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# Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research

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*This article addresses how critical race theory can inform a critical race methodology in education. The authors challenge the intercentricity of racism with other forms of subordination and exposes deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color. Although social scientists tell stories under the guise of “objective” research, these stories actually uphold deficit, racialized notions about people of color. For the authors, a critical race methodology provides a tool to “counter” deficit storytelling. Specifically, a critical race methodology offers space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color. As they describe how they compose counter-stories, the authors discuss how the stories can be used as theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tools to challenge racism, sexism, and classism and work toward social justice.*

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 . . . We are articulating new positions in the “in-between,” Borderland worlds of ethnic communities and academies . . . social issues such as race, class, and sexual difference are intertwined with the narrative and poetic elements of a text, elements in which theory is embedded. In our mestizaje theories we create new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of existing ones.

—Anzaldúa (1990, pp. xxv-xxvi)

Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1990) epigraph challenges us to develop new theories that will help us to better understand those who are at the margins of society. She also suggests that along with new theories, we need new “theorizing methods” to conduct the research that would answer the problems posed by

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these theories. Research and theory that explicitly address issues of race and racism have the potential to fill this void. In this article, we elaborate on and expand work in critical race theory to include what we call *critical race methodology*. We define critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color;<sup>1</sup> (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color.

This exercise in developing critical race methodology must begin by defining race and racism. According to James Banks (1993), Eurocentric versions of U.S. history reveal race to be a socially constructed category, created to differentiate racial groups and to show the superiority or dominance of one race over another. This definition leads to the question: Does the dominance of a racial group require a rationalizing ideology? One could argue that dominant groups try to legitimate their position through the use of an ideology (i.e., a set of beliefs that explains or justifies some actual or potential social arrangement). Because racism is the ideology that justifies the dominance of one race over another, we must ask, how do we define racism? For our purpose, Audre Lorde (1992) may have produced the most concise definition of racism as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (p. 496). Manning Marable (1992) also defined racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5). Marable's definition of racism is important because it shifts the discussion of race and racism from a Black-White discourse to one that includes multiple faces, voices, and experiences. Embedded in the Lorde and Marable definitions of racism are at least three important points: (a) One group deems itself superior to all others, (b) the group that is superior has the power to carry out the racist behavior, and (c) racism benefits the superior group while negatively affecting other racial and/or ethnic groups. These two definitions take the position that racism is about institutional power, and people of color in the United States have never possessed this form of power. These definitions of race and racism are our guides as we embark upon a discussion of critical race theory and critical race methodology.

## CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CRITICAL RACE METHODOLOGY<sup>2</sup>

To develop critical race methodology, we must define its theoretical foundation, critical race theory. Critical race theory draws from and extends a broad literature base in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies.

Mari Matsuda (1991) views critical race theory as

the work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

We extend Matsuda's definition and argue that critical race theory advances a strategy to foreground and account for the role of race and racism in education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin. Indeed, for our purpose here, critical race theory in education is a framework or set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (see Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Tierney, 1993).

Critical race theory and methodology in education have at least the following five elements that form their basic insights, perspectives, methodology, and pedagogy (see Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001, in press-a).<sup>3</sup>

*The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination.* A critical race theory in education starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic, permanent, and in the words of Margaret Russell (1992), "a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law" (pp. 762-763). Although race and racism are at the center of a critical race analysis, we also view them at their intersection with other forms of subordination such as gender and class discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993). As Robin Barnes (1990) has stated, "Critical race scholars have refused to ignore the differences between class and race as a basis for oppression . . . Critical race scholars know that class oppression alone cannot account for racial oppression" (p. 1868). A critical race methodology in education also acknowledges the intercentricity of racialized oppression—the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality.<sup>4</sup> Here, in the intersections of racial oppression, we

can use critical race methodology to search for some answers to the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical questions related to the experiences of people of color.

*The challenge to dominant ideology.* A critical race theory challenges the traditional claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Critical race scholars argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Calmore, 1992; Solórzano, 1997). A critical race methodology in education challenges White privilege, rejects notions of “neutral” research or “objective” researchers, and exposes deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

*The commitment to social justice.* A critical race theory is committed to social justice and offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). We envision a social justice research agenda that leads toward the following:

- the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty and
- the empowering of subordinated minority groups.

Critical race researchers acknowledge that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower. Likewise, a critical race methodology in education recognizes that multiple layers of oppression and discrimination are met with multiple forms of resistance.

*The centrality of experiential knowledge.* Critical race theory recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination. In fact, critical race theorists view this knowledge as a strength and draw explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, chronicles, and narratives (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Olivas, 1990). Critical race methodology in education challenges traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color. It exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of people of color and instead focuses on their racialized, gendered, and classed experiences as sources of strength (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

*The transdisciplinary perspective.* A critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both historical and contempo-

rary contexts (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia, 1995; Harris, 1994; Olivas, 1990). Critical race methodology in education uses the transdisciplinary knowledge and methodological base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, and other fields to guide research that better understands the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color.

These five themes are not new in and of themselves, but collectively, they represent a challenge to the existing modes of scholarship. Indeed, critical race theory names racist injuries and identifies their origins. In examining the origins, critical race methodology finds that racism is often well disguised in the rhetoric of shared "normative" values and "neutral" social scientific and educational principles and practices (Matsuda et al., 1993). However, when the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries are named, victims of racism can find their voice. Furthermore, those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover they are not alone in their marginality. They become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed, and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves.

## **RACISM, WHITE PRIVILEGE, AND STORYTELLING**

The use of a master narrative to represent a group is bound to provide a very narrow depiction of what it means to be Mexican-American, African-American, White, and so on . . . A master narrative essentializes and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group's cultural life . . . A monovocal account will engender not only stereotyping but also curricular choices that result in representations in which fellow members of a group represented cannot recognize themselves. (Montecinos, 1995, pp. 293-294)

We concur with Carmen Montecinos (1995) and assert that the ideology of racism creates, maintains, and justifies the use of a "master narrative" in storytelling. It is within the context of racism that "monovocal" stories about the low educational achievement and attainment of students of color are told. Unacknowledged White privilege helps maintain racism's stories. As such, we are defining White privilege as a system of opportunities and benefits conferred upon people simply because they are White (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Indeed, Whiteness is a category of privilege. Beverly Tatum (1997) writes about the underresearched issue of White privilege as she reminds her readers that "despite the current rhetoric about affirmative action and 'reverse discrimination,' every social indicator, from salary to life expectancy, reveals the advantages of being White" (p. 8). White privilege is often invisible—it is the norm (McIntosh, 1989). Tatum continues, "In very concrete terms, it [White privilege] means if a person of color is the victim of housing discrimination, the apartment that would otherwise have been rented to that person of color is still available for a White person" (p. 9). So while the person

of color is still stressed with finding adequate housing, the White person is “knowingly or unknowingly, the beneficiary of racism, a system of advantage based on race” (Tatum, 1997, p. 9).

Because “majoritarian” stories generate from a legacy of racial privilege, they are stories in which racial privilege seems “natural.” Indeed, White privilege is often expressed through majoritarian stories; through the “bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462). However, majoritarian stories are not just stories of racial privilege, they are also stories of gender, class, and other forms of privilege. As such, they are stories that carry layers of assumptions that persons in positions of racialized privilege bring with them to discussions of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination. In other words, a majoritarian story is one that privileges Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference.

People of color often buy into and even tell majoritarian stories. Ironically, although Whites most often tell majoritarian stories, people of color can also tell them.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, misogynistic stories are often told by men but can also be told by women. As an example of minority majoritarian storytelling, African American scholar Thomas Sowell (1981) claimed that “the goals and values of Mexican Americans have never centered on education” (p. 266) and that many Mexican Americans find the process of education “distasteful” (p. 267). Another example can be found with a Latino, Lauro Cavazos, who as United States Secretary of Education, stated that Latino parents deserve much of the blame for the high dropout rate among their children because “Hispanics have always valued education . . . but somewhere along the line we’ve lost that. I really believe that, today, there is not that emphasis” (Snider, 1990, p. 1). Indeed, Linda Chavez (1992), who writes about the necessities of cultural and linguistic assimilation, and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, whose writings demonstrate his stance against the civil rights of people of color and of women, are two other examples of minority majoritarian storytellers (see Higginbotham, 1992). Whether told by people of color or Whites, majoritarian stories are not often questioned because people do not see them as stories but as “natural” parts of everyday life.

Whether we refer to them as monovocals, master narratives, standard stories, or majoritarian stories, it is important to recognize the power of White privilege in constructing stories about race. For example, as Lisa Ikemoto (1997) challenges the medical profession for forcing women of color to undergo procedures during childbirth without their consent, she reveals the often-unquestioned power of majoritarian stories.

The act of subordinating occurs first in the mind of those with authority. It is the implicit assumption that women of color, particularly those who live in poverty,

are not fit for motherhood. This assumption is rooted in the experience of domination and in the construction of stories—negative stereotypes—about the “Others” to justify the resulting privileged status. (p. 140)

She further explains how this standard blinds and silences the racial discourse through majoritarian storytelling as follows:

The standard legal story does not expressly speak to race and class. By failing to look to the experience of women who have been raced and impoverished, we let the standard story blind and silence us. The de facto standard then used to identify, prioritize, and address subordination is the experience of White middle class women. This excludes and diminishes women of color, particularly those who live in poverty. (Ikemoto, 1997, p. 136)

A majoritarian story distorts and silences the experiences of people of color. Using “standard formulae,” majoritarian methods purport to be neutral and objective yet implicitly make assumptions according to negative stereotypes about people of color (Ikemoto, 1997). For example, when White middle-class people fall victim to violence in their own neighborhoods and their schools, the shock comes from the standard story: “How could this happen? This is a good neighborhood” or “We never thought this could happen here. This is a good school.” The standard story implies that violent crimes such as these are unheard of in White middle-class communities. At the same time, the standard story infers that communities of color and working-class communities may be more accustomed to violence. The silence within statements about “good neighborhoods” and “good schools” indicates racialized and classed dimensions underlying “standard” understandings of these communities and schools. Within the silence, one may note negative stereotypes reinforcing images of “bad neighborhoods” and “bad schools.” The unspoken discourse is that White communities are “good” communities that house “good” schools, and these “good” places do not experience such tragedies. “Other” communities, “colored” communities, or those “bad” communities are the ones who experience such events.

The majoritarian story tells us that darker skin and poverty correlate with bad neighborhoods and bad schools. It informs us that limited or Spanish-accented English and Spanish surnames equal bad schools and poor academic performance. It also reminds us that people who may not have the legal documents to “belong” in the United States may be identified by their skin color, hair texture, eye shape, accent, and/or surname. Standard, majoritarian methodology relies on stock stereotypes that covertly and overtly link people of color, women of color, and poverty with “bad,” while emphasizing that White, middle- to upper-class people embody all that is “good.” Morally, the silence within which assumptions are made about good versus bad describes people of color and working-class people as less intelligent and irresponsible while depicting White middle-class and upper-class people as just the opposite.



## RACISM AND DEFICIT SOCIAL SCIENCE STORYTELLING

Whether explicitly or implicitly, social science theoretical models explaining educational inequality support majoritarian stories. We draw on the work of Valencia and Solórzano (1997) to demonstrate the consistent language of biological and cultural deficit in these majoritarian stories. For example, Valencia and Solórzano outline biological deficiency models, which assume that students of color lack the biological traits necessary for success within the educational system. Using such models, scholars proclaim Mexicans, Blacks, and Native Americans to be biologically deficient compared with Whites. For instance, a majoritarian story told by Lewis Terman in 1916 claimed

high grade or border-line deficiency . . . is very, very common among Spanish-Indian and Mexican families of the Southwest and also among Negroes. Their dullness appears to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stocks from which they come . . . Children of this group should be segregated into separate classes . . . They cannot master abstractions but they can often be made efficient workers . . . There is no possibility at the present of convincing society that they should be allowed to reproduce, although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusually prolific breeding. (pp. 91-92)

In 1994, 78 years later, the debate over *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) demonstrates that some scholars continue to draw upon the beliefs of eugenicists such as Terman (1916) to tell majoritarian stories about the educational failure of students of color. Arguing over the merits of the Standardized Aptitude Test, social scientists and educators resurrected biological deficiency models to claim that Chicana/Chicano, Latina/Latino, and Black children do not have the mental capacity of their White peers (Dunn, 1987; Jensen, 1969).

Within deficiency models, however, biological explanations for inequity have not been as pervasive as cultural explanations (Coleman et al., 1966; Lewis, 1968). Indeed, what some scholars originally attributed to the biology and genetics of students of color were reclassified and described as cultural deficits. For example, a majoritarian cultural deficit story told by Cecilia Heller (1966) states the following:

The kind of socialization that Mexican American children generally receive at home is not conducive to the development of the capacities needed for advancement in a dynamic industrialized society. This type of upbringing creates stumbling blocks to future advancement by stressing values that hinder mobility—family ties, honor, masculinity, and living in the present—and by neglecting the values that are conducive to it—achievement, independence, and deferred gratification. (p. 34)

Indeed, culture continues to be cited as the leading cause of the low socioeconomic status and educational failure of students of color. For instance, John Ogbu's (1990) majoritarian story argues, "Involuntary minorities [Blacks, Chicanas/Chicanos, and Native Americans] have not developed a widespread effort optimism or a strong cultural ethic of hard work and perseverance in the pursuit of education" (p. 53). A more recent example of cultural deficit theorizing (i.e., majoritarian storytelling) comes from an African American linguistics professor, John McWhorter. In a *Los Angeles Times* article, McWhorter claims that

the sad and simple fact is that while there are some excellent Black students . . . on average, Black students do not try as hard as other students. The reason they do not try as hard is not because they are inherently lazy, nor is it because they are stupid . . . these students belong to a culture infected with an anti-intellectual strain, which subtly but decisively teaches them from birth not to embrace school-work too whole-heartedly. (George, 2000, p. E3)

Currently, many teacher education programs draw on majoritarian stories to explain educational inequity through a cultural deficit model and thereby pass on beliefs that students of color are culturally deprived (Kretovics & Nussel, 1994; Persell, 1977).

The main solution for the socioacademic failure offered by cultural deficit majoritarian storytellers is cultural assimilation. Specifically, they argue that students of color should assimilate to the dominant White middle-class culture to succeed in school and in life (Banfield, 1970; Bernstein, 1977; Schwartz, 1971). Methods by which this cultural assimilation may take place include learning English at the expense of losing Spanish and becoming an individual "American" success story by loosening or cutting family and community ties. This cultural assimilation solution becomes a major part of the curriculum in teacher education programs and is thereby brought to the schools in communities of color. Therefore, according to cultural deficit storytelling, a successful student of color is an assimilated student of color. Given the current rhetoric of "at-risk" and the resurrection of terms such as *disadvantaged*, it is clear that just as insidiously as racism has changed forms, so has the cultural deficit terminology used by social scientists (Solórzano, 1998; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

Some scholars critique our focus on race and racism by telling stories that forefront class-based or gender-based theories and discuss racialization as one of many unfortunate by-products of capitalism. In response, we argue that it is crucial to focus on the intersections of oppression because storytelling is racialized, gendered, and classed and these stories affect racialized, gendered, and classed communities. This means that when examining the experiences of students of color, a class-based theory or even a class-gender theory is insufficient. Methodologies that dismiss or decenter racism and its

intersections with other forms of subordination omit and distort the experiences of those whose lives are daily affected by racism—those “at the bottom of society’s well” (Bell, 1992, p. vi). In other words, downplaying the intercentricity of race and racism in the discourse helps tell majoritarian stories about the insignificance of race and the notion that racism is something in the past. Such stories are sometimes found in “critical” social science literature.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, these stories can actually serve to reinforce the majoritarian story.

### **STORYTELLING RESISTANCE: THE COUNTER-STORY**

We define the counter-story as a method of telling the stories<sup>7</sup> of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform.<sup>8</sup> Yet, counter-stories need not be created only as a direct response to majoritarian stories. As Ikemoto (1997) reminds us, “By responding only to the standard story, we let it dominate the discourse” (p. 136). Indeed, within the histories and lives of people of color, there are numerous unheard counter-stories. Storytelling and counter-storytelling these experiences can help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance.

#### **Types of Counter-Narratives and/or Stories**

Storytelling has a rich and continuing tradition in African American (see Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996; Berkeley Art Center, 1982; Lawrence, 1992), Chicana/Chicano (see Delgado, 1989, 1995a, 1996; Olivas, 1990; Paredes, 1977), and Native American (see Deloria, 1969; R. Williams, 1997) communities. Richard Delgado (1989) reminds us that “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (p. 2436). Critical race scholars continue in this tradition and have practiced counter-storytelling in at least three general forms.<sup>9</sup>

#### ***Personal Stories or Narratives***

Personal stories or narratives recount an individual’s experiences with various forms of racism and sexism. Often, these personal counter-stories are autobiographical reflections of the author, juxtaposed with their critical race analysis of legal cases and within the context of a larger sociopolitical critique.

The work of Patricia Williams (1991), Margaret Montoya (1994), and Leslie Espinoza (1990) illustrates personal counter-storytelling.

### *Other People's Stories or Narratives*

A narrative that tells another person's story can reveal experiences with and responses to racism and sexism as told in a third person voice. This type of counter-narrative usually offers biographical analysis of the experiences of a person of color, again in relation to U.S. institutions and in a sociohistorical context. Work by Lawrence and Matsuda (1997) as well as Lilia Fernández's (2002 [this issue]) story of Pablo offer examples of telling other people's counter-stories.

### *Composite Stories or Narratives*

Composite stories and narratives draw on various forms of "data" to recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of people of color. Such counter-stories may offer both biographical and autobiographical analyses because the authors create composite characters and place them in social, historical, and political situations to discuss racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination. The work of Bell (1987, 1992, 1996), Delgado (1995a, 1995b, 1996), Solórzano and Yosso (2000, 2001, in press-a, in press-b), Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001), and Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) exemplify composite counter-narratives.

### **Creating Counter-Stories**

To create our counter-stories, we begin by finding and unearthing sources of data. To accomplish this task, we borrow from the works of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990) use a concept called *theoretical sensitivity* and refer to it as

a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. One can come to the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending upon previous reading and experience with or relevant to the data. It can also be developed further during the research process. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't. (pp. 41-42)

Delgado Bernal's (1998) notion of "cultural intuition" differs from theoretical sensitivity in that it "extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of par-

ticipants' engaging in the analysis of data" (pp. 563-564). She further explains as follows:

A Chicana researcher's cultural intuition is achieved and can be nurtured through our personal experiences (which are influenced by ancestral wisdom, community memory, and intuition), the literature on and about Chicanas, our professional experiences, and the analytical process we engage in when we are in a central position of our research and our analysis. Thus, cultural intuition is a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic. (pp. 567-568)

Using Strauss and Corbin's theoretical sensitivity (1990) and Delgado Bernal's cultural intuition (1998), we created counter-stories from (a) the data gathered from the research process itself, (b) the existing literature on the topic(s), (c) our own professional experiences, and (d) our own personal experiences. For example, in one counter-story we created, the first form of data came from primary sources, namely, focus groups and individual interviews we conducted with Chicana and Chicano undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty (see Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). We searched and sifted through these data for examples of the concepts we were seeking to illuminate (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We used the critical lenses of race, gender, and class and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty to examine the concepts of self-doubt, survivor guilt, impostor syndrome, and invisibility.

Next, we looked to other sources for secondary data analysis related to these concepts in the social sciences, humanities, and legal literature. For the article previously mentioned, we decided to focus on a specific set of manuscripts we had recently read on the theme of women of color and resistance in the academy (see Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In sifting through this literature, we began to draw connections with previous readings and the relevant focus group and/or individual interview data. Just as in the interview analysis, we listened to the voices of these women as we read and discussed the articles. We often heard varying emotions, even in traditional academic style texts. For us, literary analysis from poetry and short story segments helped tap into these emotions and challenged us to look more deeply into the humanities and social sciences to find these pained yet triumphant voices of experience. Finally, we added our own professional and personal experiences related to the concepts and ideas. Here, we not only shared our own stories and reflections but also drew on the multiple voices of family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances.

Once these various sources of data were compiled, examined, and analyzed, we created composite characters who helped us tell a story. We attempted to get the characters to engage in a real and critical dialogue about our findings from the interviews, literature, and experiences. This dialogue

emerged between the characters much like our own discussions emerged—through sharing, listening, challenging, and reflecting. As the dialogue began to emerge between the characters, we started to insert the various forms of related data from fields such as literature, art, music, theatre, film, social sciences, and the law.

As an example, we offer the following excerpt from the previously mentioned article (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Our characters are Professor Leticia Garcia, an untenured sociology professor at a western university, and Esperanza Gonzalez, a 3rd-year graduate student at the same university in the education department. For a moment, we ask you to suspend judgment. We find these two women engaged in dialogue. We begin with Leticia's comments.

"Olivia Espin (1993) talks about silence being a mode of self preservation. And heaven knows, we need to preserve ourselves. Between 1980 and 1990, all of the graduate schools in the U.S. combined produced only 751 Chicana doctorates in all fields and they represented only 0.7% of all female doctorates (Solórzano, 1994, 1995). Given these facts, I think that both strategic silence and action are strategies we should not overlook."

Esperanza pressed on, "You're right, but there comes a time when I can no longer stay silent."

As I listened to her pained comments, I asked, "Have you read Audre Lorde's (1978) 'Litany of Survival'? She is actually responding to you through poetry. She writes:

*'and when we speak we are afraid/  
our words will not be heard/  
nor welcomed/  
but when we are silent/  
we are still afraid/  
So it is better to speak/  
remembering/  
we were never meant to survive.'*" (pp. 31-32)

Esperanza put her head in her hands, took in a deep breath, and sighed. "She says it exactly. Those contradictory feelings we have all bundled up inside. So when we do speak out, people often do not understand the depth of emotion welling up in our throats. And if we show any emotion it makes it that much easier to write us off as 'supersensitive,' or 'out of control.' It's exactly like Lorde writes, afraid to speak and afraid to stay silent." Esperanza paused to take a bite of her carrot muffin before she continued, "In my classes, because I didn't have a strong grasp of the many languages of the institution, the challenges I raised against the liberal ideas of social justice that ignore Chicanas/os fell on deaf ears. So at that point, I felt that a silent revolution was better than a clamoring battle cry quickly stifled."

I smirked at the image of myself in a faculty meeting dressed in a suit of armor with a sword, thwarting off blows from my colleagues as if in the midst of a battle. "Often it's hard to know which strategy is most appropriate in which context. Choosing our battles is not easy, but our energies are limited," I said.

"Too bad ignorance isn't!" Esperanza shot back. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, pp. 482-483)

This excerpt of a counter-story demonstrates how we create dialogue that critically illuminates concepts, ideas, and experiences while it tries to use the elements of critical race theory. We hear Esperanza as she expresses her concerns about her experiences as a Chicana being silenced in the classroom. We also listen to Leticia talking about maintaining strategic silence and developing strategies of resistance.

We believe counter-stories serve at least four functions as follows: (a) They can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice, (b) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems, (c) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position, and (d) they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone.

Counter-storytelling is different from fictional storytelling. We are not developing imaginary characters that engage in fictional scenarios. Instead, the "composite" characters we develop are grounded in real-life experiences and actual empirical data and are contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction.

## DISCUSSION

Most of our research asserts that U.S. educational institutions marginalize people of color. Often, educational marginalization is justified through research that decenters and even dismisses communities of color—through majoritarian storytelling. We continually ask, "Whose stories are privileged in educational contexts and whose stories are distorted and silenced?" U.S. history reveals that White upper-class and middle-class stories are privileged, whereas the stories of people of color are distorted and silenced. We further ask, "What are the experiences and responses of those whose stories are often distorted and silenced?" In documenting the voices of people of color, our work tells their stories.

Critical race methodology in education offers a way to understand the experiences of people of color along the educational pipeline (see Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). Such a methodology generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced, and disempowered (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Critical race theory challenges traditional methodologies because it requires us to develop "theories of social transformation wherein knowledge is generated specifically for the purpose of addressing and ameliorating conditions of oppression, poverty, or deprivation" (Lincoln, 1993, p. 33). Critical race methodology in education focuses research on

how students of color experience and respond to the U.S. educational system. From developing research questions to collecting, analyzing, and presenting data, critical race methodology centers on students of color.

Using critical race methodology confirms that we must look to experiences with and responses to racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism in and out of schools as valid, appropriate, and necessary forms of data. Critical race methodology contextualizes student-of-color experiences in the past, present, and future. It strategically uses multiple methods, often unconventional and creative, to draw on the knowledge of people of color who are traditionally excluded as an official part of the academy. Critical race methodology in education challenges biological and cultural deficit stories through counter-storytelling, oral traditions, historiographies, *corridos*, poetry, films, *actos*, or by other means.

Critical race scholarship concurs with Calmore (1997), noting that what is noticeably missing from the discussion of race is a substantive discussion of racism. We further this claim to assert that substantive discussions of racism are missing from critical discourse in education. We believe critical race methodology can move us toward these discussions. As we work from our own positions in the margins of society, we hold on to the belief that the margin can be “more than a site of deprivation . . . it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance” (hooks, 1990, p. 149). As Anzaldúa (1990) explains:

Theory, then, is a set of knowledges. Some of these knowledges have been kept from us—entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow whitemen and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space. (p. xxv)

We argue that critical race methodology, with its counter-stories and even poetic modes of expression, articulates a response to Anzaldúa’s (1990) challenge that “if we have been gagged and disempowered by theories, we can also be loosened and empowered by theories” (p. xxvi). Our response draws on the strengths of communities of color. If methodologies have been used to silence and marginalize people of color, then methodologies can also give voice and turn the margins into places of transformative resistance (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, in press-a). We know that many would discount the histories, experiences, and lives of people of color through majoritarian stories. Revealing the deficit discourse in majoritarian stories reveals White privilege, and this often is perceived as a threat to those who benefit from racism. However, as a strategy of survival and a means of resistance, we will continue to work to tell the counter-stories of those “at the bottom of society’s well” (Bell, 1992, p. v). We are deeply grateful for those who have shared their counter-stories with us and who continue to struggle, survive, and thrive in the intersections of racial oppression.



## NOTES

1. For this study, the terms *students*, *people*, *persons*, and *communities of color* refer to those persons of African American, Chicana/Chicano, Latina/Latino, Asian American, and Native American ancestry. It should be noted that each of these terms has a political dimension that this article does not discuss.

2. According to Sandra Harding (1987), a research method is a technique for gathering evidence such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, ethnographies, and surveys. On the other hand, research methodology is "a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" (p. 3). We define methods as the specific techniques used in the research process, such as data gathering and analysis. Whether we use quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of methods depends on which techniques of data gathering and analysis will best help us answer our research questions. We define methodology as the overarching theoretical approach guiding the research. For us, methodology is the nexus of theory and method in the way praxis is to theory and practice. In other words, methodology is the place where theory and method meet. Critical race methodology is an approach to research grounded in critical race theory. We approach our work and engage in various techniques of data gathering and analysis guided by critical race theory and Latino critical race (LatCrit) theory (see note 4). Critical race methodology pushes us to humanize quantitative data and to recognize silenced voices in qualitative data.

3. For three comprehensive annotated bibliographies on critical race and LatCrit theory, see Delgado and Stefancic (1993, 1994) and Stefancic (1998).

4. Our definition of critical race methodology is formulated based on the work of critical race theorists as well as LatCrit theorists. LatCrit theory extends critical race discussions to Chicanas/Chicanos and Latinas/Latinos in education. Our working definition of LatCrit theory informs our definition of critical race methodology. As such, we feel it is important to state the following working definition, which is adapted from the *LatCrit Primer* (2000):

A LatCrit theory in education is a framework that can be used to theorize and examine the ways in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly impact on the educational structures, processes, and discourses that effect people of color generally and Latinas/os specifically. Important to this critical framework is a challenge to the dominant ideology, which supports deficit notions about students of color while assuming "neutrality" and "objectivity." Utilizing the experiences of Latinas/os, a LatCrit theory in education also theorizes and examines that place where racism intersects with other forms of subordination such as sexism, classism, nativism, monolingualism, and heterosexism. LatCrit theory in education is conceived as a social justice project that attempts to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. LatCrit acknowledges that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways with their potential to oppress and marginalize co-existing with their potential to emancipate and empower. LatCrit theory in education is transdisciplinary and draws on many other schools of progressive scholarship.

We see LatCrit theory as a natural outgrowth of critical race theory, but we do not see them as mutually exclusive. For us, LatCrit scholarship is evidence of an ongoing process of finding a framework that addresses racism and its accompanying oppressions. LatCrit draws on the strengths outlined in critical race theory, while at the

same time, it emphasizes the intersectionality of experience with oppression and resistance and the need to extend conversations about race and racism beyond the Black-White binary. We believe, as we have defined it, critical race methodology is driven by our LatCrit consciousness. This means that our own experiences with the multiplicity of racialized oppression and our responses to and resistance against such oppressions from our positions of multiple marginality inform and shape our research.

5. It is important to note that often, being a "minority" majoritarian storyteller means receiving benefits provided by those with racial, gender, and/or class privilege. For an example, see the character of Professor Gleason Golightly in Derrick Bell's (1992) *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, chapter 9, "The Space Traders" (pp. 163-164).

6. Often, those who tell these stories dominate the "critical" discourse, and more often than not, they omit the "critical" work of people of color. For example, Delgado (1984, 1992) looked at this phenomenon of "selective citing" in civil rights legal scholarship through his articles titled "The Imperial Scholar" and "The Imperial Scholar Revisited." Delgado exposed a racial citation pattern wherein White authors (imperial scholars) cite each other and are much less likely to cite scholars of color. A similar pattern exists in the social science literature. Just as some Whites do not often venture into communities of color to do research, White scholars do not often venture into ethnic-specific journals or other scholarly writings to read the work of scholars of color (see Graham, 1992; Rosaldo, 1994). We know some may try to excuse this pattern by arguing that scholars of color just do not publish as much as Whites. However, we refute this notion. Instead, we believe there may be at least two reasons for racially selective citing: (a) They either do not know where to go or (b) they know where to go, but they choose to ignore the scholarship.

7. So as not to confuse the reader, we clarify here that a "story" can refer to a majoritarian story or a counter-story. A story becomes a counter-story when it begins to incorporate the five elements of critical race theory. In this article, we refer to people of color who draw on the elements of critical race theory in their writing as telling a story or a counter-story. Storytelling that draws on the elements of critical race theory is synonymous with counter-storytelling.

8. As we speak of this struggle for racial reform, we recognize the work of Gorz (1967), *Strategies for Labor: A Radical Proposal*. Andre Gorz outlines three types of social reforms: reformist, nonreformist, and revolutionary. He explains that reformist reforms are those that maintain the status quo and do not challenge the system of inequality. For example, a reformist reform might work to reform a school bureaucracy, only to make the bureaucracy marginalize students of color more efficiently. According to Gorz, nonreformist reforms move to change the system but keep the system intact. The difference here is that the nonreformist reform works to change the system into something more equitable, but it works within the system to make this happen. As a result, the system itself is not challenged. Finally, revolutionary reforms work toward a radical transformation of the present system and the creation of an entirely different, more equitable system. Although we concede that at best, much of our work probably falls into the category of nonreformist racial reform, we maintain our hopes for and continue to struggle toward revolutionary racial reform. We believe counter-storytelling in the critical race tradition offers a small but important contribution in this struggle to "advance toward a radical transformation of society" (Gorz, 1967, p. 6).

9. We cite only a few of the many critical race and LatCrit scholars who have written in this counter-storytelling tradition.

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