



# Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: counter-storytelling

## Chicana and Chicano graduate school experiences

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Using critical race theory as a framework, the article utilizes counter-storytelling to examine the different forms of racial and gender discrimination experienced by Chicana and Chicano graduate students. After describing the critical race theory framework and counter-storytelling method, the article moves to a story of two composite and data-driven characters, Professor Leticia Garcia and graduate student Esperanza Gonzalez. Various theoretical and conceptual issues such as self-doubt, survivor guilt, impostor syndrome, and invisibility are woven into Esperanza's graduate school and Professor Garcia's pre-tenure experiences.

### Introduction

Esperanza. . . When you leave you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are. (Cisneros, 1989: 105)

The experience of Sandra Cisneros' (1989) character Esperanza runs parallel to the lives of many Chicana<sup>1</sup> and Chicano undergraduate and graduate students, and we know little of that experience. How can we better understand the experiences of Chicana and Chicano students in graduate education? One answer to that question may be found in a developing theoretical framework called critical race theory (CRT). In this article we begin to answer this question by: first, defining critical race theory; second, documenting critical race theory's genealogy; third, discussing the meaning and application of critical race method; and finally, sharing a counter-story of the Chicana and Chicano graduate school experience.

### Defining critical race theory

Critical race theory draws upon and extends a broad literature base often termed critical theory. In paraphrasing Fay (1987), Tierney (1993) has defined critical theory as "an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate

societal and individual transformation” (p. 4). 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).

Then, to paraphrase and extend Matsuda, the overall goal of a critical race theory in graduate education is to develop a theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical strategy that accounts for the role of race and racism in US graduate education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating other forms of subordination, such as gender, class, and sexual orientation.

We posit at least five themes that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of a critical race theory in education.<sup>2</sup>

*1: The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination*

A CRT in education starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic, permanent and, in the words of 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 Barnes (1990) has stated, “Critical Race Scholars have refused to ignore the differences between class and race as basis for oppression ... Critical Race Scholars know that class oppression alone cannot account for racial oppression” (p. 1868). We argue further that class and racial oppression cannot account for gender oppression. It is at this intersection of race, gender, and class that some answers can be found to the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical questions related to the Chicana and Chicano graduate school experience. We also concur with Calmore (1997) in that what is noticeably missing from the discussion of race is a substantive discussion of racism. Indeed, in moving beyond a discussion of race, we must name, define, and focus on racism. For our purpose here, we use Marable’s (1992) definition of 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 takes the position that racism is about institutional power (of which People of Color in the USA have had little) and shifts the discussion of race and racism from a Black/White discourse to one that includes multiple faces, voices, and experiences.

*2: The challenge to dominant ideology*

A CRT in education challenges the traditional claims the educational system and its institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. The critical race theorist argues that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in

US society (Calmore, 1992; Solorzano, 1997). In addition to challenging the way we examine race and racism, Crenshaw and her colleagues have argued that critical race theory is also trying to “piece together an intellectual identity and a political practice that would take the form both of a left intervention into race discourse and a race intervention into left discourse” (Crenshaw *et al.*, 1995, p. xix). In this article, we attempt to demonstrate that the Chicana and Chicano graduate school experience challenges these traditional claims and urges theorists and practitioners to seriously address the education of Chicanas and Chicanos.

### *3: The commitment to social justice*

A CRT in education is committed to social justice and offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). We envision social justice education as the curricular and pedagogical work that leads toward: (1) the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty; and (2) the empowerment of under-represented minority groups.

### *4: The centrality of experiential knowledge*

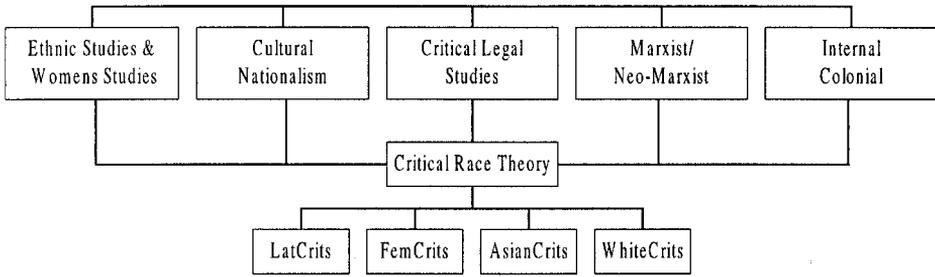
CRT in education recognizes that the experiential knowledge of Students of Color<sup>3</sup> is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education. In fact, critical race educational studies view this knowledge as a strength and draw explicitly on the Student of Color’s lived experience by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuENTOS*, chronicles, and narratives (Bell, 1987; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a,b, 1996; Olivas, 1990; Carrasco, 1996). In our analysis of the Chicana and Chicano graduate school experience, we incorporate counter-storytelling with the experiential knowledge of students by drawing from interview data, the research literature, biographical and autobiographical data, and other literary sources (Delgado, 1989).

### *5: The transdisciplinary perspective*

A CRT in education challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Olivas, 1990; Harris, 1994; Garcia, 1995). CRT in education utilizes the transdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, law, and other fields to better understand racism, sexism, and classism in education.<sup>4</sup>

## **Critical race theory’s family tree**

Figure 1 attempts to examine CRT’s family tree. It is important to note that branches of this tree are both acknowledged and unacknowledged in the CRT literature. In its most recent form, CRT emerged from criticisms of the Critical Legal Studies



**Figure 1. Critical race theory's family tree.<sup>5</sup>**

movement (Crits). However, these criticisms had their roots and are still being influenced by similar criticisms that were developing in ethnic studies, women's studies, cultural nationalist paradigms, Marxist and neo-Marxist frameworks, and internal colonial models. For instance, one could argue that CRT's roots go back as far as the turn of the last century with DuBois's (1903) work *The Souls of Black Folk*. More recently, CRT expanded to include branches in LatCrit, FemCrit, AsianCrit, and WhiteCrit scholarship. Although, initiated in the law, these branches are moving into fields outside the law. For instance, there has and continues to be an application of CRT to the field of education. Tate's (1994) autobiographical article entitled "From inner city to ivory tower: does my voice matter in the academy," in the journal *Urban Education*, represents the first use of CRT principles in education. A year later Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) wrote a paper entitled, "Toward a critical race theory of education" in the *Teachers College Record*. Two years later, Solorzano's (1997) essay "Images and words that wound: critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education" in *Teacher Education Quarterly* applied CRT to a specific subfield of teacher education. Also in 1997, Tate's "Critical race theory and education: history, theory, and implications" in the *Review of Research in Education*, furthered our understanding of the history of CRT in education. The field was expanded significantly with the 1998 "Special Issue on Critical Race Theory in Education" in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. Critical race scholars continue to help us better understand the racialized, gendered, and classed structures, processes, and discourses in the field of education.

### **Critical race theory, critical race method, and counter-storytelling**

This article is an attempt to inject into the race discourse the multiple forms of racism in graduate education for Chicana and Chicano students and to answer the following questions. How do the structures, processes, and discourses of graduate education and the professorate reinforce racial, gender, and class inequality? How do Chicana/o graduate students and professors respond to race, gender, and class inequality?

It is important to note that critical race theory is not a passing trend, the latest buzzword, or a "new concept." As mentioned earlier, critical race theory draws from the strengths of multiple disciplines, epistemologies, and research approaches (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Critical race theory frames what we do, why we do it, and how we do it.

- What do we do? We focus our work on addressing the many forms of racism and their intersections with sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination.
- Why do we do it? The purpose of our work is to challenge the status quo and push toward the goal of social justice.
- How do we do it? We work by listening to and reading about the experiences of People of Color and approaching our work in a transdisciplinary fashion.

We work to tell the counter-stories of Chicanas and Chicanos. Many in the academy, in community and labor organizing, or in other aspects of community service that look to challenge social inequality, will most likely recognize the tenets of critical race theory as part of what, why, and how they do the work they do. For our colleagues in the fields of education and other social sciences, CRT has the benefit of hindsight in addressing the critiques of other theories and is explicit in its purpose to focus on race and racism, to challenge the dominant ideology, to work toward social justice, to validate the experiences of People of Color, and to utilize transdisciplinary approaches.

In order to integrate critical race theory with the experiences of Chicanas and Chicanos in graduate education, we use a technique that has a tradition in the social sciences, humanities, and the law – storytelling. Delgado (1989) uses a method called counter-storytelling and argues that it is both a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e. those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse – the majoritarian story (Delgado, 1993). For instance, while a narrative can support the majoritarian story, a counter-narrative or counter-story, by its very nature, challenges the majoritarian story or that “bundle of pre-suppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462). These counter-stories can serve at least four theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical functions: (1) they can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; (2) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; (3) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and (4) 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 (Delgado, 1989; Lawson, 1995). Storytelling has a rich and continuing tradition in African-American (Berkeley Art Center, 1982; Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996; Lawrence, 1992), Chicana/o (Paredes, 1977; Delgado, 1989, 1995a, 1996; Olivas, 1990), and Native American (Deloria, 1969; Williams, 1997b) communities, and, as Delgado (1989) has stated, “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (p. 2436).

Our approach to critical race method in general, and counter-stories in particular, begins with an examination and analysis of a set of concepts, ideas, and experiences. In order to develop the concepts, we search out and dig through data from various sources. We begin to find and unearth these sources by borrowing from the works of Strauss & Corbin (1990) and Delgado Bernal (1998). Strauss & Corbin (1990) utilize 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 slightly from theoretical sensitivity in that it "extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the important of participants' engaging in the analysis of data" (pp. 563–564). She further explains:

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).

Therefore, utilizing our own theoretical sensitivity, Delgado Bernal's (1998) notion of "cultural intuition," and drawing upon the tenets of critical race theory, we begin to develop our counter-stories from at least four sources: (1) the data gathered from the research process itself; (2) the existing literature on the topic; (3) our own professional experience; and (4) our own personal experience. The first source of data is gathered from focus groups and individual interviews conducted with Chicana and Chicano undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty. We search through data looking for patterns, themes, and examples of the concepts we seek to illuminate. For instance, the focus group and interview data suggest that many Chicanas/os in higher education express feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and yet, are determined to beat the odds. Critical race theory and our theoretical sensitivity challenge us to view these sentiments as legitimate and important to understanding the Chicana/o educational experience. Therefore, we make sure their voice is heard throughout our text. In addition, we look for other data related to these concepts in the social sciences, humanities, and legal literature. For this article, we read a specific set of manuscripts on the theme of "Women of color and resistance in the academy" (see Appendix). In sifting through this literature, we began to draw connections with previous readings and the relevant focus group/individual interview data. Just as in the interview analysis, we listened as we read and discussed the articles. We heard varying emotions, even in traditional academic style texts. For us, the poetry and short story segments tapped into these emotions and challenged us to look 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. Here, we not only share our own stories and reflections, but we also draw upon the multiple voices of family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances.

Once these sources of data are compiled, examined, and analyzed, we create composite characters who can discuss these concepts and ideas within the context of their own experiences. Our goal is to engage the characters in a real and critical dialogue focused around our findings from the interviews, literature, and experiences.

This dialogue emerges between the characters much like our own discussions emerge – through sharing, listening, challenging, and reflecting. It is our hope that the counter-story offers an accessible and critical insight to this set of concepts, ideas, and experiences. In this counter-story, we use the lenses of race, gender, and class and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano graduate students to examine critically the concepts of “self-doubt,” “survivor guilt,” “impostor syndrome,” and “invisibility.”

In doing critical race method, we find ourselves at the intersection between critical race theory and theoretical sensitivity. The 1997 movie *Amistad* provides an example of this methodological intersection. In order to defend the freedom of a group of kidnapped African slaves in a US court of law, John Quincy Adams first searches for the life history of his eventual clients. He asks their advisor, “What is their story, by the way?” After being given a pat answer as to the geographical place they were from, Adams repeats his question, “No, what is their story?” He admonishes the advisor, stating, “You and this young so-called lawyer have proven you know what they are, they’re Africans, congratulations. What you don’t know and as far as I can tell haven’t found in the least to discover is who they are. Right?” When one is at the intersection of critical race theory and theoretical sensitivity, a critical race method compels us to ask, “What is their story, by the way?” It also challenges us to repeat the question, “No, what is their story?” By counter-storytelling the Chicana and Chicano graduate school experience, we begin the journey to find out.

We want to add to the tradition of counter-storytelling by illuminating the lives of Chicana and Chicano graduate students, who are often at the margins of graduate education. As a way of raising various issues in critical race theory and method, we offer the following counter-story about two composite characters<sup>6</sup> engaged in a dialogue. One is Professor Leticia Garcia, a junior sociology professor at a Western university (UC-Oceanview). The other is Esperanza Gonzalez, a third-year graduate student at the same university in the education department. Using our definition of critical race theory and its five elements, we ask you to suspend judgment, listen for the story’s points, test them against your own version of reality (how ever conceived), and use the counter-story as a theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical case study (see Barnes *et al.*, 1994).

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### **In the Hallway of Huerta/Chavez Hall**

*Professor Garcia and Esperanza meet in the hallway of the sociology department.  
Their story begins here.*

“Professor Garcia!”

I heard Esperanza’s voice coming down the hall and quickly turned around because I noted some panic in her tone.

“Professor Garcia do you have a minute? I really need to ask you something.”

The concern in her tone was reinforced in her facial expressions and I responded, “Well actually, I was just going to get a bite to eat before class. It doesn’t begin for a while, would you like to join me?”

“I don’t want to bother you, I’m not too hungry – it’s just–” she hesitated to add.

As I motioned for her to come with me I assured her, “Don’t worry about it, come on.”

We headed for the café that was conveniently located near my office, or as my husband chided me, not so conveniently. Looking at Esperanza’s face, I noticed she was very troubled about something. I got my usual French roast coffee and a baguette. Esperanza ordered a cappuccino royale and a carrot muffin and we sat away from the crowded lines of students. I didn’t have to wait long before Esperanza began the discussion.

“Professor Garcia, you know Gloria Martinez in your undergraduate sociology of education course?”

Knowing Gloria, I smiled and responded, “Yes, she’s really sharp. I told her she should look into some Education PhD programs. In fact, I told her to ask you about your experiences to give her a better idea of what to expect.”

Esperanza continued uncomfortably, “Yes, I know. That’s what I wanted to talk to you about. I’m supposed to call her back and set up a time so we can meet.”

“And?” I probed.

“I don’t know how to say this and it hurts me to think about it, but how can I recommend graduate school to another Chicana given my experiences here?”

“Given your experiences?” I asked.

Esperanza continued, “We’ve talked a little about this before, but last week in class, I was reminded again of how as a Chicana, my issues are seen as peripheral; even in debates about multicultural education. This even happens in 1999 in the State of California where Latinas/os are for the first time the plurality of the K-12 public student population at 41% (California Department of Education, 1999). And, Chicanas/os make up the majority (about 80%) of the overall Latina/o population. Another growing population in California public schools are new Asian immigrants who are often from very different social strata than the already established Japanese and Chinese communities. These varied Asian communities challenge the ‘model minority’ assumptions about Asians and educational achievement and have much in common with Chicanas/os in regards to how schools respond to their primary language issues and cultural background. Yet when a ‘progressive’ school of education talks about issues of racism, diversity, or multiculturalism, the issues are usually articulated in relation to Blacks and Whites.”

“You mean what Richard Delgado (1997) refers to as the Black–White binary?” I asked.

“Yes, I feel like academia has yet to recognize that there are other shades of experience between and beyond Black and White. Like the article I just read where Leslie Espinoza and Angela Harris (1998) are struggling with the same issue. They argue that these shades of experience encompass many facets of language, culture, gender, class, and immigration status that must be addressed in the CRT and LatCrit literature. These issues are inseparable from student identity and should not be severed from what is considered valid curriculum.”

“You’re so right,” I admitted to Esperanza, “Chicanas, Chicanos, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans are often left out of the syllabi of many of my colleagues. Have you seen the book list for next quarter’s class on race and ethnic relations? While it is important to look at books dealing with Black and White comparisons, there is a huge oversight there, and not for lack of materials. Even though changing demographics across the country do not support it, the Black–White binary continues to dominate our thinking in academia.”

I paused for a moment and then proceeded, “You mentioned LatCrit, tell me more about how you see it impacting the field of education.”

Esperanza glanced into her backpack and then responded, “Actually, the Espinoza and Harris article I just mentioned was published in one of five special law review issues on a developing framework called Latino Critical Race Theorists or LatCrits, as they call themselves (see Valdes, 1996, 1997, 1998; Iglesias, 1997; Arriola, 1998). They are really deconstructing the Black–White binary as it applies to discussions about racism in the law.” Esperanza pulled out an article from her backpack and continued, “One of the legal scholars in LatCrit Theory, Elizabeth Iglesias (1997) has defined LatCrit as, ‘exploring how Critical Race Theory might be expanded beyond the limitations of the black/white paradigm to incorporate a richer, more contextualized analysis of the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of white supremacy, particularly as it impacts Latinas/os in their individual and collective struggles for self-understanding and social justice’ (p. 178). I think we need to extend those discussions to education. In fact, I’ve borrowed and adapted work from the LatCrits (LatCrit Primer, 1999) and have come up with the following definition of LatCrit theory in education:

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. 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 and classism. LatCrit scholars in education acknowledge 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 conceived as a *social justice* project that attempts to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. LatCrit theory in education is *transdisciplinary* and draws on many other schools of progressive scholarship.”

I had recently read some of those issues myself and smiled at the way in which Esperanza had extended the LatCrits’ work to fit within her developing framework in education. I added, “Robert Chang’s (1993) work also reminds would-be-progressives that racism raises its ugly head in communities of varying skin tones, accents, cultures, and immigration status.”

Esperanza pulled out a wrinkled newsletter from her backpack and read a highlighted section. “Check out this quote from a UCLA Chicano Professor: ‘In Los Angeles as in the nation, such social issues as poverty, welfare, affirmative action, crime, and immigration have a racial face. These issues have a color and the color is usually black, brown, red, or yellow.’ Our experiences are racialized both inside and outside the classroom.”

I responded, “The racial faces of Communities of Color differ state-by-state, district-by-district, yet have a history of commonality in regards to experiences with structural inequality both inside and outside schools.”

Esperanza stirred the whipped cream into her coffee as she took in what I just said. She continued to speak a few seconds later. “As the only Chicana in my PhD cohort, in the beginning of the program I would often raise issues concerning the implications of policy for Chicana/o students only to have my comments given a nod of courtesy

before the subject was dismissed and attention directed elsewhere. After a while, I just stopped participating. Then I'd feel even worse, like my silence makes me complicit with the ignorance of the professors and students who claim to be social justice educators but who are blind to the ways in which they themselves 'do school.' "

"What do you mean by 'do school'?" I asked.

"I mean we sort and stratify students according to racial, gender, and socioeconomic attributes. We create a meritocracy, which assumes all students begin on a level playing field. We develop a hierarchy of relationships between professors and students, the researcher and the researched, the academy and the community," Esperanza replied.

As Esperanza concisely operationalized the definition of 'doing school,' I began dunking bits of baguette into my coffee, devouring my late afternoon snack. I knew Esperanza's frustrations. I still felt them and responded, "You bring up an insightful critique about how those of us in the academy may be unwilling or unable to recognize ways in which we 'do school.' Let's return to your comment on CRT. I think developing a working definition of critical race theory (CRT) in higher education can help us here." I pulled out the small note pad I use to write down thoughts I don't want to lose, looked for a definition and continued, "Right here, I have this definition of critical race theory as '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 the subordinate racial positions of Chicanas and Chicanos in graduate education.' Using CRT as a framework, we can examine the way in which we track students according to their Graduate Record Exam scores into prestigious fellowships and research assistantships. We can also examine the way we construct certain positive opinions and higher expectations for students who do their undergraduate work at prestigious institutions such as the Harvards and Stanfords, and negative opinions and lower expectations for those students from less prestigious schools such as the California State Universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities" (see Solorzano, 1994, 1995a,b).

"And those students then have the inside track to the hidden curriculum that helps them use their courses to prepare them for the doctoral exams, which puts them ahead of the game," Esperanza interjected.

"You're right again. In many ways it is a game," I conceded. "It's those same graduate students who are then given publishing and grant writing opportunities which later translate into faculty appointments. For Chicana and Chicano students, this is a game that we may have little experience with and often there isn't anyone who lays out the rules of the game ahead of time."

Esperanza shook her head in agreement, her eyes opened wide and her lip curled in disgust as she replied, "And I can't believe how many rules there are! I'm still learning them and I've been here three years! Part of me says why should I abide by the rules and participate in an institution that was not designed with Chicanas/os in mind? But the other part of me says, OK, I can jump these hoops if it means I will make a difference for Chicana/o communities in the end. Yet I wonder if I'm just kidding myself."

"About hoop jumping leading to community change?" I asked and then continued. "Sometimes I wonder the same thing myself." It was as if Esperanza had read the email I just received from the academic personnel committee, requesting that I meet with another group next week for follow-up questions as to why most of my publications are in Ethnic Studies Journals instead of so-called, first-tier journals. Part of me

wants to tell them that the first-tier journals have a very poor record of publishing ethnic specific work. I want to show them Sandra Graham's (1992) article, 'Most of the subjects were White and Middle Class: trends in published research on African Americans in selected APA journals, 1970–1989.' In the article she argues that in a 20-year period, very little work on African-Americans was published in these very selective American Psychological Association journals. However, the other part of me says, 'I will be the first tenured Chicana this department has ever promoted if I jump through a few more hoops and publish in the journals they want.' Then I ask myself, 'am I making a difference for the community I come from? Do students where I grew up in the north-east Los Angeles community of Lincoln Heights have any better chance of graduating from UC-Oceanview today than they did 10 years ago?' I paused before going on, thinking about my own family members and friends who never made it past high school and whether or not my work was widening and increasing the flow through the Chicana/o education pipeline.

I woke up from my daze and began again, "Esperanza, I think that space of feeling uncomfortable is important though. We need to constantly question our motives and our actions – not based on what the institution would have us do, but on what we came here to achieve in the first place. And can we accomplish our goals given our position in academia?"

"The positions held by most Chicanas/os on this campus are in the service sector," responded Esperanza. "In fact, if you want to find the largest number of Chicanas/os on campus, go to the Faculty Center – they're not eating there – they're cooking, serving, and cleaning. Those who visit the Faculty Center often look at these women and men as if they're looking through a window. They look right past them . . . like they're invisible. Privilege and power erases their existence. That's how I feel in the classroom. I feel invisible."

"Esperanza, have you read Kim Taylor's (1997) article 'Invisible woman: reflections on the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings?'"

"No, sounds like a great title!" Esperanza exclaimed.

"Well, I just happen to have written down here in my trusty note pad the quote by Ralph Ellison (1990) that Taylor (1997) uses to open up the article. I liked it so much I wrote it down and have been meaning to transfer it to my computer file of great epigraphs." I continued talking to Esperanza, "Now keep in mind, Taylor changed Ellison's words slightly to read woman instead of man." I began to read aloud, "I am an invisible [wo]man. No I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Alan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a [wo]man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodyless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination-indeed, everything and anything except me" (p. 183).

Esperanza took a long drink of her coffee and then dipped pieces of her muffin into the small bit of carrot-shaped frosting on the top. She stared at me for a moment before responding, "Stephanie Marquez (1994) talks about how the lack of sociological constructs dealing with Chicanas demonstrates how invisible we really are to the academy."

"I haven't read her work, tell me more." I finished off my baguette and leaned forward.

Esperanza continued, “She’s a sociologist and in the article I read, she problematizes the image of ‘Hispanic’ women in sociology. She describes the distortions within introductory sociology textbooks used at Arizona State University. These texts exclude, homogenize, segregate, and focus on disadvantage when referring to ‘Hispanic’ women. In fact, by using ‘Hispanic,’ Marquez argues that they not only erase the diversity of Chicana/o and Latina/o communities, but they fail to differentiate between women and men within these populations. For example, Marquez discusses that centering knowledge in the experiences of Chicanas, Mexicanas, and Latinas could begin to make them visible and that such a goal should not be peripheral to sociology” (see Anderson, 1988).

I was excited about where this discussion was headed and added, “Marquez sounds like she furthers the work of Olivia Espin (1993), a psychologist who explains that those who hold the power and privilege to define, as is done in those texts, tend to be blind to how they render components of the ‘others’ human experience silent.”

Esperanza went on, “Exactly. They don’t see how they use their power and privilege to marginalize and ‘other.’ I really appreciate Espin’s article because she explains that we experience multiple categories of oppression. From this position, Paulo Freire (1970) tells us that we should lead the transformation of our communities against the oppressors. In the same vein, bell hooks (1990) writes about resistance coming from the margins, but it seems as though my only option is a silent revolution.”

I added, “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 US combined produced only 751 Chicana doctorates in all fields and they represented only 0.7% of all female doctorates (Solórzano, 1994, 1995a). 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.

I shook my head with a smile and continued, “I hear you. But that is why it’s important that you not let them stamp out your spirit or as Patricia Williams (1997a) says, don’t let them commit ‘spirit-murder’ on you. I’ve seen it more often than I’d like to remember: Chicana/o students who begin graduate school with a fiery spirit and little by little the flame dies. That is one reason why I think Espin (1993) and Lorde (1978) are right on the mark. You have experienced being silenced. It chips away at your fighting spirit. Espin talks about utilizing that silence on our own terms. Silence can be strong – stronger than words many times. Yet she also draws on Freire as she says that the oppressed are the ones who must give voice to silence. The oppressed are the ones who recognize and validate the realities of the marginalized ‘other.’ Still, when we do voice our critiques, there are particular methods of responding to racial, ethnic, gender, and class marginalization, microaggressions, and ignorance that are better received than others” (Solorzano, 1993, 1998; Solorzano and Villalpando, 1998).

Esperanza picked at the edges of her napkin for a couple of seconds and moved on, “It seems my responses are not usually well received. Instead, I am labeled the ‘angry Chicana.’ My first week of graduate school I think my light skin threw people off. But ever since I first opened my mouth in Education 200 and spoke about issues impacting Chicana/o students, I’ve been seen as the ‘angry Chicana.’”

“Anger is good,” I calmly interjected. I smiled at the thoughts of my own graduate school days and the whirlwind of emotions even the word “Chicana” stirred in my classes. I thought of Gloria Cuadraz’s (Cuadraz & Pierce, 1994) struggle to return to graduate school after a brief break to “re-energize.” She returned and finished off her PhD with what she quotes as Chela Sandoval’s “differential mode of consciousness,” which includes, “grace, flexibility, and strength of identity” (p. 34). I paused, focused on those words.

Esperanza looked puzzled and asked in disbelief, “Anger is good?”

I explained, “For Chicanas within the university setting, anger is necessary and good. It is often our anger that fuels our spirit, gives voice and direction to silence, and provides the energy to go on. Our expression of this anger however scares a lot of people. It confuses traditional Chicanas/os and Latinas/os because we are circumventing their socially constructed cultural norms. Then, it riles up conservatives in general, and it annoys liberals the most. Some liberal educators would rather have pleasant if benign conversations about racial and gender diversity instead of actually delving into the unpleasanties which make up the realities lived by Chicana/o students everyday.”

Esperanza again pushed my thinking when she asked, “Don’t you get tired of educating your own colleagues about Chicanas/os?”

“Hold that thought,” I said as I excused myself momentarily to grab another cup of coffee. A minute later I settled back at the table and responded, “Actually Esperanza, it’s interesting that you ask that because I think it’s the other way around. I think some of my colleagues get tired of me trying to ‘educate’ them. I don’t think they see my actions as necessarily educational. Instead, I think they spend a little time

feeling ill at ease that I told them detailed information about what it may be like living in different parts of Los Angeles, beginning school not knowing any English, having parents who had no knowledge of the educational system but who were ‘involved’ in many ways undefined and unrecognized by the schools. I notice some of my colleagues become very uncomfortable when I reveal these areas of personal knowledge, which Margaret Montoya (1994) refers to as ‘taboo’ areas of knowledge. What does it mean to some of my colleagues that I know many of the nuances of communities they have only seen in the media, read about, or driven past on the freeway? Do they wonder if I have tattoos from some *vida loca* (crazy life) past? Does my brown skin and Spanish-accented English cast doubt on my scholarly merit? The other day, my husband Frank, who is a lawyer for MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund), met me at my office for dinner. Later I was asked by one of my colleagues, ‘Hey is that how you keep your office so clean, you date the janitors?’ ”

I could see my comments struck cord with Esperanza. She said, “That’s exactly what Martha Bernal (1988) talks about; the way in which racism pervades the experiences of People of Color on an everyday basis. And just as we are racialized, we are gendered and classed.”

I added, “Montoya’s (1994) notion of *mascaras* (masks) is so powerful in looking at the pervasiveness of racism, sexism, and classism in our daily lives. I can relate to her example of when her social class background was exposed. She tells the story of how her Harvard law professor questioned whether she had ever seen a ‘bond’ before. Also, her gender and cultural sensitivities were exposed when she spoke out about a case involving a young, pregnant Chicana. Now there’s Montoya, a Chicana sitting in a notoriously upper class White male institution. Her hair is done stylishly, make-up’s not too dramatic, she’s dressed professionally – and still, her masks slip. The professor exposes her as a working class Chicana who tried to play dress up, feign intellect, and play in the major leagues. But she recovered from that experience and realized she was in law school for a purpose, and that purpose was to make change, to struggle for social justice so other Chicanas and Chicanos who came after her would not have such negative experiences.”

Esperanza sat back in her chair and looked deep into her coffee cup, as if looking for her reflection. She said, “I think that exposure hurts so much because we’ve worked at creating multiple masks and recognizing our multiple levels of vulnerability is painful.” She added, “Especially as women and as Chicanas. Like the time when I was very concerned about securing fellowship money and I shared my worries with a White male professor who outlined his lips with his finger as he responded, ‘I really like that lipstick you’re wearing.’ And I know he didn’t intend to be such a voyeur, to make me feel like a sex symbol pretending to be an intellectual, but it stunned me.”

I’d heard many stories like that before and not just in education or sociology departments and I added, “That sense of shock plays with our confidence. The legacy of racism and sexism often comes packaged in self-doubt. In fact, Leslie Espinoza (1990) describes the constant struggle to quiet the little voice of self-doubt that tells us we do not belong, that our work is merely anecdotal, that we need certain ‘cultural capital’ to get to and through the university” (see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Esperanza continued, “That voice drives me crazy! Just when I think I’ve quelled the self-doubt, there it is – like when I asked my Education 201 professor why I received a B+ on my final paper. He retorted, ‘you only came in to see me once and that time I helped you fix your paper. Had you come by more often, you would

have done better because I would have rewritten your work. Your use of language is not sophisticated and other scholars who read it will think it elementary.”

“It sounds like he is pulling the old ‘write like I write so I’ll know that you know how to use three-syllable words,’” I interjected. “And for Chicanas/os that raises the old ‘accessibility’ issue. bell hooks (1989) addresses it and maintains that, ‘my goal as a feminist thinker and theorist is to take that abstraction and articulate it in a language that renders it accessible – not less complex or rigorous – but simply more accessible’” (p. 39).

Esperanza responded, “I know, I do want my work to be accessible, and I think that’s why defining our terms is so necessary, but I still have doubts that I am capable of being a scholar and educator.”

I listened to the pain in her comment and continued, “I remember working with Professor Sanchez (see note 4) as a graduate student, and I’m sure he probably mentioned this to you in your undergraduate studies. In Latin, an educator is one who draws out from others that which is already there. Despite what that ‘Education 201 professor’ thinks and what the little voice of self-doubt is telling you, I know and you know that you have what it takes to be an educator in the Latin sense of the word. You have a lot more than three-syllable words to offer our communities, *pero ese ‘professor’ no puede apreciar todo lo que tu puedas ofrecer porque no más busca a su reflexión en otros* (but that ‘professor’ can’t appreciate everything you can offer because he’s only looking for his own reflection in others); he can’t see you because he doesn’t value what you bring to the table. Hasn’t Ralph Ellison (1990) and Kim Taylor’s (1997) ‘invisible [wo]man’ taught us that? Unfortunately, it sounds like the cumulative racial and gender microaggressions you’ve experienced have given you a harsh case of the ‘impostor syndrome’” (Solorzano, 1998).

“The impostor syndrome?” Esperanza shot back.

Again I smiled at Esperanza and tried to explain myself, “Women of Color in the academy are not commonplace, we are an aberration – outliers. We often ask ourselves, how is it that I ‘arrived’ when so many others like me haven’t? Will someone discover that a mistake was made and I don’t really belong here? How long will it take for ‘them’ to realize that I am an impostor, an ‘other,’ I’m not ‘one of them’? With so many ‘casualties’ along the Chicana/o educational pipeline, we may even experience ‘survivors guilt’ (see Piorkowski, 1983). I know, for example, that I am not the only Chicana from my K-12 years who had the potential to get a PhD, but I am the only one of all my friends in Lincoln Heights to have done so. I often feel guilty that I ‘survived’ and others didn’t.”

Esperanza quietly asked, “How do you deal with that survivors guilt?”

As I pulled a book from my briefcase, I continued, “I work very hard to make sure that I can help train another generation of Scholars of Color. I just read Lani Guinier’s (Guinier *et al.*, 1997) book *Becoming Gentlemen: Women, Law School, and Institutional Change*, where they describe in a footnote the motto of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs as, ‘lifting as I rise’ (p.167). I’m holding on to the *escalera* (ladder) with one hand, *pero con la otra mano* (but with the other hand), I’m trying to reach down and lift others with me as we climb.”

Esperanza added, “Now that’s a powerful image. I can see you on the cover of bell hooks’ (1994) book, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.”

I guess I looked confused because Esperanza described further, “hooks (1994) has the little *loteria* (lottery) card, *la escalera* (the ladder) on the cover of the book. It’s up against the wall, but no one’s on it, yet.” Esperanza paused before going on, “I’m sure

many people would say you survived through the PhD because you acquired certain 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), but I think Gloria Cuadraz and Jennifer Pierce's (1994) notion of 'endurance labor' makes more sense."

I replied, "Endurance labor, isn't that what Cuadraz and Pierce (1994) say is the 'relentless drive to persist, in spite of, and many times, because of adversity'?" (p. 31).

"Yes," Esperanza responded, "and Cuadraz uses that conceptual tool differently than Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's (1977) concept of 'cultural capital' because endurance labor originates from the disempowered and moves toward equality through the creation of inner and collective strength that challenges the status quo's power relations."

"Hasn't Sylvia Alva (1995) written about this as well?" I asked.

"Yes she has," Esperanza replied, "she calls it 'invulnerability.'"

"How does she define it?" I pushed.

As usual, Esperanza was quick to reply with a well-developed conceptual definition borrowed from Alva (1995), "Invulnerability can be seen in those students who 'sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and, ultimately, dropping out of school'" (p. 289).

I commented, "Centering our actions on the experiences of People of Color is an integral part of the work in critical race and LatCrit theory. When we focus on recognizing the intersecting roles of racism, sexism, and classism and being committed to social justice, we can challenge dominant ideology by utilizing the experiences of People of Color and contextualizing our critiques historically, using multiple disciplinary tools."

Esperanza added, "For me, critical race and LatCrit theory and method in education criticizes the traditional paradigms, both in content and format. So we can actually utilize the life histories of our students and their parents as valid narratives. Experiential knowledge in the curriculum opens up the possibilities of drawing on the strengths of our communities to continue the struggle for education by incorporating silenced voices in multiple methods. Critical race and LatCrit theory challenges the academy's traditional view of our presence as 'foreign,' and often questioned as to whether it is deserved. They also critique the traditional perception in the academy that the presence of our White colleagues is 'natural,' and usually assumed to be merited."

"We're the 'outsiders' within the academy," I quickly responded.

"True," Esperanza replied. "That's Patricia Hill Collin's (1986, 1998) work, right? I like her notion of the 'outsider within.' It's so appropriate to construct our experiences *cruzando fronteras, viviendo entre fronteras* (crossing borders, living between borders) as sources of strength, resources to be drawn upon instead of deficits to overcome" (Anzaldúa, 1990; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992).

I added, "Freire (1970) wrote that the oppressed have a clearer vision of reality. I am reminded every day that I am an 'outsider within.' My brown skin and my PhD appear to be oxymorons in this place. My experiences give me a clearer vision of reality. They accentuate the state of the Chicana/o educational pipeline and make my role in effecting change painfully realistic."

Esperanza sat up quickly and spoke with conviction, "But you're asking important questions. We need more outsiders within these ivory towers. Outsiders whose research will reach beyond the self-serving interests of the academy toward transformation in our communities. Outsiders who challenge the traditional ways we 'do school,' who

appreciate and look toward our Communities of Color as centers of strength and possibility. And not the kinds of possibility that are ‘discovered’ or ‘created’ by those in power, rather possibility that has enabled our communities to navigate through the rough waters of racism, sexism, and classism – and keep struggling many times in spite of the academy.”

“You’re right Esperanza. We do need more Chicanas and Chicanos in the academy.”

Esperanza glanced at her watch and sipped the last remains of her coffee. She picked up her napkin full of carrot muffin crumbs and flashed me a huge smile before saying, “Thanks for taking the time to talk with me Professor Garcia. I have to go call Gloria and encourage her through the PhD application process.” Esperanza’s face became serious as she continued, “Who do I think I am? I’m in a PhD program, and as I get my degree and open the doors to more options for myself, I’m thinking about slamming the doors behind me by telling another Chicana; ‘Hey, graduate school isn’t for everyone.’”

I looked with pride at this brilliant young scholar and added, “Maybe you can give Gloria the run down that I never really got; ‘Welcome to graduate school and the world of academia; here’s what you can expect and some ways others have survived!’”

“Definitely,” Esperanza replied with determination. She stood up and situated her backpack. “*Seguimos adelante* (We go forward).”

“Esperanza, let’s meet again soon and talk about writing some of this discussion down into a future article,” I added.

She grinned and said, “That would be great! And very necessary, both for other Chicanas in the academy, future Chicanas in the academy, and to get me through the academy.”

“*Nos vemos* (we’ll see each other),” I said as I stood up to say good-bye.

Esperanza reached over the table and gave me a hug. “*Nos vemos Profesora Garcia* (All right then, we’ll see each other).”

I sat back down to finish off my coffee. The concepts and realities of “self-doubt,” “survivor guilt,” “impostor syndrome,” and “invisibility” kept racing through my mind. But then, I pulled out my UC-Oceanview business card, stared at my name, and recalled that there are some days when I feel that I’m one of the best in my field, and I know my field better than anyone at this place. I reached into my briefcase and pulled out some old Xeroxed pages of Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street*. I read the following passage and the clouds of “self-doubt,” “survivor guilt,” “impostor syndrome” and “invisibility” began to slowly move away.

One day I will pack my bags of books and paper. One day I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to hold me here forever. One day I will go away. Friends and neighbors will say, “What happened to that Esperanza? Where did she go with all those books and paper? Why did she march so far away?” They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot [get] out (Cisneros, 1989, p. 110).

Like Cisneros’ Esperanza, I think we know why we come to the academy. We are part of a legacy, a chain. Others have come before us and we need to recognize them and learn from them. We also need to keep the path open for those who will come after us. If one of our goals is to increase the numbers of Chicanas and Chicanos in the professions, then we must commit ourselves to breaking down barriers, abolishing

policies of exclusion, and building on students' strengths, so we can widen the path, clear some of the barriers, and reach that elusive goal.

The very fact that most Chicana and Chicano scholars have had to overcome these and other barriers to succeed in the academy is further proof of our ability to survive against high odds, and against a strong resistance to our being there. My generation of Chicana and Chicano scholars is one of the first to have the opportunity to practice their craft, but not the first to have the ability. Previous generations were not given the opportunity to practice their trade and we know that reality so painfully. If we are the first or second generation of scholars in the academy, then one measure of our success is whether a process, a space, an opportunity, a support system, can be created that assures a third, fourth, and fifth generation of Chicana and Chicano scholars. Cisneros' Esperanza knows why she must struggle in that arena called the academy. We must encourage and support our Esperanzas to come to and through the academy and to give back to their communities.

Cornell West (hooks and West, 1991) has argued that "with privilege goes responsibility" (p. 15). Somewhere I read that for those to whom much is given, much is required. Compared to the communities from which we come, we in the academy are privileged, and we have a responsibility to reach back and help those who could not or would not get out (Cisneros, 1989). I'm really happy Esperanza came by to see me. Her energy, her insights, her creativity, and her strength remind me of why I'm here. I hope to see her again soon.

\* \* \*

## Discussion

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 (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxv).

Anzaldúa's (1990) epigraph powerfully describes the necessary transformation of theories to draw upon the knowledges of People of Color. She goes on to explain that such *mestizaje* theories "create new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of existing ones" (p. xxvi). Critical race and LatCrit methodology, with its counter-narratives and even poetic modes of expression, articulates a response to Anzaldúa's challenge that "If we have been gagged and disempowered by theories, we can also be loosened and empowered by theories" (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxvi). Indeed, through our counter-narrative, we hope to have loosened the theoretical and methodological gag from Chicana and Chicano voices in higher education.

Utilizing the narrative of our two composite characters, a critical race and LatCrit methodology offers a way to understand students' experiences with such concepts as self-doubt, survivor guilt, impostor syndrome, and invisibility. A critical race methodology generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced, and disempowered – or as Bell (1992) wrote, "looking to the faces at the bottom of the well" (p. ix). Indeed, Solorzano (1998) argued that "we must

realize that most of the methods we use ... are rooted in ... 'racist epistemologies.' However, it is our responsibility to acknowledge these epistemologies and, where appropriate, use them for transformational purposes" (p. 133). We recognize the limits of understanding the complexities of racial, gender, and class experiences in academia through any given method. Yet, through critical race and LatCrit methods we hope to gain a more in-depth understanding of the racialized, gendered, and classed structures and processes of graduate education and the professorate for Chicanas and Chicanos.

Indeed, critical race and LatCrit methodology 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). Counter-narrative-as-qualitative method, exemplified in this article as a conversation between two Chicana academics, allows us to explore the breadth of what happens through the structures, processes, and discourses of higher education, as well as the depth of how and in what ways Chicanas/os respond. We concur with Denzin & Lincoln (1994) as they describe that, "The multiple methodologies of qualitative research may be viewed as a *bricolage*, and the researcher as *bricoleur* ... the combination of multiple methods ... within a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation" (p. 2). This strategy has allowed us to look to the experiential and other forms of knowledge from People of Color and subordinated peoples, whose knowledge has often been excluded as an official part of the academy. We believe a strength of critical race and LatCrit theory and methodology is the validation and combination of the theoretical, empirical, and experiential knowledge. Through our counter-narrative, we delve into the lives of human characters who experience daily the intersections of racism, sexism, and classism. We look to continue this methodological, theoretical, conceptual, and pedagogical journey as we also express our deep gratitude and dedicate this work to those both inside and outside the academy who share their stories with us.

## Notes

1. For this article, Chicanas and Chicanos are defined as female and male persons of Mexican ancestry living in the USA. It should be noted that each of these terms has a political dimension that this paper does not discuss.

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

3. In this article, the term Students of Color is defined as persons of African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and Native American ancestry.

4. There have been numerous critiques of CRT generally and specifically in the use of storytelling in the law. One of the more substantive critiques has come from Daniel Farber and Suzanna Sherry. In their 1993 article titled, "Telling stories out of school: an essay on legal narratives," they argue that: (1) outsider stories are not typical of outsider experiences and therefore unrepresentative; (2) outsiders' stories over-emphasize the unique perspective of the author and/or "the voice of color," and thus, are not generalizable to the overall outsider population; (3) because storytelling lacks clarity and analysis, it is not academically rigorous; and (4) storytelling distorts the truth. These same arguments are made and reinforced in their 1997 book, *Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law*. There have been equally numerous responses to the CRT critics and Delgado (1993) has argued that "Their point is that stories in themselves teach little unless supplemented with analysis and commentary that will enable the reader to connect the story with a more general rule or principle. True, but irrelevant. Most of us already follow this counsel. In perhaps the most notable example of legal storytelling, Derrick Bell and his interlocutor, Geneva, agree that their conversations must include statistics, case authority, and doctrinal analysis lest their colleagues reject their work as nonrigorous. Most of us instinctively follow Bell's example" (p. 665). Delgado (1993) goes on

to make the point that, “majoritarians tell stories too. But the ones they tell – about merit, causation, blame, responsibility, and social justice – do not seem to them like stories at all, but the truth” (p. 666). Delgado (1999) has also responded to Farber & Sherry’s and other CRT critics in his 1999 book, *When Equality Ends: Stories About Race and Resistance*. Another critique of CRT is that it hasn’t gone far enough in that it does not focus on practical solutions to the problems posed (see Gee, 1997, 1999). In Delgado’s (1999) book, Rodrigo (Delgado’s interlocutor) responds to some of the CRT critics (see Litowitz, 1997) by stating, “The primary obstacle to racial reform today is not liberalism . . . but rather out-of-control, rampant, in-your-face conservatism” (p. 231). Delgado’s Professor replies, “Maybe that’s the problem with academics. Removed from reality, we’re looking for interesting problems to solve and theories to critique, rather than coming to grips with real-world problems of the community of color” (p. 232). In some ways, our counter-story addresses these and other critiques. So far, such critiques of CRT in education and storytelling have not surfaced in the educational literature.

5. The following resources are some examples of the different frameworks cited: Ethnic studies (see *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*); women’s studies (see *Frontiers: A Journal of Womens Studies*); cultural nationalist paradigms (see Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987); critical legal studies (see Kelman, *Guide to Critical Legal Studies*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Marxist and neo-Marxist frameworks (see Bowles & Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, and Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); internal colonial models (see Bonilla and Girling (eds) *Structures of Dependency*, Stanford, CA: Stanford Institute of Politics, 1973); LatCrit (see Arriola, E., 1998, Difference, solidarity and law: building Latina/o communities through LatCrit Theory. *Chicano-Latino Law Review*, 19, 1–612; Valdes, F., 1997, LatCrit Theory: naming and launching a new direction of critical legal scholarship, *Harvard Latino Law Review*, 2, 1–501; Valdes, F., 1998, LatCrit: Latinas/os and the law, *La Raza Law Journal*, 10, 1–600); WhiteCrit (see Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (eds), 1997, *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press); FemCrit (see Wing, A. (ed.), 1997, *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader*, New York: New York University Press); AsianCrit (see Chang, R., 1993, Toward an Asian American legal scholarship: critical race theory, post-structuralism, and narrative space, *California Law Review*, 81, 1241–1323).

6. Professor Leticia Garcia, Esperanza Gonzalez and later reference to Professor Sanchez are composite characters based on information from numerous interviews, focus groups, biographical, humanities, and social science literature, and personal experiences of the authors. These characters are influenced by Geneva Crenshaw and Rodrigo Crenshaw, the primary characters in the works of Bell (1987, 1992, 1996, 1998) and Delgado (1995a, 1996, 1999).

### Appendix: Readings on women of color and resistance in the academy

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