
**“That’s Where My Anger Is Coming From”:
Plática Between Latine Teachers and Pre-Service Teachers
in the New Latino South**

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ABSTRACT: This study examines a plática held by Latine teachers and pre-service teachers after watching the documentary *Precious Knowledge* in the U.S. Latino South. The study employed Chicana/Latina feminist theory as well as the use of testimonios as methodology. Results from this study show that Latine teachers were able to share their experiences with racism, discuss issues of white supremacy, and make connections from present to past events. Based on this study, it is recommended that teachers need opportunities to share their testimonios and engage in discussions about topics that impact them as Latine teachers in the U.S. Latino South.

KEYWORDS: Teachers, Latine teachers, Pre-Service Teachers, testimonios, pláticas

[Literature Review](#)
[Theoretical Framework](#)
[Methods](#)
[Findings](#)
[Discussion](#)
[Implications](#)
[References](#)
[Author Contact](#)

In 2019, a group of Latine¹ pre-service teachers (PSTs) reached out to the two authors of this article asking to create a space in which Latine students and faculty could come together and engage with one another. This space has provided Latine students in the college of education at a large university in the Southeastern United States, with opportunities to support each other as they progress through their teacher education program and engage in critical

¹ The authors used the term Latine as it is preferred in Spanish speaking countries in Latin America.

discussions about issues they view as important. In addition, this space has provided Latine students with opportunities for professional development that are tailored to meet their career needs. The authors used pláticas to create a mentoring structure where Latine in-service teachers (maestras) could share their experiences after graduation and in the field with Latine PSTs. Pláticas are informed by Chicana/Latina epistemologies and are informal conversations rooted in oral traditions (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

While PSTs were also present during this plática, the authors focused on the participation of in-service teachers as we wanted to understand their perspectives since they were in the field. PSTs were tasked with listening and learning from their more experienced peers during this interaction. Latine teachers connected issues that had affected Latine students and teachers in the past (i.e., lack of representation and cultural competency) with issues that continue to affect them, such as a need to find community. They discussed how they could advocate for themselves and their Latine students and families. Ultimately, the day-long retreat within which the plática took place, and that included other community-building activities, kicked off a year-long relationship with Latine maestras and pre-service teachers, where the two groups would come together to nurture a mentoring relationship. The maestras would mentor the PSTs as they navigated their teacher education program and entered the teaching profession. At the same time, the group of maestras used this experience to build the community they needed.

This article provides an analysis of a discussion that a group of Latine teachers engaged in during a special plática with the intent of answering the question: How do Latine teachers in the U.S. Latino South discuss current affairs and connect them to their history while referencing major themes in the film *Precious Knowledge*? For context, this plática took place after watching the documentary *Precious Knowledge* (Palos, 2011), which depicted the struggles of students of Tucson High to save the Mexican-American Studies Program in the Tucson Unified School District of Arizona. The authors chose to share this film at a teachers retreat to help the teachers learn about Latine education history in the United States and to help them consider the current cultural contexts. The section below references the theoretical framework employed within this article, followed by a review of the relevant literature. Next, we highlight the methodology we used and we conclude with implications for future research.

Literature Review

The review of literature for this article focuses on studies that have documented experiences of Latine teachers in the New Latino South. We also focus on teacher burnout, specifically as it relates to Latine teachers. We then focus on Latine teachers' experiences with racism. Finally, we discuss the role of Latine teachers in helping students feel pride in their culture and identities.

Latine Teachers in the New Latino South

In the U.S., the Latine population has dramatically grown over the last few decades (Wainer, 2004). While this is seen nationwide, this rapid increase has been noted in areas with a relatively new history of Latine settlement. Hamann and Harklau (2010) attribute the growth in these areas to Latine's search for better economic opportunities. This transition has created what is often referred to as the "The New Latino South" because this change has been observed mainly in southern states such as Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Gamez & Moreal, 2021; Rodriguez-Castro et al., 2022).

While the Latine population is growing in the southern U.S., Latines in the teaching profession continue to be underrepresented. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that 1.3% of teachers in Alabama are Latine, 1.7% in Arkansas, 3.9% in North Carolina, 3.4% in South Carolina, and 1.2% in Tennessee (2017-18). Additionally, the NCES reports that more Latine teachers taught in city schools rather than rural schools and taught in schools with high minority enrollment (Irwin et.al, 2022). For Georgia, one of the U.S. southern states in which the study took place, Latine teachers make up 2.6% of the teacher workforce (Flamini & Steed, 2022). Considering that Latine students make up 16.7% of Georgia's total population, these statistics raise concerns for the education of Latine students as research has supported that students of color academically perform better with teachers of the same race or ethnicity (Okraski & Madison, 2020; Redding, 2019).

Latine Teacher Burnout

It is not uncommon to hear that teachers in the U.S. are overwhelmed or 'burnt out'. Teachers of color, specifically Latine teachers, experience burnout due to the many responsibilities they have (Monzo & Rueda, 2001). Latine teachers take on roles beyond teaching, including being cultural brokers (Colomer, 2014; Colomer & Harklau, 2009; Flores, 2017; Okraski & Madison, 2020). A cultural broker is an individual who makes efforts to improve communication and reduce conflict with those of different cultures (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001). For the Latine teacher, this role often includes language translation and interpretation for their Latine students and their families, as well as for other school personnel (Colomer, 2010; Colomer & Harklau, 2009; Okrakasi & Madison, 2020; Monreal, 2022; Rodriguez-Castro et al., 2022). As a result, this role also entails serving as an advocate for Latine students and their families. This is because Latine students and caregivers will often become comfortable enough to reach out to the Latine teacher with issues beyond education (Rodriguez et al., 2020). This is typically seen more with non-U.S. citizen Latine families, as their immigrant status often

poses specific issues that lead them to seek the help of an advocate (Colomer & Harklau, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Castro et al., 2022).

Latine teachers' burnout from taking on additional roles not related to their formal teaching assignments is noted more in southern and/or rural areas because resources for Latine youth and their families are minimal (Monreal, 2022; Okraskii & Madison, 2020). This can be seen within the school system as Latine teachers often report a lack of support from community boards, colleagues, and mentors (Ocasio, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2020). As Latine teachers report a lack of recognition and/or fair compensation for their extra efforts (Colomer, 2014; Monreal, 2022), they often feel increased isolation and a decreased sense of belonging within their school (Arce, 2004; Okraski & Madison, 2020; Peguero, 2018; Rodriguez, 2017). Nevertheless, Latine teachers continue to take on these additional roles due to similar experiences they had during their youth or to simply combat the social injustices the population experiences (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012).

Latine Teachers' Experiences with Racism

Latine individuals experience a myriad of social injustices. Latine teachers often report degrading social interactions with non-Latine faculty in schools, such as being stereotyped as incompetent teachers or not a teacher at all (Colomer, 2019; Griffin, 2018). Latine teachers also report that a strong support system outside of work is needed to withstand the discriminatory environment in their school (Monreal, 2022). On a similar note, Colomer (2019) found that many Latine teachers that were silenced by these interactions have gone as far as to disguise Latine identity markers, such as their names. While not all will do this, it does shed a light on how these interactions negatively impact Latine teachers' personal and professional identities.

Along with personal encounters with racism and discrimination, Latine teachers also observe this happening between faculty and students. Latine teachers report harmful expectations for Latine students to quickly grasp English or else they are deemed incompetent by non-Latine teachers and shunned by peers (Colomer & Harklau, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2020). In a reflection, one Latine teacher shared often hearing faculty evaluate Latine students as "at-risk" or "low" simply based on their race, language, or socioeconomic status (Souto-Manning, 2006). Okraski and Madison (2020) also found that Latine teachers report that the racialization of Spanish, the negative portrayal of immigrants, and the racial divide between students of different cultures are common struggles in the school system. This lack of regard for the unique experiences of Latine students contributes to the inequality of not having their educational and cultural needs addressed. As previous research notes, these negative interactions heavily impact student identity and can lead to internalized oppression and a negative perception of self (Arce, 2004).

Chicana Latina Feminist Theory

We were guided by Anzaldúa in conceptualizing the theory needed to make sense of this work. As two Latina scholars, we have seen how the voices of Latine individuals are often ignored or silenced. As such, Anzaldúa's theories resonate with us. This work is personal, and we, ourselves, as part of the research process and not outside of it. As she stated, "Necesitamos teorías [We need theories] that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries-new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods" (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. 89). Responding to this call, this study is grounded in Chicana Latina feminist theory which posits that new knowledge needs to be sought in transitional spaces (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). In its core, Chicana Latina feminist theory is anticolonial/decolonial (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s during the Chicano and Latino civil rights movements, women of color used these movements to begin challenging the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative discourse that marginalized their experiences. This theory is grounded in the belief that Chicana and Latina women face unique challenges due to their intersectional identities and must develop their own strategies for resistance and liberation. Additionally, Chicana Latina feminist theory emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage, history, and community in shaping women's identities and experiences.

Relative to educators and students of color, Cervantes-Soon (2018) claims that an anticolonial Xicana feminist framework is crucial for the education of bilingual teachers to fight against growing neoliberal ideologies and to prevent further marginalization, particularly in places that have recently experienced a rapid increase in the Latine population. Therefore, using a Chicana Latina feminist approach aids the examination of the continuing colonial and imperialist legacies in the US (Cervantes-Soon, 2018). Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) claim that, especially in the field of education, Chicana/Latina scholars use cultural intuition, in the form of *pláticas* to push boundaries. Santos and Crowe Morey (2013) extend this idea by claiming that women's stories of personal experience contain potentially larger political meanings that give not only voice but space to those who have historically been silenced. In essence, the sharing of one's life story is one way to document experiences and challenges for future generations.

In addition, Chicana Latina feminist theories disrupt Western colonial assumptions about research. Supporting this claim, Cervantes-Soon (2018) adds that,

Xicana feminist scholarship is rooted in its ability to recognize, expose, and respond to the colonial histories that we embody, and because it demands that we give serious considerations to how coloniality shapes our subjectivities, understandings, and positionality in the world. (P. 866)

Like Cervantes-Soon (2018), Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) note that Chicana

Latina methodologies are more than just research in that they embody who we are.

Methods

In the following section, we share information regarding participants, where the plática took place, our use of pláticas as a data collection tool, how we analyzed the testimonios that were collected, and an overview of testimonios. The plática that is the focus of this article took place after presentation of the documentary *Precious Knowledge* (Palos, 2011) as part of an all-day retreat with Latine teachers focused on building community. The retreat took place on a university campus one Saturday. Although the retreat was designed for Latine teachers, Latine pre-service teachers also joined to watch the documentary.

Testimonios

To understand how testimonios can be considered a methodological tool by which knowledge is produced for research purposes, emphasis should be placed on the fact that testimonios fall under the category of oral history. The recording of voices, especially of those who have historically not been well-represented, helps to shed light on the experiences of people whose voices are often suppressed. Although there is no one single definition of testimonios, Pérez Huber (2009) describes how testimonios have been used by Women of Color scholars to “document and/or theorize their own experiences of struggle, survival, and resistance, as well as that of others” (p. 644). The commonalities and experiences that are found and shared through testimonios help to make the voices of those sharing, as well as their minds and bodies, sources of legitimate knowledge and evidence of truths experienced by the speakers (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012).

When considering the use of testimonios, it should be noted that language can be mistranslated and meaning can get lost from culturally-specific terms of endearment or from direct translations of knowledge. Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) suggest that this happens because, “nuances get lost, risking the reproduction of language marginalization” (p. 117). Therefore, it is important to understand the nuances that languages hold and to react accordingly, ensuring to keep as much meaning as was intended.

One should also keep in mind an important characteristic of the testimonio: its relation to memory. While the retelling of a memory could be considered as untruthful because of the shifts as time passes, retelling memory allows for the experiences of individuals to be highlighted and accented with certain key ideas. This provides an avenue by which those ideas can be analyzed to break down structural marginalizations, challenge institutionalized oppression, and provide ideals of hope and liberation (Reyes & Curry Rodrigues, 2012).

In order to have access to those testimonios, we developed a space to have a plática. Guajardo and Guajardo (2013) define “plática” as “an expressive cultural form shaped by listening, inquiry, storytelling, and story making that is akin to a nuanced multi-dimensional conversation” (p. 160). According to Guajardo and Guajardo (2013), pláticas are an appropriate tool because they allow those involved to think critically, ask the right questions, and follow an argument. These authors also claim that pláticas are crucial for understanding the experiences that Latine people have, and they reiterate that pláticas, as an inquiry for data collection, require a level of trust, relationship building, and the honoring of community members’ stories. All of that we had already built.

Participants

The participants are five novice Latine in-service teachers who graduated from the same teacher preparation program. All participants are females between 20 and 25 years old. The table below outlines the participants' numbers of years teaching, their reported ethnic/national background, and their reported primary language. Although five teachers participated in this plática, only four of the teachers shared their thoughts during the discussion.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Years Teaching	Background/ Ethnicity	Primary Language
Mariela	Second-year Teacher	Mexican	Spanish
Ana	First-year Teacher	Mexican	Spanish
Valeria	Second-year Teacher	Cuban	English
Lucia	Second-year Teacher	Mexican	Spanish
Andrea	First-Year Teacher	Mexican	Spanish

Setting

The data collection took place at a large university in the New Latino South, as part of a day-long retreat where teachers learned about building community, engaged in critical discussions, and watched the documentary *Precious Knowledge*. This documentary focuses on the banning of Mexican American Studies in the Tucson Unified School District. The teachers who engaged in this plática knew one another from being a part of a student group when they were students and had engaged in several pláticas both as students and as teachers. The teachers and researchers all had strong relationships and a foundation of trust as a result in engaging in previous pláticas. This particular plática took place following the viewing of the documentary. In addition to the five teachers, there were also two researchers, and four Latine PSTs that participated in the plática.

Data Collection and Analysis

The plática was audio recorded and transcribed. In addition to that, field notes were taken by both researchers. Notes and transcriptions were uploaded to Dedoose, an online qualitative software. We made sure to read each data source and engaged in open, independent coding. After an initial round of open coding, we engaged in a second round of collaborative focused coding that targeted the challenges and successes experienced by the teachers. Similar to the methods used by Sosa-Provencio et al. (2019), we were intentional in coding large, uninterrupted text in order to stay true to participant testimonios and to ensure their voices were included. After the coding was completed, we used an iterative process of collapsing and combining codes to form categories that informed our findings.

Findings

Following the screening of the documentary, there was a moment of silence. Teachers needed time to process what they had just seen, connecting the film to what they had experienced as teachers and sometimes as students. They were feeling the pain and frustration that came from realizing that this is an old fight that should be over but still requires their attention. They were making the connections between past and present, thinking about their own experiences with racism. They were feeling frustrated and even exhausted. At that moment, one of them broke the silence, “That’s where my anger comes from,” said Manuela.

All of the teachers shared stories about the racism they and their Latine students experienced: Stories about how racism made it hard for them to do what they had set out to do when they started their careers as teachers, which was to serve their communities and be the best teachers they could be. They shared their

frustrations with issues that they understood to have existed longer than they imagined and appeared difficult to solve. They recognized the challenge of being Latine teachers in the New Latino South, which still clings to white supremacy, and what that looks like for this particular population.

Findings relate to how Latine teachers expressed feelings of frustration. They shared being frustrated due to a wide range of issues they saw as problematic in schools. One of those issues was the everyday racism they experienced and the realization that racism has a long history in schooling. They were also disheartened to find the connections and similarities between what is happening now in the US and what has historically happened in terms of racism and white supremacy. In the following sections we will review these themes and what Latine teachers expressed about them in connecting to the documentary and their lives as teachers.

Connecting Past and Present

During the plática, teachers were able to discuss the connections they saw between the current events related to movement to remove the perceived teaching of critical race theory (CRT) in schools and past events that have impacted Latines in education. The plática created a space where they could consider the events that were described in the film and think about the parallels between those events and current challenges experienced by Latine teachers.

One of the strongest connections that the teachers and pre-service teachers made was relating the attempts to ban from schools CRT, a lens to understand how race shapes the world around us, to the banning of ethnic studies in Tucson schools in the film. The state in which these teachers reside was one of many in the New Latino South to move towards banning the teaching of “divisive concepts,” CRT being one of them (Hill, 2021; Schwartz, 2021; Bernstein, 2022). One of the teachers shared her experiences with parents attending her district’s board meetings:

Yeah so what, basically parents were mad. They were like, “Oh this critical race theory you’re going to teach our kids.” Literally the same redirect, “you’re going to teach our kids to hate America, to be this and that, to be racist towards white people” and blah blah blah. And it was like, “No? What? We’re just bringing in other perspectives again like DEI and CRT.” They weren’t technically, like, they weren’t exactly the same thing. They were two separate things, but somebody saw on Fox News, “Oh CRT is bad for white people” and so the parents lost their minds. They were, like, at school board meetings acting like that, like, screaming at each other. (Valeria)

Teachers saw the parallels and discussed how the same fight continues with the goal of maintaining white supremacy at the center of the curriculum.

It just seems [inaudible] like it’s one perspective over and over and over and all of those protests... and all those quotes and everything that they were

saying... all, that all happened last summer. It all happened last summer [inaudible] and that [documentary] was what? 12, 13 years ago?" (Alejandra)

Although the connections from past events to current events was not a topic in their teacher education program, it was something that the teachers often discussed in our regular plática meetings. As discouraging as current events related to book banning and the banning of the perceived teaching of CRT in schools, teachers highlighted what educators did in Tucson, like mobilizing the whole community, being present in the media, participating in board meetings, inviting politicians to their classrooms to see their work, and in general, not giving up, and what that could mean for them today.

Experiences with Racism

As the teachers reflected on the events that took place during the documentary, they were also able to reflect on their personal experiences with racism in schools. Our analysis uncovered that racism was one of the most prominent themes in the conversation, and that this led to frustration. Teachers expressed blatant instances in school districts that left them discouraged. These experiences included being confronted with racism even before being hired as a teacher. Manuela shared her experience and how she felt about it:

But it's so hard because the hiring process in many counties is so.... It's not the best; it's very racist. The hiring process is racist, where, we would love to see other teachers like us so they can represent the kids, but they're not being hired because they're not seen as qualifying. They'll literally say, "Oh this teacher needs another year before she can come in and be a full teacher."

Another teacher, Valeria, commented about not being considered for a school whose population was majority white but was told that a school with primarily Latine students may have a position for her. She shared that, during a job fair, teachers from that predominantly white school, which at the moment had multiple openings, told her, "I don't think you want to really be here. This [the school with a large Latine population] is a new place. You know, the demographic you might be looking for...." These Latine teachers felt pushed away and their skills were either not understood or dismissed.

Teachers on more than one occasion connected the racism they and Latine children experienced to the lack of cultural competence and empathy others demonstrated in their school. Lucia mentioned how teachers who do not have the same background as children of color do not always "put themselves in their shoes or try to listen from their perspective (...) because they don't want to hear it." This led teachers to feel frustration and despair. The teachers shared frustration in seeing incidents of racism even during their student teaching. Manuela, for example, shared how she was placed in a school where she was not viewed as a

teacher and treated more like a child. She shared that her connection to the students was the only positive experience in her student teaching. This frustration was exacerbated for teachers when they knew that they would be evaluated just like their white peers.

Teachers also discussed confronting colleagues when they adopted colorblind ideologies, assuming that “not seeing color” was equal to being just to people of color; but they felt uneasy doing so. Mariela expressed this difficulty, “It’s so hard, though, because we’re so young and you don’t want to step on anyone’s toes or have people talk about you.” In confronting these instances of racism, teachers realized that, by speaking up, they were calling attention to themselves and they feared what others would say. Many times, it seemed like leaving those conversations was the safest way to demonstrate dissent; but, such tactics left the teachers feeling as if they could have done more.

Mariela also shared her own experiences with racist policies that have excluded undocumented students from institutions of higher education in the state of Georgia. She mentioned, “Because, as undocumented students are banned from colleges, and if a college accepts you, like [institution], you do have to pay international fees...” As Mariela mentioned, through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, undocumented students are indeed banned from select higher education institutions in some New Latino South States and they have to pay higher fees in those institutions they can attend. In addition, politicians have put into place racist policies that seek to exclude DACA recipients from receiving an education at top institutions in Georgia (University System of Georgia Board of Regents Policy 4.16). Mariela connected this situation to how high school students in Precious Knowledge were prevented from getting an empowering education. Our discussion also moved to the types of education their own students can have access to, the unfounded critiques of CRT, and the hypocrisy demonstrated with other relevant issues like schools’ responses to the Covid-19 crisis.

The teachers expressed being disheartened about parents mobilizing against the perceived teaching of CRT and what that meant for their classrooms and students. They compared it with the school responses to Covid-19 and how such actions affected children of color:

It’s just like they said, you can’t. It’s all so political... so politicized. Still, now, how does the county where we work go, “Ok let’s open up the schools” without any type of actual guidelines where kids of color are being directly affected, who is the majority of deaths right now. (Laura)

Laura’s reference to the majority of deaths and who was impacted was made in relation to the greater impact that Covid-19 had on communities of color and how these deaths also impacted the children in these families. In addition, teachers saw the hypocrisy of some of the policies/mandates, or lack thereof, in their school districts:

Even with that, BLM [Black Lives Matter], it's just like... BLM, and then it's like the lack of public safety. Then public health-wise, when it comes to the classroom, since last year without any mask mandates." (Manuela)

Here the teacher discussed how public safety and health were important during times like BLM protests, but not when it was decided to come back to the classroom during a worldwide pandemic when cases were not decreasing. Public safety was only important as a tool to respond *negatively* to BLM, but public safety was not as important during the Covid-19 crisis. Not only was the disconnect frustrating, but the teachers also felt that they and their communities were always at a disadvantage.

Challenging White Supremacy

The plática that took place after watching the documentary also allowed the teachers and pre-service teachers an opportunity to engage in honest conversations challenging white supremacy. The teachers discussed how white parent opposition to the supposed teaching of CRT in schools was about maintaining the status quo. Manuela expressed how white people believed they were the only ones that could speak out against issues:

... and when people who are African American or Asian or Latino start speaking up against things that are wrong with society, that's like those white people, they're like, they're... what is it called? Like the things that they benefit from, the hierarchies in society, they start getting threatened and I know that bothers them. Like, seeing, like, that, "Oh, ok," people are going to start understanding, like, that they deserve different things, and it threatens them. It threatens, like, the things that they benefit from. And that's what made it like so frustrating because it's so racist.

In discussing the issue of protest against CRT (Tagami, 2022), the teachers also shared how those same groups were advocating for certain stories to be included or omitted from what is being taught in schools. The teachers shared that those groups want to paint an erroneous picture of the history that has shaped the United States. As Valeria said, "They want to, like, sugar coat what America's history is, you know? They want to say, 'Oh America [is] this or America is that,' but do you really know?"

The teachers also had discussions about how the colorblind ideology is harmful to students. As Lucia said,

I think, like, with our students it is important that they do acknowledge what color their skin is because, like I was saying, people have different experiences based on their culture so when you adopt that, "I see no color" ideology [it] is super harmful to people without – like you think it's not harmful but when you adopt that it's treating everybody the same and everybody doesn't have the same experiences.

The teachers in the discussion saw a colorblind ideology as harmful to Latine students and teachers. Additionally, the teachers shared how Black and Latine individuals do not have the option of choosing to be colorblind because it impacts them directly and it impacts their students in the same way. Lucia shared how a teacher who was a friend adopted the philosophy, “I see no color; I don’t think skin color should be shown in schools.” She shared how she had to sever ties with this colleague because of how harmful these beliefs are to students (Piñeiro, 2022).

As the teachers continued with this conversation, they shifted to considering what could be done to counter the prevalence of white supremacy in schools, especially considering their own identities as novice Latine teachers. Ana also shared how she would have liked to have more support as she transitioned from being a student to being a teacher,

It’s really lonely when you’re the only one that thinks a certain way, where you care about your students and you want more for them so they will feel represented and feel welcomed in a safe space. It’s so hard when you’re the only one. Like, yes, we can do all of it this year but we’re scared for your well-being the following year. So, it’s like if we had more of that, I think, but it’s so hard because we’re going against the system that has been in place for such a long time.

In responding to this statement, Manuela shared how important it was for them to have these conversations,

These are important conversations we want to have. If you want to go forward, you need to have— and having a safe space where you can talk about them and, you know, talking with others who’ve been through almost the same experiences, that’s important.

The Latine teachers and the pre-service teachers found that safe space in the *plática* to receive and offer the support they need as a community and to engage in a critical discussion about challenges. This particular *plática* made it clear for them that their fight is not new, but also that they are not fighting alone. It provided them with more reasons to be those teachers they dream about being in their communities, those who advocate for other Latine children.

Discussion

The time it took teachers to process the film and connect it to their lives, talking about it and expressing their pain, was also the time it took them to collectively start thinking about what to do next. This work offers Latine teachers an opportunity to share their testimonios, find each other, and form communities to change lives. These spaces are relevant and crucial for those unheard voices to be amplified and make a difference. Their voices, which are also our voices, matter. Finding spaces to share their testimonios is central to their success, which is also our success as educators, teachers, and society.

The teachers in this study had been a part of a group designed for Latine pre-service teachers but they were able to see how this Latine teacher space could serve as a sounding board to discuss issues that were important to them. The teachers in the group discussed getting together and talking through these issues with one another in order to find ways to resist marginalization, even in the context of their own classrooms. They also discussed how they could become mentors to current pre-service teachers as they navigated field experiences and course work in hostile environments.

Implications

The path forward, which we see not just as a result of this conversation but as a result of our project working with Latine teachers and pre-service teachers, is that of allowing spaces for Latine teachers' and preservice teachers' voices to flourish. We encourage others in positions of power to help create these spaces along with pre-service and in-service teachers. Sharing their knowledge, anger, and frustration through testimonios is the beginning of them creating pathways and strategizing, not just to survive but to thrive. Their survival is the success of not just other Latine teachers but the children they serve in the increasingly culturally diverse schools in the United States. In essence, these teachers are creating pathways for other Latine teachers to enter the field because students will see teachers that look like them and imagine the possibility of a future as an educator. Supporting these conversations and opening spaces for them to happen are crucial for the betterment of the future of the country in the hands of its very diverse future population.

Our findings also include implications for colleges of education working with Latine pre-service teachers. The participants in this study shared how they experienced racism during their teacher education programs. Universities and colleges must provide spaces where Latine students and other minoritized populations can come together. These spaces provide the infrastructure for students to have difficult discussions with other Latine faculty and students in order to resist the ongoing discrimination that they face (Camargo et al., 2023). Thus, future research should continue to investigate the impact communal spaces, such as pláticas, have on creating positive and caring experiences in institutions of higher education and in K12 schools.

Findings from this study indicate that colleges preparing teachers need to consider educating about colorblindness ideology and its negative consequences for people of color, including teachers and children in schools. Teacher candidates should understand why these ideologies are harmful. Colleges of education should also work on developing empathy and cultural understanding at the same time that they are recruiting Latine teachers. Developing these attributes is essential if colleges want not only to recruit, but also to retain and support, Latine teachers as they enter the field. Finally, we believe that these changes will not be accomplished

unless educational leaders are willing to take the time to understand these differences, develop more empathy, and learn to see these differences as assets.

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