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University of San Francisco

Testimonios of Cultural Wealth: Racial and Ethnic Identity Development for Latinx Youth in Historically White High Schools

A Field Project Proposal Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

By
Amanda Montez
May 2021

Testimonios of Cultural Wealth: Racial and Ethnic Identity Development for Latinx Youth in Historically White High Schools

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

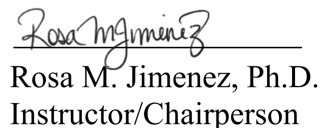
INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by
Amanda Montez
May 2021

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project (or thesis) has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:



Rosa M. Jimenez, Ph.D.
Instructor/Chairperson

May 15, 2015
Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For my students: past, present, and future.

This one's for you.

To my students, you have been my biggest inspiration for this work. I especially want to thank the Latina/o/x youth who shared your stories of power, wisdom, and resiliency with me. You make this thesis what it is today.

A big thank you and *abrazos grandes* to all of the family, friends, classmates, professors, and co-workers who cheered me on from the sidelines. I couldn’t have done this without your love and support.

ABSTRACT

My goal for this study was to study the experiences of Latina/o/x youth as they transition from a middle school that serves Communities of Color to Historically White High Schools. I wanted to know how the change of community impacted participants' understanding of their racial and ethnic identity. Through testimonios, the five participants question the nuances of race and ethnicity, convey the need for educators to challenge existing structures of oppression, and recognize their moral obligation to be part of the movement for racial justice. Utilizing the frameworks of Community Cultural Wealth and Critical Race Theory, I center the lived experiences of Latina/o/x youth. With the use of testimonios, critical reflection, and anti-racist pedagogy, justice can begin.

Keywords: Latina/o/x, Historically White High Schools, Testimonio, Community Cultural Wealth, Catholic Education

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Growing up as a classroom student with almost no educators who shared my racial and ethnic identity, I recognized that I was not given the space to think critically about race and racism leaving me with many questions about identity. Now, as a bi-racial educator, I strive to create the learning environments that I wish I had as a young learner. As a Latina educator who has worked in both a predominantly white institution and school that only serves learners of color, I have witnessed curriculum that lacks exploration of a student's sense of identity and self as well as the tools to talk about interpersonal and institutional racism in everyday life and the world around us. These experiences have inspired my pursuit and research into this topic- understanding the *racial and ethnic identity* (REI) development In Latinx youth as they transition from a community of learners of color to historically or predominantly white high schools.

In the United States, racism, both interpersonal and institutional, is taught and reproduced in education. As the United States is experiencing a new wave of the civil rights movement, educators must critique systems of oppression that uphold racism in an effort to not reinforce those systems in their classrooms. All students, but particularly students of color, need the tools to understand, critique, and dismantle racism that they see in society because "racial hierarchies shape our schools, workplaces, court places and other institutional settings" (Dei, 2001, p. 141). The general problem is that whiteness, as the dominant narrative, is upheld in schools through curriculum, leaving students of color with a sense of inferiority and alienation in a system meant to be the great equalizer of our nation (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Hughes et al., 2010; Jimenez, 2019; Yosso, 2005). School textbooks highlight the successes of white people portraying them as "responsible, creative, capable, and intelligent leaders" (Hughes et al., 2010, p. 23).

Traditionally, curriculum highlights the successes and conquests of Europeans while simultaneously rationalizing, rejecting, ignoring, and minimizing the experiences of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities (Jimenez, 2020). Curriculum that ignores the experiences of BIPOC communities in textbooks and curriculum inherently names whiteness as superior and reinforces schools as spaces of white, middle class, mono-lingual, and mono-cultural values (Hughes et al., 2010; Paris & Alim, 2014). In general, Latinx[1] students only see themselves in the curriculum in context of being "conquered people whose contributions are hardly worth mentioning" instead of being descendants from communities of people who have contributed significantly to science, mathematics, or literature, people who have had a positive impact on society (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 593). "[T]he positioning of the dominant historical view as the only acceptable knowledge in schools has meant the alienation and disempowerment of school-aged [Latinx students]" (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 582). To combat alienation and disempowerment, all students, but particularly students of color, need tools to critique and challenge the use of power, racial dominance, and whiteness while attending historically white institutions (Chang, 2016; Dei, 2001; Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; Jimenez, 2019; Love, 2019; Zamora et al., 2019).

The upholding of whiteness, or White, middle class, mono-lingual, and mono-cultural values, is prevalent in predominantly White institutions (PWIs), "institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment" although most institutions today tend to be referred to as *historically* White institutions following the desire for a more diverse student body (Brown & Dancy, 2010, p. 524; Paris & Alim, 2014). PWIs endured

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[1] Latinx: An ethnic identity held by people whose ancestors are from Latin America. This identity is not contingent on nationality or language spoken. Latino signifies a male of Latin American descent and Latina signifies a woman of Latin American descent. Meanwhile, Latinx removes the gendered language used in Spanish and is intended to be an inclusive term to all people of Latin American descent.

"durable patterns of racial underrepresentation in higher education" which excluded groups of learners and placed conditions on the access to the schooling impacting generations of learners of color both "numerically and experientially" (Harper, 2013, p. 188). The BIPOC experience of underrepresentation in PWIs paints an image of *only-ness,* where exceptional learners must educate peers on racial topics and are often tokenized; battle both micro- and macro aggressions; and encounter a shortage of educators who share their same racial and ethnic identity bringing sentiments of alienation and isolation (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Harper, 2013). For racial justice to occur in PWIs, Harper (2013) suggests that more research is needed about how BIPOC students navigate White spaces instead of the harmful effects of historically White spaces, a shift from the idea of cultural deficit to cultural assets, knowledge, and wealth (Yosso, 2005).

The idea of community cultural wealth (CCW) highlights the "cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Within classroom curriculum, a student's cultural wealth is often negated as educators attempt to teach about race and racism (Yosso, 2005). When race and racism are taught about in class, too often only heroes and holidays are centered, negating not only the racist systems that made these heroes and holidays necessary and worth celebrating, but also the personal experience of BIPOC students and families (Banks, 1993; Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Learning about race and having an understanding of one's own *racial and ethnic identity* (REI) has a positive impact psychosocially, academically, and in terms of health, especially for Latinx students (Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; Jimenez, 2021; Rivas-Drake, et al.,2014). "[Racial and ethnic identity] is complex, and is composed of an individual's sense of being a part of a group, maintaining a high regard for their racial and ethnic group role, familiarity and involvement in their group traditions" (Zamora et al., 2019, p. 217). Some

scholars use ethnic studies, critical pedagogy, and/or multicultural education to explore student's lived culture. I am using REI as an umbrella term to refer to the work in alignment with anti-racist scholars and educators J.G Sefa Dei, Ibram X. Kendi, and Tiffany Jewell. Throughout this study, I will refer to REI pedagogy as I seek to advance and name the curriculum, I hope to one day create. Examining the use of REI curriculum that emphasizes anti-racism could have a significant impact on students of color, primarily Latinx students, who attend historically White high schools after attending a middle school that only serves Black and Brown youth.

Background and Need

The Latinx population is steadily growing in the United States, as is growing confusion around how to categorize the racial and ethnic identity of Latinx people. Latinx is an ethnic identifier not racial, and therefore Latinx people can identify as any race (Stokes-Brown, 2012). It is notable that, in 2010, 53% of Latinx people identified as white and 37% of Latinx people self-identified as some other race, a critique and questioning of the Black-white racial binary in the United States (Stokes-Brown, 2012; Trucios-Haynes, 2000). To combat confusion and to understand the nuances between race and ethnicity and therefore to better understand one's self, REI must be taught in schools. Research shows the positive correlation of psychosocial, academic, and health wellbeing when ethnic and racial identity is understood in Latinx students (Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Academically, Latinx youth who hold positive and affirming ideas about their Latinx identity or positive views of Latinx people as a whole in society tend to be engaged in their classes and value their education (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014, Zamora et al., 2019). Due to the confusing nature of Latinx identity being an ethnic group and the positive impacts of learning one's REI, curriculum that teaches about racial and ethnic identity has potential to impact the way Latinx youth find success in school.

Since the turn of the century, school enrollment for Hispanic/Latinx students has been steadily increasing across the United States and Hispanic/Latinx students are the only racial group to see such an increase (Bureau of Census, 2020). Although there is an increase in school enrollment for Latinx students, in 2019, only 71.8% of Hispanic/Latinx students attained high school completion in comparison to 90.1% of their white counterparts (Bureau of Census, 2020). Additionally, in 2019, only 18.8% of Hispanic/Latinx students completed a college degree compared to the 36.3% of their white counterparts (Bureau of Census, 2020). Hispanic/Latinx students are less likely than other racial groups to complete a high school or college education as enrollment rates rise, widening the gap of completion (Bureau of Census, 2020). Historically, research has focused on the disadvantages, deficits, and challenges that BIPOC learners bring with them to school but "responsibility for educational disparities and comparable underachievement would not be placed squarely on the shoulders of students and families from [traditionally marginalized groups]" instead an examination of the social, political, and economic systems that perpetuate oppression is paramount (Locke et al., 2017, p. 15)

Some scholars attribute the large number of Latinx students not completing school to a lack of REI education in the classroom (Camangian, 2015; Duncan-Andrade, 2017; Hughes et al., 2010; Irizarry, 2007; Jimenez, 2020; Love, 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). In academic settings, curriculum upholds and reinforces the dominant narrative of whiteness, leaving out narratives of BIPOC people and specifically Latinx folks creating cultural alienation in the classroom (Camangian, 2015; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Hughes et al., 2010; Jimenez, 2019; McIntosh, 1990; Yosso, 2005). The dominant narrative of white, middle-class, mono-lingual, and mono-cultural values is upheld through educators, those teaching the curriculum. Although there is an increase of Latinx students in classrooms, 79.3 % of public school teachers are white

non-Hispanic and only 8 percent of educators identify as Latinx (NCES, 2013; Spiegelman, 2020). Additionally, teachers tend to be white even in schools where the majority of students were learners of color (Spiegelman, 2020). Due to that lack of shared understanding, teachers may not fully comprehend the sociocultural realities their students face as well as the ways schools can be an aid or hindrance of future aspirations (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). Research suggests that while recruitment for Latinx educators is imperative, it is critical that "*non*-Latino teachers [embrace] greater responsibility for the education of Latino students" (Irizarry & Raible, 2011, p. 189). BIPOC students need to use their cultural knowledge and lived experiences in their classrooms, knowledge that is statistically not shared by their teachers (Camangian, 2015; Love, 2019; Dei, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Issues of racial equity and justice can no longer be left out of the curriculum, especially when students of historically dispossessed communities are continuously, negatively impacted politically, economically, emotionally and psychologically (Camangian, 2015; Dei, 2001). Additionally, "[i]f we understand [Latinx] school failure as a response to unfair educational practices rather than as a sign of deficiency or inability, then we can recognize that the failure of these students rests to some degree on the failure of the institutions to provide them with the intellectual space to critique and positively combat the lack of pluralism in American institutions" (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 597). Students of color need a curriculum to understand, question, critique, and dismantle racism, both interpersonal and institutional. BIPOC students require curriculum that is unapologetically anti-racist.

As students use classroom curriculum to gain better understanding of self and their REI, the curriculum used must be explicitly anti-racist. It is not enough for curriculum to be non-racist, a marking of neutrality when encountering racist laws, policies, and attitudes and therefore condoning the status quo (Juwell, 2020; Kendi, 2019). Anti-racist curriculum "is actively

working against racism [through the] commitment to resisting unjust laws, policies, and racist attitudes" (Juwell, 2020. p. 6). All learners, but particularly BIPOC learners, must understand their REI through a social, political, historical, and lens of resistance. "Resistance is not just based on the challenge of domination" (Dei, 2001, p.142). Resistance then becomes a way to affirm one's identity and to understand one's purpose and place in dismantling racial oppression (Camangian, 2015; Dei, 2001). Critical REI curriculum must include anti-racist curriculum. It is not enough to teach about the power and privilege linked to the student's racial and ethnic identity without understanding the moral obligation of anti-racism, actively and constantly working towards liberation and freedom (Dei 2001; Juwell, 2000; Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019). The use of a critical REI curriculum grounded in anti-racist teachings "acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74).

Although schools have the potential to empower and liberate, Latinx students are negatively impacted because their ethnic status is marginalized in historically white high schools and are forced to seek community to combat *onlyness* (Chang, 2016; Flores & Garcia, 2009; Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; Harper, 2013; Zamora et al., 2019). BIPOC students acquire community cultural wealth, the "knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro- forms of oppression" which include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant cultural capital (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). BIPOC students in historically or predominantly white high schools (HWI/PWI) already come with and continue to acquire navigational and resistant capital, a wealth of knowledge that comes from the "ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Latinx students experience both

interpersonal and institutional racism, perpetuated by both peers and educators, in historically white schools (Chang, 2016; Zamora et al., 2019). Traditionally, research is conducted to better understand the transition of students of color from high school to college because the graduation rate in both high school and college of students of color is low in comparison to their white counterparts (Bureau of Census, 2020). There is a gap in the research that examines the transition for students of color between middle school to high school, specifically a middle school that serves Latinx students to high schools that are historically white. In historically white institutions, students, educators, and the administration need to challenge whiteness through the examination of regulations, programming, and curriculum that uphold the dominant narrative therefore disenfranchising students of color (Amiot et al., 2020; Camangian, 2015; Dei, 200; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Escayg, 2019; Gregory, 2000; Love, 2019).

To best support the transition of Latinx students from schools that educate students of color to historically white schools, there needs to be an examination of curriculum that teaches the intersection of racial and ethnic identity and anti-racism in order to prepare for navigating historically white environments (Dei, 2001; Juwell, 2020; Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019; Yosso, 2005). Teaching about racial and ethnic identity cannot end at implementing diverse voices into a unit plan, teaching tolerance between different peoples and cultures, or examining biases that students and the greater society hold. (Banks, 1993; Camangian, 2015; Escayg, 2019; Hughes et al., 2010; Kendi, 2019). Educators must prepare the space for students to draw on their "imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools" (Love, 2019, p. 2). With the use of anti-racist education, educators are able to create critical thinkers to question a society that continues to uphold racism while giving students the

tools to re-imagine a just society, tools for advocacy, change, and resistance (Dei, 2001; Juwell, 2020; Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019).

A tool grounded in (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellion, and boldness is *testimonios* (Love, 2019). Scholars use this unique and radical form of storytelling in research to gather data and hold space for participants to process lived experiences in order "to [expose] brutality, [disrupt] silencing, and [build] solidarity" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 363). True learning can occur when stories are shared, a "ritual of communion that opens our minds and hearts" (hooks, 2010, p. 51). As educators actively listen to the *testimonios* of their students, to the lived experiences of race, ethnicity, and community cultural wealth, it is imperative that students not only share their truth. Students must recognize that their stories, their *testimonios,* of marginalization and oppression are situated within a greater narrative of resistance. Doing so will reinforce the notion of solidarity to combat experiences of *onlyness* (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Love, 2019; Yosso, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

This thesis is inspired by *testimonios* to examine the transition of Latinx middle school students from a middle school that educates students of color to historically white high schools. Students of color, particularly Latinx students from predominantly Black and Brown middle schools, need academic support and guidance to learn about their own race, culture, and identity in order to navigate historically white high schools. In order to serve Latinx students, middle schools and high schools must make use of Racial and Ethnic Identity (REI) curriculum--one that includes a definitive anti-racist stance--to give students critical thinking skills, examines how whiteness impacts predominately white institutions (PWIs), celebrates their Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), and upholds the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to support students. As

students of color navigate spaces that were not built with them in mind, educational institutions must not simply talk about racial and ethnic identity without teaching the implications of power and privilege to disrupt racism both in and outside of the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to better understand Latinx students' perception of their own racial/ethnic identity and how it has shaped their transition from a predominately Latinx middle school to a PWI Catholic high school. The study aims to challenge the diversity and inclusivity of classroom curriculum pertaining to REI and find new ways to foster critical thinking, activism, and transformation in the classroom. This study will be conducted with three high school students, all of whom attended various predominantly or historically white Catholic High Schools throughout San Jose. Historically, these students have been a part of a school community that celebrates culture and family narratives in their middle school. These students have not received an explicit anti-racist REI curriculum in middle school and the purpose of this study is to understand their experiences at a PWI, and analyze these through a *testimonio*/CCW lens. This study will be conducted over Zoom because Covid-19 has limited in-person gatherings.

Research Questions:

This thesis attempts to answer the questions:

1. What are Catholic high school Latinx students' understanding of their racial/ethnic identity at a PWI? How has this shaped their educational experiences?
2. How have Catholic high school Latinx students navigated, resisted, and/or transformed their racial/ethnic identities and academic experiences?
3. How have home and school communities shaped the way Catholic high school Latinx students understand their racial/ethnic and academic identity?

Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I will explore the use of *Testimonios* and Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to examine the ways in which Latinx students understand their racial and ethnic identity in their Latinx middle school and predominantly white high school. In order to critically examine the use of *testimonios* and Community Cultural Wealth, readers must understand the ways in which Critical Race Theory (CRT) lays the foundation for these theoretical frameworks.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) arose in the late 1980s as a descendant of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and the work of the civil rights movement. Derrick Bell is known to be the grandfather of Critical Race theory and worked with other lawyers and academics to examine the intersection of race, power, and the law, expanding and deepening the work of CLS. CRT's theoretical framework is intended to give "scholarly resistance" that paves the way for other systems of oppression to be critiqued and dismantled, a form of resistance (Bell, 1995, p. 900). Creators and participants of this "scholarly resistance" include Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams, Cheryl Harris, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado.

Together, these academics have created the guiding principles for Critical Race Theory, the five tenets on which the work of racial justice rests. Critical Race Theory is guided by:

1. The "centrality and intersectionality of race and racism" (Solorzano, 1997, p. 6)
2. A strong pushback on the dominant narrative that upholds white, middle class narratives (Solorzano, 1997)
3. A "commitment to social justice" (Solorzano, 1997, p. 7)

4. The centering of lived experience and knowledge of Communities of Color (Solorzano, 1997)
5. The intersectionality of perspectives (Solorzano, 1997)

Testimonio

Critical Race Theory comes alive in the practice of *testimonios*. *Testimonios* was first used as a qualitative research tool to share the stories of struggle and resistance of those who were persecuted by their governments and socio-political forces in Latin America during the 20th century (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The methodology of *testimonio* intends to break silence, foster connection, and build solidarity through collectivity. In sharing one's narrative and perspective, it is the antithesis to quantitative research conducted through survey data. The sharing of one's story fosters both power and possibility by deeming emotional intelligence as a critical tool (hooks, 2010).

Testimonios are not oral stories, rather they take the work of oral storytelling a step further because the person sharing their story is doing so with a critical lens, one that critiques the greater societal/cultural/political realities of their experiences, not just their own (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The personal becomes political, the notion that is seen in *testimonios* as stories of "I" begin to center "we" to garner greater activism and advocacy (hooks, 2010; Saavedra & Perez, 2012). As the individual "I" is situated within the collective "we", *testimonios* allow for healing and resistance to "dominant, Western patriarchal, epistemological frameworks that have historically ignored or made invisible counter-discourses, her-stories, and non-dominant cultural knowledge" (Saavedra & Perez, 2012; p. 435). Within the collective "we", participants receive validation, recognition, and acknowledgement of lived realities often discarded from the dominant narrative of society or classroom history books.

As participants engage in *testimonios,* they are actively engaging in critical race methodology. *Testimonios* center the CRT tenets of: (a) a strong pushback on the dominant narrative that upholds white, middle class narratives as participants share stories often of violence, isolation, and oppression (Solorzano, 1997); (b) a "commitment to social justice" as participants intentionally share their experience to shed light on their lived injustice (Solorzano, 1997, p. 7); and (c) the centering of lived experience and knowledge of Communities of Color (Solorzano, 1997). As *testimonios* share narratives of BIPOC communities, they bridge the gap between academia and historically underserved communities (Delgado Bernal et. al, 2012). Most importantly, *testimonios* validate community strengths, as readers/researchers can begin to gain understanding of community cultural wealth, the knowledge, skills, and abilities of BIPOC community members that have traditionally gone unnoticed and unrecognized (Yosso, 2005).

Community Cultural Wealth

Tara Yosso's (2005, 2006) theory of Community Cultural Wealth takes root and finds strength in Critical Race Theory. CRT prioritizes the research, practice, and policies that affect Communities of Color and challenge whiteness (Yosso, 2005). The shift in perspective away from whiteness and towards the support of Communities of Color "involves a commitment to conduct research, teach and develop schools that serve a larger purpose of struggling toward social and racial justice (Yosso, 2005, p. 82). This work of Community Cultural Wealth is grounded in the CRT tenets of social justice and centering of lived experience and knowledge of Communities of Color (Solorzano, 1997).

In order to challenge racial oppression and social injustice in the classroom, educators must be able to celebrate the wealth of knowledge and experiences that students of color bring to the classroom. Traditionally, educators see BIPOC students coming to classrooms with a deficit

on knowledge, experiences, and resources by viewing "the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to overcome if they are to learn the dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of being in schools" (Paris, & Alim, 2014, p. 87). CRT and CCW challenge the narrative of BIPOC communities being "full of cultural disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Cultural wealth is not cultural capital, also described as white, middle class values that uphold the dominant narrative of white supremacy (Yosso, 2005). Instead, community cultural wealth highlights the "cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69).

In order to develop the theoretical framework of CCW, Yosso used critical race counterstorytelling, a tool kin to *testimonios*, to name and critique the ways race and racism overtly and subvertly harm Latinx students in the US education system (Yosso, 2006). Yosso (2006) explains her work with *Madres por la Educación,* a group of Chicana mothers who sought better access to equitable education for their children. They would meet regularly and speak about the work of Friere in order to break away from the Banking System of education. From a purposeful shift from deficits to assets, *Las Madres* sought out to define the wealth of knowledge they knew was in their community, a shift from cultural capital to cultural wealth. They defined Community Cultural Wealth in 6 different ways:

1. *Aspirational capital:* Aspirational capital is "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers" (Yosso, 2006, p.41). People have aspirational capital when they are able to dream of new possibilities that go beyond their current

circumstances (Yosso, 2005). This notion fosters a culture of possibility even if they have not seen someone in their community with these achievements or do not have the objective means to attain the goal (Yosso, 2005).

2. *Linguistic capital:* Linguistic capital is the "intellectual and social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2006, p. 43). This reinforces the notion that BIPOC learners come to their classroom with skills in multiple languages and ways of communicating, such as translating for family members, participating in the tradition of storytelling, or through various forms of art and expression.
3. *Familial capital:* Familial capital is understood as the "cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition" (Yosso, 2006, p. 48) Familia stretches far beyond those with whom one shares their life's blood, but encompasses the community, kin. This cultural wealth focuses on shared funds of knowledge within the greater community to foster the well-being of the entire community (Yosso, 2005).
4. *Social capital:* Social capital is known as "the networks of people and community resources...[speaking] to the fact that we are not alone in our struggles. We develop social spaces rich in resources." (Yosso, 2006, p. 43). People in the community become the support system to help guide others through society's institutions (Yosso, 2005).
5. *Navigational capital:* Navigational capital is explained as "the skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (Yosso, 2006, p. 44). Traditionally, these institutions have not been created for Communities of Color. Therefore, this capital "acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that

facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools, the job market and the health care and judicial system" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

6. *Resistance capital:* Resistance capital centers the "knowledges and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso, 2006, p. 49). There has been a long legacy of resistance for BIPOC communities. This form of community capital relies on both the knowledge of various structures of oppression and the desire to challenge and dismantle those structures (Yosso, 2005).

Yosso (2005, 2006) clearly explains that Community Cultural Wealth is something to be shared with the community. It is not the knowledge and skills to be held for the success of one. It is a wealth of knowledge to be shared with many, including educators. The goal of naming Community Cultural Wealth was to give educators a framework to better understand and therefore support their learners of color.

Taken together, the theoretical frameworks of *testimonios* and Community Cultural Wealth give vehicles to celebrate and share the experiences of BIPOC communities. They critique the notion of BIPOC communities being a deficit. Additionally, they shed a direct light on various injustices that BIPOC communities face and the ways in which they continue to challenge the oppression they face. *Testimonios* and Community Cultural Wealth are grounded in the work of Critical Race Theory, a framework of scholarly resistance to racial oppression.

Methods

Methodology

This thesis is a *testimonio* of three Latinx high school students' sense-making of their racial and ethnic identity. Testimonio exists as a research tool to share one's story and experience within a collective experience impacted by marginalization, oppression, or resistance in order to

challenge objectivity of research (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). This qualitative form of research is not intended to numerically account for phenomena occurring in society. Instead, *testimonios* share participants' lived realities and stories, although uniquely theirs, that challenged objectivity "by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, and resilience" (Delgado Bernal et. al, 2012, p. 363). *Testimonios* strengthen a collective "we" while radically listening to the individual "I" to name how "our individual lives are influenced, challenged, and transformed by collective scholarship" (Saavedra & Perez, 2012, p. 430).

Testimonios purposefully situate the researcher, listeners, and readers as key players in solidarity, and not as inactive participants. *Testimonio* allows the researcher to create "a bridge that merges the brown bodies of our communities with academia" bringing stories and theories that have traditionally been excluded from the ivory towers (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 364). This form of qualitative research is inherently political and seeks social change and action as a result (Saavedra & Perez, 2012). As readers learn of social and political lived realities, the aim is to gain deeper understanding to be able to enact change. Research for this thesis will be rooted in *testimonios* because one must deeply understand the marginalization and oppression they are experiencing in order to properly dismantle it. *Testimonios* are an act for justice, change, and advocacy, something this thesis hopes to accomplish.

Participants and Setting

This study of Latinx youth transitioning from Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity Schools to Historically White high schools takes place in San Jose, California. The third largest city in California is home to a diverse population. According to the 2012 Census, approximately 33% of the city's population is Latino/Hispanic, 32% is Asian, and 27% is white.

Within the heart of Silicon Valley lies a large Catholic community. In the Diocese of San Jose, there are 35 Catholic Schools, the majority being TK-8 institutions. Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School is the only Catholic Middle School in San Jose that is not accompanied by a K-5 school. The middle school was founded in 2000 with the intention to support the Latinx community giving wrap around services to families in the area. Our Lady of Guadalupe is home to 98 students, 98% identify as Latinx. Traditionally, Our Lady of Guadalupe students come from low-income and immigrant or mixed status families.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity school is one of the 49 schools across the United States and Canada that are part of the NativityMiguel coalition. Beginning in New York City in 1971, the first Nativity school was founded by the Jesuits, although other religious orders have created schools with this same model. With the mission to *break the cycle of poverty through education,* NativityMiguel across the US and Canada serve predominantly Latinx/Hispanic students (46%) and African American/Black students (40%). As part of the NativityMiguel Coalition, a Jesuit sponsored middle school model, common elements of these schools include: "small class sizes and small school communities, extended day and year, faith-based program, service to the economically poor and marginalized, partnership with the family, graduate mentoring and college counseling, a holistic education" (Mickey Fenzel, 2009, p. 18).

In San Jose, there are 6 Catholic High Schools. Of the 6 Catholic High Schools, 5 are historically or predominantly white institutions. Traditionally, Our Lady of Guadalupe students attend one of the Catholic High Schools in the city. 85% of the class of 2020 currently attend a Catholic High School. There is a competitive process to attend these 6 schools in the city including: testing, interviews, applications, and letters of recommendation. Graduates of Our Lady of Guadalupe graduate from high school and college at significantly higher rates than other

Latina/o/x students in Santa Clara County. In the past 3 years, 100% of Our Lady of Guadalupe alumni have graduated from high school, compared to 70% of Latinx students in Santa Clara County. Additionally, 70% of Our Lady of Guadalupe alumni enroll in post-secondary education compared to 58% of Latina/o/x students in Santa Clara County.

Participants in this study are three high school seniors and two freshmen who attend a HWI/PWI Catholic high school in San Jose. Each student is an alumni of Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School. Juan is an 18 year old senior at St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School, an all-male institution. Camila is a 17 year old senior at Loyola High School, an all-women's institution. Jasmin is a 17 year old senior also at Loyola High School. Juan, Camila, and Jasmin were all part of Our Lady of Guadalupe's Class of 2017. Dolores is a 15 year old freshman at St. Francis Xavier High School, a co-ed high school. Veronica is a 15 year old freshman at Jesuit High School, an all-women's institution located in the heart of Downtown San Jose. Dolores and Veronica graduated in Our Lady of Guadalupe's Class of 2020 and have only been able to attend their high school virtually. All of the students identified as Latina/o/x and most of them are first generation students.

These students were selected to be part of this research because they are all alumni from Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School and attend predominantly or historically white Catholic High Schools in San Jose. While they were students at Our Lady of Guadalupe middle school, three students did not receive any explicit REI or social justice curriculum. Two students began to take a Culture and Identity class in February 2020 but it was discontinued as distance learning began in March 2020 due to Covid-19. Beginning in January 2020, Our Lady of Guadalupe made the decision to create a twice a week class, Culture & Identity, that was intended to give students the space to think critically about their REI, racism, and social justice. In the

curriculum, students receive anti-racist content defining interpersonal and institutional racism, helping students understand their own family history, and giving them the tools to be advocates for change. Most importantly, the curriculum intends for students to become critical thinkers: to question whose stories are shared and how they are shared in their curriculum and in the greater society. Our Lady of Guadalupe has continued to provide Culture & Identity class in Fall 2020.

Our Lady of Guadalupe knows that anti-racist work cannot be done in the silo of one class for one grade level. To date, the English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Spanish departments teach about REI and racism beginning in the sixth grade. Latinx culture is very much celebrated at Our Lady of Guadalupe School can be seen through the community celebrations of *Día de los Muertos, Las Posadas, and La Virgen de Guadalupe* and the strong presence of *folklorico* dancing whenever people gather. Although student culture is celebrated, there is a desire to not just celebrate heroes and holidays, but to foster critical thinking skills that will serve students as they attend HWI/PWIs and be confident to speak about race and racism. As staff foster critical thinking, there is an eagerness for all departments to analyze their curriculum with an anti-racist lens to best support student learning.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted five interviews of Our Lady of Guadalupe Alumni who identify as Latina/o/x and currently attend HWI/PWI Catholic high schools. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The participants were interviewed over Zoom due to the restrictions of gatherings because of Covid-19. The data collected for this study was coded and themes were established from the coded data. Once the data was collected and analyzed, it was used to understand the transition of students from a middle school that serves students of color to a historically white

high school and the skills they acquired to critique and dismantle racism and how that affects their knowledge of their racial and ethnic identity.

Positionality

I acknowledge that my own REI impacts how I approach the research. As a bi-racial woman (Latina and white), I have experienced both the impacts of white privilege and the harmful effects of interpersonal and institutional racism. I hold strong biases against racial injustice and am an advocate for anti-racism curriculum in schools. Much like the participants in the study, I, too, am a graduate of a PWI and know the community cultural wealth that was required to feel safe, comfortable, and whole at school.

As a young student, I was never given the tools or space to talk racial/ethnic identity. It took years of research on my own to identify with being bi-racial as conversations around identity were deemed unworthy of the everyday curriculum. As educators negated the conversations around race, they avoided topics about racism and how it harms our society, except when celebrating the work of Martin Luther King Jr. Avoiding conversations about race and racism sent a clear message that race did not matter. Growing up, educators painted the picture that we lived in a color-blind society, one that did not judge people like me for the rich melanin in our skin. They did not equip me with the tools or vocabulary to speak about bias, stereotypes, microaggressions that I would encounter. They certainly did not talk about how institutions continue to create policies and regulations that continue to harm BIPOC people. The avoidance of conversations around racial oppression is inexcusable. It is the moral obligation of an educator to foster curiosity, justice, and advocacy in their classroom to create more aware and civic minded citizens for the future. As an educator and researcher, I seek to create learning environments that I did not have as a student., ones that I greatly desired.

I am committed to educational research and practice that dismantles and disrupts systems of oppression that create inequities in our society. I hope that this research can shed light on: (1) REI curriculum and its necessities in schools, (2) the use of *testimonios* to ground students in their story and collective wisdom, (3) aid PWI schools in San Jose to better understand the Latinx experience, and (4) give guidance to other Nativity schools across the country on how they can foster REI development in their classrooms.

Research Ethics

In order to protect the participants of this study, students used pseudonyms and the names of institutions will be changed to protect the identity of the student. Consent will be sought by the student's guardian in the language that is spoken in their household. Additionally, I secured approval and followed Institutional Review Board Protocols for my study.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by multiple factors. This research is limited due to one researcher working within the parameters of one semester. Another limitation can be found in the convenience sample used for this study because not all members of the larger, national population of Nativity schools were given an opportunity to participate in this study. At the time of this research, only Latinx students have been graduates of Our Lady of Guadalupe School, something that will change in Spring 2021. At the time of this research, I only know one alumni class and have not previously worked with the targeted research group, which may impact the connectivity between researcher and participants.

Significance of the Research

This thesis is a beginning point for research occurring for students of color transitioning from middle school that supports students of color to historically white high schools. Little

research examines the transition between middle and high school as most research about the transition of students of color takes place in college and university campuses. This research fills a gap and shines a spotlight onto middle school, which is not often the focus of research. This thesis may be of interest to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practitioners, especially those who support predominantly BIPOC students. Additionally, this thesis is useful to educators within the Nativity Miguel Coalition, a nation-wide model of Jesuit middle schools that enroll students of color and urge them to attend local Catholic high schools in an effort to break the cycle of poverty. In the midst of a new civil rights era, the critique of an REI curriculum is useful for all teachers as they think about how racial and ethnic identities impact their lessons of power and privilege.

Definition of Terms

1. **Anti-racist:** Policies and procedures used to critique racism as a system of oppression in effort to dismantle the inequities that BIPOC people experience due to the color of their skin (Dei, 2001).
2. **BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, People of Color is used as a way to center folks of Black and Indigenous descent. Although, People of Color is meant to be an inclusive term, it does not center any one racial or ethnic group the way BIPOC does. This thesis centers the voices of Latinx people therefore both BIPOC and person/student/learner of color are used depending on which racial or ethnic group needs to be centered (Grady, 2020).
3. **Ethnicity:** Related to, but not the same as race. Ethnicity is used to label people that share the same “values, norms for living, meaning, and culture” such as nationality, language, religion (Zamora et al., 2019, p. 216).

4. **Hispanic:** Hispanic is an ethnic identifier used on the Census and means to be a descendant of Spain and signifies a Spanish-speaking person. This is not as inclusive of a term as Latinx because it assumes language to play a key role in identity when many Latinx people do not speak Spanish and centers the ancestry of Spanish colonizers. In an effort to decentralize colonization and the sole use of language as an identifier, Latinx will be used predominantly throughout the thesis.
5. **Interpersonal racism:** Prejudice that happens between peoples due to the color of their skin. This can be upheld through stereotypes, biases, and microaggressions. Although people can be made aware of the ways in which they uphold racism, one person alone cannot dismantle institutional racism and institutional racism must be examined, critiqued, and dismantled. This is not to negate the critical work of individuals analyzing the ways in which they perpetuate racism without which institutional racism cannot be dismantled.
6. **Institutional racism:** The imbalance of power that happens on a systemic level socially, politically, and economically based on the color of one's skin. Institutional racism favors, upholds, and reproduces whiteness.
7. **Latinx:** An ethnic identity held by people whose ancestors are from Latin America. This identity is not contingent on nationality or language spoken. Latino signifies a male of Latin American descent and Latina signifies a woman of Latin American descent. Meanwhile, Latinx removes the gendered language used in Spanish and is intended to be an inclusive term to all people of Latin American descent.
8. **Predominantly White institution (PWI)/ Historically White institution (HWI):** An institution that has or has had a majority of White students enrolled. Research tends to

use the term PWI while many institutions are now seen to be historically white institutions with more diversity within these institutions. Therefore, both terms are used throughout the thesis.

9. **Race:** a human-made construct used to divide people based on the color of their skin. It is a "process of othering" that has real-world ramifications socially, politically, and economically for BIPOC people (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 105).
10. **Racial and Ethnic Identity (REI): "**REI is complex, and is composed of an individual's sense of being a part of a group, maintaining a high regard for their racial and ethnic group role, familiarity and involvement in their group traditions" (Zamora et al., 2019, p. 217). Racial identity and ethnic identity are purposefully not separated and are explored together to give learners a deeper sense of identity and self. For the purpose of this thesis, REI is bound together with anti-racism. When REI is taught about in schools, it must be done so with an explicit anti-racist lens in an effort to disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression. Exploration of one's own identity cannot be separated from the powers and privileges that come attached with REI.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Latinx students from predominantly Black and Brown middle schools need to learn about their own race, culture, and identity in order to navigate historically white high schools. This study aims to address this topic through testimonio interviews of 3 Latinx youth. In this literature review I examine the following three areas of scholarship: a) Critical Race Theory; b) Students of Color in Predominantly White Institutions; and c) Critical and Culturally Responsive Pedagogies. Together, these areas of literature provide a foundation for understanding this study.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory claims that power, law, and race need to be analyzed and critiqued in order to disrupt and dismantle a culture built on white supremacy in the United States with the goal to eradicate systems of oppression. Specifically, Critical Race Theory "critiques how power is maintained century after century through capitalism and racism, while laws are passed that promise equality" (Love, 2019, p. 135). This section includes a brief history of Critical Race Theory including the work of Derrick Bell (1995) who is one of the founding academics of Critical Race Theory (CRT). It also reviews the origins of the theoretical framework and the movement of the work, including the writings of Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2014) who conceptualized the formation of racial understanding and identity as a master category, one that impacts every individual. Finally, this section discusses the ideas developed by Enid Trucios-Haynes (2000) that illustrate the use of Critical Race Theory through a Latinx lens that is intended to critique the Black-white racial binary in the United States. It is important to note that Critical Race Theorists center race to understand oppression, but they do so in a way that simultaneously examines gender, class, and nationality/citizenship (Love, 2019). This literature

examines power structures in society that uphold and reinforce white supremacy and systemic racism, and how that specifically, negatively impacts the Latinx community.

The seminal work from Derrick Bell (1995) articulates Critical Race Theory, the theoretical framework committed to critiquing the intersection of race, power, and the law that arose in the late 1980s. CRT exists because it is the descendant of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and traditional works of civil rights. The work is CRT is seen through the use of "the first person, storytelling, narrative, allegory, interdisciplinary treatment of the law, and the unapologetic use of creativity" (Bell, 1995, p. 899). The work responds to the racist systems of oppression in the United States that were created with the beginning of slavery and manifested itself into power and privilege still seen today. The CRT framework is intended to be anti-racist and moves "beyond civil rights, integration, affirmative action, and other liberal measures" because it provides "scholarly resistance" that paves the way for other systems of oppression to be critiqued and dismantled (Bell, 1995, p. 899). Therefore, this theory challenges the societal, economic, political systems that reinforce white supremacy. This original scholarship is important because Derrick Bell is one of the founding academics of CRT who contributed to the framework and its creation along with Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams.

Building on this foundation of Critical Race Theory, Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2014) conceptualize the formation of race in the United States. This theory is used to provide a framework to better understand race as a master category, a concept that shapes how people interact with US society based on race. Throughout their writing, they describe "race as a master category…racialization…the evolution of race consciousness…racial projects, and racism" (2014). Omi and Winant poignantly define race as a made-up construct that has real world ramifications for BIPOC people. "[I]n the United States, *race is a master category*- a

fundamental concept that has profoundly shaped and continues to shape the history, policy, economic structure and culture of the United States" (p. 106). Marking people as "other" based on race and phenotypic distinctions has been upheld through religion to science to politics to create racial hierarchy, a template for other forms of oppression seen throughout US history. Omi and Winant (2014) theorize racial projects as acts of resistance against racial hierarchy and oppression; "it is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines" (p. 125). Omi and Winant speak to anti-racist projects as work that attempts to "undo or resist structures of dominance based on racial signification or identities" (p. 129). Omi and Winant's work is related to the writing of Bell because they conceptualize resistance to racial oppression as anti-racist work. Additionally, the three authors place emphasis on critical thinking and understanding how race and racism are upheld through systems socially, politically, economically, and culturally instead of through interpersonal interactions such as stereotypes, bias, or microaggressions.

Within the field of Critical Race Theory, Enid Trucios-Haynes (2000) conceptualizes the need for Lat-Crit because CRT needed to become more expansive and specific, moving to include themes of FemCrit, AsianCrit, WhiteCrit, and LatCrit. LatCrit is used to critique the Black-white paradigm generated from white supremacy, rendering the Latinx community invisible. This theory is meant to encompass the multidimensionality of the Latinx experience and urges the definition of race to become more complex with the inclusion of "color, race, language, culture, national origin, citizenship status and other factors that reflect the Latina/o experience" (p. 5). Additionally, LatCrit urges the Latinx community to use their positionality and power to dismantle white supremacy by identifying as Non-white. This is related to the work

of Bell because Lat-Crit is intended to critique the positionality and complacency of the Latinx community within the Black-white paradigm and bring forth a call to action to resist racist systems of oppression that also harm the Latinx community.

In summary, Critical Race Theory proposes the examination of race and institutional racism to dismantle systems of power that oppress communities of color. Related to CRT is a body of research that demonstrates the need for educational institutions to critique whiteness and use curriculum to challenge white supremacy. The following sections describe this research and justify the claim that students of color, particularly Latinx students from predominantly Black and Brown middle schools, need anti-racist Racial and Ethnic Identity (REI) curriculum in order to critique and dismantle racism in historically white high schools.

Tenets of CRT in Schools

Using the tenets of Critical Race Theory, educators can create more equitable spaces for students of color to learn and understand their racial and ethnic identity, a skill needed to combat both interpersonal and institutional racism. Tara J. Yosso (2005) describes the use of CRT as a shift away from viewing BIPOC communities "full of cultural disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (p. 69). This research includes Daniel Solorzano's (1997) work challenging racial stereotypes through teacher training, Michelle N. Amiot, Jennifer Mayer-Glenn and Laurence Parker's (2020) examination of middle school practices of racial equity, and Alejandro L. Zamora, Heidi Curtis and Lawanna Lancaster's (2019) study that connects CRT to Latinx youth and academic success, something which is normally studied for students of color in general and not specifically Latinx people. This research is important because taken together, these studies draw on the

importance for students of color, particularly Latinx students, to learn about their own race, culture, and identity.

Solorzano (1997) addressed teacher training on racial stereotypes using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework. In the article, Solorzano describes the five guiding principles of CRT to be (1) "centrality and intersectionality of race and racism"; (2) pushback on the dominant narrative; (3) "commitment to social justice"; (4) centering lived experience and knowledge; and (5) the intersectionality of perspectives. Solorzano critiques well- known and often used racial stereotypes to point out how educators hold negative biases of their students (p. 6-7). Additionally, Solorzano directs educators to methods that they can use to challenge the dominant narrative of racism in their classrooms by: giving examples of race and racism as concepts; finding racial stereotypes portrayed in the media; naming stereotypes within education; and challenging the dominant narrative through examples to students. Solorzano (1997) articulates how educators should use the guiding tenets of CRT to challenge dominant narratives and stereotypes that they hold of their students of color which is related to the findings of Amiot et al. (2020) who asks, "what would it look like to apply CRT's tenets to administrative practice and school leadership decisions?" (p. 201).

Amiot et al. (2020) used the tenets of CRT as a guide to address school disciplinary actions to find racist and biased practices in order to change school racial climate. The authors studied racism that occurs in 2 middle schools in the Mountain western region in the United States where students of color are the majority and how to use the tenets of CRT to examine school practices of racial equity, or lack thereof, as the school's administration team changes. They studied the use of a CRT lens to question (1) "what would it look like to apply CRT's tenets to administrative practice and school leadership decisions?"; and (2) "what patterns

emerged from the change process that included the leadership team, students, teachers, and parents resulting in more racial equity in the school and connections within the community?" (Amiot et al., 2020, p. 201). Through listening sessions with families and collecting data from other schools in the area, Amiot et al. (2020) grounded their work in two of the five tenets that Solorzano (1997) names: pushback on the dominant narrative and centering lived experience and knowledge. Researchers found a need to shift the negative perspective of students of color which was done through added dialogue with families and change the discipline practices by analyzing the racial identities of students who experienced these practices and how often they experienced them. (Amiot et al., 2020). Additionally, they noted that CRT is much more than a critique of the racism that is commonly seen in the US education system, but is a lens in which to view how administrative teams confront bias, structural racism, and white supremacy. This is also related to the findings of Zamora et al. (2019) because their research shows the positive correlation between *cuentos* and understanding racial ethnic identity (REI) just as one of the schools studied implemented dialogues with families to challenge school culture.

Zamora et al. (2019) address that Latinx people statistically endure immense educational and societal challenges and oppression. The authors studied the connection of CRT to Latinx youth and academic success, something which is normally studied for students of color in general and not specifically Latinos. This mixed-methods study allowed Latino middle school students to uncover their own REIs using "a culturally responsive school intervention, *cuento* (story) work" (Zamora et al., 2019). The participants and setting include 65 Latino middle school (6th, 7th, and 8th grades) students from the Northwest United States, who for eight hours over two months used *cuentos*, or storytelling practices. In an effort to foster "positive self-concept," a predictor for academic success, researchers used a key element to CRT, counter-storytelling, a

method where students could learn about Latinx folklore and explore their own bibliographies (Zamora et al., 2019). It should be noted that the final sessions took place the day after the 2016 Presidential election and could account for negative self-views, racially and ethnically, from the students. Although research show the use of REI in the classroom to have a positive impact on students of color, the key findings of this study demonstrate that students had a deeper understanding of race and ethnic identity following the study, but had a negative view of their own REI, using words like "ashamed," "upset," "mad," "angry," and "nothing" to describe themselves (Zamora et al., 2019). The authors describe a key implication to the study would be to widen the scope of the literature review to encapsulate stereotype threat and its harm on students. It was clear in the research that Latinx students were negatively impacted by the national rhetoric full of negative stereotypes following the 2016 Presidential election, and Latinx students need a classroom curriculum that challenges both interpersonal and institutional racism.

In summary, research demonstrates that CRT should be used in educational institutions through teacher training (Solorzano, 1997), school policies and practices (Amiot et al., 2020), and classroom curriculum (Zamora et al., 2019). Latinx students need support to understand and unpack their REI even when they are in predominantly Latinx spaces. Students of color, particularly Latinx students from predominantly Black and Brown middle schools, need academic support and guidance to learn about their own race, culture, and identity in order to navigate historically white high schools. Related to this is the need for educational institutions, especially PWIs, to examine how whiteness impacts students of color.

Centering Students of Color in Predominantly White Institutions

Research demonstrates that Latinx students are negatively impacted by whiteness in predominantly white institutions (PWIs). This includes a study that illustrates the intersection of

privilege with whiteness, "rurality", and nationality and its impact on Latina identity (Chang, 2016), a literature review that articulates programs and strategies to improve race relations in PWIs (Gregory, 2000), and a study that claims the importance of testimonios for building a Latina community to combat alienation and isolation by sharing one's stories in order to find success and a sense of belonging in a PWI (Flores and Garcia, 2009). It should be noted that two of the three listed works study predominantly white institutions in higher education because little research exists about challenging whiteness in primary or secondary education institutions. Together, these studies speak to the importance of community and academics for students of color, particularly Latinx students, to learn about their own race, culture, and identity in order to challenge whiteness in PWIs.

In 2016, Aurora Chang addressed the impact that the intersection of white privilege, whiteness, "rurality", and nationality has on the high school Latinas in Wyoming, a predominantly white state. Chang (2016) sought to answer the questions: (1) "how do high school Latinas navigate their socio-academic experiences within a rural, wealthy and predominantly white city in Wyoming?" (2) "how do these Latinas' *testimonios* speak to larger theoretical understandings of the purpose(s) of American education?" and (3) "what are the educational implications of the growing number of Latina/o students in rural areas?" (p. 241). Conducted in Wyoming, this study included 10 Latina students, nine ninth grade students and one tenth grade student, who live in a state with a predominantly white and growing Latinx population. Chang uses *testimonios*, a qualitative form of research using radical storytelling as a way to gather data and share lived experience of oppression and marginalization. The study found that these 10 Latina students were discriminated against causing feelings of "disappointment, pain, and anger" (Chang, 2016, p. 244). Additionally, they were labelled as

foreign, something that happened particularly in school, which "translated into low expectations, incorrect assumptions about academic and linguistic abilities and stereotypical ideas about Latina/o culture" (Chang, 2016, p. 245). The author implies that their schooling is a major factor in upholding whiteness and therefore discrimination and oppression. Like Judith Flores and Silvia Garcia (2009), Chang (2016) adds to a growing body of evidence that illustrates the need of a designated space for students of color to process what it means to navigate a PWI.

Alongside the findings of Chang (2016), Judith Flores and Silvia Garcia (2009) addressed the building of a Latina community to battle against alienation and isolation by sharing one's stories in order to find success and a sense of belonging in a PWI. Flores and Garcia (2009) studied a space for voices of color, specifically Latinas, in the midst of PWIs in order to gather and create a community where community is lacking at the University of Utah (PWI). This study included 20 Latina women, both graduate students and community members. The findings demonstrate the need for more critical awareness within their group of women. There is a strong desire to "move toward new *conocimiento* of what *Latinidades* means so we interrupt authenticity tests, so that we move toward a genuine *colectiva de mujeres* who can embrace all of our differences and commonalities con *amor y respeto*" (Flores and Garcia, 2009, p. 168). Flores and Garcia (2009) imply that there is a great desire for affinity groups to battle isolation and discrimination in PWIs. By contrast, Gregory (2000) illustrates the vast programming begun by some educational institutions to best support their students of color and improve their campus racial climate.

Putting the research and theories of Chang (2016) and Flores and Garcia (2009) into practice, Gregory (2000) writes about both programming that are implemented to better racial justice in higher education to improve race relations on campus in predominantly white

institutions (PWIs). In the article, Gregory (2000) addressed the notion that campus climates were harmful for students, faculty, staff, and administrators of color on college and university campuses in terms of race. The need for inclusion on college and university campuses was studied because “when faculty proactively promote interaction across racial and ethnic boundaries, African American students have reported higher GPAs and faculty have reported higher levels of satisfaction” which is thought to have greater effect of “dismantling racist attitudes" for students. (Gregory, 2000, p. 41) Gregory proposes various strategies to combat racism: constructing learning communities in classes, community events rooted in diversity, activities and events that bring awareness to diversity, and recruiting students of color to name a few. Gregory’s (2000) piece highlights the use of classes, events, and training to foster inclusivity, acceptance, and tolerance on college and university campuses but lacks the tools and skills for students, staff, faculty, and administrators to critique and dismantle racism as a system of oppression. The findings suggest that any change to racial climate within PWIs must be done with a desire and belief in institutional change that will positively impact the entire campus. Change regarding racial climate can be done with “[s]trong leadership and commitment [that] must be accompanied by adequate resources, collaboration, monitoring, and long-range planning” (Gregory, 2000, p. 45). It becomes clear through the reading that racial climate and racial justice should not be conflated.

In summary, research demonstrates that PWI academic institutions must evaluate and challenge whiteness to improve racial climate. Taken together, this body of research suggests that PWIs must support students of color by improving their racial climate. This research justifies challenging the dominant narrative of whiteness, especially in PWIs to support students

of color as they attend historically white high schools through the adoption of anti-racist REI curriculum that critiques and disrupts racism as a system of oppression.

Critical and Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

Multicultural education, anti-bias education, anti-racist, and abolitionist education are all approaches to examine culture in the classroom using a culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy takes into account how student learning is influenced by one's culture, which is especially important thinking of the cultures that are often omitted from curriculum (Irizarry, 2007). "Culturally responsive pedagogy, as part of a larger educational reform movement, has the potential to help improve the quality of education for Latinos and other ethnically diverse students, but it is imperative that it is done in a way that affirms students' cultures and accounts for inter- and intra-group variation" (Irizarry, 2007, p. 23). In this movement of educational reform, "it tries to move, in beautifully contested ways, children and communities to where they want to go while grappling with the painful pasts that they have to confront to get there" (Camangian, 2015, p. 427). This pedagogy centers student voice, critical consciousness, and funds of knowledge exceeding textbooks. "It is through culturally responsive and critical pedagogical approaches that Latino students can become empowered to successfully navigate school and dismantle barriers to exist in school and beyond" (Irizarry & Raible, 2011, p. 188). There are many approaches to culturally responsive pedagogy, but this literature review specifically examines the use of multicultural, anti-bias, anti-racist, and abolitionist curriculum and pedagogy.

Educators draw on various pedagogy and practices to incorporate the learning of REI into their classroom. In the process of implementing best practices, educators must examine the positive and negative aspects of multicultural and anti-bias education because anti-racist

education is an approach to curriculum that gives students the skillset to critique, challenge, and dismantle systemic oppression, not just racism. This section includes an overview of multicultural curriculum and how it falls short (Banks, 1993), a critique of "tolerance rhetoric" seen in anti-bias education (Escayg, 2019), the use of anti-racist curriculum to create critical thinkers to disrupt systems of oppression, specifically institutional racism (Dei, 2001), and the use of abolitionist teaching to give students the space to dream of a more fair and just world (Love, 2019). Taken together, this culturally responsive pedagogy brings light to the multitude of ways that race, culture, and identity are taught about in the classroom. Educators must be aware of the difference between teaching of heroes and holidays as a simplistic way to talk about race and social justice in contrast to preparing students to ask the critical questions of: Who am I? What power do I have? Who benefits? Whose story is told? as a way to challenge dominant narratives and systemic injustice. Equipping students with critical thinking skills will benefit all students, but especially students of color, as they attend historically white institutions where their voices are not dominant in curriculum and classrooms.

Critical Pedagogies

Critical Pedagogy is the theory and practices that challenge the relationships between students, schools, and societal structures that is dependent on the implementation of social justice into the classroom. It is the various ways in which teachers share knowledge, content, and skills in a meaningful, creative, and productive way. The ultimate goal of critical pedagogy is to give students the ability to critique the society around them to become more active participants in the hope to create a more inclusive, equitable, and just society. Paulo Friere is known to be the grandfather of critical pedagogy which gives a foundation to critical and cultural responsive pedagogies. He theorized of a banking system of education, one that imagines students as empty

vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge from their teacher and argues the inadequacy of the exchange (Friere, 2012). Friere (2012) raises the notion that "pedagogy must be forged *with,* not *for,* the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity" (Freire, 2012, p. 48). Critical pedagogy is best used in classrooms when all people, teachers and students, recognize their shared responsibility in building a learning community that allows students to actively and passionately share ideas and stories (hooks, 2010). The nurturing of critical thinking lays the foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy, the use of multicultural, anti-bias, anti-racist, and abolitionist education, to take place.

Critically Sustaining Pedagogies

Critically Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) are grounded in asset pedagogies and critically relevant pedagogies. Asset pedagogies "repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities- specifically poor communities of color- as resources and assets to honor, explore, and extend" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87). Gloria Ladson-Billings is the grandmother to culturally relevant pedagogy. She "laid the groundwork for maintaining the heritage cultural ways of students of color and also for [encouraging] students to critique dominant power structures" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). Paris and Alim suggest that educators should take Ladson-Billings' framework a step further and ground themselves in culturally sustaining pedagogy. It is not enough to make relevant the knowledge of BIPOC communities, rather it should be the role of education to celebrate and sustain these cultural practices and knowledge. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy supports multilingualism and multiculturalism in the classroom. "CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster- to *sustain*- linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). CSP becomes a framework to not only promote

racial equity, but becomes a tool to “ensure access and opportunity” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 89). CSP allows for educators to view culture not as static and fixed, but as both traditional and evolving (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Multicultural Curriculum

James A. Banks (1993) is often referred to as one of the grandfathers of multicultural education. He critiques systemic racism in the United States and advocates for the education system to give students the skills and knowledge to dismantle systems of oppression through the use of multicultural education. Banks (1993) explains that multicultural education grew out of the call for Ethnic Studies in the 1960s and 1970s and is grounded in “(a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 5). He acknowledges that much of multicultural education stops at content integration, and that integration happens in four different ways (a) the contribution approach which teaches “heroes and heroines, holidays, and discrete cultural elements”; (b) the adaptive approach which includes themes of culture and ethnic curriculum without changing the original, Euro-centric curriculum; (c) the transformation approach which gives students the tools to question how knowledge is created and formed by changing school curriculum to give students the view of “concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of various ethnic and cultural groups”; and (d) the social action approach through which students learn the importance of decision making to help solve societal issues (p. 23). Students receive a disservice when multicultural education stops at content integration for only specific subject areas, like social studies or language arts, rather than being implemented in every subject area. Multicultural education must not be “narrowly conceptualized” or “confined to activities for special days and occasions such as Martin Luther King’s birthday and Cinco de

Mayo" (Banks, 1993, p. 37). Multicultural education must give educators the tools to rethink curriculum so that students can "understand how knowledge is constructed and how it reflects human interests, ideology, and the experiences of the people who create it" (Banks, 1993, p. 37). Although multicultural education has the intention to create critical thinkers to disrupt systems of oppression, Banks makes clear that most curriculum work in multicultural education stops at content integration which does not necessarily critique systems of power and call for action. Students receive a disservice if multicultural education stops at the learning of heroes and holidays as the only connection to race, culture, and identity.

Additionally, Norah Peters-Davis and Jeffrey Shultz (2016) compile the stories and experiences of multicultural educators and students. Much of the work of multicultural education is taking place at colleges and universities (Peters-Davis & Shultz, 2016). Multicultural courses are described as being isolated from, not woven throughout, the educational experience and are often offered to those who are seeking a teaching degree or are passionate about social justice and equity (Peters-Davis & Shultz, 2016). The goal is to broaden student perspectives by introducing them to experiences and viewpoints that are different from their own where students are asked to learn and unlearn about systems of power around them and how they uphold oppression of countless groups of people (Peters-Davis & Shultz, 2016). Multicultural classrooms can be a space for transformation if students are open-minded and willing to examine their life experiences closely. Similar to the critique of multicultural education by Banks (1993) and Peters-Davis and Shultz (2016), Escayg examines the use of anti-bias education as it attempts to disrupt bias, power, and privilege taking the curriculum of race, culture, and identity one step further.

Anti-Bias Curriculum

Kerry-Ann Escayg (2019) critiques the use of an anti-bias curriculum and its inadequacies in the classroom to effect change and form critical thinkers. Anti-bias curriculum was coined by Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force (1989) and is grounded in: "(1) Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. (2) Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections. (3) Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. (4) Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks and Edwards, 2010, p. xiv)". Escayg (2019) questions an anti-bias curriculum because the focus of the anti-bias curriculum is not dismantling or understanding white supremacy and how to combat systems of power. Although anti-bias curriculum focuses on learning about social identities and the differences between cultures, it falls short of "providing strategies that encourage children to understand how such structures comply with an unjust social order" (p. 4). Escayg makes the point that an anti-bias curriculum upholds "'tolerance' rhetoric" and tends to center the student perspective, a subjective, individual perspective, on inequality. Anti-bias education fails to give students the tools to speak about race, power, and privilege and therefore does not create critical thinkers, students who can connect problems in society to economic, political, and historical power to effect change in their society. Escayg's (2019) critique of anti-bias curriculum and its inability to foster critical thinking to dismantle systems of oppression is connected to G.J. Sefa Dei's (2001) calls for a more critical curriculum for students, an anti-racist curriculum.

Anti-Racist Curriculum

Similar to the findings of Banks (1993) and Escayg (2019), G.J. Sefa Dei (2001) addresses the need for educators to use anti-racism and inclusive education to disrupt dominant narratives within their classrooms and institutions. This article is a call for action to educators to take multicultural and anti-bias curriculum a step further, through anti-racist and abolitionist education. Dei studies student-teachers who are being trained by him in anti-racist practices as they are told to complete readings and provide reflections and questions, later to be analyzed in his article. Many student-teachers discussed and witnessed issues of power and their understanding of race and racism within different school settings and Dei gives critical feedback needed to understand the meaning and work of anti-racist education. To begin, Dei (2001) addresses that power allows for white students, of dominant status, to be able to understand their "experiences, histories, and knowledge as the norm" making clear that students of color cannot engage with the same understanding of self within the classroom due to curriculum that upholds dominant narratives, whiteness. Additionally, he says all schools, "regardless of demographics, need to implement a racially and ethnically diverse knowledge system" as a way for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to learn a true and complete history that decenters European-based curriculum (Dei, 2001, p. 149). Dei makes clear that implementing a racially and ethnically diverse curriculum is a "moral obligation" of educators that will positively impact white folks because they will acquire greater knowledge and benefit communities of color who are asking for better, more inclusive curriculum. Dei explains that a racially and ethnically diverse curriculum will teach white folks to not perpetuate and uphold racism, especially in towns where they are the dominant group. Very poignantly, the author makes note that a diverse curriculum will lessen "the likelihood that whites will endorse a political and social system that

perpetuates white nationalism" (Dei, 2001). Because questions of power are grounded in anti-racist curriculum, the curriculum becomes larger than celebrations of culture through food and holidays but becomes a way for students to understand and question the power imbalances within a society and the curriculum is therefore critical. Learning skills of critical thinking allows students to question other forms of oppression, not only racism. Dei proclaims that we "cannot wish away racism" making the point that institutions must put forth changes to disrupt this oppression, and must do so with "transparency and accountability" (Dei, 2001). Dei (2001) concludes that the overall goal of educational institutions to take up anti-racism work is to ensure that minority students have the same sense of belonging and entitlement to their school as students of the dominant culture do and give every student the skills of critical thinking to disrupt systems of oppression.

Abolitionist education

The culturally responsive pedagogy of multicultural, anti-bias, and anti-racist curriculum examines history and culture through a lens of equity. Abolitionist education expounds the notion of pedagogy. Bettina Love (2019) describes the abolitionist framework not as a curriculum or approach, but as a way of being. "It is a way of life, a way of seeing the world, and a way of taking action against injustice…[seeking] to resist, agitate, and tear down the education survival complex" (Love, 2019, p. 89). The aim of an abolitionist framework is to not only critique systems of injustice and demand change as other culturally responsive pedagogies do but to radically dream of the new and unknown in an attempt to be free. Abolitionist education requires society to imagine living in a world that cannot normalize hatred, anger, or inferiority of dark people (Love, 2019). Abolition centers the thrival and joy of the Black community.

In order to live, not simply teach, this pedagogy, Love (2019) explains that abolitionist

teaching begins with imagination once educators have grappled with their own complacency in anti-Blackness, racism, and upholding whiteness. “Abolitionist teaching is built on the radical imagination of collective memories of resistance, trauma, survival, love, joy, and cultural modes of expression and practices that push and expand the fundamental ideas of democracy” (Love, 2019, p. 100). Without imagination, abolition ceases to exist. In the work for abolition, educators will demand the seemingly impossible by fighting, not just demanding, to end “racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, classism, mass incarceration, and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)” (Love, 2019, p. 7). Only those who can understand the ways that structural inequality is reproduced throughout history can begin the work of freedom dreaming. In the work of abolition, educators cannot simply be allies to BIPOC communities but co-conspirators, co-creators and dreamers, to the work of justice.

In summary, scholars demonstrate that educators must give students critical thinking skills to combat systems of oppression in their society. This included the use of multicultural curriculum in the classroom and where it has fallen short (Banks, 1993) and a critique of anti-bias education as not giving students enough critical thinking skills but upholds a “tolerance rhetoric” that does not question systems of power (Escayg, 2009). Literature shows the implementation of anti-racist curriculum as being the most beneficial way to create critical thinkers to disrupt systems of oppression, not just racism (Dei, 2001). Finally, abolitionist education moves past pedagogy and practice and questions the ways in which educators live and dream for a more just and equitable society (Love, 2019). Together the works speak to the need to form critical thinkers specifically through an anti-racist REI curriculum, which will better support students of color who attend historically white institutions, who can challenge the dominant narrative of whiteness and dream of a radically different society.

Summary

Students of color need anti-racist REI education to critique and dismantle racism, both interpersonal and institutional, that they experience in predominantly white institutions. Students of color in PWIs are negatively impacted by whiteness and feel marginalized. To counter that marginalization, schools must move past “tolerance rhetoric” and teach about REI and how identity impacts systems of power in the United States. By doing this, educational institutions introduce counter-narratives and center student voices as a way to disrupt the dominant narrative of Euro-centric curriculum. To teach about REI, educators must be critical of the curriculum that they use to not just teach about heroes and holidays, but introduce critical thinking skills to question systems of power and oppression. All students benefit from anti-racist education, but students of color, particularly Latinx students in predominantly white institutions, rely on the ability to critique power that they see every day as they transition from a middle school that serves Black and Brown students to a historically white high school. With my thesis, I will study graduates of Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School in San Jose to learn about their transition as Latinx students to historically white, elite, Catholic high schools throughout the city to understand the implications of anti-racist REI curriculum at the middle school level.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

The purpose of the thesis is to explore the needs of Latino/a/x[2] students as they transition from a Nativity school, a model of middle schools that educate students of color, to historically white Catholic high schools in San Jose. This research focused on the student's understanding of their racial and ethnic identity and the intricacies and complexities of what it means to be Latinx. Each of the five participants in this study shared their unique experiences and perspectives when it comes to identity, the desire for diverse voices in their curriculum, and their thirst for change, engaging in the fight for racial justice because of injustice they and their community have experienced. Each participant clearly explains the Community Cultural Wealth that they have acquired to navigate a school where they are not part of the majority and how that impacts their racial and ethnic identity.

Testimonio Profiles

Table 3.1 Student Demographics

Name	Gender	Grade	School	Racial/Ethnic Identity (REI)
Juan	Male	Senior	St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School	Latino, Latinx, Mexican, Hispanic
Camila	Female	Senior	Loyola High School	Latina, Mexican, Hispanic, Indigenous, and Spanish

[2] Instead of Latinx, Latina/o/x will be used throughout the entirety of this thesis in response to the fluid nature of identity that the participants expressed in their testimonios. Rarely did students use Latinx to describe themselves. Their testimonios, data, and results will reflect their viewpoint and identity. Latina/o/x will be used in the following sections of this thesis.

Jasmin	Female	Senior	Loyola High School	Latina, Mexican, Mexican-American, Hispanic
Dolores	Female	Freshman	St. Francis Xavier High School	Hispanic, Latina, Honduran, Honduran-American
Veronica	Female	Freshman	Jesuit High School	Mexican, Latina, Hispanic, Latinx
All names of participants and high schools are pseudonyms that attempt to represent the ethnic identity of the participants.				

Testimonio Narratives

Juan: Yearning for Racial and Immigrant Justice

Juan was born in Mexico, but calls San Jose home. Juan describes coming back to tutor at Nativity as an act of coming home, a comfort that he longs for in high school. He misses the shared understanding that came with mutual culture with his peers. After his time at Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School, he chose to attend an all-male Jesuit high school, St. Ignatius College Preparatory where he is part of the 12.5% of Hispanic students on campus. He is a current senior with a passion for social justice, political science, and education, something he plans to study in the fall when he begins college. On campus, he is part of the yearbook club and LSU, Latino Student Union, although he wishes they would do more than put on events by delving into challenging conversations about identity and racism. He firmly believes that St. Ignatius laid a critical foundation for students to be able to have challenging dialogues about race and racism with one another but yearns to see more diverse voices in the curriculum. He adores his Counter Culture class, a space for students to center the voices and experiences of the Black Panther and Chicano movements in literature but is frustrated that the class is an elective only offered to Seniors. Juan believes that he has learned a lot from his community about his racial

and ethnic identity. It is more than the family recipes or celebrations at quinceñeras, *Las Posadas*, *la celebración de la Virgen de Guadalupe,* or being polite because mom reminds you "*estás en casa ajena*" (you're in another's home). His upbringing in a mixed immigration-status household taught him of the many expectations that his family had for him. His mom would say, "In a country like the United States, where you're gifted so much just by the virtue of your birth, to not use those advantages, to not put your best foot forward- it's like a waste of the opportunity you've been given, a waste of the sacrifice your parents have made". He expresses an innate desire to be part of the movement for racial justice because he knows as an immigrant himself that the fight for racial justice also concerns him, his family, and his community.

Camila: Developing intersectional racial and class consciousness

Camila has moved around a lot, but calls Downtown San Jose home. After attending Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School for middle school, she chose to attend Loyola High School. Loyola High School is an all-women's school where she is part of the 15% of Hispanic students on campus and part of the Senior class. She appreciates her English class, but feels that most of the curriculum in her classes focus on the white, male experience. She longs for diverse narratives that would allow her to ask greater questions about identity. Camila struggles to balance it all with a demanding homework load, and being on the dance and swim teams. Before the racial reckonings of the summer of 2020, she was awarded a work scholarship which required her to work for 300 hours each school year cleaning and doing various tasks around campus. She described her experience of working on campus as demeaning and sad because she felt like she didn't get to reap the benefits of her labor. Many of the recipients were women of color and due to the racial reckoning students no longer have to work to receive scholarship funds to attend Loyola High School. Her family is originally from Michoacán, Mexico, which

leads her to many questions about her Indigenous heritage that is intertwined with Spanish roots. Along with questions about family lineage, she inquiries about the ways in which social class impacts one's understanding of their racial and ethnic identity. She knows that they go hand in hand and has often felt othered because she does not share the same economic wealth as the other students at Loyola High School. She firmly believes in using her white passing, language, and citizenship privilege to positively impact BIPOC[3] communities and is part of the Sunrise Movement, a climate change community organizing group. She sees and understands the racial justice and climate justice movements as inextricably linked.

Jasmin: Advocacy and Inter-Racial Solidarity

Jasmin is a current Senior at Loyola High School. Like Camila, she is part of the 15% of Hispanic students at the all-female high school in the Willow Glen, a wealthy neighborhood of San Jose. She describes herself as a first-generation Latina woman whose family originates from Oaxaca, Mexico. Like Camila, Jasmin has questions about her Indigenous and Spaniard roots that accompany her Mexican heritage. At school, she is part of the dance company as well as Latinx club, where pride is abundant in shared food, dances, and religious traditions. She is proud to be part of the Latinx club, something that former Nativity students fought for when the school would not allow ethnic clubs on campus. She finds joy in her social justice theology class where students are able to speak about the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of Covid-19 on BIPOC communities. She surrounds herself with other Latinas who are able to share lived experience and the Spanish language. Jasmin is grounded in the work for racial

[3] Black, Indigenous, People of Color is used as a way to center folks of Black and Indigenous descent. Although, People of Color is meant to be an inclusive term, it does not center any one racial or ethnic group the way BIPOC does. This thesis centers the voices of Latinx people therefore both BIPOC and person/student/learner of color are used depending on which racial or ethnic group needs to be centered (Grady, 2020).

justice as being advocacy work. To her, advocacy work is speaking out and finding solidarity across racial and ethnic groups.

Dolores: Racial and Socio-economic Divisions

Dolores proudly identifies as a Honduran-American, Latina, and Hispanic daughter of immigrants. She has a passion for social justice, and could often be found at Black Lives Matter protests during the summer learning all that she could about racial injustice. Dolores is a current Freshman at St. Francis Xavier High School, a co-ed Catholic high school in San Jose. In a school that has predominantly Asian and White students, Dolores is part of the 15% of Hispanic students. She purposefully chose St. Francis Xavier for the diversity that she saw on campus. She holds a unique perspective of high school because the entirety of her experience thus far has been online. Aside from her classes, Dolores is part of LSU, Latino Student Union, that partners with BSU, Black Student Union, to celebrate culture at St. Francis Xavier. She grapples with her identity and how it impacts her experience in high school. Over the summer, a hashtag was trending on Twitter in response to the institution saying that they support racial justice. In an outcry from current students and alumni, pages and pages of tweets described a school where racial justice was not a paramount, enacting fear in her and other students from Nativity who were newly enrolled. As she combats the fear of experiencing racism on campus, she confronts the grave socio-economic divide of students. She speaks to the juxtaposition of wealthy students being able to travel to Hawaii or go to their second home in Santa Cruz to take their online classes while she experienced violence and a shooting on her block just days ago. She longs to have seemingly uncomfortable conversations about race because she knows of their importance to change the cultural climate of her school and to find community in the shared love of diversity.

Veronica: Social justice, civic duty, and social media

Although Veronica began her time at Jesuit High School online, she feels incredibly connected to the diverse community. Jesuit High School is an all-women's high school located in the heart of Downtown San Jose. She is a current Freshman in a school that is predominantly White and Asian and she is part of the 19% of Hispanic students. She is proud to be part of the Latinas Unidas and Harry Potter club. Like Dolores, she holds a unique perspective of high school, having only attended through online classes. Veronica describes her time at Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School as being her second home, a place where she could be her true and authentic self by sharing jokes with peers and loving a shared Latinx culture. She is proud to be a first generation Latina and part of the Latinx community, something her mom instilled in her since she was little. She believes her mom, a single working mother, didn't just integrate traditions in their household. She fostered pride and a warm embrace of Mexican identity as something beautiful and valuable because it teaches you the importance of relationships and togetherness. Veronica strives to use her privilege and platform of being a minority student in a historically white school to let other Latinx students know that they can do it, *si se puede*. She wants them to know that they are not alone in this educational journey and that together they can make an impact on campus. Veronica is part of a community organizing group, Gen Z: We Are The Future, where she researches social justice issues that other teams make into podcasts, write articles, or design social media posts. Veronica believes her civic duty is to educate others. It is very clear that creating a more informed and equitable society is a moral duty to Veronica.

Thematic Findings

Latina/o/x participants in this study reveal the complexities of racial and ethnic identity within the Latina/o/x community, identify the challenges faced as they navigate

historically/predominantly white high schools, and name the importance of being part of the current movement for racial justice. While many of the participants share similar experiences, each one has a unique story and perspective grounding their testimonio into a larger narrative.

The Complexities of Racial and Ethnic Identity

All students in the study spoke to the Latina/o/x identity being impacted by language, citizenship, nationality, race/culture, and socio-economics. Latina/o/x students contend with their racial and ethnic identity by expressing confusion between race and ethnicity, feeling confined to a label not meant for them, and longing to know more about their cultural roots. Each of the participants expressed their identity as being fluid and changing based on who they were communicating with. Together the group used the terms: Latina, Latino, Latinx, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican American, Honduran, and Honduran American to describe their racial and ethnic identity. Students do not hold a stagnant and one-dimensional view of their racial and ethnic identity. Instead, they use terms that identify geography, nationality, citizenship, language, religion, and gender. Throughout their testimonios, participants used these identifiers interchangeably signifying a fluidity. This is in direct contrast to the rigidity of terms that myself and previous generations of Latina/o/x people have known.

Table 3.2: Shared Experiences Based on Participant's Racial and Ethnic Identity (REI)

	Not feeling comfortable checking white as their race	Expressing confusion between race and ethnicity	REI & socio-economics	REI & nationality / citizenship	Bilingual	First generation American	Experienced othering based on their identity
Juan	x	x		x	x		x
Camila	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Jasmin	x	x			x	x	
Dolores	x	x	x		x	x	x
Veronica		x	x		x	x	

During the interviews, each student was asked to define race and share their racial identity followed with a definition of ethnicity and an explanation of their ethnic identity. Across the interviews, students presented hesitation and uneasiness with these questions, often having questions themselves pointed at me about the differences between the terms. Although one student spoke with confidence, she did not accurately define and identify the nuances between race and ethnicity. These Latinx students tended to feel much more confident explaining their ethnic identity, something they strongly identify with.

Without hesitation, Juan explained how race is a socially constructed idea based on the color of one's skin. Although he could define the term, he questioned how race impacted his own identity and understanding of self.

> I would consider myself to be Latino, Mexican. I've never really thought about race. This is always a question I get asked. It's always something me and my friends talk about. I would consider myself Latino ethnically, but I'm not sure where I put myself in really as a race. I know Latinx is still a very new thing that is kind of sprouting so I really- I have no problem identifying with it, but I just haven't really identified with it for a long period of time. I was born in Mexico, then I immigrated here, so I wouldn't consider myself to be Mexican American because that kind of ties into more like nationality, where you are a citizen. But I was born in Mexico, but I wasn't raised in Mexico. I was raised in

America, but my nationality isn't American. You know it's a binary there and I don't know... I just say Latino because I think it's the more general term to kind of go in.

Jasmin described race as being a social construct meant to put people into boxes, a limitation to understanding true identity. She explains that race is used as a form of discrimination is our society but describes ethnicity as the culture that one is raised in. She describes her ethnicity not as Hispanic or Latinx but as Mexican, another nationality. In her uneasiness, she hopes to find support and understanding from her peers or those who are asking her about identity. When asked how she would describe her ethnic identity, Jasmine replied, *"Well, like I just usually say Mexican and people go with it."*

Veronica was the most confident of the participants in the study when asked about the differences between race and ethnicity. She describes race as an identity that is shared and passed down from family, not necessarily general groupings of people based on the color of their skin. Much like Jasmin, Veronica leans on and identifies with the nationality of her mom.

Researcher: What is your racial identity?

Veronica: I am Mexican.

Researcher: How would you define ethnicity?

Veronica: I would define it based on your culture and what you and what culture you grew up with, and what traditions you follow.

Researcher: What is your ethnic identity?

Veronica: Latina.

Together these descriptions begin to uncover the complexities that the Latina/o/x community experience when it comes to their REI. Each of these participants are immigrant or

first generation Mexicans living in San Jose and each of them have a different response to how they understand their racial and ethnic identity.

As the participants reflected on their REI, four of the five participants communicated discomfort when explaining their racial background. They each expressed frustration with marking “White” on applications, standardized tests, or general forms, all noting that they did not identify as such but felt that they were made invisible on forms and applications. Students reflected that they check white as their racial identity because they do not know what else to check, their mom has said that this is the best box to check, or they choose other and will write in Latinx or Hispanic.

Juan describes his confusion over his racial identity when taking a standardized test. He clearly recognizes that Latina/o/x people can be Black, Indigenous, or Asian, a racial group. But he, much like his peers do not feel that the caramel melanin in their skin or the oppression that they face due to socio-economics, language barriers, and citizenship condone a white racial identity.

> You know when you're taking a standardized test, you have to check one of the boxes, right? And you know I never-I never know which one to check because I didn't know-I don't fit into Pacific Islander or any of the other categories. And it's always between like American Indigenous and White, but I'm not a part of any recognized tribe, and I wouldn't consider myself to be part of a tribe. But also like my understanding of white- I don't look white, so I wouldn't put myself as white. But if I think about it, like my ancestors, right. You know, some of them might have come from Spain, but I don't. That's very distant, so I don't know if that still applies to me. So, I always, when I have

> to choose, then I go with white. When I don't, I just click you know the other box and I just write, Latino or Mexican.

> Like if you're Hispanic, that means that you know the roots of your country or your parents' home country kind of tie back to Spain, right? They know in the very way back Spain colonized everything or the Hispanic new world and then everything else we can just say it's non-Hispanic, right? That's how I would define what ethnicity is. If you go back to your family tree, where do you end up? In Spain or elsewhere?

Camila describes herself as a white passing Latina, and is determined to use that privilege to support her community. Even with identifying as White passing, she hesitates to identify as White and prefers to have a box for Mexican American identity.

> I don't know. And then I study about racism and it's like well racism existed before race so they just need race to explain, or defend why they had racism. So, it's not supposed to make sense, and I know that. So, I never bothered to try and find it.

Four of the five participants explained the disdain and confusion they had when it comes to choosing a racial identity on a standardized form or test. All students felt compelled to share that they felt that the Latinx identity was celebrated at Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School while they were a student. They felt supported and loved knowing that they were in a community of shared identity. It was not until they left this community (for their high school) where they were forced to give name to something - they had yet to explore - that they felt challenged with a sense of not fully understanding their identity and sense of self.

Four of the five participants talked about the notion of mestizo, of being mixed race. While they were describing their racial identity and the limiting power of white as the only box,

students talked about the complexity of *Latinidad*. Many people from Latin American countries can trace their heritage to both Indigenous peoples and Spanish colonizers, further complicating student's understanding of their racial and ethnic identity.

Camila conveys the desire to learn more about Indigeneity both in San Jose and Mexico. She recognizes that her white passing Latina identity is complicated by both Indigenous roots and Hispanic heritage.

> Well, for starters- I am, cis gender, straight, Latina and Hispanic. I'm also Spaniard, but I know in my family there's like Native blood. But I'm just not familiar with that, but I do know the reason why I'm white passing is because I also have a lot of Spaniard blood. I was actually trying to figure this out before cuz I didn't know Native American could also apply to like South America. So, with Native American I wouldn't click on that because I'm not from, like, America, you know. So, I only put white, but now I'm afraid to click Native American because I feel like... I don't... a part of me was like 'oh no you're trying too hard', 'you know, you're reaching' but, like I kind of think I'm White and Native American if like Native American does include people from Central America or South America. So, my family's from Mexico, but we just don't know because a lot of people in Mexico, you don't want to identify with that because there is discrimination so they don't. And also, they're just not educated on it so my grandparents never told me. But my dad's like 'well yeah your grandpa is from Indigenous people'. We don't know what tribe or anything about it, like context. But we do know one great grandpa from Spain so we're also Spaniards...so yeah.

Camila notes that her family is not educated about the heritage of their ancestors and do not often have conversations about race and ethnicity. As a result, she and a few of her peers note the confusion of race when race is specifically a US construct.

Together, these testimonios speak to the complexity of *Latinidad* as a REI. As students wrestle with the nuances of identity, they speak to the need for more conversations about racial and ethnic identity in the classroom.

From Nativity to High School: Learning how to Navigate

As these Latina/o/x students have navigated both a community that shares their REI and one in which they are part of a minority, a majority of participants noted the desire for educators to take interest in their culture and it did not matter that they did not share the REI of their students. All students noted that in both their middle schools and high schools, a majority of their teachers did not share their racial and ethnic identity. Traditionally, they spoke of the Spanish teachers as some of the only people to share their racial and ethnic identity. This is not surprising as 80% of teachers in the United States are white. Three students shared that in order to best navigate a school, there needed to be educators who cared to learn about their culture and identity and were willing to talk about race through a critical lens. No students showed disdain that a majority of their teachers could not relate to them through a shared racial and ethnic identity.

Throughout the testimonios, each student joyfully recalled their time at Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School. They spoke of a deep sense of community and solidarity that stemmed from a shared understanding of culture and self between students. One student spoke of the fact that there was no need to have fear when you were showing up to school as your most

authentic self. As students began to describe the comfort and home that Nativity became for them, they discussed the racial and ethnic identity of their teachers. Each student recognized that the only teachers who shared their REI were a handful of teachers and secretaries. Each student failed to mention that the President and Principal are both BIPOC leaders, and are the only BIPOC duo of both President and Principal in Jesuits West, a network of 20 Jesuit middle and high schools.

Camila spoke of her frustrations throughout the testimonio of being part of a minority on her high school campus, but when explaining the racial demographics of educators at Nativity she explained:

> Um- not really, but I wasn't too bothered by it. It was usually like one or two. Like okay the secretaries were always, like they shared the same ethnicity as us. And Spanish. But History-white. Literature-white. Math-white. Yeah, like all the core classes were White teachers.

Dolores expressed that beginning her time at St. Francis Xavier High School was a culture shock. She voiced frustration not knowing the entire community, and only being able to understand a small portion through Zoom. To date, she does not have any BIPOC educators as current teachers, but she assumes that she will be able to see more diversity when she is on campus. In juxtaposition to the lack of diversity in educators at her high school, she praised the many white educators who took the time to learn and celebrate her culture at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

> Um, not really. I think it was just Mr. Guzman and secretaries, which I was a bit surprised about because it's mainly a Hispanic school, like 97% of them. Most of my

> teachers were like Irish. Irish? I mean like, Ms. Hasty? And then Mr. Ortiz, I don't really know where he's from. But Mr. Ortiz, the secretaries and Mr. Guzman- they kind of shared the same ethnic background as us. But the rest of them were like different but it didn't make me feel like some type of way, you know. Like 'oh all my teachers are white -oh my gosh!' It didn't feel like' oh no one relates to me', because most of the students did. It didn't matter that they were of white background, they always included cultural appreciation. Like *Dia de los Muertos*, they all participated. And stuff like that. We all had culture and traditions and they all participated in it and learned about it, which was really nice.

Juan, much like his peers, noted that the racial and ethnic identity of his teachers at Nativity did not match with the racial and ethnic identity of the student body and did not express this as a grave issue. He noted that conversations about race became normalized during his 8th grade year after President Trump was elected into office.

> There wasn't a lot of introspective discussion because I think everyone knew that we kind of belonged to a community of color and there wasn't a lot for us to learn, because we were already living the experience. I guess it would be very hard for a teacher to lecture a group of students of color about what students of color struggle through.

He later comments that identity and culture were so celebrated at Nativity, that it was not a space to think about race in a critical way. After explaining that St. Ignatius College Prep. has a much more diverse teaching staff, he describes the teacher of one of his favorite classes, Counter Culture 2, a white man who does bring a critical lens to conversations about race in the classroom.

> My teacher is white, but he is a very- everyone uses the word ‘woke’ and, it's just a term that I feel is outdated- but he's a teacher that challenges everyone, you know. And you can feel it in the class even remotely when he says things that are a bit off color or challenge the status quo, and you can feel students be uncomfortable because of what he says and he's not afraid to challenge students. He challenged the previous administrations’ response to Covid and the lack of stimulus checks to undocumented people, the low- and middle-income people who were kind of left out. A lot of students feel like ‘this is an English class-we're not supposed to be talking about this, you know you're supposed to be giving me essays. But this class is very much along the lines of like- ‘no, we are going to have these tough discussions, because in the real world you're going to have them regardless if you want to or not, so we might as well start’. That class is very much a countercultural class in that we're being challenged by the teacher who does not claim to know or understand fully any of our experiences, but gives us that space to kind of vent or just share what we've gone through.

Each student expressed a desire to authentically learn about race and racism in high school. Many students noted that they were learning from a European or white perspective. Juan noted that he had not read a Latin author in any of his English classes during his four years of high school. Students recognized that conversations around race and racism can be uncomfortable, challenging, and a push back to the status quo. In order to have these conversations woven throughout the curriculum, Juan notes that the desire has to come from teachers.

> So, I would wish they integrated that into the curriculum and also taking more time to just have these conversations about race that they don't necessarily have. I don't want it to feel like teachers are forced to do this because it's in their job requirement that like you have to teach so and so. But rather, they do it out of, like, a passion for teaching. Saying 'I'm an English teacher, and I, myself, want to expose my students to all of this, regardless of what my department chair says.' So, I don't want them to feel like they're forced into teaching us Hispanic authors, because then they're not really devoted to teaching that and then the students will not be devoted to learning, or at least feign interest, in those subjects.

Students are keenly aware in the various ways that race and racism impact them on a daily basis. These five students expressed not just the challenges of understanding oneself, but the desire to talk about race and racism in the classroom. To best do this, students suggest steering clear of "whitewashing the celebrations" and implementing diverse voices of *Latinidad*, not simply Cesar Chavez. Most importantly, students note that educators must see teaching about race and racism as a moral obligation. In order for Latinx students to navigate educational institutions, students suggest that their teachers, especially those who do not share the same REI as their students, must be willing to incorporate race and racism into their curriculum to understand, empathize, and celebrate the lived experiences and knowledge of their BIPOC students.

Understanding Oppression and Advocating for Change

Throughout the testimonios, participants explained various ways in which their REI was impacted by intersecting identities. As a direct result, a majority of the students explained moments of microaggressions and feelings of exclusion based on their identity at the

intersections of race, ethnicity, socio-economics, language, nationality, and citizenship. Each of the students, without hesitation, explained their motive to be part of the current movement for racial justice that we are witnessing in the United States. Jasmin explained that fighting for racial justice was a moral issue, work that people feel inextricably connected and called to do. Juan explained that he did not need any convincing of racism existing in the United States because he understood from lived experience.

> I think there's an interesting dichotomy in our understanding of racism, because, you know, as People of Color we've experienced racism sometimes overtly sometimes through micro aggressions. So, it's easier for us to come out and say 'yes there's racism'. But then there might be a student, you know they might be white and they haven't experienced overt racism. So, they're… I wouldn't say in denial of it, but they're more hesitant to accept that racism is a fundamental core upon which the country was built. Built on Indigenous land, by slaves. And so, it's harder for them to come to terms with that, whereas with myself it's like 'no- I accept that because I've lived through it', right? I've seen how immigrants have been treated, how Hispanic students have been treated. I have lived experience and so I'm more accepting of it and that's how I feel.

As a result of othering that Latina/o/x students face, both in school and in the greater community, Latina/o/x youth attain resistance capital and a moral commitment to be part of the movement for racial justice. Latina/o/x students become part of the movement for racial justice by using their privilege, standing in solidarity with other BIPOC communities, and doing advocacy work that will have greater impact.

Camila is acutely aware of the ways in which her skin color gives her privileges not normally afforded to those in the Latina/o/x community. As a white passing Latina, she

recognizes that she must use the privilege that she has, whether it be privilege based on the color of her skin, the languages that she speaks, or her nationality to support BIPOC communities.

> I mentioned, in terms of hiding and I also know with my parents that I have to be their voice because they don't really have the opportunity or that privilege to be able to say what they need to say or to defend themselves. From that, I learned that, you know, even though you share the same ethnicity, you still have to use the privilege of what you have to help those in the same group as you. Not even group, just like the people you know. Because you don't know if that person is struggling or does not have that privilege. I learned a long time ago that I'm white passing. But I realized how much that means in terms of if you can stand up [for yourself] and he can't. Even though I am still Hispanic and there's a lot of things that society uses to oppress people like me, I do have some white privilege and I can use that and so that has helped me. So, in terms of the civil rights movement and other minority groups, I see that I also have to like jump in and like use my voice whenever I can because, regardless if I don't identify with that group, I know that there's a difference in privilege that some have in different ways. Like you know, when it comes to my family in terms of documentation. You know, other Asian Americans or African Americans...maybe that family's not dealing with its privilege in terms of documentation but simply because of how they look, their race. So, I'll use the privilege that I have, of how I look to help defend them. Sometimes someone cannot defend themselves, so you just have to jump in for them.

Juan and Jasmin both bring up the notion of solidarity, of racial and ethnic groups working together to attain racial equity. In the months following the racial reckoning of Summer

2020 that gained momentum for the Black Lives Matter movement, students also allude to the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes across the United States, naming both racial justice movements.

> Jasmin: Yeah, because it affects everyone in the community, not just the Latin community. But it's affecting a lot of other communities as well, and I feel like if we don't band together, then it's going to be definitely harder for other voices to be heard.

> Juan: Yeah! Because at the end of the day, it affects me whether I like it or not, or indirectly or not. So, you know I feel tied to it. When I was still going through the immigration process and we were fixing everything up, we had no choice but to be attentive to what Congress is saying, right? We have no choice but to listen to the talks on immigration reform because we're going to be directly affected by it. I have friends who are Dreamers and are or were in DACA, so you know I can't turn a blind eye. So, I'm interested in the movement because I'm affected by whatever outcome, there will be so no you just can't ignore it, because it affects practically everyone.

As Jasmin and Juan alluded to, racial justice cannot happen in a silo, with one racialized group of people working for racial equity. Camila and Veronica made clear in their testimonios that they understand the concept of intersectionality, the idea that social justice issues are inherently connected. Oppression is not a stand-alone phenomenon. It does not occur in a silo. Rather, social issues are interconnected. Therefore, the movement for racial justice concerns other various movements for social justice such as combating climate change and being an educator. These Latina/o/x youth see racial justice as an ongoing, incomplete project.

> Camila: I do feel like I am part of the movement for racial justice because I'm also part of the fight for climate justice. And you know... I feel like all these issues tie with racial

justice and I feel like climate justice ties with a lot of issues, like social issues. So, I feel like I am. And regardless if I wasn't involved with climate justice movements, I will still be involved with fighting for racial justice because I think it's all interconnected. But regardless, I'm always trying. I have experienced burnout. So, when I am moving away it's just simply because I am experiencing burnout and I'm trying to like find a way to be balanced, but everybody does know me for sure for being really outspoken. In my family it might be a bad thing-haha. Like I am always there trying to, you know, improve it. I know that also means like myself, finding like ‘okay, you know I also made a mistake’. And learning and trying to every day, trying to deconstruct myself because, like this is still a Eurocentric society. So, you just naturally- like this is embedded. So, every day you have to continue.

Veronica: Absolutely. I feel like it's something that the United States needs to change, and we are changing it and everybody needs to be a part of that movement because together we're going to be able to understand it and combat it. And by that I feel like I'm doing my part by educating people around me and educating myself, so that they can understand it and advocate in their own ways. So, I also have used my platform in any way I can. Like on social media, on Instagram, I follow accounts that talk about these current issues and advocate, and so I feel like I share them. I am a part of an organization called Gen Z: We Are the Future and I research different topics on different social issues that are occurring and I help share them. And we create social media posts. We create articles that share them to our community so yeah. It's a pretty small organization that hopefully can grow as time progresses. We have a social media, podcasting team, journalism team, and a research team. And I think there's a few more, but those are the

> main ones I can remember, and we are in charge of. I research for different topics that they create into posts and articles, so I get to choose my own topics. I get to choose two topics every week that I create research papers like bullet points and notes that our journalism team turns into articles and shares or our social media team turns into Instagram posts. Like I recently worked on a project for sexual assault awareness month where I researched statistics, resources, and what sexual assault means and what consent means. And then we also researched the AAPI hate crimes and I researched lesser-known hate crimes that we've created into a post and we shared on Instagram. I found their page on Instagram. My classmates and my peers follow them and I they were taking applications and I'm like I want to do this, I want to pursue social justice. As I grow in this as an opportunity, so I took it. It's not necessarily a Bay Area group, there are people from Asia and Europe, who are part of the organization.

Due to experiencing racism themselves or in their community, these Latina/o/x youth are called to be part of the movement for racial justice. All participants affirmed their role in the movement for racial justice. They have described solidarity between racial groups as critical in order to end racial oppression. They are also keenly aware that in order for racial justice to occur, educating the greater society about social justice issues must take place as well as activism for climate change, something that disproportionately affects BIPOC communities. These Latina/o/x students know that their communities will continue to be oppressed if they do not advocate for change and the end of racial oppression.

Analysis and Discussion

This research is rooted in Tara Yosso's (2005, 2006) theory of Community Cultural Wealth, a product of Critical Race Theory that celebrates the wealth of experience, knowledge, and skills that BIPOC communities hold. There are six forms of capital within Yosso's (2005, 2006) framework and students touched on all six notions: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital. During the testimonios, the five Latinx participants most clearly identified social capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital.

Social Capital

Yosso (2005) describes social capital as "networks of people and community resources" (p. 79). Social capital speaks to the solidarity and shared understanding of both culture and oppression. The student participants shared various ways they attained social capital: in middle school, high school, the greater community, their families. Most notably, students named being part of the same social group, but had a variety of ways to describe that racial and ethnic group. In this analysis, I will focus on networks of people who fall under the umbrella REI term of Latinx.

The five participants of the study share many commonalities in terms of their identity. 100% of participants are bilingual. Four of five participants are first generation students, only one was born outside of the United States. All of the participants have at least one parent who was born in Latin America, specifically Mexico and Honduras. Yet, all of the participants use a variety of terms to describe their racial and ethnic self. Students used: Latina, Latino, Latinx, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican American, Honduran, and Honduran American to describe their

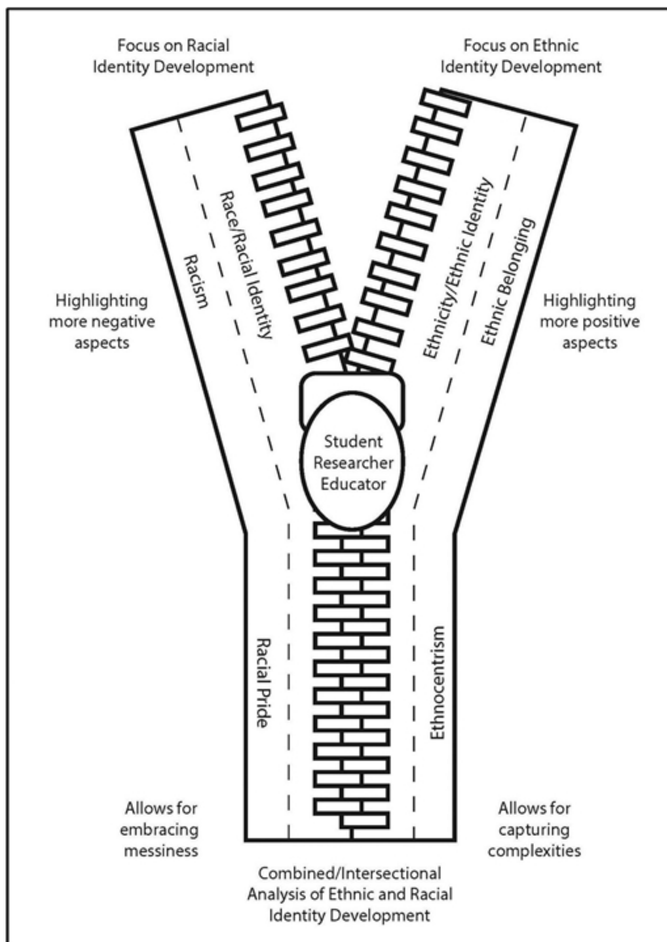
racial and ethnic identity. Ethnic and racial self becomes dynamic, complex, and contextual as youth strive to find the term or terms that best describes themselves. Not only are they trying to find a term that gives meaning to them and their familial heritage, identification includes group membership, something that holds both knowledge and emotional weight (Cheon et. al, 2018). Racial and ethnic identity is not something that is stagnant and unchanging, rather it should be understood as fluid and impacted by changing popular terms and maturity (Cheon et. al, 2018).

One of the popular terms used to describe a group of people who share a cultural heritage from Latin America is Latinx, a gender neutral term that is widely, but not completely accepted throughout the ethnic community. "Latinx was first used in academic and activist spaces to pluralize Latin American communities into a gender-inclusive, pan-ethnic group" (Salinas, 2020, p. 165). Latinx attempts to shift the Spanish language from one full of gender, to more gender inclusive. Latina and Latino are both gendered ways to express an ethnic identity in Spanish. Scholars state that the x was first used in the Xicano/ Chicanx movement, an empowerment of people of Mexican origin living in the US giving nod to the Nahuatl language (Salinas, 2020). Latinx began to be used in university settings and is thought of as an ideological term, one where many "Latina/o/x students and scholars often do not identify with a race" (Salinas, 2020, 152). Latinx is complicated by the fact that it is challenging to pronounce in Spanish and not all indigenous languages use the letter "x" (Salinas, 2020). Research shows that many people who identify as part of the Latinx community do not use the term at home because their parents may not speak English or did not attend higher education (Salinas, 2020). Therefore, Latinx becomes geographically inclusive and linguistically exclusive, challenging the perceived inclusivity of this catch-all term. Only two of the students in this study identified as

Latina/o and Latinx. Many of them described that they are part of the Latinx community, but it was not a term used to self-identify ethnically.

As racial and ethnic terms change as new terms are made available, self-identity also changes as one matures and acquires more knowledge about self and heritage (Cheon et. al, 2018). Racial and ethnic identity development is complicated, especially for individuals in the Latina/o/x community. Traditionally, racial and ethnic identification occurs during adolescence (Cheon et. al, 2018). As students learn about racial and ethnic identity in the classroom, educators should embrace the complexities and challenges that come along with the nuanced conversation of race and ethnicity. Johnston-Guerrero (2016) suggests that educators can foster racial and ethnic identity development in youth by (1) using critical pedagogy; (2) embracing the intersections of race and ethnicity; (3) understanding diverse views. Race and ethnicity therefore become vibrant and expansive, a dramatic shift away from racist stagnant, unchanging, and singular views. "By acknowledging diverse ethnicities within racial groups, and that racial groups themselves are different, inter-and intragroup dynamics can be more fully considered and the racist homogenization of Communities of Color can be tackled" (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016, p. 47). Johnston-Guerrero (2016) theorizes that students should learn about both race and ethnicity as not separate the two identifiers, holding space for the complexities that will accompany that learning.

Visual Representation of Intersection Racial and Ethnic Identity (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016)



Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) states "race is the child of racism, not the father". As racism is a system of oppression to enact power over BIPOC communities, race became the confines in which people had to identify based on the color of their skin. In their testimonios, students described the complexities they hold when it comes to their racial identity. Many disagreed with their white racialized label, some conflated nationality (Mexican) with race. But all of them spoke to the importance of their Latina/o/x identity and shared cultural understandings with their peers. Their participation within a racial and ethnic identity allowed for groups of people and

community resources to flourish, helping to prepare them for navigating a historically/predominantly white high school where they were (Yosso, 2005).

Navigational Capital

Yosso (2006) defines navigational capital as the "skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 44). Yosso (2005) describes Navigational Capital as "maneuver[ing] through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind" (p. 80). Navigational wealth acknowledges that BIPOC students will have a different experience than their white counterparts in various institutions, such as a high school, and highlights the lessons learned, skills, and tenacity needed to operate within these spaces. All of the students who participated in this study described the home that Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School was for them while they were in middle school. They spoke of their three years at Nativity with *cariño,* describing the comfort in shared traditions, celebrations, language, jokes, and food with their peers. While they were students, there was an Asian student and an Ethiopian student, but the majority of their peers shared the same Latinx/Hispanic identity. Additionally, students described the safety in being at Nativity, because students understood that other families were undocumented or mixed status. As these alumni of Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School transition from middle school, they traditionally attend Catholic High Schools in San Jose, secondary institutions in which they are no longer part of a racial or ethnic majority.

Yosso (2005) describes the need to be resilient to attain navigational capital. While attending HWI/PWI[4] Latina/o/x students describe being othered and *onlyness*, where exceptional

[4] An institution that has or has had a majority of white students enrolled. The writing of white with a lower-case w is purposeful in an effort to decenter whiteness and center Black and Brown identities, a push back to the dominant narrative. Research tends to use the term PWI while many institutions are now seen to be historically white institutions with more diversity within these institutions. Therefore, both terms are used throughout the thesis.

learners must educate peers on racial topics and are often tokenized; battle both micro- and macro aggressions; and encounter a shortage of educators who share their same racial and ethnic identity bringing sentiments of alienation and isolation (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Harper, 2013). The participants described both *onlyness* and resilience throughout their testimonios. Two students spoke of frustrations as they combat microaggressions. Two students described the confrontation and othering that they faced when they did not share the same economic wealth as their peers. Two students spoke of the need to speak Spanish openly on campus as a way to connect with their heritage. Four of the five participants have joined their high school's Latinx community: Latino Student Union, Latinx Club, and Latinas Unidas. These five Latinx participants have acquired navigational wealth as they continue to find community on their campus. The act of continuously showing up to a space where peers, educators, and leaders do not share their racial and ethnic identity signifies resilience and solidifies their navigational cultural wealth.

Participants suggest that having a curriculum in which they could learn about race and racism and having teachers who genuinely desire to teach about race would have a positive impact on their ability to transition to high school and navigate the institution. Three of the participants noted that they had teachers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Nativity School who did not share the racial and ethnic identity of their students. The majority of their teachers were white but were described as making a genuine effort to know students, their families, and cultural celebrations and traditions. As the teaching force in the United States is predominantly white, teachers must find ways to connect with their students about race and racism, something statistically they will not share with their students. Irizarry and Raible (2011) suggest that "It is through culturally responsive and critical pedagogical approaches that Latino students can

become empowered to successfully navigate schools and dismantle barriers to their success that exist in school and beyond" (p. 188). In their study of 10 educators who work with predominantly Latina/o/x students, Irizarry and Raible (2011) study educators of multiple races, with varying language abilities, and who are from different cities and towns. Research found that in order to best support Latinx students, educators must (1) "[learn] with and from the community" by forming relationships with students and their families and letting that form their educational practice (p. 196); (2) bring cultural knowledge into the classroom making "their practice more culturally responsive to the academic and personal needs of their students" (p. 197); (3) make an effort to learn the language(s) spoken by their students (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). This research reinforces the tenets of Critical Race Theory through centering the lived experience of Students of Color. Research suggests that teachers, no matter their racial and ethnic identity, will best support learners of color if they recognize the community cultural wealth of their students and bring that wisdom to their curriculum (Irizarry & Raible, 2011; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2006).

One of the ways that participants sought to be supported by educators was through the implementation of a diverse curriculum, one that does not solely center whiteness. One hundred percent of participants spoke of the desire to have diverse voices, narratives, and experiences woven into their curriculum, explaining that they continue to learn about history and literature through a European and white lens. Although speaking about race and racism is often described as challenging and uncomfortable, teaching about race is a way "to affirm oneself, one's sense of worth and purpose, and to become whole within a disconnected, fragmented, and despiritualized context" (Dei, 2001, p. 142). Dei (2001) theorizes that an anti-racist curriculum in classrooms brings race and oppression to public knowledge, a critical and necessary stance

"when the most disadvantaged in our communities continue to survive politically, economically, emotionally and psychosocially" (p. 144). Anti-racist pedagogy rests on the notion that this framework must be used in both schools that are predominantly white and racially and ethnically diverse (Dei, 2001). Anti-racist pedagogy then entrusts educators to disrupt what is understood as "normal" in their practices because they understand that working for racial justice is a moral obligation. Anti-racist pedagogy is more than including diverse novels or units to one's curriculum. It is more than focusing on heroes and holidays. Anti-racist pedagogy calls for "developing minority student' sense of entitlement to their schools, a feeling that they belong in these spaces as much as their bodies" (Dei, 2001, p. 156). Therefore, educational institutions can foster the navigational wealth of their Latino/a/x students through forming educators to be culturally sustaining and anti-racist.

Resistance Capital

Yosso (2005) theorizes resistance capital as students being able to "recognize and name the structures of oppression, and then are motivated to work toward social and racial justice-resistance takes on a transformative form" (p. 48). In the testimonios, 100%of the five students stated that they were called to be part of the movement for racial justice. Students described experiences where they themselves or loved ones have experienced discrimination based on their identity, naming the structure of racial oppression. Each and every one of them described a moral obligation to the fight for racial justice because they too know the harmful impact of racial oppression. Each student had a unique perspective to eradicate racial oppression. Some students desired to stand in solidarity, some desired to teach, some desired to organize. But each perspective of resistance is needed to transform racism in U.S. society.

Conclusion

Deficit thinking and practices puts the blame and burden onto communities of color for low academic achievement due to a community's cultural norms and values, the ways families are structured, and language acquisition (Solorzano, 1997; Valencia, 2010). Deficit thinking and practices in education celebrate middle class, white, mono-lingual, and mono-cultural experiences. This thesis shifts the notion of Latina/o/x students coming to educational institutions with a deficit and instead celebrates the wisdom and multiplicity of their lived experience as Latina/o/x youth. Instead of highlighting the racism that these students have encountered: the discrimination based on socio-economics, microaggressions based on language and nationality/citizenship, and othering occurring on their campuses, this thesis attempts to situate that pain, lived experience, and knowledge within a narrative of Community Cultural Wealth. These five Latina/o/x youth precisely name each of the six cultural capitals that make up Community Cultural Wealth: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. This thesis specifically addresses the ways in which Latina/o/x youth attain social capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital as they learn in spaces in which they, their narratives, and their experiences are not part of the majority or mainstream.

Each of the five Latina/o/x student testimonios are personal and unique although they situate themselves into the greater narrative of oppression and resistance experienced by Latina/o/x youth while attending historically or predominantly White institutions. Together, they foster dynamic themes. These testimonios narrate the confusion, questions, and desire to learn about REI. Latina/o/x students loudly and clearly express the desire for white teachers who have a yearning to teach about race and racism in their class and weave diverse narratives into their

curriculum. Latina/o/x youth feel called, as a moral obligation, to fight for racial justice because they know the plight and experiences of racism from lived experience.

As these testimonios honor the social, navigational, and resistance capital of Latina/o/x youth in HWI/PWI, this research is a call to action for educators to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments where all students can learn the nuances of race and ethnicity, understand diverse perspectives, and be given the tools to enact change in their school and greater communities. Latina/o/x youth do not want their experiences, nor the experiences of their communities to be silenced in the classroom, as if their lived wisdom is separate from their learning. They state the need not for teachers to share their same racial and ethnic identity, but to feel that talking about race and racism is a moral obligation. Teachers have the ability to challenge the status quo of a society by fostering critical thinking in their classrooms.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This research centers the voices of Latina/o/x youth as they transition from a middle school that serves BIPOC learners, specifically from a NativityMiguel school, to historically or predominantly white institutions and how that transition impacts their understanding of their racial and ethnic identity. Existing literature about Latina/o/x youth tends to center their experience of transitioning from high school to colleges and universities. There was a clear gap in research in regards to how NativityMiguel alumni navigate high schools where they are not part of the majority, racially and ethnically.

As high school students, these Latina/o/x youth are trying to understand their own racial and ethnic identity as racialized people. These five youth cannot speak for the entire network of NativityMiguel alumni that stretches across the United States and Canada. However, this study provides a deeper understanding of experiences NativityMiguel alumni confront throughout their high school career. As the NativityMiguel coalition continues to grow, further research is needed to understand and celebrate the acquired Community Cultural Wealth of the almost 8,000 alumni of NativityMiguel schools.

Recommendations

No type of pedagogy, however effective, can single-handedly remove the barriers of racism, discrimination, homophobia, segregation, Islamophobia, homelessness, access to college, and concentrated poverty, but antiracist pedagogy combined with grassroots organizing can prepare students and their families to demand the impossible in the fight for eradicating these persistent and structural barriers (Love, 2019, p. 19)

Amid the countless forms of oppression in our society, Bettina Love (2019) reminds us in the quotation that the fight for justice and equity must: be anti-racist, be grounded in communal knowledge, and begin in our schools. In the following section, I offer recommendations informed by her call to action and the testimonios of the participants of this study. I offer the following recommendations specifically for schools that are part of the NativityMiguel coalition, serving predominantly Latina/o/x and Black youth at Jesuit middle schools; Jesuit schools, who strive to form people with and for others; and fellow educators.

For Educators at NativityMiguel Schools

One of the common tenets of a NativityMiguel school is holistic education (Mickey Fenzel, 2009). A holistic education would include life skills, socio-emotional learning, and most importantly, learning about anti-racism. Traditionally, NativityMiguel schools include a curriculum that helps students get into local Catholic high schools: helping them prepare for high school placement tests, working with the financial aid office, writing letters of recommendation, etc. The research in this study has shed light on student's desire to have a class to talk about their race and ethnicity as well as learn how to take action. I recommend expanding classes already in place at NativityMiguel schools that offer non-traditional curriculum to include facilitated conversations about race and racism so that students can more easily transition to historically or predominantly white high schools. I suggest that NativityMiguel educators adapt lessons from *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell (2019) to ground and guide conversations around race, racism, and activism that is specific for this middle school age group. This class has potential to be a safe space for students to process through a tumultuous election season, the Black Lives Matter movement and recent police brutalities, and express solidarity with the Asian American community who has been targets of recent hate crimes. As we see in this research,

most participants had questions about race and ethnicity, as racial and ethnic identity development tends to happen in the adolescent years, it is critical that NativityMiguel schools begin to have conversations about race and racism in middle school. Toward a more robust approach to race and ethnic identity development and social justice, I offer the following recommendations:

1. Develop an anti-racist curriculum that will help students move beyond a loving community and will give them the tools to critique a racist society
2. Foster a community of activism that gives students the tools to positively impact their community at a young age
3. Cultivate a community that celebrates culture, not just for students but for all people on campus
4. Continue partnerships with local Catholic high schools to honor and develop the navigational wealth acquired by students

For Educators at Jesuit High Schools

One of the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching is Life and Dignity of the Human person. In Catholic schools, this is often narrowed down to conversations about abortion and the death penalty. If Catholic, and therefore Jesuit, schools were to honor Life and Dignity of Human Person, then they would see racial justice as a moral issue. They would understand that the killing of unarmed Black men at alarming rates is an issue about Life and Dignity. As Jesuit institutions continue to center and uphold Catholic Social Teaching, it would be hypocritical to not take a blatantly anti-racist stance, not just in the classroom but throughout the institution. Anti-racism work at Jesuit schools[5] would have to look at: who does diversity, equity, inclusion,

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[5] Adapted from https://www.jesuitswestcore.org, an online racial justice toolkit for Jesuit institutions. Co-written by myself (the researcher) and Jamal Adams.

and anti-racism (DEI+A) work and if they have power in the institution, how money is spent to foster anti-racism, the policies in place that harmfully affect BIPOC people, a strategic plan that encourages racial justice for the coming school years, and racial justice programming and curriculum for students, staff, and the greater community. Additionally, schools must understand that anti-racism work is continuous and changing and is therefore not fixed or stagnant. Ibram X Kendi writes "the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it-and then dismantle it" (Kendi, 2019, p. 15). Anti-racism work will continue to evolve, creating more inclusive and equitable understanding, practices, and policy.

Like NativityMiguel schools, Jesuit schools seek to faster *cura personalis*, care for the whole person. Caring for the whole person, must include caring about race. Students do not live in silos, separating their racialized self from their student self. The two are inextricably linked. Therefore, conversations and curriculum about race, racism, and anti-racism are imperative. As many of the participants noted, they have a strong desire to have educators who are willing to celebrate diversity, include non-white narratives and perspectives in class, and challenge the status quo of our society no matter the racial and ethnic identities of these educators. Additionally, participants named the importance of anti-racist work through advocacy. Because none of the participants were part of advocacy projects on their campuses, I argue that more focus needs to be made on students becoming advocates for change, a critical component of anti-racist pedagogy.

1. **Anti-Racism Consciousness Professional Development for Educators**: Educators must genuinely reflect on their classroom community and curriculum to deepen their understanding of anti-racism. I must note that this list is incomplete as anti-racism work will continue to deepen our knowledge of what it means to be a truly racially just

community[6]. A few guiding questions toward developing an anti-racism consciousness includes:

a. Is there trust in my classroom to have conversations that students may find challenging?
b. Are there community norms at my school that help foster dialogue?
c. Whose voices do I center curriculum?
d. Whose stories are deemed worth sharing in class?
e. Are negative stereotypes upheld in my curriculum?
f. Are students aware of bias, stereotypes, or microaggressions?
g. Is Eurocentric, middle class, monolingual, monocultural knowledge celebrated or challenged?
h. Do lived understandings and wisdom honor people of different races, ethnicities, languages, nationalities, abilities, genders, sexualities, or religions?
i. Do I create space for students to explore identity and their sense of self?
j. Are BIPOC people celebrated as heroes or on their holidays? Or are they an everyday aspect of the student experience?
k. Does every department foster knowledge about race and racism? Or just specific classes (ex: History or English)?
l. Does each department have learning outcomes about diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism?

[6] Adapted from https://www.jesuitswestcore.org, an online racial justice toolkit for Jesuit institutions. Co-written by myself and Jamal Adams.

2. **Service Learning and Fostering Activism:** Students in Jesuit high schools are required to complete service hours as part of their graduation requirements. In the process, it is critical that students understand their positionality of privilege as they enter into historically marginalized communities. Most importantly, as students feel empathy towards communities facing oppression, it is essential that students understand advocacy work. Many of the participants in this study noted the advocacy work that they were part of, none of which were taking place through their high school. As Jesuit high schools foster *people with and for others,* they must be more critical of how students are doing work *for others.* Students, in the course of their Jesuit education, must learn that advocacy work does not come as a result of doing community service or going on an immersion trip to another city or country. Advocacy work comes from active listening, centering of marginalized voices, understanding systems of power, and fostering systemic change, all through an anti-racist lens.

For K-12 Educators

1. Live out abolitionist teaching: This research is a rallying cry for change in our schooling practices, policies, and pedagogies to support not just survival but the thriving of BIPOC students in our classrooms. As a teacher myself, I urge fellow educators to live out abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019).

> Abolitionist teaching is as much about tearing down old structures and ways of thinking as it is forming new ideas, new forms of social interaction, new ways to be inclusive, new ways to discuss inequality and distribute wealth and resources, new ways to resist, new ways to agitate, new ways to maintain order and safety that abolishes prisons, U.S.

> Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and mass incarceration, new ways to reach children trying to recover from the educations survival complex, new ways to show dark children that they are loved in this world, and new ways to establish an educational system that works for everyone, especially those who are put at the edges of the classroom and society. Abolitionist teaching is teachers taking back their schools, classroom by classroom, student by student, parent by parent, and school community by school community (Love, 2019, p. 89).

2. **Be co-conspirators:** Most importantly, teachers are in the unique position of forming future generations of citizens, leaders, creators, healers, and activists. As educators, we must be *co-conspirators* in the movement for racial justice, always moving towards greater understanding. As co-conspirators charged with the task to address oppression and dream of a more just society, Bettina Love and the Allies for Change suggest that educators:

   a) Understanding where we stand in relation to systems of privilege and oppression, and unlearning the habits that protect those systems, which is lifelong work for all of us, without exception.
   b) Authentic relationships of solidarity and mutuality, which are not possible when we try to avoid or transcend power imbalances.
   c) Honestly acknowledging and confronting those imbalances to create authentic relationships.
   d) Social change work is always rooted in collaboration, humility, and accountability.
   e) The interior journey into silence, mediation, inner wisdom, and deep joy is inextricably linked to the outer work of social change (Love, 2019, p. 118).

3. **Love your students:** I challenge educators to love their students so deeply that they desire to disrupt and enact change against the oppression their students face because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, nationality, citizenship, or language acquisition. Teaching has never been simply about the chapters read, PowerPoints created, or tests given. May we create an education system that allows students to explore who they are and how they are in the world. As educators, I argue that is our moral obligation to build an anti-racist society beginning in our classrooms.

My hope is that after reading this research, educators can acknowledge the infinite ways in which they can foster anti-racism in their classrooms. It is my belief that all educators must celebrate the skills, knowledge, and wisdom of BIPOC communities and implement such expertise and intelligence into the everyday curriculum to challenge racial oppression. Participants of this study boldly and loudly proclaimed the importance of diversifying curriculum, having educators who fostered critical thinking while celebrating BIPOC culture, fostering a space to reflect about racial and ethnic self-identity, and learning how to disrupt oppression and advocate for change. Latina/o/x students clearly demonstrated the need for anti-racist curriculum and addressed the impact that attending a historically/predominantly White institution has had on their understanding of self. As BIPOC communities have worked tirelessly for generations in the fight for racial justice, change is not simple nor straightforward. Therefore, it is imperative that institutions recognize their complacency in upholding racism and begin to challenge systems of oppression in a multitude of ways. With the unapologetic and unwavering support of educational institutions, an anti-racist society is possible.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. Background info/demographic info.
   a) Age
   b) Grade
   c) High school
   d) How do you define your identity?
   e) What is your racial/ethnic identity?

2. Topic 1: Understanding of REI
   a) How would you define race?
   b) How would you describe your racial identity?
   c) How would you define ethnicity?
   d) How would you describe your ethnic identity?
   e) What identifying terms do you gravitate towards? [Latina, Latinx, Chicano, Mexican American] Why? What do these different terms mean to you?

3. Topic 2: Educational Experiences in middle school
   a) Can you tell me a little about your experience at [middle school]? How would you describe [name of middle school]?
   b) What was the racial and ethnic makeup of [middle school] while you were a student?
   c) In your classes at [middle school], did you learn about your race or other BIPOC people in the curriculum? How so?
   d) Did teachers and staff share the same racial and ethnic identity as their students?
   e) How would you describe the experience of being at a school where the majority of students are Latinx?
   f) Did that impact your understanding of REI?
   g) Did you feel prepared to attend [high school] and speak about your racial and ethnic identity?
   h) Can you think of a time when you felt really out of place because of your identity? Tell me about it. Or a time you felt like you really belonged? Tell me about it.

4. Topic 3: Understanding of REI in a PWI HS
   a) Can you tell me about your experience at [high school]? How would you describe [high school]?
   b) In your classes at [high school], do you learn about your race or other BIPOC people in the curriculum? How so?
   c) In your classes at [high school], did you learn about your race or other BIPOC people in the curriculum? How so?
   d) Do your teachers and staff share the same racial and ethnic identity as their students?
   e) Can you tell me about the transition from [middle school] to [high school]? How would you describe the experience of being at a school where the majority of students are not Latinx? Does this impact your understanding of REI?

f) What about your experiences outside of class? Do you feel like you belong? Or examples when you feel out of place?
g) Do you feel that the schools you have attended have equipped you to talk about your racial and ethnic identity?
h) If not, where do you tend to find resources about REI?

5. Topic 4: Home/community
a) What language is spoken at home?
b) Where are your parents from?
c) What did you learn at home about your identity?
d) What were things that you learned at home that you wish your teachers understood or knew?

6. Topic 5: Anti-racism
a) Living in a new wave of the civil rights movement, how does understanding your racial and ethnic identity impact your understanding of racism in the US?
b) From your experiences at school, do you feel equipped to talk about racism in the United States?
c) How would you define anti-racism?
d) Do you feel part of the movement for racial justice? Why or why not?
e) If you were the creator of classroom lessons, what do you wish future generations of students would know? At [middle school]? At [high school]?