, you have to go for PSAT practice, none of that. It was more of like you’ve got to go, but I kind of figured out on my own how to get there. But I tell them everything, more so they can understand sometimes the story of my students, of our students.

As the daughter of immigrants, Taylor felt it was her obligation to share her story.

I think number one, having parents that were immigrants, that’s very important, parents that didn’t speak English for a while, growing up kind of fast in that environment, having to translate, having parents that worked hard, multiple jobs at times, and just the growing up, having to take care of your siblings, that type [of stuff].

Now that she was a teacher, she saw how extended summer trips abroad impacted students' education. However, she shared with her colleagues that she, now a successful teacher, had also been sent to her grandmother's home in Honduras a month before school let out.

Even as silly as we have some kids that already left for the summer to go back to their country so they can be there for the summer, and I was like, 'I'll admit, I did that.' In eighth grade, I left a month early to go to Honduras with my grandma. And I came back in August, like, 'Hey!' And that's something we struggle with here sometimes because if they don't pass a test... 'Sorry, will you repeat eighth grade?'

Most Latina teachers were not vocal about their heritage unless approached by others. However, some teachers embraced the opportunity to talk about their experiences with the hope that colleagues might better understand Latina/o students and families experiences with US schools. Important to note, Taylor stressed that her message was not only for non-Latinos. To her, Latina/o teachers without similar experiences to her own experiences were as disconnected from Latina/o students as non-Latina/o teachers who had never overcome any hardships.

Marcela's students were also very much aware that she was Latina. Nonetheless, she felt she did not relate with most of her Latino students because she considered her Latino students, mostly Mexican, were raised with different values than her own.

I just really don't feel that I can relate to them that much. The Hispanic kids that we have, almost all of the Latinos that we have are Mexican and their culture is not the same they don't have the same value for education that I grew up with. Even the parenting is just different. I remember my mom, like the rules that she had for us and the chores that she had for us and the structure that she had for us, these parents, I've met with very, very, very few of them that actually have any structure for their kids for when they get home from school. Usually, it's just whatever. If the kid said he didn't have any homework, he didn't have any homework. Does he have to clean? No because his only job is schoolwork. Well, if he's bringing home failing grades, then obviously he's not keeping up his end of the bargain, why not give him some chores to do? It just doesn't, I don't know,

I can't identify with it. My parents were poor when I grew up, my parents were Hispanic, but we weren't raised that way.

As Marcela explained herself, she continued to distance herself from her Mexican students in the Latina/o pan-ethnic plain. Marcela pointed out that Mexican parents failed to prioritize their children's education, and identified Mexican students as being less likely to excel academically.

Explaining “The Angry Latina”

In addition to clarifying cultural misconceptions, Taylor confronted colleagues who challenged her use of Spanish at work. She clarified that Spanish was never discouraged as a teaching tool; however, Taylor pointed out that when she spoke Spanish with her colleagues some staff members voiced their discomfort.

If we're speaking Spanish among ourselves or if I'm going by the clerk and I'm like, 'Oye, ¿cómo está? [Hey, How are you?] I've had somebody come out and be like, 'Now why are y'all talking about me?' Trying to be funny, but I understand she's insinuating, 'Stop doing that.' But my comment, not to be a smartass, but I'm like, 'I was talking to her.' That's all I can say.

Taylor explained that she sometimes had to start her conversations, “Not to be pro-Latino,” because she felt that what she had to say would make her stand out, in her terms, as the “angry Latina.” Taylor was not the only teacher who found herself explaining the diversity among Latinos to colleagues. Marcela also educated her colleagues when she heard them generalize and assume that all Hispanic people were Mexican or that all Hispanic cultures were the same. She would compare the diversity among Spanish-speakers to the diversity among English-speakers to make her point.

That's like saying that someone from Britain who speaks English, they should have the same culture as someone from Georgia because we speak English. I mean, even within the same country, somebody from Georgia is completely different from someone from Seattle, for example, or somebody from California is going to be completely different from a New Yorker, and they're still American

and they still speak English. And they have different words for things, too. You go to New York and you get a pizza and it's a pie. Well, if you go to California, I doubt they're walking around calling pizzas a pie. Sodas in Chicago is called pop, you want a pop. So we have different words for things, and it's the same thing within the Hispanic community, and I've used those examples, so I'm like for a Mexican, something could be one word, and for a Cuban, it could be a completely different word. Just because we seem to speak the same language doesn't mean we don't have a little variation here and there culturally and we also have cultural differences because they're completely different countries.

A condition of being Latina in this part of Georgia was that teachers felt they sometimes encountered racism towards Latino/a students, and by proxy, towards themselves in school settings. Both Taylor and Marcela shared experiences where they addressed large crowds of people because they had been offended by the main speaker's message regarding Latina/o students. At one district meeting, Taylor was shocked to hear a county-trained specialist describe why Latina/o students needed to learn English.

[For] everybody else ...it was normal for them to hear that our kids needed to learn English to translate for their parents at doctors' [offices] or at Quick Trip. The Quick Trip really made me mad when she [county-trained specialist] said it. And everybody else was just listening normally. And me, being the only Latino in the room, I was like, 'Okay, did nobody else find that comment offensive?' Like my people are not just learning English to translate for their parents. We want to be educated. We want to learn, we want to go to school, not just to translate at Quick Trip or Home Depot, as she used. And I was very embarrassed, I was. I was like, 'This is a county trained specialist?'

During a faculty meeting, Marcela decided to speak up. The principal's position, that minority students' parents did not read to them or that their parents were not professionals who could encourage them academically, offended Marcela.

And I said in the meeting that I kind of felt a little offended by that because just because they're Hispanic or African American doesn't mean that their parents may not be a professional. All Hispanics are not construction workers or do yard work and stuff like that. Some of their parents are professionals. We've had some parents that own grocery stores or own their own construction business.

When teachers did stand up to explain their experiences as a Latina, it was often to clarify misconceptions based on the hypothesized pan-ethnic identity of Latinas/os regardless of place of origin, generation, or differences in education and occupational status. Taking a stand sometimes positioned Latinas to take on the role of a stereotypical “angry” Latina. However, by explaining the circumstances of their transactions, Latina teachers shed light on what made them react so fervently. Latina teachers often spoke-up abruptly when they felt they were being silenced or they felt Latinas/os in general were misunderstood.

Discussion and Implications

These Latina teachers’ experiences, and administrators’ perceptions shed light on the complexity of race and ethnicity in schools. Clearly, the ethnic definitions Latina teachers challenged in chapter four brought similar levels of confusion to non-Latinas/os. As these labels were rarely openly discussed, the act of clumping all Spanish-speakers into the Latina/o pan-ethnic group regardless of nationality prevailed. Yet, Latina teachers who were considered role models tended to be the ones who defied majoritarian tales by educating themselves and returning to teach students the skill of navigating outside cultures while valuing their own culture.

Although Latina teachers were frequently credited for their contributions to their school community’s cultural awareness, their most apparent contributions were their efforts in orchestrating school events that promoted a “kaleidoscope approach” (Herman, 2007) to cultural understandings. Albeit less frequent, opportunities to provide a cultural picture that extended beyond a “superficial focus on cultural artifacts such as art, historical figures, legends, festivals, and customs” that essentialized and reduced

Hispanic cultures to “something static rather than presenting them as diverse, constantly shifting, and connected with the everyday lives of real people” (Harklau & Colomer, in press) did occur. The opportunities to discuss Latina/o culture(s) through broader perspectives that included sociopolitical/sociocultural issues arose when Latina teachers problematized “colorblind” perceptions of culture by strategically sharing their own counter-stories with colleagues.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature that reveals occasions in which students of color do not embrace teachers of color as belonging to their pan-ethnic community (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). However, this study also shows how teachers of color sometimes blend in, pass, or go unnoticed by their colleagues. This is not to say that Latina teachers purposefully kept their identities hidden, however, the opportunities to share their cultural capital were limited. Working in a world where both colleagues and students either questioned or overlooked their ethnic identities, either contributed to Latina teachers’ submission to the status quo or their energized efforts to disrupting such beliefs.

In order to create more professional forums where Latina teachers are encouraged to embrace their ethnic identities, teacher educators must create safe spaces (i.e., forums to freely discuss issues based on reality) in their classrooms for both Latina teachers, and non-Latina/o teachers to cultivate their own identities, and to embrace and negotiate diversity before they enter their classrooms. By identifying and documenting their own cultural wealth, teachers begin to obtain the necessary tools to transform education, to empower Latina/o students and other students of color, and to utilize assets already

abundant in their communities (Yosso, 2005). The sooner educators begin to affirm their identities and their personal histories, the more likely they will be able to negotiate these identities in school contexts.

CHAPTER 7

NEGOTIATING MULTIPLE LANGUAGES AND SOCIOPOLITICAL EXPERIENCES IN CLASSROOMS: LATINA TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

Spanish-English bilingualism is often seen as a potent marker of Latina/o identity.

In chapter five, I revealed that administrators recruited Latina teachers mostly for the bilingual skills they assumed Latina/o teachers might bring to their teaching team.

However, the use of Spanish in US public school classrooms is a highly charged issue. Given the significance attached to the use of Spanish in classrooms, Spanish-English teacher bilingualism is an especially important issue to investigate in terms of teacher attitudes and classroom practices. In this chapter, I consider Latina teachers' classroom practices through a lens of Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory endorses activities that incorporate lived experiences into class discussions and presentations. Such practices mirror Freire's (1970, p. 77) concept of "authentic thinking," that is to say, "thinking that is concerned about reality" and that "takes place only in communication." Herein, I show how some Latina teachers primed classroom environments for critical thought by creating safe spaces—forums to freely discuss issues based on reality. Yet, "safe" is perhaps a misnomer, as these are not neutral spaces. Instead, they are designed as spaces where students are "*safe* to engage in personally challenging explorations and lines of inquiry that called thinking into question (Fecho, 2010, p. 445, emphasis in original)." To better understand Latina teachers' utilization of lived experiences in their class discourse, I address the guiding question,

How do Latina teachers negotiate multiple languages and sociopolitical experiences in their classrooms? Specifically, I consider:

- 1) What language practices do Latina teachers enact in their classrooms?
- 2) How do Latina teachers negotiate sociopolitical issues in their classrooms?

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory draws from a broad literature base in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). In the field of education, Critical Race Theory is grounded in five tenets that challenge the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses: 1) The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination; 2) The challenge to dominant ideology; 3) The commitment to social justice; 4) The centrality of experiential knowledge; and 5) The transdisciplinary perspectives (Yosso, 2005, Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). With regard to pedagogy, Critical Race Theory draws explicitly on the lived experiences of People of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, testimonios, chronicles and narratives (Yosso, 2005).

In addition to pedagogical tools for the classroom, Critical Race Theory unveils perspectives that undermine the beliefs and practices of communities of color. In particular, Critical Race Theory discloses deficit perspectives that fault minority students and families for poor academic performance because: 1) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and 2) parents neither value nor support their child's education (Yosso, 2005). Queries regarding teacher attitudes and practices that place students of color at a disadvantage, however, must be removed from the belief that acts of discrimination come exclusively from White teachers and administrators

(Howard, 2010). As Fránquiz and her colleagues argue, “Deficit narratives are internalized and brought to teaching contexts both by White teachers and teachers of color (Fránquiz et al., 2011).”

Language in Latina Teachers’ Classrooms

All six Latina teachers were to some degree Spanish-English bilingual; however, their use and tolerance of heritage languages in their own classrooms differed. These Latina teachers drew from their own linguistic experiences to shed light on what influenced their classroom practices.

Language Ideologies

Soledad’s perspective of Spanish in her classroom was directly related to her experience as a four-year old immigrant to the US who learned English at school before ESOL programs existed. Moreover, she agreed with Baymeade administrators’ plans to transition more English Learners (ELs) into mainstream classrooms the upcoming school year, and shared, “That’s how it should be. It worked for me.” Soledad further described her linguistic philosophy in her own Language Arts and Social Studies classes, “I make them [students] speak English... Like I’m just going to start speaking Spanish to all my students, and they’re the only ones that are going to understand.” What’s more, when her students learned that she was bilingual and asked why she did not speak Spanish, she simply responded,

Because this is a school and you’re here to learn school in English... you’re here to make your way in a world that is primarily English speaking, and you have to go get a job and go to college, it’s not going to be in Spanish. So I’m not going to dumb it down for you or give you less because you speak Spanish.

Marilyn had also belonged to this school of thought when she began to teach ESL. “I used to be upset if I caught them speaking Spanish in my English classroom, I would

scold them because it doesn't help them practice their English." However, her Kreston colleagues encouraged her to use Spanish as a tool to teach her students; moreover, a monolingual English Language Arts teacher urged her not to resist using Spanish. He would tell her, "I've not heard you speak Spanish one time to these kids [ELs] that are in the class and [they] need your help, and you should use that to your advantage."

Nevertheless, while she began to take his advice, she continued to struggle with her stance on language use in classrooms. "I want to be an example of English, and I cannot be if I'm constantly speaking Spanish."

Taylor, on the other hand, reveled in her ability to communicate with her Spanish-speaking students. To her, language was more than just a code; it was a means by which she could draw on cultural understandings to link new knowledge with her students' background knowledge.

The fact that I can, in my instruction, talk about things, that—unless you're a Latino—you really don't know, or you haven't been exposed to...I'm able to use examples in Spanish...and I do that intentionally so they can connect to it.

Thus, Latina teachers' language ideologies ranged from supporting English-only policies to embracing multiculturalism.

Language Practices

Teachers' attitudes about language policies were often evident in their own use of language in their classrooms. Taylor frequently code-switched between standard-English, colloquial-English, standard-Spanish, and colloquial-Spanish during the day. For example, when asking a student to close a door she once said, "Este, Marta, cerrame la puerta. [Um, Marta, close the door for me.] Please." She also code-switched while updating a student about her schedule. "Paula, guess what, no te pueden cambiar la

clase.[They can't change your class.] Sorry, I tried.” During another class, she calmed students during a class discussion and requested to her students, “Hold up, hold up. Slow your roll.”

Through code-switching, Taylor modeled an acceptance of languages and language varieties in her classroom. In addition, she provided legitimate responses to inquiries asked in Spanish. Once, a student asked, “Ms. Garza, mañana cuando vamos en el field trip a que hora vamos a regresar?[Tomorrow when we go on the field trip, at what time will we return?]” And Taylor nonchalantly responded, “We’ll see when today’s group comes back.” By creating such a relaxed linguistic atmosphere, Taylor inadvertently addressed non-Latino students in Spanish. One day she asked a White monolingual English speaking student to “get comfortable, papa” as he walked into class. Although the directive was said in English, she added, “papa” in Spanish illustrated Taylor’s acceptance and advocacy of both languages in her classroom.

Understanding the many forms of Spanish and English her students spoke facilitated communication between Taylor and her students. However, communication depended on more than just understanding Spanish and English terminology. Taylor set-up a safe space for students to create language, and to learn in a safe environment.

Sociopolitical Discussions in Latina Teachers’ Classrooms

Some teachers implemented lessons that set the tone for critical thought. While these discussions often created an open forum for students to think critically about bilingualism, ethnicity, and immigrant life, students were not alone in learning. When Latina teachers joined conversations based on real experiences, they also thought critically of their own identities.

Classroom Atmosphere

Christina shared her own personal stories with her students early on in the year to create a safe space for students to do the same. An avid traveler, she posted a board in her classroom with a world map in the middle that had pins marking every country she had visited and many she planned to visit. In addition to sharing her board with students, she asked that they create their own board describing themselves and their hobbies to share with her and the class.

Marcela also explained that she established a relationship with her students by getting to know them through assignments. In addition to creating a fun forum for students to share about themselves, assignments such as “Real Students of Crowley” (based on the reality series “Real Housewives of...”) allowed Marcela to share a bit about herself with her students.

I get to know them from the very first day because...I give them the sort of assignment that will let me learn more about them. So this year they did a “Real Students of Crowley” assignment where they had to pretend like it was an audition booklet for a new show coming out...and they had to give unique qualities about themselves that would get them cast on the show...And then I made one of my own and I shared it with them when we had voluntary presentations. And that kind of sets the tone for that relationship. They know very early on that I’m interested in knowing about them and that they get to know a little bit about me.

Critical Conversations

Taylor also established her classroom as an open forum for students to speak freely. She explained, “At the beginning of the year, I started the day like ‘we’re going to have an open mind, period. That’s all I ask, open mind, respect each other, and that’s it.’ Illustrative of Taylor’s expectations, she began a class I observed by discussing one of the largest methamphetamine confiscations in the US, which had taken place the day

before in a neighborhood where many of her students lived. “It’s in this neighborhood and it affects you...the unfortunate part—besides that it’s illegal—is that the toxins may affect you.” Thus, Taylor not only discussed the news, she pointed out critical issues to students and highlighted how these issues impacted their lives. Over the course of the year, Taylor discussed a number of heated topics with her students. For example, when she discussed the Dream Act with students, she began the conversation, “Now we know that some of us are legal and others aren’t.” On a different day, a student freely contributed to the conversation of coyotes while discussing an article on immigration.

Student: Cuando mi papi vino, nos pidieron dinero. [When my father came they asked us for money.]
Taylor: Do you know how much?
Student: Four thousand dollars. Como le pagas al coyote ellos consiguen su dinero y los Zetas^{iv} quieren su parte. [Because you pay the coyote they get their money, and the Zetas want their part].

Marilyn also sought to create an open forum for her students to discuss current events critical to their wellbeing. In response to the marches held across the state in support of and opposition to House Bill 87^v, Marilyn chose to integrate immigration issues into her curriculum.

No, [it’s not part of the mandated curriculum] it’s totally designed to get a personal letter to the world, this is who I am, I’m going through this in my life here, these are my life dreams and my goals. They’re very engaged...They’re very upset with House Bill 87 and they’ve blogged the guy who made it, and they’ve blogged the immigration attorney who’s against it.

By creating a forum for students to discuss their own lived experiences, these Latina teachers incorporated highly politicized lessons into their curriculum to mirror their students’ highly politicized lives.

^{iv} Los Zetas is a Mexican drug cartel.

^v House Bill 87 is the Georgia Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011.

As a result of the politicized lessons some Latina teachers taught, a few Latina teachers experienced unexpected learning events of their own. Taylor, Marilyn, and Concepción all started the year with cultural quilts—an activity in which students created a paper quilt to frame certain facets of their identity. Taylor noticed that in addition to creating a springboard for discourse with her students, the critical reflection required by the activity caused her to feel empowered as a Latina.

I just felt this Latino empowerment all the sudden. It was weird...I feel like we've been, people are misunderstanding the Latino culture or the Hispanic or whatever you want to call us because we're not all the same, we don't have the same views, we're all different...Some of us speak Spanish, some of us don't...I guess because part of the quilt was asking about a time you've been discriminated, things about race and stuff or times you stereotyped and I remember the kids mentioning, 'You know, I used to think that if you didn't speak Spanish, you weren't Latino.' I said, 'You know what? Me too.' Because my parents were like, 'You've got to speak Spanish, you've got to speak Spanish.' And...it wasn't until I read an article in Latina Magazine that was talking about that that I was like, 'You know what? I am that generation that some of us don't speak Spanish.'

In these classrooms, teaching and learning was grounded in discussions of lived experiences, as a result, both students and teachers learned to question prescribed truths of the Latina/o community. In Taylor's case, her own perceptions of being Latina were altered during class discussions.

Uncomfortable Spaces

Sharing personal experiences did not mean that students would automatically understand teachers' hardships as Latinas in the US. When Marilyn told students she had been embarrassed to let others know she was Latina, students gasped. Taylor, aware of students' negative reactions to Marilyn's openness, planned to create a lesson to discuss the various experiences of immigrants.

Some of the kids were like how dare she not know to be loud and proud of her Puerto Rican culture...After she explained it, they were like, oh, okay. But still,

again, a lot of them just came over, so they don't understand what it is to have to fit into...an all White community. What it was like when your parents did not teach you to speak Spanish because they wanted you to be American or whatever they viewed as American.

In response to misunderstandings caused by generational gaps, Taylor longed to include her Latina/o and non-Latina/o students in a critical conversation about the Latina/o immigrant experience. She hoped to draw attention to the sociopolitical realities of each era and how they impacted immigrants' options to negotiate their home culture in a new context.

Although some teachers included lived experiences as a tool to facilitate understanding, not all Latina teachers felt comfortable discussing such contentious topics with students. For example, Soledad did not discuss immigration events, even when her students wrote about the deportation of their own parents in journals assigned for class.

Sometimes you'll read about like one parent is deported or whatever...I really don't put comments in it. Sometimes I don't even give them [journals] back. I may just acknowledge that I've read them or if it's something like that, really I wouldn't put a comment on that, no...Like I have Marisol, her dad just got deported, and I don't know if she's, I don't think she's coming back here next year, I think she said she's going back to Mexico.

Soledad felt the most uncomfortable about discussing immigration issues and avoided the subject with her students. Evading topics that dealt with her students' lived experiences, Soledad maintained an aloof position to their realities, and she failed to foster an understanding of their worlds.

Discussion And Implications

When teachers include students' home language into their repertoire of practices, they affirm students' cultural and linguistic home cultures. However, what happens when Latina teachers chose to avoid uncomfortable discussions? While some studies have

shown that Latina/o teachers are likely to share their cultural experiences with students in their classrooms (Rueda et al., 2004), my observations challenge whether all Latina teachers allow themselves, or feel they are allowed, to bring their own lived experiences into the classroom. In chapter one, Soledad shared that her individual culture had evolved from both her Cuban and US cultures. However, from childhood, she learned that Spanish was for the home, and English was for school; thus, she refrained from bringing her Cuban family values into the classroom. In this chapter I reveal how these ideologies manifested in her classroom, as she complied with English-only mandates.

Critical race theory posits that teaching is an act of social justice. However, when these Latina teachers defaulted to the same teaching practices that their teachers had used to teach them without critically reflecting upon the academic and social impact their practices had on their students, Latina teachers gambled on meeting their own students' needs. Instead of taking such risks on students' learning, I propose teachers engage in critical discourse. By creating a safe space for students to connect classroom lessons with their own lives, teachers create spaces of inquiry, both for students and for themselves.

Through my observations, I learned that the Latina teachers who learned about their students' lived experiences early in the semester were able to connect the lessons more directly to students' prior knowledge, as they implemented pedagogical methods that matched class content to students' interests and learning styles. These practices were possible because they established their classrooms as safe spaces for discussions based on lived experiences, Latina teachers refrained from banking education (Freire, 1970, p. 81), and employed critical pedagogy that involved a "constant unveiling of reality" and strove for the "emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality (Freire, 1970, p.

81).” A case in point, Taylor’s sudden sense of “Latino empowerment” was a manifestation of her “critical identity consciousness” (Urrieta, 2007) forming as the critical discourse in her classroom caused her to reflect upon her own perceptions of what it meant to be “Latina.”

Conclusion

My observations of these Latina teachers’ classrooms provided a glimpse into the challenges and benefits of maintaining classroom practices grounded in social justice. With regard to the challenges, teachers cannot be expected to enact methods that challenge dominant ideologies when they themselves have not experienced such teaching methods. Although the Latina teachers who created safe spaces shared the tensions that arose during their classroom experience of critical reflection, they also shared how the process led to personal transformation and new perspectives. If we expect teachers to implement teaching practices based on the five tenets of critical race theory, we must practice them in our own classrooms to model the process. While this chapter illustrated the role of Latina teachers’ instructional methods through a lens of critical race theory, the following chapter considers Latina teachers’ instructional methods through a culturally responsive lens.

CHAPTER 8

LATINA TEACHERS AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING: ARE THEY ONE AND THE SAME?

In the preceding chapter, I shared Latina's perspectives on the use of multiple languages in their classrooms. In this chapter, I look at the practices of Latina teachers who teach in multicultural contexts through a culturally responsive lens. Understanding Latina teachers' pedagogical practices is important as the call for more teachers of color intensifies (Gay et al., 2003). Although scholars support the notion of recruiting teachers of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010), a growing body of research draws attention to the academic and professional needs of teachers of color (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012), and challenges the presumption that teachers of color are instinctively more effective with students of color than their White counterparts (Weisman & Hansen, 2008). Nevertheless, with training (Sheets, 2004, Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012), and a schooling environment receptive to culturally responsive practices (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012), studies show that teachers of color have the potential to be successful educators in multicultural contexts.

In an examination of major arguments regarding the diversification of teachers, Villegas & Irvine (2010) found five practices implemented by effective teachers of color: (a) having high expectations of students; (b) using culturally relevant teaching; (c) developing caring and trusting relationships with students; (d) confronting issues of racism through teaching; and (e) serving as advocates and cultural brokers. The realization of these practices by Latina teachers, in particular, culturally responsive

teaching, depends greatly on whether or not they value the cultural and linguistic capital of students of color and communities of color (Yosso, 2005).

Herein, I explore Latina teachers' application of culturally responsive teaching methods by asking, *Are all Latina teachers equally successful in applying culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms?* Specifically, I consider:

- 1) What practices do Latina teachers enact to engage students in their classrooms?
- 2) How do students respond when Latina teachers employ culturally responsive teaching practices? And how do students respond when culturally responsive teaching practices are not employed?

Culturally Responsive Teaching

As noted above, employing culturally responsive practices is a characteristic of an effective teacher of color. In order to recognize these practices, I provide an overview of culturally responsive teaching and the observed impact it has on students.

Gay (2010) defines Culturally Responsive Teaching as “using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31). Moreover, Gay (2010) argues that culturally responsive teaching is: 1) Validating; 2) Comprehensive; 3) Multidimensional; 4) Empowering; 5) Transformative; and 6) Emancipatory.

Culturally responsive teaching is *validating* because students learn to know and to praise their own and one another's cultural heritages. Culturally responsive teaching is *comprehensive* because these practices encourage students to maintain their connections with their ethnic groups and communities. Culturally Responsive teaching is *multidimensional* as students learn to correct factual errors about cultural heritages.

Culturally Responsive teaching is *empowering* because teachers expect students to succeed. Culturally Responsive Teaching is *transformative* as students learn to value their ethnic identities. Culturally responsive teaching is *emancipatory* because students learn that no single version of truth exists, nor is it total and permanent (Gay, 2010).

In order to achieve these outcomes, teachers must form a positive relationship with their students and create a classroom climate that prioritizes interaction among students and between the teacher and students. That is to say, culturally responsive teachers include activities (e.g., individual, group, competitive, cooperative, participatory, and sedentary, etc.) that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of information, concepts and skills. Additionally, culturally responsive teachers work toward student empowerment and encourage students to challenge existing social orders and power structures. For Latina teachers who internalize deficit narratives (see Chapter 6), the expectation to enact culturally responsive practices may challenge what they consider to be true about teaching and contest their understanding of knowledge in general.

Latina Teachers' Classroom Practices

Although I observed culturally responsive teaching methods during my visits, pedagogical practices were inconsistent across classrooms.

A Caring Classroom

Marcela was the last resort teacher. Meaning, when all the other teachers had kicked students out of their classrooms, administrators brought them to her class and gave them the ultimatum: they either got their act together in her class, or they left the school. She was known as a teacher who had a knack for working with students in general—from

those who played in the school band and waited for the yellow bus to those who were affiliated with gangs and were old enough to drive in middle school. There were many reasons for Marcela's successes as an educator. For one, during my observations, Marcela's tone was generally jovial. She joked with students. For example, when a burst of wind unexpectedly opened her classroom trailer door one day, she simply remarked, "I'm so awesome ghosts even want to come learn in here." Furthermore, she made consistent efforts to acknowledge all of her students during each class period.

Although her classroom was relaxed, Marcela was a champion of discipline. An advocate of positive reinforcement, Marcela supported the process of her students' learning. For example, while taking out his homework, one of Marcela's students remarked, "Ms. Vargas, I did it but I need help with the linking verb a little bit." To which she responded, "We're going to go over that together, no stress." Students settled down within the first few minutes of class, and they went over the homework together. After going over the homework, Marcela then guided students through the first few exercises of their classwork and said, "Okay you guys. You're on your own for numbers four through ten." After a few minutes of students working silently on task, Marcela regrouped her students, "Alright number four. It sounds like we're finished." She then walked around, and as she glanced over students' work, she called out, "Mario has it right, Alicia has it right, Clarissa has it right," and so forth for every question. As she did so, one Latino student proudly remarked, "Yeah, we're smart like that." In addition, during several observations, Marcela took out her candy jar and gave a piece of candy to students who provided responses using higher level thinking skills. Furthermore, when a student asked why he had not been given candy after responding correctly, she explained,

“You have to tell me why for the jar. That’s the higher thinking part.”

In a supportive classroom Marcela’s students felt good about themselves and free to ask for help. Marcela maintained high expectations and encouraged students to participate, thereby, nurturing their self-esteem while teaching them literacy skills.

An Open Discussion

Taylor often began class with excerpts from video documentaries. During one observation, students’ warm-up activity consisted of a short video on 9-11 and the controversy regarding the possible construction of a Muslim community center close to where the twin towers had fallen. As students watched the video, Taylor walked around to check homework journal entries. When the video segment ended, students practiced their persuasive writing skills and responded to the discussion question: “Should Muslims be allowed to build a community center near ground zero?” Within a few minutes, Taylor opened the forum for students to openly discuss their opinions concerning the community center.

When she asked her students to share, one student responded, “Mine is too racist.” Taylor encouraged him to speak and reminded him, “You don’t want to offend anyone, but you’re entitled to your own opinion.” After reading his essay, Taylor asked the class for comments. She explained, “Whether you agree or not, that’s on you. But he gave reasons.” As students continued to volunteer, many shared very different positions. Between essays, Taylor commended students who presented their arguments with great detail—a lesson objective that strengthened students’ writing and presentation skills.

With regard to content, Taylor drew students’ attention to stereotypical notions embedded in comments about people who shared ethnic or religious identities. She

reminded her students, “Not all Latinos are Mexican, not all Black people like fried chicken, and not all Asians have 4.0s.” She continued to draw parallels to concepts with which her students were more familiar, “Islam is a religion, it’s like being Catholic.” “Let’s say fulano [so-and-so] robs a store and he goes to St. Patrick’s Catholic Church. So are we going to tear down the church?” In response to this scenario, students questioned each other and challenged themselves to think critically.

Taylor connected lively class discussions to writing assignments for students to learn through active participation and critical thought. Thus, her lessons met students’ learning styles, nourished their cultural awareness, cultivated their critical skills, and validated their academic potential.

A Silent Space

Although some teachers encouraged students to voice their opinions and lived experiences in the classroom, other teachers were more likely to send students out for misbehaving when they spoke out of turn. During one observation, Soledad informed her students of her plans for the class as they walked in the door. “I’m going to take attendance and then I have an 18 minute video and then I have a powerpoint. You need to be attentive and quiet.” As students settled in, she continued to give them directives, “Mark, close your mouth. Sit correctly in your seat. Do you need for me to show you how to sit correctly? I can teach you during silent lunch. Go to Ms. Guiles (team-teacher). And if I hear you, you’re going to go to Ms. Carol (counselor).”

During the video, Soledad prevented students from sharing their perspectives and experiences in class. When students tried to share their experiences that related to the powerpoint presentation Soledad had created, she reminded them that it was not a

discussion.

Please stop interrupting. If you have something to say, please raise your hand...If you have a question raise your hand because if I hear your voice that means you're interrupting me and you're going to have to go. You can raise your hand. If I choose, you can say something.

When they continued to whisper about the content of the presentation among themselves, and not follow along with presentation at her pace, she added, "I'm already successful. I don't really care if you don't care. If you keep talking you're going to do textbook work."

After the video, Soledad sat at her desk and graded papers while students answered worksheet questions quietly. Within a few minutes, Soledad glanced up and noticed that a handful of students were not working on their worksheet. To this, she warned, "Some of us are getting off task...I think I may have to add some names to a silent lunch list I have. I'm gonna send somebody out of the room because it's my turn to send someone out."

Over time, students began to show indifference to Soledad's approach to order in her classroom. During a separate observation Soledad asked a student to pass out work packets while she stood over another student as he took out his book. "I'm waiting on you and I really don't want to wait very much longer," Soledad threatened. Preoccupied, Soledad did not notice her helper mocking her. Each time the student laid a packet on a desk she whispered, "Silent lunch," "Detention," "Ms. Guiles," "Ms. Carol." Her classmates smiled in silence. In response to her punitive methods, Soledad's students rebelled by mocking her authority; furthermore, they sometimes paid closer attention to following her procedures than to the content of the lessons.

When students missed class—regardless of reason—Soledad was not forgiving. In

certain cases, it lead to double jeopardy as the student was immediately punished by missing instruction when sent out of the room, and later, indirectly punished when held responsible for the missed material. In one case, I observed a Latino student who pled his case in vain:

Latino student: I need help.
Soledad: No, you need to read.
Latino student: No, I need help.
Soledad: What is the question?
Latino student: What are some ways a kid can raise money?
Soledad: It was in the video.
Latino student: I wasn't here.
Soledad: You were here.
Latino student: No, I was in time out.
Soledad: Oh, well, I guess you're gonna have to think of some things on your own.

Double jeopardy was evident even when students missed class for reasons other than misbehavior. For instance, when Soledad warned the class that they only had ten minutes left to complete an assignment, a Latino student fretted, "But I went to the bathroom!" To which she responded, "I don't care."

An Absolute Hierarchy

Concepción's concern with authority was evident during a number of observations. During one particular class, she demanded her students to observe the chain of command.

You need discipline. I have to do what people ask me to do. I need to listen to the people above me. And you need to learn this now. When you want to do your own thing, especially a child. If you don't want to follow what you are told to do you are going to be removed from this class because this will not continue. I do what Mrs. Hewitt tells me to do, not what I want to do. If I want to keep my job I have to do what she tells me. If I want to do what I want to do, then I quit my job and go home.

In Concepción's world, deferring to authority was the norm. Through her lens, the world

was a hierarchy where her students were to obey her, just as she was to obey her administrators. As an outcome of Concepción's hierarchal ideology, she avoided dialogue in her classroom and turned each assignment into an obligatory act. During another class observation, Concepción laid out her expectations just as students prepared to start a test,

You need to learn to write on the line. Whenever you do any paper in any class make sure that's how you write it because that's the way I want it and not how you want it. If you don't listen you're not learning. If you come for any other reason you're in the wrong place. First thing you're gonna do is write your name on the first line.

As minutes ticked away, students became eager to begin, yet, Concepción walked around to check their names and pointed out mistakes.

Sir, is this what I told you to do? Take a look at this and follow this model. No, that's not the way I said. I am giving you an example. I'm showing you how to do it and people still don't know. Date. Underneath the date, teacher. No, that's not the way you lead it. Son, do you have a last name, sir? Look at the way I want you to write the heading. This is the way I want it and this is the way you're gonna write it.

Discussion And Implications

Culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional. Meaning, it extends beyond the curriculum content to include the "learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments (Gay, 2010, p. 33)." Through their acts of teaching, some Latina teachers created supportive classrooms that encouraged students to engage in critical thought. In effect, they employed culturally responsive teaching practices.

Latina teachers who embraced the precepts of culturally responsive pedagogy, experienced the transformative process of education. As a result, students were empowered, they believed they could succeed in learning tasks, and they were willing to pursue success (Gay, 2010). Furthermore, they began to learn the skills needed to

challenge existing social orders and power structures through the instructional practices of culturally responsive pedagogy. On the other hand, in classrooms where silence and obedience were demanded, students' critical skills failed to develop. The Latina teachers who took on the role of bank clerk educator, maintained a dichotomous worldview in which they made the choices and students complied. When students adapted to the "fragmented view of reality deposited in them" students were unable to transform the world around them (Freire 1970, p. 77).

Conclusion

As these data indicate, teacher education programs should not assume that all Latina teachers will know how to, nor choose to employ, culturally responsive teaching practices. However, these data also show the benefits of culturally responsive teaching practices, as they allowed for transformative dialogue between students and teachers in supportive classrooms. We should provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to engage in culturally responsive pedagogy in the field and then provide the time and space for critical reflection in the classroom (face to face or online). By infusing our own curricula with interactional instruction, the hope is that these methods will have a transformative and empowering impact on novice teacher identities as they enter the classroom. As a guide, I suggest the work of Villegas & Irvine (2010) who revealed culturally responsive pedagogy as an effective skill among successful teachers of color. Additionally, Villegas & Lucas (2002) provide guidelines for teacher educators to help teachers of all ethnicities to understand culturally responsive theories and to implement culturally responsive practices.

CONCLUSION

The premise of this study was to better understand the impact Latina teachers had on Latina/o students. However, as this study evolved, I came to understand that while Latina teachers have the potential to be effective teachers to Latina/o students, they should not be pigeonholed into being the only teachers who are able to meet the needs of Latina/o students. Moreover, if Latina/o teachers are to realize their potential skills, teacher educators must work with pre-service teachers to help cultivate linguistic and cultural capital, to build an awareness of majoritarian tales and other deficit precepts, and to foster skills to teach in culturally responsive ways.

In chapter four, I revealed the need to appreciate diversity within pan-ethnic groups and to consider the possibility of a “mismatch” when clumping racially congruent students and teachers. Like teachers of other ethnicities, Latina teachers may require time and reflective thought to establish relationships with students—Latina/o and non-Latina/o. Differences within the Latina/o pan-ethnic community and acculturation to the White mainstream community sometimes kept these Latina teachers from relating with Latina/o students. In fact, some related better with students from other ethnicities because they shared lived experiences.

Given these insights, what might teacher educators learn from these Latina teachers? We can work towards creating culturally sensitive curricula that encourage pre-service educators to work towards affirming their diversity (see Nieto & Bode, 2011). By engaging in self-reflective exercises, pre-service teachers might learn to negotiate their

own identities (e.g., ethnic, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, religious, etc.). Such practices will spur educators to affirm their identity by naming themselves, thus, nourishing the development of their “critical consciousness” over the course of their teacher education program and into their teaching practice.

In chapter five, I pointed out that at the school level, even though efforts were made to recruit teachers of color, administrators prioritized other criteria when recruiting effective teachers to ensure students excelled on state mandated tests. While the call for diversity was heard, diversity took a back seat to the call for better test scores. Moreover, although schools worked towards providing students and parents with bilingual teachers and staff with whom they could communicate, the underlying expectation for Latina teachers was that they, as school agents, take on the school voice and ensure that parents and students understand the school culture. Both Rustle administrators’ efforts to recruit teachers of color and how teacher candidates of color responded to such intense recruitment resembled national trends. First, administrators took various measures to recruit Teachers of Color from a very limited pool of candidates. Secondly, teachers of color preferred to work in majority minority schools (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

On another note, Latina/o teachers were primarily sought for their presumed linguistic and cultural knowledge. However, because bilingualism is on a continuum, Latina teachers might not know enough Spanish to interpret effectively. Furthermore, Latina teachers, even if bilingual, may not know enough academic Spanish to mediate instruction for ELs. As the call for more Latina teachers increases, teacher educators need to consider the resources we must provide Latina/o teachers if they are to fulfill the linguistic expectations others have of them.

One possible solution might be to create courses in university Spanish departments that build upon the linguistic skills of those Latinas (and others) who speak Spanish by teaching them grade-specific academic Spanish for various content areas. These courses could also include language used to meet school-wide needs (see Colomer & Harklau, 2009), and could be co-created with school personnel to ensure inclusion of words and phrases most needed in local school environments. Important to note, these courses should be offered to all educational professionals with a basic understanding of Spanish, as teaching Latina/o students is the responsibility of all school agents.

In chapter six, these Latina teachers' experiences, and administrators' perceptions shed light on the complexity of race and ethnicity in schools. Clearly, ethnic labels were rarely openly discussed, thus, the act of clumping all Spanish-speakers into the Latina/o pan-ethnic group regardless of nationality prevailed. Yet, Latina teachers who were considered role models tended to be the ones who defied majoritarian tales by educating themselves and returning to teach students the skill of navigating outside cultures while valuing their own culture.

The opportunities to discuss Latina/o culture(s) through broader perspectives that included sociopolitical/sociocultural issues arose when Latina teachers problematized "colorblind" perceptions of culture by strategically sharing their own counter-stories with colleagues. In order to create more professional forums where Latina teachers are encouraged to embrace their ethnic identities, teacher educators must create safe spaces in in their classrooms for both Latina teachers, and non-Latina/o teachers to cultivate their own identities, and to embrace and negotiate diversity before they enter their

classrooms. The sooner educators begin to affirm their identities and their personal histories, the more likely they will be able to negotiate these identities in school contexts.

In chapter seven, my observations challenge whether all Latina teachers allow themselves, or feel they are allowed, to bring their own lived experiences into the classroom. Moreover, I reveal how these ideologies manifested in Latina teachers' classrooms, when they complied with English-only mandates. Thus, my observations provided a glimpse into the challenges and benefits of maintaining classroom practices grounded in social justice. With regard to the challenges, teachers cannot be expected to enact methods that challenge dominant ideologies when they themselves have not experienced such teaching methods. Although the Latina teachers who created safe spaces shared the tensions that arose during their classroom experience of critical reflection, they also shared how the process led to personal transformation and new perspectives. If we expect teachers to implement teaching practices based on the five tenets of critical race theory, we must practice them in our own classrooms to model the process.

In chapter eight I argue for the merit of culturally responsive pedagogy. In classrooms where silence and obedience were demanded, students' critical skills failed to develop. On the other hand, students taught by Latina teachers who embraced the precepts of culturally responsive pedagogy, experienced the transformative process of education. As these data indicate, teacher education programs should not assume that all Latina teachers will know how to, nor choose to employ, culturally responsive teaching practices. However, these data also show the benefits of culturally responsive teaching practices, as they allowed for dialogue between students and teachers in supportive

classrooms. Thus, it is imperative that we, as teacher educators, model culturally responsive classroom practices. We should provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to engage in culturally responsive pedagogy in the field and then provide the time and space for critical reflection in the classroom (face to face or online). By infusing our own curricula with interactional instruction, the hope is that these methods will have a transformative and empowering impact on novice teacher identities as they enter the classroom. As a guide, I suggest the work of Villegas & Irvine (2010) who revealed culturally responsive pedagogy as an effective skill among successful teachers of color. Additionally, Villegas & Lucas (2002) provide guidelines for teacher educators to help teachers of all ethnicities to understand culturally responsive theories and to implement culturally responsive practices.

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APPENDIX A: FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

First Interview Protocol for Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How did you choose to become a teacher and how did you prepare for this career?
3. How long have you been a part of this school community?
4. Tell me about this school community.
5. What made you want to teach the subject area you teach?
6. What made you want to teach in this school?
7. What terms do you use to describe yourself ethnically? Please explain.
8. What does your ethnicity mean to you?
9. How did your ethnicity play a role in your own schooling? Tell me of a time when this has been apparent to you.
10. How does your ethnicity affect your role as a teacher? Tell me of a time when this has been apparent to you.
11. I have a passage that I'd like to read aloud about developing a diverse teaching force. [After I read it aloud] What's your opinion about this passage? *I will also have this passage for the teachers to refer to as they think of their response. I will collect the passage at the end of the interview.*

If we are to be responsive to the special demands and great opportunities of our nation's pluralistic makeup, we should develop a teaching force that is diverse, as well. Many of the increasing numbers of students who will be filling our schools in the next decade will be children of color. Many will be sons and daughters of immigrants. Children need role models—they need to see themselves in the faces of their teachers. We need teachers who can relate to the lives of diverse students, and who can connect those students to larger worlds and greater possibilities. We need teachers from different backgrounds to share different experiences and points of view with colleagues. This sharing enriches and empowers the entire profession and students from all backgrounds (Riley, 1998, p. 19, as cited in Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003, emphasis added).

12. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your experience as a Latina/o in education?

APPENDIX B: SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

Second Interview Protocol for Teachers

These interview questions were created after reading through my first round of interviews. You may find some familiar topics and others that are completely new to you. Please feel free to elaborate as much as you'd like as you build upon previous thoughts.

1. Has the community that this school draws from changed over time in terms of SES? How about race? Ethnicity?
2. What kinds of things does this school do that might help welcome or be approachable to parents? Students? How well do you think these things are working?
 - a. How about with Latino parents in particular?
 - b. How about with Latino students in particular?
3. Describe events held at this school to celebrate Latino/Hispanic culture. Who organizes these events? What is your role in the implementation of these events?
4. How does being Latina influence what you choose to teach (e.g., lesson plans, authentic texts, videos watched, etc.)? Please share an example.
 - a. Has anyone ever asked you to incorporate any culture or current events pertaining to Latinos in your lessons because you are Latina (e.g., parents, students, teachers, administrators)? Tell me of a time when this has been apparent to you.
5. Do you feel like you are ever asked to do things at school for students and/or parents because of your ***ethnicity*** that you might not be asked if you were not Latina? Please share an example.
 - a. Do you feel it is your duty to do things because of your ***ethnicity*** that you might not feel compelled to do if you were not Latina? Please share an example.
6. Are you ever asked to do things at school, for students and/or parents because you are ***bilingual*** that you might not be asked if you were English monolingual? Please share an example.
 - a. Do you feel it is your duty to do things because of your ***bilingualism*** that you might not feel compelled to do if you were not bilingual? Please share an example.
7. How does your upbringing compare to the upbringing of the Latina/o students who attend this school? Tell me of a time when this has been apparent to you.

8. How would you like students to see you? How would you like them to relate with you? Is it different with different students? Is your relationship different when students are from a different racial or ethnic group than you are? Please explain.
9. When do you think it's appropriate for teachers to use Spanish in the classroom? How do you think other people at this school feel about using Spanish in the classroom? How do you think students feel about using Spanish in the classroom?
10. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your experience as a Latina/o in education?

APPENDIX C: THIRD INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

Third Interview Protocol for Teachers

These interview questions were created after reading through my second round of interviews. You may find some familiar topics and others that are completely new to you. Please feel free to elaborate as much as you'd like as you build upon previous thoughts.

1. What have you discussed with other teachers or staff members about your heritage? Can you think of an example?
 - a. How about the Latina/o heritage in general?
2. How do standardized tests impact the lessons you teach? Please explain.
 - a. How you teach?
 - b. What you would like to teach?
3. How do the schedule changes to spend more time with your students impact your relationship with them (e.g., extra homeroom time)?
4. Here I have a copy of the Crowley High School Cluster map^{vi}. By looking at this map, could you share what the communities from each area are like?
 - a. Where do most of your students live? Which neighborhoods in particular? Describe them.
 - b. How would you explain what is meant by the *Wilton Divide*?
5. Thank you for bringing examples of your students' work. As we go through these, please share why you chose these examples and what makes these pieces, or their authors, stand out to you.
 - a. How do these pieces shed light to how these children experience life?
 - b. How do these experiences compare to your life experiences?
6. How has participating in this study altered your thoughts about your Latina/o students?
 - a. Your perception of your *role in the schooling* of Latino students?
 - b. Your perception of your *role in the schooling* of students in general?
7. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your experience as a Latina/o teacher with regard to
 - a. your role as a role model for Latina/o children?
 - b. your ability to relate to the lives of diverse students?
 - c. your ability to share different experiences and points of view with colleagues
8. Any thoughts you would like to add regarding your role?

^{vi} Not included to maintain confidentiality.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Interview Protocol for School Personnel Who Work with Latina/o Teachers

1. How long you worked here? In what capacities?
2. Tell me about the community that this school draws from in terms of SES, race, ethnicity.
 - a. Has this community changed over time in terms of SES? How about race? Ethnicity?
3. What has been the typical racial composition of teachers at the district over time?
 - a. How about at this school?
4. Do you see benefits in having a racially and ethnically diverse teaching staff? Please explain.
5. When the teaching staff is racially and ethnically diverse, what effects does it have on the relationships *among teachers and students*? Can you give me an example?
6. How does the presence of a Latina/o teacher impact the school? Please explain.
7. I have a passage from former Secretary of Education Riley that I'd like to read aloud about developing a diverse teaching force.

I will also have this passage for the administrator/counselor to refer to as they think of their response. I will collect the passage at the end of the interview.

If we are to be responsive to the special demands and great opportunities of our nation's pluralistic makeup, we should develop a teaching force that is diverse, as well. Many of the increasing numbers of students who will be filling our schools in the next decade will be children of color. Many will be sons and daughters of immigrants. Children *need role models*—they need to see themselves in the faces of their teachers. We need teachers who can *relate to the lives of diverse students*, and who can connect those students to larger worlds and greater possibilities. We need teachers from different backgrounds to *share different experiences and points of view with colleagues*. This sharing enriches and empowers the entire profession and students from all backgrounds (Riley, 1998, p. 19, as cited in Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003, emphasis added).

- a. *[After I read it aloud]* What is your opinion about this passage?
8. How has your school responded to this call for teachers from different backgrounds?

- a. If more teachers of color have been hired: Have any tensions or issues come up because more teachers of color have been hired? Can you give me an example?
9. Is there anything you would like to add regarding the role of Latina/o teachers at your school?

Table 1. Student Demographics 2010-2011

	White	Black	Hispanic ⁷	Asian	Native American	Multi-racial	LEP ⁸	ESOL Enrolled	Free & Reduced Lunch
The State of Georgia	44%	37%	12%	3%	0%	3%	6%	4.1%	57%
Rustle County	32%	29%	25%	10%	0%	4%	16%	7.2%	52%
Baymeade Middle School	33%	32%	25%	6%	0%	4%	7%	1.6%	56%
Kreston Middle School	3%	23%	62%	8%	1%	3%	23%	8.6%	91%

<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/Home.aspx>

Table 2. Teacher Demographics 2010-2011

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Multiracial
The State of Georgia	82,848 73.0%	25,786 23.0%	2,019 1.8%	985 .9%	226 .2%	1288 1.1%
Rustle County	8520 78.4%	1549 14.3%	380 3.5%	219 2.0%	38 .3%	155 1.4%
Baymeade Middle School	66 81.5%	7 8.6%	5 6.2%	2 2.5%	0 .0%	1 1.2%
Kreston Middle School	41 49.0%	26 31.0%	12 14.0%	3 4.0%	0 .0%	2 2.0%

<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/Home.aspx>

Table 3. Latina Teacher Participants

	Ethnicity	Course(s) Taught	Years Teaching/ Years at School
Baymeade Middle School			
Christina Ophelia Fontana	Born in US American mother Argentine father	8 th Grade Spanish	7/5
Soledad Hirsch	Born in Cuba Immigrated at the age of four	6 th Grade Language Arts & Social Studies	17/12
Kreston Middle School			
Taylor Victoria Garza	Born in US Honduran parents	8th Grade Language Arts	5/5
Marilyn/Mary/Maria Lara	Born in Germany on US base Puerto Rican parents	8th Grade ESOL	5/3
Marcela Vargas	Born in US Cuban parents	7th Grade Language Arts	14/5
Concepción Salazar	Immigrated as adult from Puerto Rico	6th Grade Language Arts	40/4

Table 4. School Personnel Participants

Baymeade Middle School

AP Language & Literacy, International Baccalaureate Program, ESOL

6th Grade AP

8th Grade AP

6th Grade Counselor

8th Grade Counselor

Kreston Middle School

Principal

8th Grade AP

ESOL Chair

International Baccalaureate Specialist

AP Curriculum & Instruction

AP 6th & 7th

7th Grade Counselor

6th Grade Counselor

8th Grade Counselor

Literacy Coach
