

Chapter 28

Ethnic Identity as a Cultural Mediator in Teaching: An Autoethnography of a Latinx Teacher



Jennifer M. Barreto

Abstract In this chapter, the author examines her experience of education as a Latinx in the United States, first as a student, and then as a teacher, through the intersectionality of language bias, racism, and elitism. Producing autoethnographic research acknowledges and validates her Latinx presence and draws attention to her marginal position inside the dominant structures of education. This autoethnography puts the critical focus on her experiences within the broader context of education (Denzin NK, *Interpretive ethnography: ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Sage, 1997). This personal narrative (Bochner AP, *Narrat Inq* 22:155–164, 2012) employs the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and Latinx critical race theory (CRT; Delgado R, Stefancic J, *Critical race theory: an introduction*. University Press, 2001) to explore the tensions of being Latinx in the United States education system. This cultural analysis considers personal, social, and culturally constructed identities. The author discusses the everyday negotiations between Latinx culture and teaching in an elementary school. Centering the critical framework, the author interrogates how society shapes our narratives, identities, and lives (Kehly MJ, *Gend Educ* 7:23–31, 1995) through culture, power, and language.

Introduction

I am an anomaly in education—an elementary school teacher from a working-class, Puerto Rican family, and a first-generation college student. This exceptional advantage point leads me to examine how—despite the forms of oppression I experienced as a student and despite the lack of representation of Latinx educators—my Latinx ethnic identity played a role in my choice to become a teacher and to teach in an elementary school in the United States.

Researchers in the field of education have documented scarcity in recruiting and retaining Latinx and other marginalized teachers in the United States (Bristol &

J. M. Barreto (✉)
Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI, USA
e-mail: jbarreto@emich.edu

Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012), despite the student population in the United States becoming increasingly more culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, with Latinx students identified as the largest minority (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2018). In contrast with these diverse demographics of students, 80% of teachers are white and only 9% are Latinx (NCES, 2018). How does the field of education become diversified when historically it has suppressed the narratives of Latinx students and other non-dominant groups (Yosso, 2005) and has excluded the insightful experiences of Latinx teachers (Goldhaber et al., 2019)?

Highlighting the marginal positions in which Latinx people live in dominant institutions of education, Lamar (2019) describes her teaching experience in the United States as excluding her ethnic and cultural identities. Lamar felt devalued in education, and ultimately, she left teaching. In their study of a Latina pre-service teacher, Gomez and Rodriguez (2011) found that she relied on her ethnic and cultural background when working with students. They reported she reflected critically, strategically considering ways to find representation so students would see themselves reflected in their learning. While the results of such studies are encouraging, more work must be done in the field of education to elevate Latinx and diverse voices. The benefits of sharing Latinx stories include encouraging teachers to use their cultural/linguistic experiences to help diverse students. Viewing culture as another resource for all students to learn, Latinx teachers recognize the importance of celebrating—not devaluing—a student’s native language.

Sharing my story by examining the intersections of language bias, racism, and elitism as both a Latinx student and as a teacher in the United States can help address educational inequities. Educators have underscored the crucial role of attending to multicultural lived experiences in the classroom, and how these experiences inform classroom pedagogy (Yazan, 2019). Bartolomé (2004, 2008) argues that teachers must understand how their ideological orientation shapes their students’ views and influences their teaching. In thinking about my ethnic identity, my beliefs, ideas, and language impacted my classroom decisions. Vellanki and Prince (2018) found that in U.S. classrooms teacher educators had a singular understanding of the multicultural context that excluded the stories of multicultural students and teachers; they identified the need for further research in multicultural teacher stories in education.

Limited research exists on Latinx educators finding their voice as role models in an oppressive environment. Coker and Cain (2018) state the importance of marginalized teachers as uniquely positioned to empathize with students who are also marginalized. By examining my tensions in the classroom as a Latinx teacher dealing with different forms of oppression, including language bias, racism, and elitism, my goal is to continue the conversation of representation. I aim to address this missing link by examining the intersections of who I am. In this chapter, I would like to create a roadmap of my thoughts, experiences, and reflections as a minority K–12 educator. I am using critical autoethnography as a method to understand my

personal experience to contribute to our knowledge of power and social inequality in the education system.

Theoretical Framework

Framing My Ethnic Identity in Education

Being Puerto Rican guides my ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity. The theories I used to examine my ethnic identity include critical race theory (CRT) and Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit). LatCrit stems from CRT building on critical race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), who examine social justice through an empowering and liberating framework to show inequalities (Bell, 1995). LatCrit considers the historical oppression of ethnicities and cultures. This framework highlights the Latinx experience of ethnicity, language, culture, and the oppressions this group encounters (Covarrubias & Lara, 2014; Yosso, 2005), “beyond the limitations of the black/white paradigm” (Iglesias, 1997, p. 178). The framework of CRT and LatCrit in this chapter adds to this dialogue, highlighting the experiences of Latinx educators.

I draw on the CRT tenet of storytelling or counter-storytelling as one way of contextualizing the importance of culture (Bernal, 2002). LatCrit scholars in education have relied on storytelling to document and share how Latinx culture influences the educational experience. Storytelling provides me with a path toward understanding how my Latinx identity empowered me to navigate power dynamics within schools. My narrative and knowledge production are symbiotic; hence, these stories are personal and essential in education (Clanindin & Connelly, 2000). In this chapter, I focus on the centrality of my experience to understand how ethnicity functions in society. Through sharing my experiences, I use my culture as a mediator when teaching. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state that CRT is “a set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seek to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (p. 25). Sharing my counter-story centers my Puerto Rican self through a type of narrative that goes beyond the status quo to empower other Latinx teachers to share their stories and continue my commitment to social justice.

LatCrit scholars document and analyze counter-stories intentionally to highlight varied and persistent oppression. To challenge dominant stories, this way of data collection and analysis focuses on the diverse and persistent nature of inequalities of Latinx lived experiences that are often silenced (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through the sharing of one’s story, there is an opportunity for healing as others find similarities from their own experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Methodology

Narrative as Inquiry

I use narrative research to explore my ethnic identity connected to my identity as a teacher in Florida and to interrogate how these intersections impacted my pedagogy. Producing autoethnographic research acknowledges and validates my Latinx presence and draws attention to my marginal position inside dominant structures of education, “a topic of investigation in its own right” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 733). Autoethnographic work allows storytelling to be at the center. It is powerful in that it “can be used as a springboard to explore a myriad of issues related to identity and belonging, as well as curricular matters and teaching in ways that are explicitly antiracist” (Aveling, 2006, p. 266–67). My choice of autoethnography focuses on my lived experience as a route to illuminate aspects of my culture or society (Bochner, 2012). The interrogation of my ethnic identity transforms from a noun to a verb through my lived experiences (Heath & Street, 2008); the examination of my ethnic identity as both a student and teacher in the United States is not stagnant but is instead an action to propel what is needed in future research and schools.

Creating an “autobiographically oriented narrative” illuminates issues of oppression that I “have suffered in silence for too long” (Bochner & Ellis, 1996, p. 24). My aim is to immerse my readers into my thoughts, experiences, and reflections as a Latinx student and educator. As a Puerto Rican born in Belgium, I am uniquely positioned to be American yet not American enough because my native language is Spanish, and I was born outside the United States. This intention positions me alongside education researchers who use autoethnography to ask, How might my experiences of culture, learning, and education inform my approaches to curriculum and pedagogy? (Hughes et al., 2012). I am using critical autoethnography (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014) as a way to examine and interrogate my oppressive lived experiences to use theory to challenge dominant narratives in the U.S. education system. I offer my individual autoethnography as a conversation with others’ stories, in the hope of creating a dialogue on the intersection of language bias, racism, and elitism.

Narratives

I situate my narratives (all people, places, and schools are pseudonyms) within the literature. In sharing my experiences, I might shed light on the collective experiences of Latinx educators. My stories are not extraordinary; many minorities face similar challenges in their educational experience and teaching. What’s different is the pattern noticed: the forms of oppression I received as a student, including white privilege, the myth of meritocracy, and erasure—topics I could interrogate with my students as a teacher.

Navigating My Ethnic Identity Growing Up

In this narrative, I share my understanding of my lived experiences as a Puerto Rican growing up in the U.S. education system. The context described by Phinney (1990) as a theory on ethnic identity development, looks at the psychological relationship of ethnic and racial minority group members, examining personal and within-group views. Through my ethnic identity, I explore my sense of self as an educator in the United States, exploring my ethnic identity through my culture and language (Syed et al., 2013). I understand that my ethnic identity is a social construct and others impact how I affirm and reaffirm the boundaries of who I am (Kibria, 2000; Lyman & Douglas, 1973). In placing myself at the margins of my ethnic identity, I am able to integrate how culture and language influenced my role as an educator.

From Kindergarten until I graduated with my master's in education, I never had a Latinx teacher. Even worse, my education did not include my culture in my learning. This created a divide early on, between who I was at home and who I was at school. As early as elementary school, I unintentionally, but by design, navigated a hierarchy of which culture schools preferred. My proud Puerto Rican parents raised me in a Spanish-speaking working-class household. My father was in the military and we attended schools primarily with other military children all over the United States and the world. Often, I was the only student in my class who was Latinx. Throughout my K–12 education, I went to five elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. Each time I went to a new school—because my parents marked Spanish as a language spoken at home—I would be pulled out of class and asked to pass an English proficiency test. Each time triggered questions in my head, “How many times do I have to pass this so I never have to prove myself again? Am I going to pass? Will they find out I don’t know English well enough? Am I enough?”

My experiences in education positioned English as the only language needed to be successful academically, consistent with monoglossic ideologies of subtraction bilingualism. García (2009) describes subtractive bilingualism: “When monoglossic ideologies persist, and monolingualism and monolingual schools are the norm, it is generally believed that children who speak a language other than that of the state should be encouraged to abandon that language and instead take up only the dominant language” (p. 51). My bilingualism was devalued, considered an obstacle that must be quickly removed. Flores and Schissel (2014) discuss the standards in the United States in which it mandates teachers to perpetuate the monoglossic language ideologies and urged educators to move toward more heteroglossic language ideologies. The historically encouraged viewpoint is to abandon the native language and instead take up the dominant language. Due to these monoglossic ideologies, as early as kindergarten, I was being positioned as a bilingual student navigating between my cultural and linguistic identities.

Spelling Test Blues and White Privilege

To examine my lived experiences and oppression as a student, I share a story from second grade. I attended a U.S. school in a classroom with a white monolingual teacher. I had feelings of being inferior and not working hard enough due to a deficit framework, very common with bilingual students (Chavez, 2012; Flores & Schissel, 2014; Lamar, 2019).

In second grade, I was the worst at spelling. I would study so hard, having my parents quiz me throughout the week. Yet on the day of the test, I would fail. The sounds in my head just didn't quite match the letters on the page. One day, after failing another spelling test, I got so frustrated, I ripped up my paper and threw it in the trash can outside the classroom. To make it worse, I would see my teacher congratulating my monolingual peers on how great they did. "Way to go, Mattie and Josh, you must have studied so hard." My white teacher found the ripped-up test and called me up to her desk. "Jennifer, you simply need to study harder and do better. Maybe your Spanish is hindering your learning."

Because of this constant reminder that English was not my native language, as a student, I was hesitant to participate in class. When my teacher would call on me to read, my cheeks would get red from the anxiety of having to read aloud. I was so nervous that I would not read the words correctly and students would make fun of me. So, when I went into education, it stunned my family. No one in my family was an educator, but they supported me in my decision to become a teacher. My first experience of becoming an educator would happen after graduating with my bachelor's degree.

In my experience of being told I was not working hard enough, my teacher was participating in the myth of meritocracy, a component of CRT. Bernal (2002) explains meritocracy: Individuals are assured that if they just work hard enough, no matter their race, ethnicity, or class, they can achieve anything. This advice does not consider the advantages of whites over historically marginalized groups.

My second-grade teacher's beliefs led her to think in these "American" ideals, devaluing my cultural and linguistic background. Her status as a white female meant she had white privilege. White privilege is "an invisible package of unearned assets" (McIntosh, 1997, p. 120). Tatum (1999) asserts that white privilege, although invisible, is real, infusing all areas of our lives. My linguistic knowledge was undervalued and even viewed as a deficit by my monolingual teacher. The design of standards in an education curriculum includes the invisibility of white privilege, devaluing "other" norms (Flores & Schissel, 2014). Additionally, Bernal (2002) summarizes, "The insidious nature of a Eurocentric epistemological perspective allows it to subtly (and not so subtly) shape the belief system and practices of researchers, educators, and the school curriculum while continuing to adversely influence the educational experiences of Chicanas/Chicanos and other students of color" (p. 202). As a teacher, I empathized with students because of these experiences, critically reflecting as I created lesson plans and considered the academic progress of my Latinx and all students (see narrative below).

The Decision to Become a Teacher

My desire to become a teacher was influenced by optimistic ideals common to other marginalized populations—“transformative pedagogical concepts and revolutionary curriculum” that disrupt the status quo (Lamar, 2019, p. 148). The following narrative charts the serendipitous path that led me to become a teacher.

After graduating with my bachelor's degree in psychology, a professor told me about an opportunity to teach in Spain. After speaking with him, I applied and got the job. Surprised to see they accepted me; I began the process of my visa so I could live in Spain for the next school year. Rather quickly, I moved to Spain for a year to teach English to middle and high school students. This would be my first job as an educator. In Puerto Rico, we often call Spain “la Madre España” [the Mother Spain] as it was a huge part of colonization. Having ancestral ties to Spain, I thought it would be a way to connect with my heritage. Once in Spain, I took that time to dig deeper not only into the Spanish language but also to learn about Spanish literature. I even joined a book club. In the book club with other teachers at the school, we would read books by Spanish authors in Spanish and then have discussions. These book club meetings reoriented me to the beauty of my native language and how it, too, is academic. Until that point, I had only thought of Spanish as a social language, not academic. Years of a U.S. education had made me devalue my bilingualism. I had absorbed the message that speaking English was the singular route toward academic success. Through this experience, I could find value in my heritage and felt inspired to become a teacher in the United States. It was the first time I saw people who looked like me teaching and it was powerful. That example showed me I, too, could be a teacher. This experience got me excited to come back to the United States to complete a master's in education and become a teacher. I had hopes I could bring some unique ideas into the classroom that encouraged multiculturalism and multilingualism. I was not yet aware of the strict guidelines in the curriculum I would have to follow, the scripted curriculum, or the pressures of standardized tests.

When you connect or see yourself in a profession, you are more likely to go into that field (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). For me to decide to become an educator in the United States, I first had to see people like me teaching. I navigated my ethnicity through exposure to Spanish literature in the book club. That is how I understood the world and later connected this important concept to my teaching. Lizárraga and Gutiérrez (2018) declare that the borders, *napantlas*, that multilingual and multicultural students negotiate should hold value in literacy. Stories and words transform learners' unique experiences, allowing them to “...navigate cultural, emotional, and cognitive borderlands” (p. 39). I rooted my beliefs in teaching to include stories and storytelling, a communal context, relating to the realities of students' lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Silencing Ethnicity to Conform to Dominant Culture

Next, I discuss my experience at a Florida school where demographics were shifting. The oppression my Latinx students received translated into a form of silencing. Latinx students silence their ethnic identity as a mode of self-preservation to conform to the dominant culture and to be successful in school (Espin, 1993; García, 2009; Yosso, 2005).

When I got the fifth-grade teaching job at La Fresa Elementary, I was told that I was exactly “the type” of teacher “these kids” needed and offered the job. I accepted. Later I found out the school’s demographics were changing, from being a primarily white monolingual school to one that included a higher Latinx population labeled as English Learners (ELs), meaning their primary language was not English.

During my first week working, teachers had that week before the students arrived to get their classrooms ready and attend faculty meetings. As an icebreaker activity with the staff, we divided into groups of five and did a faculty scavenger hunt. We went around the school completing different tasks. The last task was to take a picture as a group. When I looked at our picture, I noticed that I was the only Latinx person in the picture, with brown hair, tan skin, and brown eyes. The rest of the teachers were white with blond hair.

A few months into the start of the school year, three new students joined my class around the same time. None of them spoke English. As I got to know them, I learned that two had primary languages of Spanish and one Haitian Creole. This would be the first time I had students who knew little English. Curious about how best to help them, I spoke with my English language resource teacher. She was one of the few other Latinx teachers designated to assist in our school with students who were labeled “EL.” The school received extra funding to provide extra assistance to learn English. I asked, “What can I do to better help my students during class?” She responded, “I’ll create a time where I will pull them out of class or give you a website to put them on.” Not feeling satisfied with her answer because it did not help when I was in class, I asked other teachers in the school what they did. The responses I got were horrifying, “The demographics in this place are changing, and not for the better,” “The glory days are behind us,” “They will either sink or swim,” and “What do they want us to do, go to Haiti and learn the language?” I felt confused and frustrated because I did not have support for such injustice.

One morning I was working with one of my labeled ELs, Xavier. One of my newest students who had recently immigrated, his native language was Spanish, and he was attempting to do his work with his dictionary. This is a common practice among ELs; the school would provide an English/Spanish dictionary to all Spanish-speaking students. I asked him, “How are you doing?” Xavier told me, “Sé que tendré que olvidar mi español para aprender inglés” [“I know I will need to forget my Spanish to learn English”]. In shock, I said, “¿Por qué dices eso?” [Why do you say that?] He replied, “Pues, Mateo me dijo que para que él

aprendiera inglés, tenía que olvidar su español. [“Well, Mateo (another student in the class) told me that for him to learn English, he had to forget his Spanish”]. His response affected me in such a way that I immediately reflected on my own experiences and what I could do as a teacher to help support his native heritage. How did a school with so many Latinx students not have a better system in place? I wanted social justice to challenge the inequities that schools perpetuate.

According to Freire (2000), education can be an instrument to enforce conformity or to transform oppression. Xavier’s comment about forgetting Spanish to learn English reproduced conformity. The goal is not to merely tolerate non-dominant cultures and languages but to celebrate and value all cultural and linguistic knowledge (García, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The teachers I spoke to reminded me of my second-grade teacher. They exhibited the CRT tenets of white privilege, the devaluing of other languages, and the myth of meritocracy. They were all white, monolingual English speakers who saw Spanish as a challenge to overcome instead of as a valuable resource to bridge knowledge. Additionally, they believed that if students worked hard enough, they could succeed and would either “sink or swim.”

Using Latinx Knowledge as a Tool of Resistance in Pedagogy

An element of CRT is the call for social justice in education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In this next narrative, my Latinx background helped me seek social justice in my curriculum and to value culture and language, constantly asking questions of representation and whose story gets prioritized. My experience with Xavier inspired me to challenge the curriculum and think more critically about my teaching pedagogy. By sharing this narrative, I aim to help address the complexities of multicultural multilingual students by accepting and affirming their ethnic identities while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Social studies was the last subject of the day and often cut short or eliminated altogether due to dismissal. Interestingly, it was the only subject that included multicultural values in its standards. Because of the subject, it was a perfect way to infuse my multicultural ideas into the classroom and prioritize this time. The school had given us a workbook as a resource to help us teach social studies, almost like an afterthought that was formulaic. The lessons or curriculum never included how students could bridge multicultural and multilingual values to learn new content. During a social studies lesson, the topic was immigration and coming to an unknown land. The lesson was straightforward, discussing conquistadors and historical dates but not asking students to reflect on their own lived experiences, especially those who had immigrated to the United States. I yearned to figure out a way that would combine my students’ culture and linguistic expertise.

Read alouds would be something my elementary students love. Introducing a social studies lesson included strategically selecting books to read aloud to situate the topic, but also to access prior knowledge. This was a common practice among teachers, but I was going to include community knowledge of my students from their multicultural and multilingual lives. I searched for all the multicultural resources I could find while still adhering to the standards. I had to look beyond what the school provided. To celebrate diverse backgrounds, I looked for bilingual books. My local library had a range of bilingual books in all the languages represented in my classroom (Spanish and French). Besides the book I would read aloud in class, I would also set out different bilingual books in our classroom library for students to explore independently.

The first experience reading a bilingual book to my students, I read the English part, and then I read the Spanish part. Dan, a student who was white and monolingual, said, “I didn’t understand a word you said. Why did you even read that?” Connecting to our immigration topic as a class, we discussed how it might feel to come to the United States and not know English. Xavier said, “Es muy difícil dejar todo que tu sabes pero nosotros queremos una vida mejor.” [It is difficult to leave all you know, but we wanted a better life.] The class got quiet for a second as students reflected on that. After that conversation, Dan said, “Wow, that must be really hard.”

Freire (2000) maintains that the motivation behind teaching is never neutral—you either challenge the inequities or allow them. I challenged inequities by developing positive school expectations, fostering a sense of belonging, and improving subsequent educational outcomes (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006). By purposefully selecting bilingual books to bring multicultural and multilingual stories into our classroom, the motivation behind my teaching was not neutral. My Latinx background uniquely positioned me to tap into my knowledge of culture and language to bring a more multicultural education for my students. Since I came from a community similar to that of my students, I took ownership and pride in my multicultural students’ education but was also deeply knowledgeable of their histories, language, and traditions (Flores & García, 2017).

Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

This chapter is an examination of the experiences of one Latinx student and educator and how my experiences shaped the way I taught students in the classroom. This story illustrates the need for more salient research concerning Latinx teachers, and how their unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds set the stage for both representation and understanding (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2019).

The intention of this chapter is not to be generalizable. Instead, this story has transferability. My experiences are relatively common throughout limited research (Lamar, 2019). But my story lends depth and personalization to a better

understanding of Latinx teacher experiences. Although this chapter focuses on one teacher, I feel it should be a stepping stone to further research in this important area of the broader subject of multiculturalism education. Centralizing the voices and stories of historically marginalized scholars facilitates understanding of how the normalization of oppression and inequality persist in education (Duncan, 2005) and functions to produce particular teacher identities. Hence, recognizing inequality, specifically race and language bias in American schools cannot be examined without capturing the narratives of those who have lived through these experiences (Chavez, 2012). Implications include highlighting the need for more diverse teacher stories and experiences. Future research should explore connections with marginalized teachers and experiences in the classroom, with broader implications of fostering multicultural values in teacher education programs and professional development. Vellanki and Prince (2018) noted silences in education in their exploration of multicultural teacher education programs. There is great potential for the application of this method to future interviews, discussion panels, and teacher preparation programs, employing a wider sample than this one autoethnographic work.

A particular strength of sharing my narratives concerning navigating my ethnic identity growing up, spelling test blues and white privilege, the decision to become a teacher, silencing ethnicity to conform to the dominant culture, and using Latinx knowledge as a tool of resistance in pedagogy is that they serve as a powerful reference to help researchers examine Latinx teachers. My story provides a data source for examining the potential impact of Latinx teachers on Latinx students, as well as the broader role of Latinx teachers in education.

My story offers many anecdotes to show how school policies regarding multicultural and multilingual pedagogy limit the educator and students alike. There is a considerable lack of research on Latinx teachers and students. Historically, the Latinx community in the United States is part of negative popular discourse, described by Carter (2014) as The Latino Threat Narrative (LTN). Politically this threat attacks language and culture. With some strides made in states like California and Arizona that just reversed English-only laws, it may be possible to find ways for deeper social integration of historically marginalized populations into school environments. The increasingly high growth rate of the proportion of Latinx students in the United States presents a unique backdrop of cultural context for research. Representation matters—we hear it so often that we may become desensitized to its significance. Representation of minoritized groups in education is incredibly powerful, changing the way we think and breaking dominant power structures.

Thus, additional research is required to generate possible multicultural and multilingual responses to the Latinx population and to answer the call for more research that includes marginalized voices (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011). Missing from teacher education programs is a more welcoming and supportive context for Latinx students to become educators, and for Latinx and other pre-service teachers of color to explore how their identities connect to teaching (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011). This research calls for teacher educators to make spaces in their classrooms for students to listen to and share stories of their experiences, particularly stories that can highlight ethnic

backgrounds describing disadvantages or privilege. These experiences promise to create a much-needed dialogue among all future teachers by creating school cultures that are inclusive of all cultures, ethnicities, and languages starting as early as elementary school. Building support networks within the community that value the families and students who attend the school will create inclusive spaces, address the opportunity gap, and provide positive associations with multiculturalism in the school environment (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). CRT and autoethnography are the manners in which I think about the world and the ways I have described my experiences. A person's multicultural and multilingual identity should be celebrated as a superpower, not denigrated as an obstacle.

The impact of these findings on future research helps share counter-stories of minority teachers in the classroom. In the United States, a push for diverse teachers in the classroom has been discussed yet our teacher prep programs do not reflect that. In this chapter, I discuss my Latinx knowledge as a tool of resistance in pedagogy that serves as a powerful reference to help researchers examine Latinx teachers. My story provides a data source for examining the potential impact of Latinx teachers on Latinx students, as well as the broader role of Latinx teachers in education.

References

- Antrop-González, R., & De Jesús, A. (2006). Toward a theory of critical care in urban small school reform: Examining structures and pedagogies of caring in two Latino community-based schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19, 409–433.
- Aveling, N. (2006). “Hacking at our very roots”: Rearticulating White racial identity within the context of teacher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 9(3), 261–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320600807576>
- Bartolomé, L. I. (2004). Critical pedagogy and teacher education: Radicalizing prospective teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 31, 97–122.
- Bartolomé, L. I. (2008). Authentic cariño and respect in minority education: The political and ideological dimensions of love. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 1(1), 1–16.
- Bell, D. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory? *University of Illinois Law Review*, 1995(4), 893–910. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392109342205>
- Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 105–126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800107>
- Bochner, A. P. (2012). On first-person narrative scholarship: Autoethnography as acts of meaning. *Narrative Inquiry*, 22(1), 155–164.
- Bochner, A. P., & Ellis, C. (1996). Talking over autoethnography. In C. Ellis & A. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp. 13–45). AltaMira Press.
- Boylorn, R. M., & Orbe, M. P. (Eds.). (2014). *Critical autoethnography: Intersecting cultural identities in everyday life*. Left Coast Press.
- Bristol, T., & Martin-Fernandez, J. (2019). The added value of Latinx and Black teachers for Latinx and Black students: Implications for policy. *Policy Insights From the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 6(2), 147–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219862573>
- Carter, P. M. (2014). National narratives, institutional ideologies, and local talk: The discursive production of Spanish in a new U.S. Latino community. *Language in Society*, 43(2), 209–240. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404514000049>

- Chavez, M. (2012). Autoethnography, a Chicana's methodological research tool: The role of storytelling for those who have no choice but to do critical race theory. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 45(2), 334–348.
- Clanindin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Coker, J., & Cain, L. (2018). Southern disclosure: One southern-and-queer middle school teacher's narrative. *Middle Grades Review*, 4(3), 1–9.
- Covarrubias, A., & Lara, A. (2014). The undocumented (im)migrant educational pipeline: The influence of citizenship status on educational attainment for people of Mexican origin. *Urban Education*, 49(1), 75–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912470468>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Sage.
- Duncan, G. A. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: Narrative, inequality, and the problem of epistemology. *Race, Ethnicity & Education*, 8(1), 93–114.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 733–768). Sage.
- Flores, N., & García, O. (2017). A critical review of bilingual education in the United States: From basements and pride to boutiques and profit. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 37(2017), 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190517000162>
- Flores, N., & Schissel, J. (2014). Dynamic bilingualism as the norm: Envisioning a heteroglossic approach to standards-based reform. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(3), 454–479. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.182>
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Continuum (Original work published 1970).
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Basil/Blackwell.
- Goldhaber, D., Theobald, R., & Tien, C. (2019). Why we need a diverse teacher workforce. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(5), 25–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721719827540>
- Gomez, L., & Rodriguez, T. L. (2011). Imagining the knowledge, strengths, and skills of a Latina prospective teacher. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(1), 127–146.
- Heath, S. B., & Street, B. V. (2008). *Ethnography: Approaches to language and literacy research*. Teachers College Press.
- Hughes, S. A., Pennington, J. L., & Makris, S. (2012). Translating autoethnography across the AERA Standards: Toward understanding autoethnographic scholarship as empirical research. *Educational Researcher*, 41, 209–219.
- Iglesias, E. (1997). Forward: International law, human rights, and LatCrit theory. *University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*, 28, 177–213.
- Irizary, J., & Donaldson, M. L. (2012). Teach for America: The Latinization of U.S. schools and the critical shortage of Latina/o teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(1), 155–194. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831211434764>
- Kehly, M. J. (1995). Self-narration, autobiography and identity construction. *Gender & Education*, 7(1), 23–31.
- Kibria, N. (2000). Race, ethnic options, and ethnic binds: Identity negotiations of second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans. *Sociological Perspectives*, 43, 77–95. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1389783>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: Aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 465–491.
- Lamar, A. (2019). An irregular verb that cannot be conjugated: One Latina's autoethnographic journey out of teaching. In C. R. Rinke & L. Mawhinney (Eds.), *Opportunities and challenges in teaching recruitment and retention* (pp. 147–171). Information Age Publishing.

- Lizárraga, J. R., & Gutiérrez, K. D. (2018). Centering nepantla literacies from the borderlands: Leveraging “in-betweenness” toward learning in the everyday. *Theory Into Practice*, 57(1), 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1392164>
- Lyman, S. M., & Douglas, W. A. (1973). Ethnicity: Strategies of collective and individual impression management. *Social Research*, 40, 344–365.
- McIntosh, P. (1997). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In B. Schneider (Ed.), *An anthology: Race in the first person* (pp. 119–126). Crown Trade Paperbacks.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2018). *Digest of educational statistics, 2018*. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 499–514. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.499>
- Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471–495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365>
- Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103>
- Syed, M., Walker, L. H., Lee, R. M., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Zamboanga, B. L., Schwartz, S. J., et al. (2013). A two-factor model of ethnic identity exploration: Implications for identity coherence and well-being. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 19, 143–154. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030564>
- Tatum, B. (1999). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race*. Basic Books.
- Vellanki, V., & Prince, S. P. (2018). Where are the “People Like me”? A collaborative autoethnography of transnational lives and teacher education in the U.S. *The Teacher Educator*, 53(3), 313–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2018.1462873>
- Yazan, B. (2019). Toward identity-oriented teacher education: Critical autoethnographic narrative. *TESOL Journal*, 10(1), 1–15.
- Yosso, T. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

Jennifer M. Barreto is an Assistant Professor at Eastern Michigan University in the department of Teacher Education. Her research interest includes equity and diversity and how it pertains to identity development with multicultural and multilingual students.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

