Decentering White Space in the Two-Year College English Classroom: A Perspective through CRT, TribalCrit, and LatCrit

By

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Abstract

White space in the educational system is an attitude, environment, ideology dominated by the white dominant voice and creed. This white space intimidates and oppresses Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students, not only physically but mentally and emotionally. This research provides solutions to help instructors decenter white space. In order to begin to decenter white space, instructors need to modify their curriculum and classroom policies, presence and environment, and execution. Using Latina/o Critical Theory, Tribal Critical Race Theory, and Critical Race Theory in Education, this research addresses structural facets of systemic racism BIPOC students in the two-year college English classroom endure.

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Dedication

To my paternal grandparents, Grandma and Crampa Ramírez, “I did it!”

Your love and spirits drive me to be a better version of myself.

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Chapter 1

> "My experiences at Princeton have made me far more aware of my 'Blackness' than ever before. I have found that at Princeton no matter how liberal and open-minded some of my White professors and classmates try to be toward me, I sometimes feel like a visitor on campus; as if I really don't belong. Regardless of the circumstances underwhich I interact with Whites at Princeton, it often seems as if, to them, I will always be Black first and a student second."
> Michelle LaVaughn Robinson, "Princeton-Educated Blacks and the Black Community," Undergraduate thesis, 1985

In the late 1970's, my father worked as a CPO in the Army. During this time, we were stationed at Fort Clayton in Panama. I attended school on the Army base, so a diverse student population surrounded me. When my family and I rode the bus to the city market, the locals would refer to us as los americanos; so I did not see myself any different.

I remember riding to the city market with my mother on the bus. I begged her to allow me to pull the cord and yell - ¡ALTO! When I pulled the cord, the bus quickly stopped, and we hopped off the bus to begin shopping at the market. As a treat, my mom allowed me to use my money I saved to buy some cocoditas, a rolled up coconut candy. Buying a treat at a store was a regular occurrence. Even at the age of seven, I developed a comfort, a literacy, for using balboa - Panamanian money. When dealing with Panamanian currency, there are different amount of balboas such as un centésimo, cinco centésimos de balboa, un décimo de balboa, un cuarto de balboa, medio balboa, and un balboa. Balboas were the first currency I learned to use when I bought items, and the first currency I learned to save in my piggy bank.

After a few years, my father was reassigned to the United States, and my family uprooted to be with him. We were now stationed at Fort Lewis in Tacoma, Washington, and we moved in the dead of winter in the middle of the school year. It was a huge transition leading to culture

shock from living and going to school on the base in Panama compared to living in a city school in Pacific-Northwest and going to public school there. For instance, in Panama, the weather averaged at 86 degrees daily. We lived on the base, which consisted of a two-story house on stilts. My sisters and I had our own bedrooms and bathrooms. We had a huge kitchen and our backyard led into a jungle where seeing an iguana or a sloth was an everyday scene. My school bus stop was in front of our house, so to avoid the heat, I watched for the school bus to come up the street. With my school bag in hand, I ran out the front door as soon as I saw the yellow bus. In contrast, when we relocated to Tacoma, we arrived in early November, so snow blanketed the ground already. We settled into an efficiency apartment in the city not on the base, so my two sisters, my mom, and I slept on the pullout couch, while my father slept on the floor. It took me almost thirty minutes to walk to the school bus stop in the snow, and I waited for another twenty minutes for the school, and those twenty minutes in the cold, snowy mornings hurt my body to the core. No matter how bundled up my mom dressed me the outside elements pained me. The change of countries, cities, living arrangements, schools, and even weather climate was so much for our family.

By accident, my father enrolled me into third-grade instead of second, so I was not able to finish my second-grade year but placed in third grade during the middle of the school year. Within the first week I entered the new school, they administered a standardized practice test in order to figure out what level I should be attending since my school records from Panama had not arrived at my new school. My reading scores were extremely high. I was reading at a 5th reading level, but my math score was not up to par. One the day of the test, I returned to class to my classmates reviewing currency. The activity went as follows: the teacher provided the class a grocery list that included the price of each item on the list. A student was assigned as the person

buying groceries and another student working the cash register. The cash register employee had to add up the groceries and then give back change using huge paper coins (not paper money).

So, again I have only been back in the United States for about a week, and when I walked into the classroom, the teacher appointed me as the employee. I was nervous, but I followed the teacher's instructions. I was unfamiliar with the activity, but when I glanced at the coins I had to choose from, I noticed that the money did not look familiar to me. The coins were not balboas. I felt my face burn with embarrassment. When the grocery shopper had her items, she came to the cashier to check out; however, I did not know how to add up the groceries although I had the experience shopping in Panama. I fumbled with the foreign coins, and I placed out three silver coins. I decided to place out three different sizes of the coins. I figured that the big one is worth more and the smallest coin was worth the least. That was a 2nd grader's logic. Well, as you can expect, I placed the incorrect amount of coins on the counter. The students laughed at me. Ashamed for being so stupid I sat down at my desk. I knew how to count change; I did it at the stores all the time in my old house. In my 2nd grade mind, I failed to comprehend that we were living in another country and that the currency was different, so it is understandable that American currency was foreign to me; however, my teacher did not consider that idea. She, along with the students, laughed at me. In front of the class, she questioned if I was in special education classes in Mexico. I guarantee that my confused expression solidified my teacher's theory of me belonging in special education classes.

The rest of the activity was a blur since I laid my head on my desk and cried. After the activity, the teacher released the class for recess. As the students grabbed their winter jackets and gloves from their cubbyholes, my teacher requested me to stay. I remained at my desk until she demanded me to follow her. She led me into a supply closet. I remember, at first getting

excited, because I saw crayons, pencils with the school logo on them, and heart-shaped red erasers. I thought I was getting a classroom gift for being a new student like a welcome to our class present.

She closed the door when we both entered the supply closet. I distinctly remember her bending over to face me. She inquired where we moved from, and I replied that we moved from Panama. She said she did not understand why I was having trouble with the American currency since I was originally from Texas, according to a form my parents completed prior to joining the new school.

The following words that came out of her mouth has shaped me into the educator that I am now, but it was also the beginning of the obstacles I would endure during my academic trek. She continued with "Well, you are a dumb Mexican girl, and you won't amount to anything." I place this phrase in quotations because that is how I remember it. All I remember is grabbing my jacket and holding back tears. I do not even remember walking out of the closet, but I do recall going outside and watching my classmates play tag. I had never truly seen my classmates and at that point, I realized I was brown. I was not white. In retrospect, the teacher, who humiliated me, already had presumptions and prejudices about me. The teacher set me up to fail - not in a constructive way - but in a demeaning, belittling way. If I would have stayed any longer at that school, I believe I would have. However, after the school year, we moved back to Harlingen, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley, my hometown.

In order to tell my story, my transformation from a Latina student to Latina instructor, I felt it necessary to begin with my earliest experience of dealing with white space in a classroom. Because of this experience, I have dealt with an unbelievable case of imposter syndrome. It has been an obstacle of insecurity that has plagued even today as a PhD student. It was with this

encounter, with my 3rd grade teacher, that has been an academic scar for me, and a scar that I do not want my students to ever have to bear.

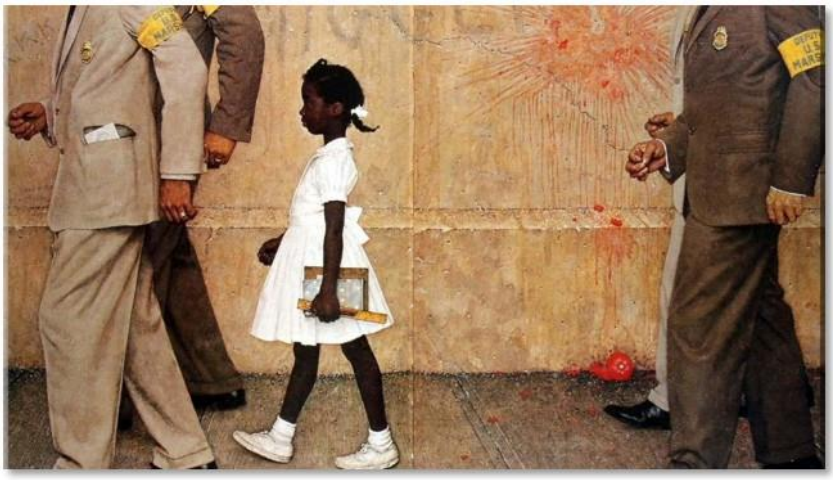
Introduction and Statement of Problem

Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students lack comfort in most community college English classes because, most of the time, the content of these classes and policies fails to reflect them. There are numerous reasons for this problem for BIPOC students such as the environment within the larger institution or to an instructor who fails to help BIPOC students make connections with the lessons and activities done in class.[1] However, in this dissertation I argue that the primary reason why BIPOC students do not feel like they belong is the lack of readings/literature provided in the lessons that the BIPOC students can relate to and racist classroom practices and policies. The problem stems from systematic racism and white space dominated school systems. For generations, educators in higher education teach and act in traditional ways within the classroom. This traditional way of teaching seeps with systemic racism from professors who act as dictators or to professors who claim that they are not racist, but complain about how lazy most BIPOC students are or to the white liberal professors who are blind to their own complicity and/or racist actions. For this reason, there can be significant change if educators are cognizant of what a classroom should entail in order for BIPOC students to be seen, heard, and understood. In order to achieve change, I argue that decentering white space will provide a positive educational change for BIPOC students. With this overview, my goal is to contextualize my argument that education is inherently perceived as a white space even

[1] For instance, when discussing American Indian students' education journey, the "inferior quality of education, assimilation, and deliberate destruction of indigenous tribal languages" are some of the ways content fail BIPOC students (Benham and Stein xviii). .

today. For example, the first major category I provide is racism. In order to understand the background of white space in the education system, one needs to understand the different perspectives of the definition of racism in order to grasp at how white space has seeped into our educational system. The following category - white space - approaches white space within society; however, I connect the definition to white space within society to my definition of white space within higher education especially with 2-year college English classes. The last two categories deal with the foundation of Critical Race Theory, and its merging with education.

Conceptual Framework for the Study



"The Problem We All Live With" Norman Rockwell, 1964 - from the permanent collection of Norman Rockwell Museum

Norman Rockwell painted this powerful piece nine years before I was born. He depicted the now iconic image of Ruby Bridges, a six-year-old girl, who marched into an all-white-public school surrounded by U.S. Marshalls in New Orleans on November 14, 1960. Rockwell captures the tip of the iceberg of racial segregation in this image. The journey to this unforgettable part of educational history must be remembered. It is important to remember how white space originated in our American educational system. Basic history informs us that the school system in the United States of America was cultivated by European colonists. In other words, "schools as we

know them were a European invention. And as the English came to dominate North America it was the English version of schooling that came over time to be the dominant form of education for most people living in the colonies that eventually became the United States" (Fraser 1). The essence of what Dr. James W. Fraser, professor of history and education at New York University, argues is that the school system in the United States was created by white men for white men. In 1606, King James granted the Virginia Company permission to explore lands to colonize in Jamestown in order to gain more power in the New World ("Virginia Company"). With this grant, the company had the power to appoint leaders and took responsibility to consistently provide the colonizers with the supplies they needed to seize land ("Virginia Company"). After years of creating their establishment in Jamestown, the leaders dealt with debates on whether to educate Native Americans and enslaved people and how to go about it. The Governor was instructed to convert the Natives to Christianity and the culture of the English ("Virginia Company"). Some settlers feared that if enslaved people were educated it would make them eligible for freedom due to the fact that one Christian could not enslave another Christian.

To combat this argument, some colonists decided that they could learn to read and convert to Christianity; however, they would remain enslaved. Granted, some slave owners did not want to Christianize their enslaved people because if their enslaved people (their property) were Christianized, it could mean that the slave owners will lose their property. However, converting will prove profitable. Conversion will create "Better Servants . . . render them exceeding Dutiful unto their Masters . . . exceeding faithful in their Business, and afraid of speaking or doing any thing that may justly displease you" (Mather). It was not until the 19th century that literacy of enslaved people was explicitly outlawed. As Virginia Governor Berkeley stated in the 1600s, "I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not

have these for a hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!" (qtd. in Fraser 2). Berkeley did not believe in freedom of thought, but did believe in "an elite, rich, ruling class" ("Virginia Company"). This attitude was common among most whites in the U.S. but especially in the Southern states. Thus, began a culture and an environment catered to white students. The white space, for white male students only, catered to colonizers in the education system. While white space evolved, it remains a negative side that BIPOC students deal with on a daily basis. Even though it was not until the 20th century that schools became segregated, which leads me back to Rockwell's painting.

The image of Ruby Bridges surrounded by militant - looking white men, while passing obscene jargon written on the wall symbolizes what I view as white space in the education system. Although Bridges has to pass hundreds of white people protesting her entering the elementary school, the racism and hate was done verbally; however, when in the classroom and the institution, this six-year-old dealt with teachers not wanting to teach or deal with her. She dealt with an institution that resented her for being in the same school as their white students. She was taught by an institution that was not created for her. This type of concealed racism is the evolution of the education system. In his book, *Racism without Racists*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva maintains that racial inequality within institutions, policies, and laws are subtle (Bonilla-Silva 3). In other words, when my father was growing up, he encountered signs that had "NO Dogs, Negroes, or Mexicans" all around the Texas city he grew up in during the 1950s. During this time period, the racial inequality was apparent by discriminatory practices, but as Bonilla-Silva states, "covert behaviors" is the "new racism" (Bonilla-Silva 3). The moment Ruby Bridges was chosen to be the first Black student to enter an all-white-school, she, and all other BIPOC

students before and after her, endured the betrayal white space created - physically, emotionally, and mentally. For this reason, I keep this image of the white space Ruby Bridges experienced in my thoughts when I create lessons and when I teach my students.

Focusing on the white space in the classroom, I contend that it is imperative that professors take into account the needs of BIPOC students. I posit that by consistently and evenly including counterstories and stories written by BIPOC authors into assigned readings, lessons, and class activities, BIPOC students will have a stronger path in finding their voices in society. In addition to curriculum, it is imperative that instructors adjust classroom policies in order to decenter white space. By adjusting the curriculum and classroom policies, educators can provide a space where BIPOC students can be seen, heard, and understood in their academic journey. BIPOC students may remain oppressed in the educational system. From the echoes of segregation, inequity of facilities and classroom materials, lack of prepared educators, white cultural classroom instruction, and racial attitudes instructors had against BIPOC students to name a few. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, scholar Paulo Freire demonstrates that the main goal of educational oppressors was to conquer the minds and hearts of "deficient" students, and he argued that "the banking concept of education" helped conquer minds of oppressed students (72). This type of oppressive educational practices Freire writes about replicates the structure of the 1660s educational system and white space. The oppressors aimed to control, assimilate, and to dominate BIPOC students. Although progress has occurred within the 360 years, white space persists and remains alive in 2021. To demolish harmful practices, adjustments and changes in the curriculum and classroom policies can decenter white space in the classroom. In respect to the curriculum, instructors must incorporate BIPOC authors along with a curriculum that aligns with these authors in order to decenter white space. In addition,

higher education institutions should create and apply inclusive classroom policies. By adjusting and changing curriculum and policies can give BIPOC students agency in their own learning. One such proposal for change lies within the aim of this dissertation is to address the issue of white space in the two-year college English classroom and to gain a better understanding on how to decenter the white space by applying Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latino-Critical Theory (LATCrit), Tribal Critical Theory (TribalCrit), and Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTEd).

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore some of the different variables that influence white space in the two-year college English classroom. The study seeks to answer the following question: How does a professor decenter the white space using literature written by BIPOC authors and revisioning practices and policies? In Critical Race Theory, storytelling and counterstorytelling are the most characteristic approaches. In my research, I utilize the concept of storytelling and counterstorytelling to argue that by providing this approach in the assigned readings, lessons, and class activities is the beginning of decentering white space in the classroom for BIPOC students. The literature review provides a brief introduction to Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Theory in Education and how white space combats the educational success of BIPOC students.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) Brief History and Background

With decades of fighting oppression and racial inequality, racism was endured with Black leadership and courage encouraged dialogue and education; however, by the early 1970's, the progress of the Civil Rights Movement stalled. During this time, lawyers and activists Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado recognized racism continued within law and legal institutions, so they created new strategies to challenge racism. Although they were inspired by

Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and feminism thought, Bell, Freeman, and Delgado took CRT and launched it further by incorporating lived experiences of BIPOC people and pointing out the cracks within the legal theory and praxis. CLS scholars draw attention to the laws enforced legitimized white dominant attitudes; they also argued that these laws and policies are embedded with racism. However, CRT surpassed CLS to become the dominant approach when dealing with historical and current issues on how the law discriminates against BIPOC constituents. CRT scholars felt the need to respond to the 1954 Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that the doctrine "separate but equal," from the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson, still was not equal at all. Some scholars believed that this was a breakthrough in racial discrimination, but Derrick Bell argued that it was a facade. During this era, the United States endured several wars such as World War II, Korean War, and the Cold War, and racial turmoil within its own people; Bell believed the motivation was not because of a breakthrough in racial discrimination. He saw the act as a ploy to appear inclusive to non-white Americans, so that their U.S. image of inclusivity would serve the U.S. better with the turbulent global relations. In his article, "Brown's Half Light," Bell concludes that *Brown* was only a morsel of hope to minoritized people but failed to solidify a true path to equality in the educational system (Bell 19). In my opinion, the failure to solidify equality in the education system due to whiteness continues today. The lack of fully integrating diverse cultural readings and curricula, along with oppressive classroom policies, into the educational system derails all forms of progression of education for BIPOC students. Educators cannot provide only a morsel of diverse readings and expect that they are decentering the white space in their classrooms. Nor can instructors have classroom policies that prevent BIPOC students from flourishing in an educational setting. This mindset coincides with Richard Delgado's assertion that *Brown* provided whites with their desired global

reputation, but at the end, the whites acquired their goal but failed to provide BIPOC students an education equal to their white classmates (Delgado, "Storytelling" 62). Similarly, Alan D. Freeman acknowledges the fact that antidiscrimination laws, such as *Brown*, legitimizes the subordination of Black people and their circumstances while portraying the appearance as progress (Freeman 1065). The strategies used by Bell, Delgado, and Freeman provides an examination of how whites pass law and act on behalf of Black people and other minoritized people without any discourse with Black or other minoritized people to learn their actual needs or wants. Most white professors can also fall into a pitfall of assigning readings or developing classroom policies that do not take into account BIPOC needs or want in 2-year college English classrooms. In Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back*, and Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought*, these women of color center their personal experiences by fusing activism and alliances within white space in order for their intellectual work to be heard within white traditional practices. Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Collin generate pioneering voices for the next generation of activists. Because of their words, it can generate momentum to the movement of having society hear BIPOC voices.

Equally important is Kimberlé Crenshaw's term, intersectionality. While in law school, she discovered the 1976 case - *Emma DeGraffenreid et al. vs. General Motors* failed to realize how gender and race intersected for the plaintiffs. This case dealt with discrimination by segregating the workforce. DeGraffenreid was an African American woman, but was not hired for any job. She argued that there were jobs for African American men and white women, but none for an African American woman. Their argument was that they hired African Americans and whites in the same company, so they were not discriminating. The court ruled in GM's favor ("DeGraffenreid"). A few years later, as a young law professor, Crenshaw believed that

DeGraffenreid's case was a missed opportunity to highlight the deeper issue. The deeper meaning of having an African American woman fall through the cracks of law. Crenshaw believed that DeGraffenreid was lost in the intersection, an analogy she created to illustrate how multiple modes of inequality and deprivations compound themselves. These intersections create obstacles because they are not understood within traditional ways of thinking.

For instance, Emma DeGraffenreid was at a crossroads with her race and gender in the eyes of the law. This frame was not a view that law, policy, or even society was not accustomed to grasping. Crenshaw realized that there was not a term for this crack that DeGraffenreid fell in. Crenshaw states that when a problem has no name, we cannot see the problem. When we cannot see the problem, we cannot solve it (Crenshaw 102). With this mindset, her metaphor, intersection, became part of CRT as intersectionality. Intersectionality deals with different concepts such as gender, race, racism, and sexism cross with each other, which produces a complex, multifaceted inequalities. In order to expound on the ideologies of CRT scholars such as Bell, Delgado, and Crenshaw, it is important to explain some basic components of CRT.

Basic Five Tenets of CRT

Although throughout the years CRT continues to expand in order to encapsulate all marginalized perspectives, CRT remains true to five basic tenets. The first being that racism is a norm in society (Bell, *Faces* 3; Dixson and Rousseau 4; Solórzano and Delgado Bernal 312). In his article, "Racism Is Here to Stay: Now What?," Derrick Bell declares that society needs to grasp the reality that racism "has been internalized and institutionalized to the point of being an essential and inherently functioning component of [our] society" (89). To explain, on January 6, 2021, a mob of rioters stormed into the United States Capitol building. During this coup, several of the people involved killed officers, destroyed and stole government property, and one of those

people was a 22-year-old white, female named Riley Williams. Williams was charged with theft, obstruction and trespassing; however, on January 21st, she was released from jail under her mother's custody and strict travel restrictions. Yet, in May of 2020, a 15-year-old Black girl named Grace was incarcerated for not completing her online homework. By mid-July 2020, she was still in jail, and a white judge denied her release to her mother stating "I think you are exactly where you are supposed to be" (Gross). Despite the fact that these two women are citizens of the United States, it is obvious that the young Black girl was never going to be treated equally under the law compared to the white woman. This brief example of racism in our justice system illustrates what BIPOC people endure on a daily basis. In relations to higher education, racism will not disappear from policy and content; therefore, educators need to decenter the white space within their classroom. The white space being any type of white ideology that makes BIPOC students not fit or not succeed in an academic setting.

The second CRT tenet is "interest convergence," which maintains that whites tolerate, or even encourages, advances for BIPOC people only if it benefits whites (Bell, "Interest" 51 and Crenshaw 105). A prime example of "interest convergence" deals with *Brown*. As Bell concluded about the main goal of *Brown*, in 1954, was to create a more positive reputation to their global relations, it was not for the benefit of Black students. In his article, "Brown vs. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," Derrick Bell argues that whites accept racial equality as justifiable if it increases the whites' social status (Bell 27). In other words, any racial equality will be accepted if whites benefit from it. *Brown v. Board of Education* being one of those strategic moves for whites to get what they need from global relations. To add, *Brown II* came a year later, which provided a loophole for whites in the South to keep schools segregated as long as they wanted. It benefited whites by taking their time to

allow Black students into their Southern schools with a simple phrase "all deliberate speed" (Bell, "*Brown*'s" 18). In the educational system, public schools and/or higher education, monetary gain is usually the main focus of these institutions. With that being said, the provisions provided for BIPOC students in their educational journey only benefits the institution in the long run but is temporary for BIPOC students. After the student finishes the course, semester, or academic year, they are left to their own devices. For instance, in Sekile M. Nzinga's book, *Lean Semesters: How Higher Education Reproduces Inequity*, Nzinga argues that universities, even though they are celebrated to be progressive in opportunity for BIPOC students, are clearly vulnerable to the inequity of capitalist institutions (Nzinga 6).

The third tenet of CRT is that the concept of race is a product of social thought (Bell, "Who's 80, Ladson-Billings, "Critical" 36, Delgado and Stefancic, *An Introduction* 42). Race has no bearing in any biological or genetic makeup; therefore, race creates a social hierarchy in order to keep BIPOC people on the low level of this hierarchy within society in any global continent. In Michael Omi and Howard Winant's book, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s,* they make the claim that since race is a social construct, racism will remain in society. Whites will maintain racial categories within society because it benefits the whites' societal structure (Omi and Winant 73). This theory of race as a social construct explains how white space in higher education will not dissolve; therefore, by decentering white space in higher education improves the academic journey for BIPOC students.

In the fourth tenet, CRT challenges the white ideologies and experiences as the norm (Bell, "Serving" 238, Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 10 and Delgado and Stenfancic, "Images" 230). In other words, CRT provides energies to shine a spotlight on ways whites racialized any BIPOC group. This tenet clarifies the role of challenging policies and content in higher education institutions. For instance, the lack of hiring BIPOC faculty to represent the BIPOC student body

in higher education. Another breadth of this tenet is what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva illustrates as color-blind racism. He argues that color-blind racism maintains modern racial norms, which makes this tenet difficult to accomplish (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 53). To clarify, in higher education history, curriculum, policy, and content embodies whiteness, which in turn makes any type of resistance against this white ideology strenuous but not impossible. To disrupt the organizational and cultural expressions of whiteness matter in higher education especially for BIPOC students' success. By disrupting whiteness in the educational system begins at decentering white space in the classroom.

In the last basic tenet, the voices of BIPOC people paves the way for the dominant society to learn what the BIPOC people have endured. BIPOC voices share different lived experiences and histories; however, within these lived experiences and histories, BIPOC voices are able to share their oppression in ways that whites are unaware of due to their lack of awareness. In Derrick Bell's article "Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory?," he offers an explanation as to why stories are important to CRT. He argues that BIPOC stories communicate their views and lived experiences dealing with race and racism. The main goal of storytelling and counterstories is to provide a constructive understanding of social justice and to illuminate racial injustice (Dixson, Rousseau, and Donnor 4). This last basic tenet of CRT plays an important role to my argument. In order for BIPOC students to have a voice in higher education, white space needs to be decentered. Storytelling and counterstories decenter white space within the classroom.

Most importantly, storytelling and counterstories provide a venue for BIPOC people to provide their experiences of racial discrimination and oppression. In the academia field, storytelling and counterstory are displayed by fictional stories to illustrate the racial

discrimination and oppression done to BIPOC people. For instance, in Thomas Ross's article, "The Richmond Narratives," he applies different narratives to depict race and racism that fuse opinions of the Supreme Court with plaintiffs (Ross 44). Another example of storytelling and counterstory is in Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales's poem "I Am Joaquin/Yo Soy Joaquin." He provides both a storytelling and counterstory of the vacant Chicano voices within the making of the United States. In his "Property Rights in Whiteness," Derrick Bell wrote extensively utilizing a fictional story to portray the importance of preserving property rather than the society of Black people. In his article, "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative," Richard Delgado provides the same legal event told in different perspectives, which furnishes diverse perspectives that indicate how society constructs legal realism. However, with storytelling and counterstory, Ladson-Billings warns not to provide a deep commitment to sharing these lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, "Critical" 42). To make storytelling and counterstories productive, the purpose is to connect the lived experiences of BIPOC people to racial injustices without watering down the severity of BIPOC voices. Furthermore, Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso argue that counterstory provides a setting to defeat racism, gender bias, and economic hardship in order to legitimize BIPOC voices. In the literature on CRT, there seems to be general agreement that storytelling and counterstories communicate BIPOC needs and wants.

Although I provide a brief explanation of CRT in education (CRTEd), in chapter two, I will provide detailed information on LatCrit and CRTEd to attempt to establish the connection between CRTEd, LatCrit, and white space. I will determine the effectiveness of inserting storytelling and counterstory to decenter white space in the classroom.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Although CRT began in law, CRT has become cross-discipline especially in the discipline of education. Most CRT scholars challenge the curriculum with Anglocentric ideology especially when most white educators initially approach BIPOC students with "deficit theory (Delgado and Stefancic, *An Introduction* 7). This type of "'deficit theory" approach trickles into the classroom, so as instructors, we need to be made aware of and/or learn how to eliminate white space in the classroom especially in 2-year college English courses. Delgado and Stefancic argue that many CRT scholars utilize CRT's tenets to comprehend the downfall of the educational system especially how BIPOC students are taught (Delgado and Stefancic, *An Introduction* 7). Although it is true that these concepts are important to comprehend, any type of theory will not succeed unless white space is decentered within the classroom, curriculum, content, and policy. Why is it important for decentering white space in a 2-year college English classroom? At times, the higher education institutions are bogged down by state level mandates, business processes, etc, so it is the instructor's responsibility to decenter the white space in their 2-year college classroom. BIPOC students have no chance if instructors wait to be instructed to decenter white space, so why not take initiative to make adjustments in your class curriculum and classroom policies?

Derrick Bell in "Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory" claims that although BIPOC people exercise a variety of voice, the narrative voice holds a stronger value when dealing resistance, protection, and echos the most formidable power - "the power of commitment to change" (Bell, "Who's Afraid"80). In another article, Bell analyzes that racism will forever be in the United States and is "cyclical" (Bell, "Racism" 85). This theory that racism in society is a huge cycle provides a framework to explain the slow advancement of racial progress in society especially in education. The lack of BIPOC faculty and staff in higher education fails to decenter

white space in educational institutions. It is our job to break the cycle of having a "racial status" in the educational system (85). By doing so, it will be a powerful effort to help BIPOC students become who they are meant to be in their academic endeavors.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva believes that a "new racism" has evolved to represent today's racism - "color-blind racism" (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 53). He provides four main "frames of color-blind racism, namely, abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism and minimization of racism" (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 74). He argues that with these four facets white people can basically use these pieces as a Lego set: "abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism" (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 54). With "abstract liberalism," "whites can appear 'reasonable' and even 'moral,' while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality" (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 56). The next frame is "naturalization," which is a way for whites to justify racial injustice by explaining that it is "natural occurrences" at work (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 56). The third frame is "cultural racism," which relies on stereotypes perpetuated by society, and the last frame is "minimization of racism" meaning that whites play off racism as the positive progression society has made with racism. Therefore, Bonilla-Silva believes that white people swap between frames and/or combine frames in order to have an argument to explain their color-blind racism. Most educational systems do exchange between these four frames, which prevents color-blind racism to continue. Although Keleher and Johnson argue that it is the institution's responsibility to recognize and confront racism within their own institution; however, if the institution utilizes these frames of color-blindness, racism will continue to perpetuate within that institution (Keleher and Johnson 24). Comparatively, Bonilla-Silva states the race in power within the institution, which is usually white, will mimic the racial social status within society, which does not help BIPOC students (Bonilla-Silva,

"Rethinking Racism" 469). In order to provide BIPOC students a valuable and equal education, the institution should take steps in decentering the white space; however, I argue that, as we wait for the institution to take action, instructors can begin decentering the white space within their own classrooms.

Most CRT scholars, when discussing higher education, focus on three items "(a) colorblindness, (b) selective admissions policy, and (c) campus racial climate" (Ledesma and Calderón 214). However, very few discuss how CRT can help eliminate white space in the individual classroom. Building on CRT's five principles I created, in the dissertation, three basic principles for faculty to use to help BIPOC students cultivate their voice in order to flourish in college. The first principle deals with presence and environment. Presence and the environment in the classroom remains the first angle BIPOC students encounter; therefore, it is imperative that the instructor creates an inviting, warm, and engaging presence and environment. There are multiple ways to create this type of presence and environment. For example, with presence, the instructor can greet every student as the students walk into the class. Several students want to slink in the back, but to acknowledge their presence from the beginning indicates that the instructor respects and values their presence. For the environment, I provide an activity at the beginning of class to help the students understand the structure. For instance, when I provided class activities, I usually have the students work in groups, so from day one, I set up the class for collaborative learning. Granted, I may have to make adjustments within the groups, but I make sure the students get to know their group members because they will be their main learning cohort. The main condition in this first principle is to challenge the balance of power from instructor to student.

The second principle concerns the curriculum and classroom policies. The instructors are responsible to teach all students, so it is imperative that instructors do not leave out BIPOC students in the conversation. For instance, in Fall 2020 I mentored a faculty member with their syllabus. She was assigned to teach American Literature from 1965 to the Present. During the *Zoom* meeting, my colleague shared her syllabus, and I automatically noticed that she only had two Black writers, one Native American writer, no Asian or Middle East writers, and no Latinx writers. However, by just me pointing this out to my colleague, she was able to makeadjustments to her syllabus. She did mention that she was out of her comfort zone in teaching BIPOC writers, but she was willing to make this change in order for her BIPOC students to connect with the lessons. A week later, we had another *Zoom* call to discuss the readings she added to her curriculum, and she even mentioned that a couple of BIPOC students were excited to begin their next project because the instructor encouraged BIPOC students to include their native language within the project, which leads me to the second part of this principle, classroom policies.

In classroom policies, most institutions provide a standard syllabus template in order to include all institution policies; however, instructors can adjust most classroom policies. The one I believe makes a huge impact in decentering white space is to create assignments, projects, and/or research that BIPOC students can utilize languages.

The last principle I believe will decenter white space in a classroom is execution of the curriculum. It is pivotal to escape the traditional ways of teaching, which is why execution is important when being a facilitator of knowledge. As I weave throughout the dissertation, counterstory, storytelling, and oral stories provides a valid theory that administers the ideology that BIPOC students' counterstories, storytelling, and oral stories are credible knowledge.

Although the second and third principle may seem similar, they are in fact quite different. The second principle deals with curriculum and classroom policies that may hinder BIPOC students in their learning. For instance, curriculum should include readings written by BIPOC authors in order for BIPOC students to connect and see themselves. Without including these works, instructors will neglect inclusivity of BIPOC students, and most classroom policies reflect a dominant attitude that most BIPOC students consider intimidating and threatening. Whereas, the last principle of execution places emphasis on valuing BIPOC students' counterstories, storytelling, and oral stories as valid and credible knowledge.

An excellent scholarly resources on counterstory and storytelling, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric of Writings of Critical Race Theory* by Aja Y. Martinez illustrates counterstory as methodology and that this type of method empowers BIPOC people because of challenging the majoritarian voice (3). The inclusion of counterstory in assignments will prevent BIPOC students from being "at the bottom of the well" in their academic journey (Bell, *Faces* 110). With these four tenets BIPOC students can begin to heal and grow from the academic scars the educational system caused, and instructors will hopefully learn to teach with BIPOC students in mind. I plan to expand in chapters two and three.

I feel that by following the CRT tenets of recognizing voices of BIPOC people will help BIPOC students feel heard, seen, and understood in the two-year college English classroom. In their article, scholars María C. Ledesma and Dolores Calderón argue that having Critical Race scholarship divulges how structures created by the dominant voice have established and controlled educational gateway for BIPOC students (Ledesma and Calderón 214). Therefore, it is imperative to find ways to decenter white space in the classroom. Ledesma and Calderón find that even though CRT provides a looking glass to assist in identifying racism in institutions, CRT

does not really provide solutions (219). I assume that by creating a positive environment for BIPOC students, incorporating connections with BIPOC students, including BIPOC authors into your syllabus and counterstory assignments will be an opening to a remedy to decentering white space in two year college English classes.

Racism

In his book, *Racism without Racists*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva theorizes that the reason why racial matters cannot be solved between whites and BIPOC people: whites view the term racism quite differently. For whites, they see racism as isolated situations; however, BIPOC people view racism within systems, policies, laws, and institutions (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 8). Bonilla-Silva's theory of the debate of prescribed terms of racism is insightful because it sheds insight on the pervasive problem of white space in higher education. Also, in his article, "The White Space," Yale professor Elijah Anderson voiced concern that white space has a distinct feature for Black people; it indicates a space that includes a large number of white people; however, he also mentions that white space comes in different variations (13). I look at how white space, not only has a huge amount of white people, but that in higher education, this white space includes white ideology within policy, curriculum, content, and behavior. That white space in higher education bolsters a white mentality that prevents BIPOC students from experiencing an education equal to their white classmates. In this dissertation, I present three basic tenants to decenter white space in the English two-year college classroom. Some instructors may not even realize that they are creating white space in the classroom by using "the right to dominance" (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism* 24). They may believe since they are being tolerant or professional with a student that they are not being racist; therefore, they are not creating a white space in this classroom. Additionally in Lisa D. Delpit's article, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other

People's Children," Delpit explains that, at most times, white educators do not perceive themselves as having power over their BIPOC students (284). This power, which I refer to as white space, should be realized in order for educators to decenter it in this classroom. I feel that it is important to analyze racism as the main premise of my research because it is important for readers to understand that racism is the foundation of white space especially with a focus on white space in two-year colleges.

White Space

Although he did not create the colloquial phrase – *white space,* Yale professor of sociology Elijah Anderson defines white space as a space with an "overwhelming presence of white people and their absence of black people;" however, he also mentions that white space comes a in variety of forms (13). I focus on how the classroom environment in 2-year college English classes contributes to white space by the curriculum and classroom policies, presence and environment, and the execution of the curriculum in this dissertation. My goal is to use white space as a lens to comprehend how it operates in a classroom, and by understanding white space, decentering white space will prevail. One of the central claims of this dissertation is to determine the effect of decentering the white space in order for BIPOC students to thrive in their educational path. I elaborate on Anderson's perspective of white space as an "overwhelming presence of white people" within higher education. Furthermore, I unfold how content and policy within traditional higher education institutions invoke white space through curriculum and classroom policies, presence and environment, and the execution of the curriculum in chapters 2-4. Ruby Bridges navigated white space with prevalent white ideology, attitudes, beliefs, and structures, but navigation must not be a skill BIPOC students continuously use. If navigation was

to be a skill, BIPOC students will grapple with trauma, exhaustion, and lack of self-trust in their academic ability. Two-year colleges need to make significant changes in order to decenter white space within the classrooms and the institution. Anderson proposed theories as to why when a Black person enters the white space, the people in the space immediately cast judgement as to why a Black person has invaded their space. While navigating through this white space, Black people could be vulnerable to physical and social hazards. Within the educational system, white space is not limited to Black students. BIPOC students experience white space in their everyday lives; however, the educational system, especially in two-year colleges, should decenter white space. While there is a broad agreement white space was not only created by whites, but also consciously and unconsciously implemented by whites using subtle attitudes, views differ when it comes to BIPOC creating this white space (Sassi et al. 43). Both viewpoints agree that white space is a myriad of white people occupying a space where BIPOC people are judged and questioned within that space; however, neither expand on the fact if BIPOC people can actually create white space. To point out, Victor M. Rios argues that white space can unintentionally include attitudes and viewpoints that bolster whiteness and white privilege (Rios 259). In other words, white space can be created inadvertently, which I attempt to shed light on the fact that white space can be created by BIPOC faculty and staff as well. BIPOC faculty and staff can cultivate the attitudes and viewpoints of white ideology.

As an illustration, when these BIPOC instructors were just beginning their academic journey as students, most BIPOC students never experienced being taught by a BIPOC instructor. In their article, "The Current Latinx/a/o Landscape of Enrollment and Success in Higher Education," scholars Sylvia Hurtado, Joseph Ramírez, and Katherine Cho argue that "Although Latinx/a/o students currently account for approximately one in six students (16.5%)

participating in higher education, many colleges and universities enroll a much smaller percentage of Latinx/a/o students and employ few Latinx/a/o faculty and staff (Hurtado, Ramirez, and Cho 3). With these statistics, one can assume that if the numbers are low for Latinx community, it will be low for most BIPOC groups.

When BIPOC instructors become educators, they may mimic the white space they were taught in. In other words, BIPOC instructors can intentionally or unintentionally copy the teaching ways of their previous instructors. *When I was a student, most of my instructors sat behind a desk while lecturing or when we entered the classroom, my instructors would stand at the classroom door not necessarily there to greet us, but to inspect us. So when we sat down at our desks, I already felt a disconnect with the teacher. I felt as if I was being judged by my looks. As an instructor, I stood by the classroom door during passing periods and would inspect the students. What was I inspecting? I don't know. I was just doing what I saw for most of my public-school education. Needless to say, the first couple of days of teaching my BIPOC students were nervous when they entered the class. I was confused as to why a young Latina student was nervous to talk to me. She was practically my mini-me, so what am I doing that is making her uncomfortable? It wasn't until the third day of my teaching career I was at my usual post between classes, and I noticed two of my female students giggling with each. They looked so happy, but as soon as they approached our class with me standing, or should I say intimidating, at the door, the smiles disappeared in a flash. Their eyes just lost their joy. It was me; I am the reason. That day I changed my entire structure of teaching. As a student I felt disconnected from my teacher because he seemed to judge me, I was doing the same to my students because I thought that was what I was supposed to do. Now, when the students come to my class, I am never at the same spot, but no matter where I am, I always smile with joy at every student.* With

this experience, I have learned that BIPOC instructors can unintentionally create white space in their classrooms. In fact, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Paulo Freire points out the "problem with humanization" (43). He notes that liberation is not only for the oppressed, but for the oppressors. In other words, if one side of this partnership shifts, so will the other side. With my teaching experience at the beginning of my career, I understand the nature of my shift. For the same reason, in *On Critical Pedagogy,* Henry A. Giroux claims that it is imperative that educators bridge knowledge taught in the classroom to students' experiences in order for them to become "critical agents" in their learning (5). My definition of white space in a higher education school system, such as a community college, entails an instructor creating a class environment, either with mannerisms and/or curriculum, that communicates to BIPOC students that the professor is superior, and the students are lesser, which is an echo of the dominate oppressor and the oppressed. To decenter the white space affords BIPOC students agency in their learning.

Most BIPOC students, despite them being first year college students or coming from multiple generations of college educated family members, acquire a community-based learning environment. To demonstrate, Blanca Campa, Professor of Educational Psychology at El Paso Community College, claims that student who are at-risk, such as BIPOC students(because of the lack of support not because they lack intelligence) find that "family, school experiences, peer interaction, and community can be very reliable factors that influence and determine the well-being of individuals" (23). If the higher education institution does not create an environment that does not welcome or help BIPOC students navigate the confusing and intimidating ways of college, within their classroom, instructors can help balance the lack of what the institution is not doing. Instructors can reflect on their curriculum such as readings, lessons, activities, and group activities to decenter the white space they created.

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When I was taking undergraduate courses, most students had to take the basic writing courses such as first-year composition classes, and most instructors taught these courses using literature. The literature assigned included Mark Twain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and occasionally, a white woman writer would be added to the list. This addition of a white woman writer to the reading list still lacked a connection for me in spite of me being female because the writer was white. However, it was not until my junior year in college that I enrolled in a course titled – Hispanic Literature - taught by Eduardo del Rio. In that course, I finally read from writers, who took me on a familiar journey (something I know) with family, friends, and my community. Writers, such as Sandra Cisneros, Rudolfo Anaya, Tomas Rivera, Oscar Hijuelos, Ana Castillo, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Pat Mora, revealed the power of story to me. At that moment of realizing my people had - and have- powerful voices, everything changed. I became engaged, inspired, and connected within the classroom. I grew up in South Texas where the majority of the people are Mexican-Americans, so why did it take me until my junior year of college to read from writers who are like me? Even in the community college in South Texas I attended before I transferred to a university, I only read works from Jonathan Edwards, Mary Rowlandson, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. As a young Latina woman, I would have appreciated to read works by BIPOC writers. This enlightenment, of realizing that there were prominent writers in the world who preceded and resembled me, would have proved to be encouraging during times of self-doubt. My connection between my real world and new ideas gained from the course would have been valuable to me. If white space was decentered throughout my academic career, I would have realized my worth within the academia field at a young age.

Current studies appear to support the notion that storytelling and counterstories as methodology assists BIPOC voices to be heeded by an institution not initially created for minoritized students. For instance, if I had read works written by BIPOC authors earlier in my academic journey, I would have realized that my own people have struggled and survived. I could have used those stories and counterstories as a sense of pride and motivation to believe in myself (Campa 34). The issue of white space in the two-year college English classroom can be decentered by instructors altering their curriculum and classroom policies, presence and the environment they create, and the execution of the curriculum. By adjusting these three aspects in the classroom instigates the decentering of white space, which is instrumental to provide a safe and productive learning environment for BIPOC students. By incorporating Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latino-Critical Theory (LATCrit), Tribal Critical Theory (TribalCrit), and Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTEd), decentering white space can advance BIPOC students in their academic progress. In order to facilitate decentering white space in an English classroom, these theories will help expose and contest continued traditional educational contents and higher education institutional structures. In order to achieve the decentering of white space in an English classroom, these theories will help unmask and challenge continued traditional educational curriculum and higher education institutional structures and policies.

In this chapter, I elaborated on terminologies and a brief history of racism utilized throughout the dissertation. The reason for providing this background information is to create a foundation of prior knowledge for the rest of the chapters to have context. I also incorporate my personal storytelling and counterstory that interweaves with the topic of white space and racism within the educational system. In chapter 2, I demonstrate how to decenter white space by incorporating LatCrit and CRITEd. I explore the effects of history and law with an

understanding of the struggles that Mexican-American students endured due to oppression and not achieving educational success. I examine three historical court cases of South Texas: *Salvatierra v. Del Rio ISD*, *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD*, *Hernandez v. Driscoll ISD*, and *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi ISD*. These cases illustrate the racism towards Mexican-American students on the basis of skin color, language, and economic status within the educational system. In this chapter, I integrate LatCrit with CRITEd as a theoretical framework to encapsulate the importance of instructors to modify their curriculum and classroom policies, presence and environment, and execution.

In chapter 3, I provide two historical cases to address American Indian experiences with colonization and racism through the lens of TribalCrit and for the inclusion of oral stories into the curriculum. Oral stories are rarely incorporated into literature; however, by including oral stories into the curriculum provides a venue for lived-experiences and perspectives of American Indian communities. The concept of TribalCrit along with CRITEd is further explored to provide a framework to decenter white space in a classroom.

In chapter 4, I create a fictional interview with the late scholar Malcolm Knowles to gain insight into the use of andragogy in order to discuss the appropriate usage of pedagogy and andragogy. It is important for two-year college instructors to understand and use these two terms correctly. By incorporating andragogy along with pedagogy into your classroom, educators will learn to be vigilant to BIPOC student voices and lived-experiences. The fifth chapter concludes my argument of the importance of decentering white space in a classroom by transforming curriculum and classroom policies, presence and environment, and execution to empower BIPOC students. Using LatCrit, TribalCrit, and CRTEd as a theoretical framework, I illuminate and address structural features of oppressions and racism BIPOC students have endured in the

educational system. This dissertation is not intended to be a theoretical framework that abolishes systemic racism in the educational system; however, I am arguing that instructors can begin to decenter white space.

Chapter 2

> "I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess -- that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for 'talking back' to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name. 'If you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong.'"
>
> Gloria Anzaldúa - *Borderlands/La Frontera*

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When I entered my 10th year of teaching English at a predominately white North Texas middle school, the new academic year began with all the usual meetings and updates; however, there was one update that shook me. I taught on-level and honors 7th and 8th English and was excited about planning for the new school year. When returning from the summer break, teachers usually returned to school a week before the students to prep for the academic year. The last day of the teacher prep week, the teachers from the school had our one annual meeting with the principal hosted by the librarians and Parent Teacher Association (PTA). That year the PTA outdid themselves! On each round table every chair contained a goodie bag. Seeing the elaborately decorated gift bags, I couldn't help but to reminisce about my former middle school teachers. I wondered if they had these types of prep weeks. I remember them looking worn down and old and imagining them smiling made me giggle. "Have you opened your bag?" my colleague asked. I opened the bag. The PTA catered us with Starbucks and Target gift cards, coffee mugs with the school mascot on it, a school t-shirt, a lanyard, our annual academic calendar, and the agenda for the meeting. They also provided an ice cream bar with all of the fixings. As my colleagues began to fill the library, I grabbed a place in line to get my treat. After thirty-minutes, the faculty settled in their chairs with their ice cream creations. The principal stood. He thanked the librarians and the PTA for such a wonderful welcome back to

school. The PTA and the librarians started to clean up, and at that time, the principal addressed us with his yearly welcome speech. There were four things on the agenda I noticed the honors program last on the agenda. During most of the meeting, I doodled. It was my way of not focusing on the honors program. On my agenda, I wrote - What changes did the Board implement? The Board usually liked to spring last minute changes to the faculty and expect those changes to take effect immediately. Ironically, most of the Board never taught in public school. Go figure. Finally, the last agenda! I placed my pen down and looked up at the principal. "Okay, now for the end. As most of you know, previously, a student had to maintain an 80-grade average to remain in the honors program. If their grade for any particular honors class dropped below an 80, that student was placed on probation for 6 weeks in order to entice students to raise their grade. If they fail to bring their up to an 80, they would be removed from that honors course and placed in an on-level course," explained the principal. "Well, over the summer, the board approved a new motion to be followed across the district immediately" he paused. He continued, "Instead of students maintaining an 80 to remain in honors, the grade would be lowered to a 70. The Board believes that by lowering the average grade in an honors class, it will allow more minority students to qualify to be in honors." I looked around the room and most of my colleagues had an expression of confusion that reflected my own confusion. The principal began his closing remarks. He wasn't even phased with the tense silence. I immediately raised my hand. "Yes. Kassandra, do you have a question?" he replied. "Well, I am confused about the grade average change in honors. So let me see if I am getting this straight in my head. Okay, so for example, I teach English honors and am a Latina. So the Board believes that the school district has to lower their standard grade average because minority students are not bright enough to be in honors?" I paused but continued before my principal had a chance to answer: "So the Board

believes that a minority is smart enough to teach it, but a minority student is not smart enough to be in honors on their own merit?" Most of my white colleagues would not look me in the eye. It was as if they were embarrassed for me. The principal quickly moved on to end the meeting. I left after that academic school year.

Introduction

In the 1997 film, *Selena*, the director, Gregory Nava, loosely depicts the late Tejano music star Selena's life and her murder in 1995. The movie shines light on Selena's life, played by Jennifer Lopez, and her rise to stardom. At one point in the movie, Selena's father, Abe Sr., played by Edward James Olmos, explains the distressing position that Mexican-Americans play in the society. In the scene, Selena y Los Dinos, her band, were scheduled to perform in Monterrey, Mexico. Her father, concerned about her lack of Spanish, warned her about the backlash they will receive from the Mexican press because of her lost cultural identity of not speaking Spanish. Selena and her brother, Abie, played by Jacob Vargas expressed excitement about the scheduled performance, but their father has some hesitations about it. Her father explained, "They don't accept us there. They never have." Selena exclaims "Hello? We're Mexicans!" Abe Sr. corrected, "No, we are Mexican-Americans, and they don't like Mexican-Americans." Abie replies with "It's all the same." Abe Sr. rationalizes "Listen, being Mexican-American is tough. Anglo's jump all over you if you don't speak English perfectly. Mexicans jump all over you if you don't speak Spanish perfectly.[2] We got to be twice as perfect as

[2] For most multilinguals, code switching, which is continuously switching back and forth between languages, is a daily practice. For the Latinx community, Gloria Anzaldúa states that "We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages" in order to identify ourselves (77). She explains her "forked tongue" conclusion with "For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard . . . Spanish nor standard English" (77). In the dialogue of the clip of *Selena*, Anzaldúa's description encapsulates the dichotomy struggle most Latinx people endure.

anybody else. I'm serious. Our family have been here for centuries and yet they [Anglos] treat us as if we just swam across the Rio Grande." He continues "Japanese-Americans, Italian-Americans, German-Americans their homeland is on the other side of the ocean, ours is right next door - right over there" as he points to the border of Texas and Mexico. "We gotta prove to the Mexicans how Mexican we are and we got to prove to the Americans how American we are. We have to be more Mexican than the Mexicans and more Americans than Americans both at the same time. It's exhausting! Man, no one knows how tough it is to be Mexican-American," he concludes. This clip of the movie depicts the reality of the crisis in identity that most Latinx people experience especially in the educational pipeline. Latinx community occupies a crossroad between cultures, language, and identity. To illustrate the complexity of Latinx identity, it is essential to understand the most important document regarding Mexican-Americans - The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 ended a two-year war with Mexico. Mexico was the only obstacle that prevented Americans from continuing the Manifest Destiny, which was an ideology that Americans coveted to expand their territory that had been previously owned by the Indigenous people and Mexicans. The Americans had to be clever about obtaining their desired expansion. With the Treaty, Americans were able to acquire over "500,000 square miles of lang" (Griswold Del Castillo 189). Within the Treaty, Articles VIII and IX are the two main articles essential to Mexican-American identity. Article VIII emphasizes that Mexicans, who lived in land that was controlled by Mexico, can remain on the land, or they can move to Mexico and still possess their land. The Mexicans who do decide to stay on their land have one-year to declare whether or not they will be Mexican citizens or Americans. Failure to decide by the one-year deadline will default their citizenship to the United States (Griswold Del Castillo 189).

The following Article IX states that the people who choose to be or the ones that have defaulted to be a US citizen have the full rights of being an American citizen, which includes "free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction" (Griswold Del Castillo 190). Because of these articles, Mexicans were now labeled white and/or other white on government documents. For example, my family have lived in the San Marcos and Austin, Texas area prior to the Treaty, so my family and their descendants, on government documents such as birth certificates, were labeled white. However, within these two articles and the entirety of the Treaty, there is no mention of the Spanish language. The combination of being labeled white by the American government and no law that nullifies the Spanish language fosters complexity in Mexican-American's identity.

As pointed in the *Selena* movie clip, even though Mexican-Americans are labeled as white and/or non-white, Latinx people dwell in a place of not specifically fitting within the white and Black lens, which places Latinx in a position to prove our identity in order to combat racial discrimination within society and in the educational system. The Latinx community have straddled not only a physical border but a metaphorical one as well. With physical borders, immigration status maintains a major obstacle for most Latinx students. Metaphorical borders meaning facets that differentiate Latinx people in society's view such as language, ethnicity, economic, cultural, and social characteristics that most white society views as lesser than. Latinx students were racially, culturally, linguistically, and academically thought of as inferior in the classroom; however, not much has changed in today's educational school system.

In this system, Latinx students have dealt with educational inequity and obstacles that prevent advancement of Latinx students because of both the physical and metaphorical borders. Utilizing CRTEd (Critical Race Theory in Education) and LatCrit (Latino Critical Theory) to

explore the effects of history and law, especially in Texas school desegregation cases, provides an understanding as to why Mexican-Americans have unspoken histories of their struggles with segregation and achieving educational equality. Chapter 2 analyzes the historical educational injustices done to Mexican-American students, and how these injustices have created generational white space within the educational system and how this white space oppresses Latinx students today.

In addition, CRTEd and LatCrit extracts any laws that undermine Latinx people's rights. Latinx students seek to use education to elevate their identities and to enhance their economic standing in society. By discussing four major Texas legal cases, *Salvatierra v. Del Rio Independent School District* (1930), *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District* (1948), *Hernandez v. Driscoll Independent School District* (1948), and lastly, *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*, I will illustrate the connection of white space historically and currently along with the importance of story and counterstory as a methodology in the classroom.[3] The last three cases deal primarily on the struggles and segregation of Mexican Americans in Texas because as of 2010 U.S. Census, 38.2% of Texas's population is Latinx people ("U.S. Census Quickfacts Texas"). Since I will be referring to Texas cases dealing with Mexican-American students, I will be interchangeably utilizing the terms Mexican-Americans when dealing with people from Texas, Latinx when referring to the group of people from a Latin background, and BIPOC when signifying a group of minoritized people.

This chapter focuses on Latina/o Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Theory in Education. Combining both LatCrit and CRTEd provides a lens to view how Mexican-American

[3] These four legal cases deal with small Texas towns. Del Rio, TX is a border town approximately 150 miles west of San Antonio. Bastrop, TX is a small town located approximately 30 miles southeast of Austin, Corpus Christi, TX is a town located on the Gulf Coast, and Driscoll has a population less than 800 people and is located approximately 28 miles west of Corpus Christi, TX.

students are being overlooked in the educational system and how white space in the educational system forms within the institution and classrooms. I proceed to move into scholar Elijah Anderson's definition of white space as a way to situate the main claim of decentering white space in two-year English classrooms into the dissertation. In addition, I contribute solutions that instructors can accomplish to decenter white space in their classrooms.

LatCrit and Critical Race Theory in Education

Although CRT and LatCrit are similar, LatCrit branches off to explore struggles that the Latinx community endure such as education, immigration, language, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture (Solorzano and Bernal 311). LatCrit illuminates and addresses the multidimensional backgrounds of Latinx people. LatCrit is not in competition with CRT but acts more like a supplement by broadening CRT to include elements essential to the needs of the Latinx community (Solorzano and Bernal 312). One of its main stances that provides authority to LatCrit is storytelling and counterstory. For LatCrit, storytelling and counterstory transfers Latinx voices in areas where their voices are silenced by the majoritarian voices. CRT scholar Ian Haney Lopez infers that by exercising LatCrit, it supplies a lens to view the experiences of Latinx within the United States. He examines that under the law, the term "white" is not limited only to label white people (Haney Lopez, *White by Law* 776). In other words, due to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican-Americans do not fit into specific racial categories. They straddle a crossroad of "cultural and national borders due to the labeling by the U.S. government (Haney Lopez, *White by Law* 776). He also contends that by not acknowledging Mexican-Americans as a race negates perspectives of lived experiences (Haney Lopez, *Race* 483). However, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic made the claim that by having racial categories provide power that benefits whites and authenticates white values, beliefs, and knowledge. It also

normalizes these white values, beliefs, and knowledge over BIPOC people, which in turn, dominates BIPOC people (*CRT Introduction* 21). Although I agree with Delgado and Stefancic, they overlook how Mexican-Americans were forced into the white and other-white category. Language, cultural traditions, and education of Mexican-Americans were taken in order for them to assimilate into white's "values, beliefs, and knowledge" (Delgado and Stefancic, *CRT Introduction* 21). This intersection between white and Black lends Mexican-Americans to endure to a menagerie of racial discrimination.

In the 2010 Census report, Latinx community is the largest minoritized group in the United States, and this growth poses anti-immigration worries for the white community ("U.S. Census Quickfacts). The fear of the Latinx population explosion to some believe it will unbalance the whiteness power. This unbalance muddles the white-Black binary that most white people have accustomed themselves to accepting. In David Montejano's book, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986,* Max Handman best explains this narrow racial attitude "American society has no social technique for handling partly colored races. We have a place for the Negro and a place for the white man: The Mexican is not a Negro, and the white man refuses him an equal status" (Montejano 158). In short, the Latinx population challenges the traditional white-Black paradigm. However, in his article "The Black-White Binary Paradigm of Race," CRT scholar Juan F. Perea suggests that the white-Black binary leaves out other minoritized groups, which eliminates their histories (Perea 458). I agree that the white-Black binary omits other minoritized groups such as Latinx, Asian-American, and American Indians; however, I think Perea's concerns about the dangers of scholars focusing solely on the white-Black paradigm nullifies any other minoritized groups' needs and wants of equitability (Perea 464).

Whereas Athena D. Mutua, law professor, believes that Perea overlooks a couple of points to his argument. The first is that Perea contends that Black and white people are on equal ground. In other words, that they have the "equal power" (Mutua 9). She continues that Perea places blame on not only white scholars, but of Black scholars for continueing the white/Black paradigm, which diminishes the voices of other minoritized groups; however, Mutua claims that Perea does not account for the racial hierarchy in his analysis of the white/Black paradigm. Strictly speaking, Mutua argues that instead of placing blame on Black scholars, scholars need to focus that blame on "institutions of white supremacy" (Mutua 10). It is these institutions that create content and policies that thwart equality and equity for BIPOC people especially in higher education institutions.

Concerning the Texas educational system, Mexican-Americans have been oppressed in white space due to the content of what and how they were taught, policies that afflicted any intellect growth, and loopholes in the law that prevented them to grow as an American citizen. Regarding Mexican-American people, journalist scholar Roberto Suro urges us to grasp the ideology that to understand the true essence of the Mexican-American is to hone in on two viewpoints simultaneously. The Mexican-Americans are "a population of newcomers and a population with a long history in this country" (xi). To put it differently, the history, culture, education, and status of Mexican-Americans are extensive and complex; therefore, it is extremely hard to situate their presence in a white/Black paradigm. Within the educational experience, Mexican-American and Black students have intertwined experiences with segregation and lack of equality and equity. However, with laws and policy, it proved difficult for Mexican-Americans to disentangle their racial identity and language with the educational system. Historically, Mexican-American students have had their voices and identities lost and

buried within white space in higher education. Most two-year colleges continue to this day to silence Latinx students with white space.

White Space as Oppression

Inspired by Elijah Anderson's definition of white space "a situation that reinforces a normative sensibility in settings in which black people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present. . . . a perceptual category - and they typically approach that space with care" (Anderson 10). In two-year colleges, the lack of BIPOC faculty representation, the neverending cycle of developmental English courses, and content and presence in the English classroom cultivates white space within the institution and the English classroom. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the impact of white space on BIPOC students, specifically Mexican-American students in Texas.

The following Texas legal cases illustrate the purpose of CRTEd and LatCrit for Latinx students. These cases illustrate how the law (state and federal) and educational policies, together and separately, historically oppressed Mexican-American students; however, not much has changed within content and policy within the educational system. First, in 1930, twenty-four years before the *Brown v. Board of Education*, in a small Texas town of Del Rio, the West End elementary school was a segregated school for Mexican-American children. This school had two rooms that provided three classes of curriculum for a multitude of Mexican-American students. With this inequity, the parents of Jesus Salvatierra, along with other parents, and attorney John L. Dodson sued the school district in the case known as *Del Rio ISD v. Salvatierra*, the first class action lawsuit against segregated schools in Texas. The grounds of this case was that the West End students were deprived of the resources that were given to the white students in other elementary schools (González 334).

Despite the fact, the district judge, Judge Joseph Jones, ruled in favor of Salvatierra and the other parents. The judge agreed that the school district could not "assign [Mexican-American students] to separate schools, and exclude them from schools maintained for children of other white races, merely or solely because they are Mexicans" (Donato and Hanson). However, the school board filed an appeal and won. The school board's appeal argued that the West End students had "linguistic deficiencies" and because of these deficiencies, it was necessary to segregate the students in order to provide guidance for their language "handicaps" (González 335). In this situation, the "linguistic deficiencies" equated to the Mexican-American students speaking Spanish, and the Del Rio school board rejected this lack of conformity of speaking the English language because it threatened white society. Historically, school districts consistently punished Mexican-American students for speaking Spanish, which in turns deprives Latinx of their native language.

With globalization today, society, in most viewpoints, view speaking multiple languages as advantageous; however, that has not always been the case with Spanish-speakers. Latinx people continue to endure racism when speaking Spanish especially in Texas. Microaggression comments like *this is America, speak English* or *But you speak so well* prove that language continues to be a dividing force.

The division can be seen in most two-year English community colleges, which incorporate language policies in syllabi. For example, under the "Writing Expectations" expectation, the verbiage that demands students to write in standard American English. The oppressive action of banning BIPOC students from writing in their languages demonstrate white space in an institution. By banning BIPOC students' native language perpetuates the traditional white dominant ideology, which creates a space that prevents BIPOC students from obtaining

any academic growth. In reality, a majority of the time, *attitudes about language are never about the language*. The attitudes are always about *the person* - speaking the language.

In 1948, two Texas towns approximately three hours apart were dealing with their own legal cases. The first case, *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD*, nearly 20 Mexican-American families led by Minerva Delgado initiated the lawsuit due to their children being segregated from the white school. The revelation of this case was that the instructors, with school board approval, placed the Mexican-American students in a separate school due to their surname and language (González 338). In this case, the judge ruled that the school district violated the students' Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States: "no state shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (338). However, if the district provided tests to illustrate the students' English language proficiency, then the students can be segregated from the other students. The issue with this loophole is that the tests were not very fair nor did they really offer any meaningful measure of language proficiency.

In the same year, in the *Hernandez v. Driscoll ISD* case, the school district not only separated the Mexican-American students from the white students although they were in the same building but had the school separated into two sections: one section for the Mexican-American students and the other section for white students. The Mexican-American students were forced to complete three different levels of first grade in order to integrate the students into the white section of the school. The three levels included "low first," (was for the first two years, and "high first," (was for the last year in first grade) (Vara 8). By the time these students completed three levels of first grade, three other classes of white students surpassed them, so by the time the Mexican-American students actually graduated from high school they were twenty or twenty-one years. Given that they were so much older compared to the other white high

schoolers, most of the Mexican-American students quit school in order to help the family earn money. The ironic and devastating facet of this case was the majority of the Mexican-American students who were placed in three different levels of first grade actually spoke English. The students who testified against the school district testified in English, so in short, they did not need the extra two years in first grade. However, the school district's three counterclaims were to blame the parents for not speaking English to their children outside of school. The second counterclaim argued that if the school district combined English speaking students with non-English speaking students in the same classroom, then "all of such children will be retarded" (*Stolen Education*). In other words, the school board's logic was if Mexican-American students were placed in the same classroom as the white students, they will dumb down the white students.

These two cases not only demonstrate that the educational system was not made for Mexican-American students, but the circumstances in these cases also clarify that the Spanish language-whether it was the students' first language or second - was a side of their identity that the school district wanted to eliminate. This is a form of white space. When the white dominate voice empowers over a minoritized voice, this empowerment exercises power to oppress. For example, in a local DFW two-year college, most of the English development courses have three levels, which is not much different from the *Driscoll* case. For these students in development English courses, they have to pass three levels of these courses in order to be advanced to a freshman-level English class. The success rate of these students is bleak. For instance, for the local DFW two-year college in 2017, "44.2%"of students, who did not meet the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSI) requirement, did not complete the TSI requirements within two years ("Accountability Report - Dallas College"). Whereas, statewide in 2017, "41.2%" of students did

not complete the TSI requirement within two years ("Accountability Report - All Public Two-Year Colleges Statewide"). However, for most Texas two-year colleges, institutions do not have three levels of developmental courses. Granted, if a student initially test below a certain level, the higher education institution is required to provide some kind of remediation course to help the student transfer to a core English course; however, there is no set way of providing this remediation course. Some two-year colleges streamline the developmental courses in order to receive money from the students, and some institutions retain BIPOC students from academically succeeding. The white space created by this specific policy in two-year institutions is yet another way policy continues to oppress not only Mexican-American students, but BIPOC students who did not meet the basic TSI requirements.

The last case, *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*, involves a group of Mexican-American and Black students who initiated the lawsuit against the school district in 1970, which was sixteen-years after *Brown*. In the *Cisneros* lawsuit, the plaintiffs argued that both Mexican-American and Black students were segregated from the white students, and that *Brown* applied to both Mexican-Americans as well as Black students. However, the defendants argued that *Brown* did not apply to Mexican-Americans because the Mexican-Americans are not Black. They are other-white not Black, so they were not segregated based on race. *Brown* desegregated Black students from white students, so the defendants ruled the plaintiffs argument was null. However, the judge allowed for testimonies, which provided for the students to share their stories in court. The judge ruled that Mexican-Americans are "an identifiable, 'minority group'" sufficient to bring them within the protection of *Brown* and that Corpus Christi ISD is not following the law mandated by the Fourteenth Amendment (González 340). Although these legal cases deal mainly with racial discrimination of Mexican-American students in K - 12, the

severity of racial discrimination in law, policy, curriculum content, and language, can still be applied to two-year and four-year higher education institutions. For instance, TSI examines a student's capability on basic subjects such as math, writing, and reading; however, if the students' first language is not English, the difficulty of them being successful on the TSI is slim. Institutions continue to discriminate against BIPOC students for speaking multiple languages in two-year colleges by retaining them in developmental English courses. So in order to provide Mexican-American students equality and equity, CRTEd and LatCrit scholars have challenged the laws for "proxy discrimination" (Delgado and Stenfacic, *Introduction* 93). Historically, the system made calculated decisions when oppressing Mexican-American students. Their main goal was not to educate the students but to racially discriminate.

Each Texas legal case focused on racial discrimination against not only Black students but also Mexican-Americans. In *Salvatierra*, Mexican-Americans were segregated from white students due to their "linguistic handicaps" (González 335). In similar fashion, in *Delgado*, Mexican-American students were discriminated against because of their language, but in this case, the school board wanted to eradicate the Spanish language in order to assimilate the students. However, this was not the only school to create such a policy. The majority of Texas public schools had this policy, a policy that has victimized my family for three generations. In the Hernandez case, the school district discriminated by lumping all students with a Spanish surname into a first-grade class for three years, so they could complete three different levels of English instruction. However, most of the students who were held back for those years were fluent in English as well as in Spanish. In the last case, *Cisneros*. Mexican-American students were discriminated against based on physical, cultural, and language differences; however, it was with this case that institutional racism was unmasked.

To experience racism from both sides - as a student and an educator, I realize that there is no escaping it, especially in the educational system. Reflecting back on my experiences from both sides of the educational system I now understand educator Paulo Freire's words "education functions as an instrument of oppression" (Freire, *Pedagogy* 81). My experience during that meeting during prep week solidified that theory for me. I discovered despite my effort to help BIPOC students acknowledge their worth, voice, and intellect, my BIPOC students were set up to fail in this educational system. Freire's words altered my perspective of the system I dedicated my life to do, a system that taught me. I then concluded that this type of racist attitude and belief is rampant in school districts across the nation. I understood that lowering the average grade was just one of the many "instrument[s] of oppression" that perpetuates the colonizing and dominating actions done against BIPOC students. To lower the average grade functions as another way to limit the voices and power of BIPOC people to speak out against injustices. It is another way to keep BIPOC people from straying away from domination. If I stayed, I would be aiding in this mindset of keeping BIPOC students down, so I left that school district because I refused to oppress any of my students, especially my BIPOC students. The lowering of academic standards oppresses BIPOC students' ability to become critical thinkers, productive citizens, and having agency of their own ability. The racial prejudice that the system has against BIPOC students is deep. Racial prejudice within the education system is generational, and throughout those generations, the educational system has already labeled BIPOC students as inferior in every possible way.

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Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley (known as La Valle to locals) I was always an outsider. I spoke Spanglish when needed, but in my home with my family, we spoke English. I remember asking my father why he did not teach us Spanish growing up.

"I wasn't taught Spanish."

"But I remember Grandpa and Grandma speaking Spanish to their siblings when we visited them in San Marcos, TX. They knew Spanish, so why weren't you taught?"

"Well, you have to consider the time I grew up in. It was difficult for your grandparents, my parents, to find teaching jobs in San Marcos, TX, so they moved us to Rio Grande City, TX to teach. It was the only place within the state they could find teaching jobs. As teachers, they knew they couldn't speak Spanish to their students because the district would suspend the students, and they would be fired. So, they took precautions. My parents decided not to speak Spanish to us at home. They felt that they were protecting my brother and me, which in reality, they were right. I saw many of my friends paddled, suspended, ridiculed, and humiliated just because they spoke Spanish to each other. It was forbidden."

"Daddy, I don't understand. They would spank or suspend a student if they spoke Spanish? Well, shit."

"Shit is right."

"My friends speak Spanish all of the time. Well, not in the classroom but during lunch or after school. So you're telling me that they would, during your time, be punished?"

"Most definitely. Most of the students were scared to talk to their friends in Spanish, but every now and then, there would be a brave soul who would speak Spanish in front of the

teacher. If it was a Black or Mexican teacher, the teacher would quietly warn the student and let them slide, but if it were a white teacher, forget it! That student would be toast."

"So this is why I wasn't taught Spanish?"

"Yep, you are a product of assimilation in Texas."

I am extremely proud of my family and the hardships they endured, but that conversation affected my perspective about my identity along with my family's identity. They had completely changed their way of living and thinking about their identity in order to accommodate a school district, a school district that was not created for Mexican-American students and in my grandparents' case, for faculty as well.

Photograph of Ramírez family in 1965. From left to right: Francisco Martinez Ramírez, Angela Pescina Ramírez, Anthony Pescina Ramírez (my father), Hector Pescina Ramírez, Frank Pescina Ramírez, and Rene Pescina Ramírez

Due to the policies of the school district, it generationally affected my family and our identity. Instead of having the district embrace Mexican-American cultural identity and language the institutional policy erased and silenced our self-identity. My grandparents instinctively protected

their family by eliminating a certain side of our identity, and by doing so, three generations later, I am experiencing this forced assimilation.

With the *English-only* policy not a law, the school district conserved white space within their schools, curriculum, and policy by forbidding a language spoken by the majority of the student body. Instead, they forced students to speak English only. Scholar Tara J. Yosso utilizes CRT as a framework to dispute racism within educational systems' "multiple layers of school curriculum" (Yosso, "Toward" 93). She argues that "traditional curricular structures, processes, and discourses reveal a hidden (and not-so-hidden) curriculum that marginalizes [BIPOC students] while they cater to white middle/upper class students" (Yosso, "Toward" 94). Most compelling evidence supporting this statement is the three Texas cases. In each school district, the educational system failed the Mexican-American students. To ban Spanish, the institution controlled the content and policies in higher education, especially in two-year colleges, which diminishes BIPOC students' agency in their academic journey. This type of power within the system establishes an oppressing environment for BIPOC students on campuses. Professor Elijah Anderson's view on white space deals with spaces that are overwhelmingly white such as a BIPOC student entering a campus/classroom where they see a majority of white faculty, staff, and students. He also contends that if a BIPOC person enters the white space without an invitation, the BIPOC person is expected to explain their presence (Anderson 19). While it is true that a considerable number of whites in one space is overwhelming to BIPOC students and that a BIPOC person would have to explain their reasoning for occupying the undeniable white space, content and policy creates an actual environment without actually having white people in the space. The campus/classroom culture generated by these policies preserve-oppressing attitudes hence create an oppressing environment.

In her article, “Whiteness as Property,” UCLA law professor Cheryl I. Harris argues that property defines something that belongs to the dominant class (1716). As far as the Texas cases, the Mexican-American students all dealt with facilities that were not equal to the white students’ facilities. *Brown* attempted to correct Plessy - “separate but equal,” but Harris claims it merely shifts the whiteness but does not eliminate it entirely (Harris 1752). The assumption that there are equal facilities and resources depicts that the lawmakers’ negligence created the inequality of facilities and resources in the educational system. Harris argues that the perpetuation of a certain kind of racial hierarchy continued. This shift of whiteness and conservation of racial hierarchy encapsulates white space in a 2-year English classroom. The content and curriculum taught in higher education along with the policies and practices embody white space within the institution. For example, if the content and curriculum in a two -year college English classroom contains readings from white authors or content that only white students connect to their lived experiences, then the instructor creates white space within their classroom, a space that BIPOC students cannot connect to their lived experiences. Adding to the white space, higher education institutions and their policies undermine BIPOC students’ experiences and potential. These policies fail to assist BIPOC students in their academic journey.

For example, developmental English courses in two-year college usually create an academic trench that BIPOC students struggle to flourish academically. In reality, most institutional policies generate obstacles for BIPOC students. Some of those policies being only to use standard American English in essays, retaining students in English developmental courses to perfect the English language, and not providing educational equity. In Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he describes the banking concept as an aspect of the educational system that oppresses BIPOC students by failing to develop a critical awareness. Concerning critical

awareness, Freire considers this element as a way of disseminating knowledge that inhibits creativity, which results in an alienating worldview of domination. He also asserts that by focusing on the banking concept in education does not focus on the settings that oppress BIPOC students. In other words, the banking concept creates BIPOC students who are passive recipients instead of creating BIPOC students who use their voice to evoke social change. With developmental English courses in some two-year institutions, the policy for BIPOC students to complete three levels of developmental English classes is a form of oppression. For example, in a local DFW two-year college, the Developmental Integrated Reading and Writing (DIRW) policy provides three levels of DIRW courses in order to integrate "critical reading and academic writing skills" ("Dallas College"). With these types of courses, history repeats itself by maintaining a loophole as Freire's states "Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students . . . of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression" (Freire, *Education* 78). These courses are to help BIPOC students, whose English language is not their first language and/or students who failed to pass the TSI assessments, but I argue that these classes resumes oppression. For instance, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the goal was to desegregate schools of Black and white students, but Mexican-American students were never on the forefront of this case especially when it comes to language. Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in no way mentioned anything about the using the Spanish language, society has taken upon themselves to view Spanish as a "linguistic deficiency" and "handicaps" (González 335). Derrick Bell's discussion of *Brown* openly acknowledges that integration failed the Black community, but to save face in front of global relations. He supports the notion that throughout history, the white community supported Black rights in voting, education, residence, and in employment only when it benefited or advanced the interest of the white community -

"interest-convergence" (Bell, *Silent* 49). This "interest-convergence" was no different for the Mexican-American community.

Equally important to the Texas legal cases, Bell's "interest-convergence" carries weight. The majority of the members of each school board owned farms. These owners needed the parents of the Mexican-American students to work the farms; therefore, the farm owners were not concerned about the students' education because those students would be their future workers. For the farm owners, who were also the school board members, they believed they followed laws, but in retrospect, they bent the law in order to keep the Mexican-American families and the students oppressed. Reflecting back to my experience with my former middle school, the school district did not bother to have any dialogue with the BIPOC community that lived in the district. The changes of lowering the grade to remain in honors was done without including any dialogue with the parents to decide what would be best for the BIPOC students. Again, the institution determined the new policy and content in order to maintain dominance for the benefit of white people.

In fact, CRTEd and LatCrit together work to challenge the dominant whiteness, race, and racism that marginalizes Latinx students in education (Solórzano and Bernal 312, Bell, *Faces* 155, Bell, *Silent* 163, Delgado and Stefancic, *Introduction* 93). Although Latinx students count for "one in six students (16.5%)" in higher education institutions, there are still some institutions that accept little to no Latinx students (Hurtado, Ramirez, and Cho 3). In 2015, data shows that first-generation Mexican-American students comprise of "51.3%" enrolling in two-year colleges (5). This could be for many reasons, but the top two are financial and geographical.

Unfortunately, most Latinx students do not fare well in public school despite being one of, if not, the largest student population in most Texas schools. So why is enrollment into higher

education low for Latinx students? In order to illustrate the lack of enrollment of Latinx students in higher education, either at a two-year college or a four-year college, it is important to reflect on an institution that feeds into these higher education institutions. For example, in the 2019-2020 school year, Dallas ISD had a total of "153,784 students" ("Dallas ISD"). The top three populated ethnic groups of students are "white at 5.8%, Black at 21.6%, Hispanic at 69.8%, and Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander are at less than 5%" ("Dallas ISD"). The percentage of language spoken at home is "English-only -37.3%, Speaks English-very well - 41.7%, and English less than well - 21%" ("Dallas ISD"). Granted these percentages do have other native languages other than Spanish; however, with the high percentage of "Hispanic of Latino" students, it is an educated assumption that most of the "English less than well" is Spanish speaking students. As for the full-time faculty, there are "9,989.5" in Dallas ISD, and the ethnicity breakdown is as follows: "white - 28.6, Black -33.5, and Hispanic-31.7" ("Dallas ISD"). So in actuality, Latinx students had some representation within their teachers; however, when they enter a two-year or four-year college, the numbers completely switch around, which can be an intimidating transition to college.

To illustrate, in a local DFW two-year college, the percentage of Latinx students compared to Latinx full-time faculty proves that there is not enough representation. As of May 2020, full-time faculty demographic breakdown is: "white - 55.5%, Black - 17.7%, Hispanic/Latino-14.3%, and Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander are at less than 12%" ("Accountability Report: Dallas College"). When or if BIPOC students transfer to a four-year university, the numbers are even lower for representation, but the number of BIPOC students at a four-year university drops significantly. Without representation how will BIPOC students know they belong at these institutions? Granted, there

will be BIPOC faculty who embrace the whiteness of the educational system, but I trust that most BIPOC faculty will understand that the educational system is broken. Historically, BIPOC students have not received equality and equity in their education journey when attending K-12, so why would they enroll in an institution that is famously known for white people?

Some may question as to why there are so many BIPOC scholars in the education system. Granted, there are more BIPOC teachers in K - 12; however, when it comes to colleges and universities, the number of BIPOC scholars, especially Latinx instructors, are dismal. Even more discouraging is the number of Latinx students (for every six white students, there is one Latinx student) enrolled in higher education is not much higher than hired Latinx instructors ("Data"). With those bleak numbers, it is not surprising that Latinx students and scholars have no voice in higher education especially with issues that are considerable in our community.

Historically, BIPOC people had to remain in the fight to see justice within the educational system. Although there have been some strides, there is so much more work that needs to be done for future generations. Teaching, for me, is so much more than being in the classroom. I want my BIPOC students to see their potential - their worth. There have been too many generations of BIPOC students, that never learned their worth, and I know with certain changes of policies, faculty representation, and inside the classroom can make huge strides to decentering white space in these institutions. In order to decenter white space in two-year colleges, faculty and the institution can make sure there is faculty representation, assure that the institution policies advance BIPOC students such as in English developmental courses, and content and presence within classes boast BIPOC authors, artists, and scholars.

Solutions for White Space

Much like racism, white space will never vanish. It is a permanent space; however, faculty can decenter the white space from having a central role inside their own courses. As educators, we do not have much say when it comes to institutional policies established by the state or board of trustees such as hiring faculty representation or developmental courses that support the transition to core courses. These policies and practices continue to be inadequate in equality and equity. However, educators do have power to decenter the white space within their own courses. They have the power to have equity and inclusion in their presence and environment, curriculum and classroom policies, and execution. The aim of this dissertation is not so much to argue that white space exists in the individual classroom, but rather to explore theoretical formations to help identify the white space in a classroom and how to decenter that white space.

To explain further, when a BIPOC student attends college/university, the intimidation of not feeling they (BIPOC students) belong in higher education institutions shapes a negative presence that BIPOC students' sense. In other words, the intimidating emotion can range from being a first-generation college student, being overwhelmed by the grandness of the college/university and the number of classmates in classes, and the intimidating sense of feeling alone when navigating through this first-time experience. Most colleges/universities have orientation programs for all students to feel welcome; however, institutions are lumping all students into this program. The institution may have some student clubs to get students excited about the new semester during these programs, but the institution is not considering how they are coming across to BIPOC students. Scholars Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr, and Rubén Donato argue that when Latinx students enter college they endured "unequal nature of public education," which results in an inferiority complex when they begin their college coursework (30). That is

not the case at all. For example, my younger sister taught 7th grade science in a school district within the Rio Grande Valley. Her first two years she had nothing in her classroom. She had to borrow a projector in order to teach science concepts to her students. Another recent example, when the United States had to go on lockdown due to Covid-19, teachers were expected to teach virtually; however, most students, especially in economically disadvantaged school districts, did not have the basic technology to keep up with the class. So for the college/university to have assumptions that all students arrive at college on the same basic academic level is a form of white space. It is the institution's responsibility to recognize and meet all needs and concerns of BIPOC students, but instead, they continue to create content and policies that fail the majority of BIPOC students. Institutions are missing a big opportunity to decenter the white space, but most of the time, miss the mark; therefore, white space dominates colleges/universities, and without an instructor realizing, this white space can trickle into their courses.

Scholars of color established the CRT movement in order to challenge racism within policies and practices within the law. Although CRT began in the law schools, it provides ways of giving BIPOC voices in scholarship normally dominated by white people. Like CRT, LatCrit provides a niche for Latinx voices. When creating this branch of CRT, LatCrit scholars carved this space for issues that run prevalent in the Latinx community such as "immigration, language rights, bilingual schooling, internal colonialism, sanctuary for Latin American refugees, and census categories for Latinos" helped create Latino-Critical (LatCrit) (Delgado and Stefancic, *CRT: Introduction* 93). CRT continues to evolve by including Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) and AsianCrit. In chapter 3, I plan to elaborate on TribalCrit, which focuses on issues of Indigenous Peoples in the U.S.

The first modification an instructor can do is to revise the presence or environment within the classroom. The main way of accomplishing this change is to disrupt the balance of power. From the first day of class, it is understood that the instructor is in charge not only by presence, but by the syllabus, gradings assignments, and rules such as no late work, participation is required, and other demands (Weimer 89). But no matter how hard a faculty works at creating a syllabus to catch all kinds of scenarios, this type of verbiage control rarely produces a presence of respect from BIPOC students. Most will see this type of authoritarian attitude as a presence they see outside the classroom, a presence that views BIPOC people as less than, incapable of succeeding. To unbalance this power, the instructor and the students can work together in creating some parts of the syllabus. There can be activities within the first week of the semester to help students evaluate the syllabus. Afterwards the students can create policies with an explanation of why they decided to create them. Again, the instructor does not have to give full control, but to provide students the ability to collaborate on a document that runs the course not only gives them agency in their learning, but in a positive way, it also unbalances the power within the classroom.

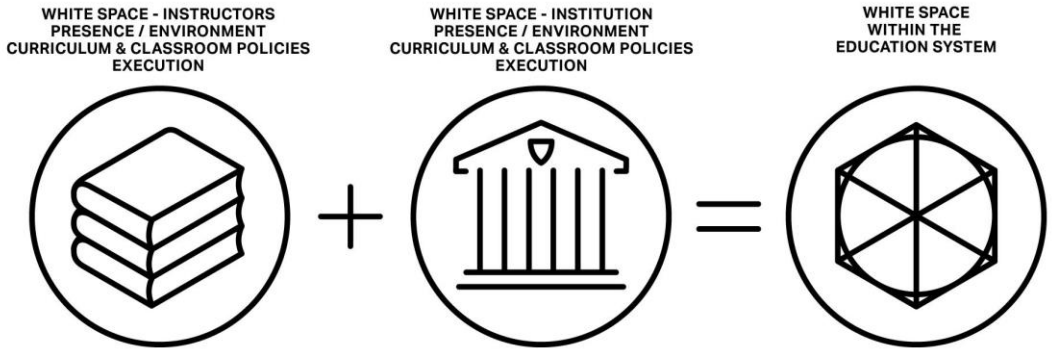

Figure 1 White Space Centered

The image above visually illustrates how content, curriculum, and presence combined with the institution's policies, practices, and presences at a 2-year college cultivate white space.

When content in the classroom deals only with white authors, scientists, artists, etc, BIPOC students cannot visualize themselves in those roles. If they cannot imagine themselves or relate to the content, educators are impairing BIPOC students' self-identity and goals. Even by not having BIPOC representation within the content and curriculum creates a negative presence that announces that BIPOC scholars are not essential in learning. However, there are ways an instructor can decenter white space in their courses, but none of them will work unless the instructor accepts the possibility of them actually having white space in the environment and curriculum they create.

There are three main areas in the classroom where an instructor can decenter white space. The first area to decenter white space is within the curriculum and classroom policies. In the curriculum, BIPOC students need to have a connection to what is being taught; therefore, by bringing in works written by BIPOC authors will help them realize the value of their lived experiences. In 2014, Dominican-American, Pulitzer Prize for Fiction award winner Junot Diaz described his experience earning his MFA in Cornell as "That shit was *too white*" (Diaz). He also explains that "I was a person of color in a workshop whose theory of reality did not include my most fundamental experiences as a person of color - that did not in other words include *me*" (Diaz). Junot Diaz, a renowned writer, illustrating the racial discrimination he endured in his graduate program demonstrates that white space in all levels of education still prevails. By including lessons, activities, assigned readings, group projects dealing with BIPOC writers will foster BIPOC students to know that their lived experiences are worthy.

The second area appertains to presence and the environment the instructor conveys to BIPOC students. White space in the college classroom is a form of power, a power that continues to prevent BIPOC students from evolving into critical thinkers. Most instructors fail to realize

that they are intentionally creating white space in their college courses. This form of power dominates BIPOC students by encapsulating them into a traditional classroom and way of thinking and learning. To dencenter this white space, instructors need to unbalance this power. Instructors must extend power to BIPOC students in order to create a presence and environment within the classroom that BIPOC students can academically flourish.

The last component of decentering white space in the classroom deals with execution. It is important on how an instructor teaches. Educator bell hooks expounds that most instructors "were taught in classrooms where styles of teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal" (35). To benefit our BIPOC students, it is important for instructors to break from the traditional way of teaching in order for them to succeed. Instructors need to be a facilitator with knowledge (Weimer 60). In the same fashion, Freire believed that the "banking method" was an oppressive way to teach (Freire, *Pedagogy* 24). That by providing this dictatorial style of teaching fails to give any students, especially BIPOC students, power in their learning and their own critical thinking. To facilitate knowledge, instructors providesBIPOC students opportunities to engage in their own learning. By adjusting curriculum, presence, and execution, instructors materialize ways to decenter white space in their classroom. It comes down to whether or not the instructor wants to take the time to do the work with changing their traditional way of thinking and teaching.

Within these veins of CRT, there have been certain characteristics that seem to trickle within all of these CRT branches such as storytelling, counterstorying, and narrative (Delgado and Stefancic, *Cutting Edge* 41). In the histories of most BIPOC people, storytelling and counterstory, whether it be visual, oral, or written, have been intrinsic in teaching future generations their culture. For the Latinx community, we share corridos (a narrative folk ballads),

testimonios (first-person narrative of social injustice), and folklore (histories/stories that share lived experiences of generations in the past) to share our history and to preserve our identity. Most of the corridos and folklore approach the themes of hardships, obstacles, courage, and redemption. To combat the blurred line of truth and fiction in history, counterstories provide a way for BIPOC voices to correct history taught by white people.

As a Latina educator who has taught at mostly Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) in Texas for fifteen years of my twenty-five years of teaching, I realize the importance of storytelling and counterstory in my courses. To not include these or not see the value of including storytelling and counterstory in a curriculum inhibits BIPOC students from being an active learner or having agency. Lack of BIPOC voices in higher education only amplifies white space within the institution. However, by adding lessons dealing with BIPOC students storytelling and counterstories in the content of the classroom curriculum will offer some correlation BIPOC students can appreciate.

As indicated in the Texas legal cases, schools, curriculum, policies, and even attitudes were not made for BIPOC students. Today, higher education institutions still maintain policies and practices that are deficient in equality and equity for BIPOC students. Historically, BIPOC people were always oppressed through a variety of horrific ways, but laws passed in the United States in the educational venue, most white people found loopholes to keep BIPOC people from succeeding. It was not very long ago that white society believed that BIPOC students were inferior, incapable to learn, and lazy. Because of these racial prejudice assumptions, there are still policies in the educational system that continue segregation. For instance, a Californian research team known as Proyecto Derechos Civiles (also known as The Civil Rights Project) discovered that “as 2012, the typical White student in the United States attended a school whose

student composition is nearly 75% White, while the average Latinx student attended a school whose student composition is approximately 56.8% Latinx" (Vara 8). So, changes need to occur, not only with the classroom, but with policies and practices with the system. Despite the needed changes within the institution's policies and practices, curriculum within the instructor's class can be a substantial way to decenter white space. The instructor needs to include perspectives, such as storytelling and counterstory, into their classes throughout the semester not just a lesson or activity. Although the system controls the content and policies, faculty still have control of how to teach. In other words, if the system instructs that students need to learn how to write a rhetorical analysis, the instructor creates curriculum such as their class activities, assigned readings/literature, group projects, and assignments to teach the rhetorical analysis. To decenter white space in the classroom may be recognized as a shift of discourse in higher education especially in 2-year colleges, and it may inspire the system to reflect on their own white space. For example, hiring more BIPOC full-time faculty. Until then, the responsibility weighs on the instructor to take the first step in decentering white space in their classrooms.

The image below illustrates how by making changes in content, curriculum, and presence can decenter white space to ensure academic progress for BIPOC students. When educators incorporate avenues to decenter the white space in their classes and lessons, it fosters agency to BIPOC students.

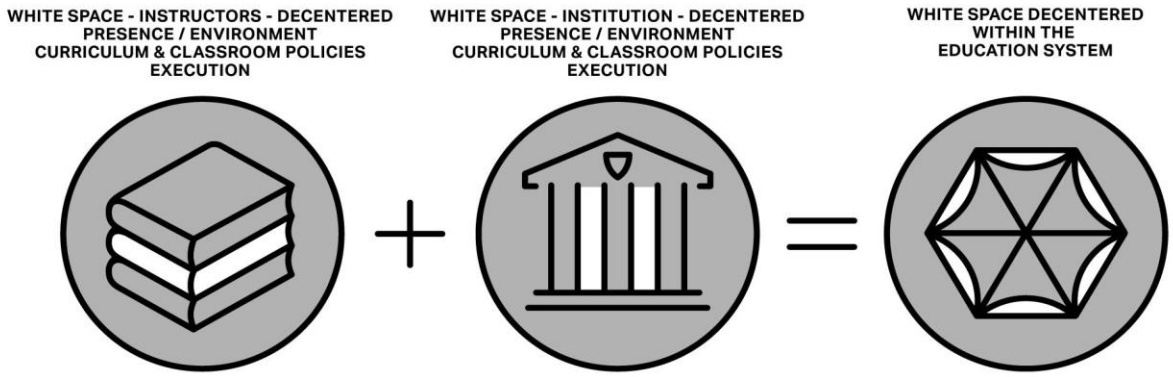

Figure 2 White Space Decentered

In order for instructors to decenter white space, they need to dispense their knowledge that does not hinder or oppress the students. Paulo Freire explains that by providing a traditional lecture style, which the instructor bestows, their knowledge to their students, the students are passively accepting this knowledge. Freire refers to this type of oppression as the "banking education" (Freire, *Pedagogy* 107). In short, Freire believed that "banking education" was another way to oppress BIPOC students. The "banking education" is when an instructor dumps knowledge to students, and the students accept this knowledge. According to Freire, "banking" is a way for the dominant class to conquer the minds of BIPOC students in order to serve the dominant class. Educator Henry A. Giroux says that this type of teaching will not teach students to be critical thinkers and worldly citizens ("When" 352). An instructor can decenter this type of white space by acknowledging that BIPOC contain powerful knowledge, and that the instructor can learn their knowledge by incorporating storytelling and counterstory into their assigned readings/literature, activities, assignments, and group work.

Scholar bell hooks believes that Freire's, and possibly Giroux, concept of pedagogy does not account for the aspect of excitement in the classroom (hooks 7). She believes that the system believes that having fun in a classroom is "to transgress" (7). I suggest that not including or

inspiring an excitement for learning in higher education is another form of white space. In other words, to include excitement and engagement in a classroom decenters the traditional ideology of white space in pedagogy. bell hooks believes that no matter how experienced the instructor is, it takes a community to help with the excitement and engagement. By adding storytelling and counterstories into the course will organically create a community within the BIPOC students, which will engage them in the lessons. Then again, it is equally important for instructors to share their stories. I argue that opening this type of discourse will help the instructor build a connection with your students, which will assist in creating a positive presence within the classroom. I agree that "it is important to recognize and validate Latinx/a/o student identities and affirm cultural groups, programs . . .", but editors of *Latinx/a/os in Higher Education: Exploring Identity, Pathways, and Success*, Sylvia Hurtado, Joseph Ramirez, and Katherine Cho are mainly arguing for higher education within the institution (18). They overlook what I consider an important point about having this validation done by the instructor within individual classes not only the institution.

Yet some readers may challenge my view that higher education institutions have validated BIPOC students and their identities with Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Month, Black History Month, etc. Nevertheless, it will take much more than monthly recognition for BIPOC students to feel truly included. It will take considerable power to change the minds of an eurocentric institution, so why wait on them to make the changes? Educators, like our BIPOC students, are low on the institutional hierarchy, but that does not mean that educators cannot make change within their own community such as their classroom. Society expects BIPOC students to; as the cliche goes in Texas, *pull yourself up by your bootstraps*. However, for

BIPOC students, those bootstraps are usually worn, torn, and/or missing, so why can't educators use their own bootstraps to mend the educational inequality within their courses?

Growing up in Harlingen, Texas, my education began my senior year of college with one class. This one class opened my eyes to BIPOC writers that had voices and opinions. One of those writers was Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. His poem "I Am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín altered my self-identity. He was an activist during the Chicano Movement during the 1960s and 1970s. His scholarship, to some white public, believed his words were a defiance to the traditional status quo. Throughout his works, Gonzales awakened Chicanos, especially young Chicanos, "to learn and take pride in their pre-U.S. history, to develop their own community-controlled self-help institutions, and to reject conventional notions of American cultural assimilation" (Esquibel xv). As you can assume, these ideologies could cause some nervousness among conservative people, but for BIPOC students to read and learn from scholars like Gonzales will inevitably provide a BIPOC counterstory that illustrates the generational struggles of the Latinx people. These struggles BIPOC students will be able to connect to their own families. By providing a work from a BIPOC writer will decenter the white space in your curriculum along with the class environment.

Of course, many will probably disagree with this assertion by arguing that this is why higher education institutions have multicultural courses. BIPOC students can enroll in these courses in order to learn or gain a voice in the academic world; however, as some scholars of Critical Race in Curriculum (CRC) argue that these multicultural courses focus on certain aspects that do not help students learn about multicultural works. They believe that these types of courses highlight certain parts of culture, attempt to sum up BIPOC histories with one module of lessons, and accentuate a sense that BIPOC people are helpless and lazy. While it is true that

there are multicultural courses for all students to take, it does not mean that BIPOC students, who usually stick to the degree plan and cannot, afford a sidetrack course, and these courses fail to promote authentic BIPOC voices. This deficiency of multicultural courses only suppresses BIPOC students' agency.

Some may argue that the main goal of any institution for students is to obtain a job. However, as Yosso posits that the institution content and policy are made to continue societal hierarchy in "social and economic power" for white students, but to teach BIPOC students on how to serve the white people in jobs that keep BIPOC students from climbing the hierarchy ladder (*Critical* 96). By limiting BIPOC students' opportunities after high school or college subjugates their potential for them being their own advocate. This type of oppression conserves the social and economic hierarchy ladder. The system places BIPOC students in the low rung of that ladder for the system's sake, not the student.

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When I was a junior in high school, I had the choice of taking home economics class, where the curriculum included learning how to sew a pillow, mend socks, and cook a quick meal for my family or woodshop, a class that teaches how to make small items such as a three level shelf and a small box. I wanted to take the woodshop so badly, but my varsity basketball athletic course coincided with it, so I was forced to take home economics. A few weeks into the school year, juniors were scheduled to meet with the school advisor. The goal was to figure out a college plan or a workforce plan for the juniors. After a few days, I received my appointment. I was scheduled to meet with my assigned advisor, which means she was responsible for students whose last name begins with P,Q,or R, during my chemistry class. When it was time for my meeting, I went directly to the front office of the school. The school's secretary asked me to sign

in at the front desk. When I completed my signature, the secretary asked me to sit down and wait a few minutes while she lets the advisor know I am here. Sitting in the front office felt like I was in trouble. The secretary and even the student worker looked at me like I was an intruder in their space. I have never been to the principal's office for punishment or accolades, so waiting for the advisor in the front office where the principal had his office, made me nervous. My upper lip began to perspire. "Kassi. You can go back, now. Down the hall, two offices to the right" the secretary said. "Thank you," I replied. I walked back to my advisor's office. When I walked in, the advisor had her head down looking at a piece of paper. She didn't even acknowledge me when I entered the room. I took a few steps into her office and stood behind one of the chairs that sat in front of her desk. I quickly questioned myself. Did I walk into the wrong office. I turned around to double-check the nameplate - Mrs. Elizabeth Smith - on the wooden door. Yep, I am in the right office. I waited for her to ask me to sit down or to look me in the face. She did neither. After what may have been minutes, she finally looked at me. "Kassi. Your home economics teacher noted that you are really good at sewing" she said. "So on your workforce plan, I will add seamstress to your list. "Sewing?" I questioned. "Yes, sewing. It can provide you and your family a comfortable living" she explained. "Well, my dad and I planned for me to enroll in a 2-year college in East Texas and try out for their basketball team." I continued "My dad told me that I need to go to a two-year college until I really know what I want to do." Her eyes widen and she said "I am a qualified advisor. My job is to help you figure out what you want to do. That is why I recommended you to be a seamstress. You're good at it, and you'll like it." "I don't want to be a seamstress. I was thinking of doing something with science like marine biology. This is why my dad suggested that I start at a community college." At this point, Mrs. Smith was red in the face, and her nostrils flared. I immediately regretted what I said, but still did not

understand what I said to get her so angry with me. "Well, since your father knows so much about the career track, I can't force you into being a seamstress, but ask yourself this: What does your father know about being in a real job?" she sneered. "He is a teacher at South Texas College" I answered. I didn't become a seamstress, and not that there's anything wrong with the profession of a seamstress, it just wasn't *my* path.

My lived experience with my high school counselor mirrors Freire's argument about "fear of freedom" (Freire, *Education* 46). Drawing from social psychologist Erich Fromm, Freire argues that the oppressors fear of forfeiting their power to oppress while the oppressed falter at grasping freedom but that freedom is the key to humanization, which leads to self-determination (Freire, *Education* 46). My high school advisor, Mrs. Smith, oppressed me by not recognizing my agency to make a decision about my future. She was not thinking about me as an individual. She saw me as a group of people (Latinx), a group to dominate. I consider myself fortunate because I had my father to guide me through some of my educational career, but as an instructor, I know that not every BIPOC student is as fortunate, which is why having BIPOC representation with the educational institution provides immeasurable accountability. Instructors should incorporate readings/literature by BIPOC writers into their courses. Higher education institutions need to have policies and presence that provide equality and equity for BIPOC students. failure to do so, oppresses BIPOC students in their critical thinking and self-identity.

To conclude, instructors do not have much power when it comes to content and policy within the institution; however, they do have power in their curriculum of their classes. The job of an educator is to liberate students' minds, but with content and policy, the liberation benefits white students. The system continues to fail BIPOC students when it comes to their education. The lack of representation in faculty and courses that do not propel the BIPOC into core courses

are policies that lack equity and equality for BIPOC students. By not incorporating content and curriculum that BIPOC students can visualize themselves silences their voices and agency, and its design was to oppress BIPOC students. It is time to redesign how the system works and a good place to begin this redesign is in the classroom. As bell hooks states, "some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches" (43). Change is hard to deal with and even harder, when the change happens in the classroom, but this change is essential. Change is a process.

Chapter 3

> "And now let me exhort you to do away that principle, as it appears ten times worse in the sight of God and candid men than skins of color -- more disgraceful than all the skins that Jehovah ever made. If black or red skins or any other skin of color is disgraceful to God, it appears that he has disgraced himself a great deal -- for he has made fifteen colored people to one white and placed them here upon this earth" Willian Apess in "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" from *On Our Own Ground*

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Graduating college at the University of Texas at Pan American (now known as The University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley) wasn't an easy road for me. I quit college at nineteen because I did not believe in myself nor did I feel I belonged in the academic environment. After working in the real world for a couple of years, I eventually figured out I wanted more for my life. So I went back to school, I had to work three jobs, pay my own rent, car payment, car insurance, and utilities, so coming back to school was not easy, but I was driven. A month before my college graduation, my father asked me if I wanted a college ring to commercemate my accomplishment. Growing up, I remember my father always wearing his college ring. It was gold with a green stone in the middle. The green stone actually had some scratches on it and the imprints on the sides of the ring were pretty worn down. My dad said I can pick any ring, and he would buy it for me.

It didn't take me long to decide, " I want your ring."

My dad looks at me with surprise. "My ring?" he asked.

"Yeah, I grew up seeing you wearing that ring everyday, and I wouldn't be graduating if you didn't believe in me, so I want your ring" I replied.

My father just smiled at me and said "it's yours."

The next week my dad took me to Alexandre's Jewelry. Alexandre's opened in 1946 in Harlingen, Texas, and my grandparents would take their watches, rings, and necklaces to be

repaired by Alexandre, so needless to say, Alexandre knew my grandparents and my parents very well. So to get my new ring resized, my dad took me to see Alexandre. I didn't take too much notice of Alexandre when my dad introduced me to him. The older gentleman began to tell me a story about my grandparents, so I politely partook in the conversation. When my dad gave him the ring and mentioned that it needed to be sized for me, Alexandre studied the ring and smiled. "I know this ring," he said. I looked at my dad, and he smiled back at me. Alexandre said he will have the ring ready in a week. I was so excited because it will be ready to wear when I walk in graduation. Afterwards, my father and I went to lunch. Once we settled with our burgers, fries, and drinks in the booth of the old Day's Pharmacy, I asked my dad what Alexandre meant when he said he knew the ring.

My dad finished chewing and said "well, despite my parents' wishes, I quit college a semester before I was to graduate from Southwest Texas State University. I moved back home, and without me knowing, my mom, your grandmother, registered me at The University of Texas at Pan American. One day, she woke me up, told me to shower, and that I needed to leave the house in 40 minutes in order to make my first class. I knew there was no arguing with her, so I took a shower, placed a notebook and pencil in a bag, and drove to college. She always believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. So she was the reason I finished my undergraduate degree".

I interrupted and asked but you completed three Master degrees since then, so why did you quit?"

He shrugged his shoulders and said "I missed my family and didn't feel I belonged at Southwest. I wanted to be near my mom and dad, so if it wasn't for your grandmother believing in me, I would not have graduated".

I looked at my burger and asked "we have had a similar journey, haven't we? So what about the ring?"

He smiled again and said "that was your grandmother's ring. When I graduated, she asked me to pick any ring from the Jostens catalog, and she would buy it for me. I said I wanted her ring. I was graduating from the same university she earned her Bachelor's degree, so I felt it was fitting. Now, you are graduating from the same university we graduated from, and you picked her ring to celebrate your academic journey. Little girl, I couldn't be more proud of you."

I held back tears because I knew that ring symbolizes family, love, belief, and grit. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for my family.

Introduction

One may wonder why my story is important to this chapter. This particular oral story has never been written down until now, but our family oral story displays the struggles my family endured to earn an education within a system that did not desire Mexican-Americans to attend. History has shown how the educational system attempted to shut down BIPOC students' academic journey; however, this story, I believe, is an example of an oral story that encourages my family members to continue with their educational journey. There are branches to our family's educational story such as my Grandfather Francisco M. Ramírez fighting in World War II as a corporal in the 11 Bravo troupe - 194th glider regiment attached to the 17th airborne division. He served our country in order to earn an education through the GI Bill. My Grandmother, Angela Pescina Ramírez, quit school at 6th grade in order to help her family; however, earned her high school degree and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in 1958 as a Latina woman with two boys and a husband. Without this story in our family, the Ramírez family would not comprehend the hardship and perseverance that every Ramírez family member

endured to complete their education. Without this oral story in our family, our family's future generations would not appreciate the grit that fundamentally makes us who we are. It is a story that has already been passed down three generations. Like other BIPOC students, American Indians struggled for equality in educational opportunities. The depth of the struggle for American Indian students is profound. I argue that oral stories can decenter white space in a 2-year college English classroom.

In chapter 3, I present a brief history of the education American Indian endured. In chapter 2, I combine LatCrit and CRTEd together, and with chapter 3, I join Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) and CRTEd together. TribalCrit addresses specific factors that impact American Indian community. By adding CRTEd with TribalCrit, I convey the importance of including oral stories and knowledge as a methodology into the curriculum. By including oral stories, it will benefit BIPOC students in having a stronger connection to their culture. It will assist in decentering white space in a classroom. As with previous chapters, I entwine my personal narrative into chapter 3 to demonstrate the substance that oral tradition can provide to BIPOC students.

A Very Brief History of American Indian Education

In order to grasp the complexities of American Indian education, it is necessary to comprehend the convoluted relationship between American Indians and the U.S. government. From 1778 to 1871, the U.S. government constantly negotiated treaties with American Indian tribes in regards to education. In fact, supplies for "educational services and facilities were included in 120 of the nearly 400 treaties between the Indian nations and the federal government" (Wright et al. 8). Now, with these treaties, it was explained that "education 'appropriate' for Indian students was to be provided" (Klug and Whitfield 31). The word

"appropriate," for the U.S. government, especially the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), creates a cryptic definition. In other words, the U.S. seized the opportunity to educate American Indians in order to assimilate them. In 1803, Thomas Jefferson noticed a "coincidence of interests," which involved American Indians who had a wealth of land but needed to be civilized, and white men who were civilized but desired land (Adams 8). So fourteen years later, Congress created the Civilization Fund, which was a 10,000 yearly allocation. Their reasoning was:

> Put into the hands of their children the primer and the hoe, and they will naturally, in time, take hold of the plough; and, as their minds become enlightened and expand, the Bible will be their book, and they will grow up in habits of morality and industry, leave the chase to those whose minds are less cultivated, and become useful members of society. (Adams 8)

In six short years, thirty-eight Indians schools were in full operation and run by missionary organizations known as reformers. However, the Indian Appropriation Act of 1871 declared that American Indians were no longer considered members of the "sovereign nations" and those treaties can no longer be granted (Wright et al. 8). By declaring American Indians as separate nations created them to be wards of the United States, and by being wards, it paved the way for new laws that gave the government power over American Indians and their land.

After a few years, religious missionaries believed that the government dodged their responsibilities with the U.S. wards. The Indian Appropriation Act of 1871 promised to help "civilize" the American Indians for their land; however, the government failed to fully keep their promise, so in 1882, a second reform took place. The Indian Rights Association was created to "civilize" over 300,000 American Indians and "to prepare the way for their absorption into the common life of our own people" (Adams 12). Less than five years later, several other reform

organizations formed to help civilize American Indians. These reformers strived to make the Indian Appropriation Act of 1871 a reality.

In order to guide reformers in identifying different levels of "civilization," anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan created seven levels of "ethical periods" . . . "lower savagery, middle savagery, upper savagery, lower barbarism, middle barbarism, upper barbarism, and civilization" (Adams 17). With these levels, reformers were able to identify their success rate at "civilizing" American Indians. Despite this framework, reformers realized that to civilize, the solution dealt with land, law, and education. The reformers believed that with land, they can create a reservation system that would break American Indian community and foster an individualistic mentality. In law, reformers viewed laws as a civil civilization; therefore, laws should be throughout reservations. This is how and why the Dawes Act (also known as the 1887 General Allotment Act) came to be. This Act provided approximately 160 acres of land to every family lead member and 80 acres to single persons over the age of eighteen. If the person is an orphan, they will also receive 80 acres (Reyhner and Eder 81). Similar to Mexican-Americans, American Indians were also given one year to decide on the land, and if they missed that time, the U.S. government would make the choice for them, which would not be fruitful land. Lastly, for education, reformers concluded that American Indians "must be taught the knowledge, values, mores, and habits of Christian civilization" (Adams 21). They thought that the older generation of American Indian were basically a lost cause, but the younger generation is the solution to civilization.

With the goal of education in mind, the reformers focused on educational objectives. They came up with five main aims when educating American Indians. The main objective was to teach the American Indian children basic skills such as learning how to read, write, and speak the

English language, which again, is similar to what Mexican-American students endured. They, as well American Indian students, were banned from speaking their language. Additionally, the reformers believed that it was important to instruct the core knowledge of subjects such as math and science. Since reformers were teaching "savages," reformers did not believe that these "uncivilized heathens" would grasp any of these concepts but felt that it may provide a "glimpse of a civilized world through books" (Adams 25). The next aim was to indoctrinate the skill to be individualized. This aim was to shatter tribal life because to American Indians, tribal life was held in high regard when it came to their community. They worked, hunted, and lived as a whole not as an individual; however, the reformers believed it was crucial for American Indian students to learn how to cultivate their own land and learn that an individual's worth is more important than "the welfare of the community" (Adams 25). The next objective was to instill the concept of what a home and family should resemble. The last two priorities were to administer Christian training and to teach how to be a productive citizen.

Civil War veteran Lieutenant Colonel Richard Henry Pratt started the first off-reservation boarding school controlled by the government. However, before he began Carlisle Boarding School in 1879, he failed at a few businesses and reenlisted as a lieutenant in 1867. He commanded the Black Tenth Calvary troops known as the "Buffalo Soldiers" (Reyhner and Eder 132). Their job was to protect settlers and to handle the American Indian population, so he was experienced dealing with American Indians. He converted Army barracks, known as Carlisle Barracks, which was a military post to the infamous Carlisle Indian Industrial School ("Kill"). In this school, American Indian children were forced to take a Christian name, cut their hair, banned from speaking their native language, and convert to Christianity. Failure to do so would result in harsh discipline. In his 1892 speech delivered at George Mason University, Pratt's belief

was to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man” (“Kill”). With the intention of assimilating American Indians into the white space, these students endured horrific experiences, and at the end like the Mexican-Americans, American Indian’s culture and identity were severed.

With this calculated plan to appropriate the land of American Indian communities and to assimilate their children, the federal government seized and pierced American Indian’s culture and identity to the brink of elimination. In order to comprehend the severity of these issues, Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) provides a theoretical frame to address issues of American Indian people today.

TribalCrit and Critical Race Theory in Education

CRT provided an essential framework to examine the lived experiences of BIPOC people. Out of CRT, several other branches grew in order to encapsulate the diversity of the United States. With LatCrit, it highlights the complexities of the multidimensional backgrounds of Latinx people. Even with the labeling of white and other white, Mexican Americans and American Indians have the commonality of being in between the “Black/white binary,” and by being between this binary demonstrates the multifariousness that Mexican Americans and American Indians experienced under the law (Delgado and Stefancic, *Introduction* 77).

TribalCrit addresses American Indian experiences with colonization and racism. With TribalCrit, scholars focus on individual lived experiences and institutional racism that limits opportunities for American Indian students. Like CRT and LatCrit, TribalCrit has specific components that are distinct to American Indians. To credit these components, professor at Arizona State University, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy introduced Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). His purpose was to aid in the understanding of American Indian needs and

lived experiences in an extremely challenging relationship between American Indians and the federal government.

For the first tenet, "Colonization is endemic to society," which can be explained by the boarding schools that American Indian students were forced to attend (Brayboy 430). In a like manner, CRT argues that racism is permanent, but with TribalCrit, it goes to the beginning with colonization. Colonization, in the New World, was the beginning of the downfall of BIPOC people. The following component "U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain" (Brayboy 431). This tenet demonstrates what Bell calls the "interest convergence," where the interest, in this case, of American Indians will be acknowledged as long as it benefits whites in some way (Bell, "Brown" 35). In the case of American Indians, there were several items that whites wanted from them such as land and to assimilate them. They wanted land and to assimilate the "savage" in every American Indian person.

The third component deals with the federal laws that politicizes American Indians' identity. Brayboy states that "Indigenous peoples have not only racial but political identities" (432). Since the U.S. government views American Indian communities as separate governments, it invokes this politicizing of their identity. As previously mentioned, one of the main educational objectives of the reformers was to break tribal communities. Reformers wanted for the American Indians to maintain an individualistic ideology; however, with the fourth tenet, Brayboy explains that "Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forget tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification" (433). With this tenet, it is "rooted in a belief in and desire to obtain and forge tribal autonomy, self-determination, self-identification, and ultimately tribal sovereignty" (433). Basically, for the first three positions, it provided

American Indians to have control of lands, natural resources and tribal boundaries, deny any idea of the guardian and ward relationship, and the right to identify and define what it means to be American Indian (434).

In the fifth component, Brayboy explains, "The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens" (Brayboy 434). In other words, "culture, knowledge, and power" take on a different meaning and understanding when viewed through the eyes of an American Indian. To explain, when examining culture, whites see culture differently than American Indians. For American Indians culture connects to the lands that they live on and the lands of their ancestors, but at the same time, "culture is simultaneously fluid or dynamic, and fixed or stable. Like an anchor in the ocean, it is tied to a group of people and often a physical place" (434). With knowledge, American Indians believe that with it, one can adapt to change and recognize that there are three types of knowledge. The first one being "cultural knowledge," which includes understanding the importance of being part of a tribe. The next type of knowledge "Knowledge of survival" involves grasping the meaning of adapting as a person and a member of a tribe during changes, and the last knowledge, it is "academic knowledge" (Brayboy 435). With "academic knowledge" along with knowledge passed down through ancestors actually generates an education needed to survive.

As described in the previous section, the history of American Indian students and the forced education connects to the sixth tenet: "Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy 436). In chapter 2, I illustrated court cases dealing with Mexican American students and segregation in school systems; however, with American Indian students, in most cases, the legal battle dealt with historical, legal, and social construction of race, but most importantly,

these cases dealt with the racialization of American Indians. For example, in the 1890 North Carolina case *McMillan v. School Committee of District No. 4*, it involved the McMillan family, whose mother was a Croatan and father a Black man "within the fourth degree," which basically means the father had white in his blood. In this particular North Carolina county, there were three school districts - one for whites, another for Black students, and the other for American Indian students, and for this town, the American Indian tribe was Croatan. To attend the Croatan school, students, obviously, had to be descended from the Croatans. The McMillan children attended the Croatan school since their mother was Croatan; however, shortly before McMillan went into court, the state rectified the school laws to exclude "all negroes to the fourth generation" ("McMillan"). This meant that the McMillan children needed to attend the Black school. When the school district argued that the McMillan children were "neither Croatan nor mulatto and, therefore, ineligible" to attend the Croatan school, the McMillan children's father took his case to court (Martinez-Cola 473). To be clear, McMillan was not arguing about segregation, unlike the cases dealing with Mexican-American students mentioned earlier. In actuality, McMillan was arguing that the school was not racially classifying his children correctly. Similar to the *Delgado* case, the school district relied on "ocular evidence" for physical evidence (Haney-Lopez, "White" 776). Circumstances like this represents how most American Indians have been racialized in the eyes of the court.

In a similar vein, CRT scholar Ian Haney Lopez analyzes the *Hudgins v. Wright* case to illustrate race is a social construct in society and in the courts. He shines light on this case in order to illustrate how race is an "ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing . . . forces of social and political struggle" (Haney Lopez, "Social" 240). For example, in 1806, three Black Wright women of the same lineage (the grandmother, mother, and daughter) claimed that they came

from a free Black woman, but neither women nor their owner, Hudgins, could prove it. In this mandate, if a person was born into slavery, they were automatically a slave, but if they can prove that their maternal line was a free slave, they would be free. Therefore, to determine a Black person's place in society, the law followed the maternal bloodline. When it comes to white lineage, the bloodline usually follows the paternal line; however, when it comes to slavery, the linage follows the mother's bloodline because many slave owners would rape and impregnate their enslaved women. These women were both Black and American Indian, so for the sake of their freedom, they identified with American Indian in hopes that the judge would set them free. Without the proper documentation, the judge relied on their physical features, which like McMillan's children, positions them in an intersection, an intersection that renders the Wrights and McMillans in a vulnerable position the white's opinion of race. The Wrights' owner did not see them as American Indian but as enslaved women, and the school district saw the McMillan children as Black by physical attributes. Both Crenshaw and Haney Lopez voiced concern about race not being a presence to avoid. That it is indeed a social construction.

To continue with the TribalCrit tenets, Brayboy expounds that "Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups" (437). In short, American Indians place high value on cooperation, such as adaptability on the tribe as a whole. As mentioned in the American Indian and education section, cooperation, such as working together was looked upon as a weakness in the reformers eyes and was an version that the reformers tried to eradicate.

Along with tenets five and six, the eighth tenet "Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are therefore real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" is

important to my argument that oral stories are a practice that can decenter white space in a 2-year college English classroom (Brayboy 438). For American Indians, stories and oral knowledge are "real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory" (Brayboy 439). The last tenet "Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change" (Brayboy 440). In general, any work dealing American Indians should provide a purpose to improve opportunities and situations of American Indians.

TribalCrit attempts to illustrate the inconsistencies in systems and institutions like in higher education. Although these tenets can be applied and expounded on within different disciplines, I will be focusing on tenets five, six, and eight to frame an analytical lens for utilizing oral stories and knowledge as methodology in two-year English courses. My hope is that by illustrating the importance of using oral stories and knowledge as a methodology, educators will understand the importance of adjusting their curriculum, so BIPOC students can have a stronger sense of their culture.

Oral Stories and Decentering White Space in the Classroom

The literature on stories and counterstories as methodology is extensive; however, in most of the literature, scholars do not convey the different ways to communicate stories and counterstories. In Martinez's, *Counterstory*, she mentions *testimonios,* which is a first-person narration of significant experiences of social injustice. But mainly, when discussing *testimonios*, Martinez mentions people usually "still opted to publish anonymous *testimonies* because of fear of and vulnerability to the 'professional or political consequences for personal disclosures" (Martinez 30). However, scholar Marisela Martinez-Cola argues that most literature does not include experiences and perspectives of American Indian communities especially when it comes

to oral stories. However, scholar Nancy-Angel Doetzel, Nanticoke-Lenape Indian Tribal scholar Lisa J. Ellwood, and journalist Rebecca Klein argue that the failure of the school system includes not educating instructors and not incorporating American Indian ways of knowing such as oral stories. In short, although CRT and LatCrit focus on the idea of lived experiences of Black and Latinx people, it flounders at acknowledging the importance of incorporating American Indian peoples' ways of disseminating tradition and culture, which oral stories are foundational in their cultural knowledge.

When it comes to BIPOC people, traditions, culture, language, and community are the cornerstone of what makes them who they are. As history has proven, if those traditions, culture, language, and community do not conform to white ideology, it is rejected. Education is no different for BIPOC students. The education system continues to maintain a traditional mindset in order to sow thought, knowledge, and power structures of white people, the dominant group. In CRT, LatCrit, and TribalCrit, the commonality of these three theories is an emphasis on lived experience of BIPOC people. For TribalCrit, oral stories and knowledge serve a vital function in offsetting the history created by the educational system, which is basically the white American beliefs. In his article "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative," Richard Delgado explains that this deformed history taught in schools are basically a way for the white dominant voice to "remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups [BIPOC people] and provide a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural" (Delgado, "Storytelling" 71).

So, with Brayboy's fifth tenet, he discusses the three forms of knowledge that exist together: "cultural knowledge, knowledge of survival, and academic knowledge" (434). Most American Indian communities believe that cultural, survival, and academic knowledge are

transmitted through oral stories, which is why oral stories and theory are deeply interconnected (Brayboy 439 and Delgado, "Storytelling" 71). However, professor and Director of the Center for Indian Education at Arizona State University, Karen Gayton Swisher argues that most of the research presented continues to be shared by an outside perspective (83). She continues to elaborate that American Indian people believe that they can provide solutions to improving the knowledge shared in courses; however, she understands that help is needed: "If non-educators have been involved in Indian education because they believe in Indian people and want them to be empowered, they must now demonstrate that belief by stepping aside" (Swisher 85). Despite differences in who should teach oral stories, there are areas of agreement that oral stories need to be taught in order to share American Indian voices and lived experiences through their traditional ways. This tenet lines up with my first solution of decentering white space in a two-year college classroom. By providing a curriculum and classroom policies that respects the Brayboy's fifth tenet, BIPOC students learn that the combination of these forms of knowledge fosters survival.

My second solution to decenter white space aligns with tenet six: "Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy 436). In order to decenter white space, instructors need to revise the presence or environment within the classroom. The main way of accomplishing this change is to disrupt the balance of power. Despite the government and institutional policies, instructors can actually shift power in order for BIPOC students to learn and feel safe to learn. Chippewa scholar Gerald Vizenor and Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine V. Deloria Jr. both believe that power is not an aspect or trait that one person can control, but that power is defined by the group and how that group defines themselves and their traditions (Vizenor, *Fugitive* 150 and Deloria, *We Talk* 123). Brayboy acknowledges the fact that "There is a clear link here between

knowledge-in the form of experience-and power" (435). The need to maintain complete power over the class determines the presence and environment of the class. It establishes a place where BIPOC students have difficulties rooting themselves in and without this connection, BIPOC students will not relate to their surroundings such as their instructors, classmates, and the curriculum.

For the next solution of decentering white space in a classroom, I align it with the eighth tenet of TribalCrit: "Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are therefore real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (Brayboy 439). The third solution I provide, execution, revolves around the idea of breaking away from traditional ways of teaching. For example, traditionally, instructors transfer knowledge over to the students; however, as I have alluded to previously, historically BIPOC students come with negative experiences within the education system. So why do most two-year college instructors resume the traditional teaching styles? For American Indian, oral stories help preserve origins and provide life lessons. According to scholars Marie Battiste and Keith H. Basso, they both point out that oral stories have a place in American Indian communities and lives (Basso 58 and Battiste 114). They also argue that by listening to stories and counterstories is an avenue of data collection because oral stories are "guardians of cumulative knowledges that hold a place in the psyches of the group members, memories of tradition, and reflections on power" (Brayboy 440). So by including oral stories into the curriculum and executing the histories of oral stories with respect and due diligence will assist in decentering white space in a two-year college English course.

CRT, LatCrit, and TribalCrit are pivotal to reverse this negative type of narrative, and by including oral stories into the classroom, it can reinforce, to BIPOC students, the reality that their voices have value. BIPOC counterstories, either by *testimonios* or oral stories, these narratives

provide valid and logical ways of disseminating knowledge and truth. White space has permeated generations of American Indian people. In education, reformers constantly forced American Indian students to amputate their identity, so it is time to hear these oral stories in the classroom.

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Between the ages of ten and 14 years old, every summer I attended a basketball camp at Southwest Texas State (now known as Texas State University). I loved going to camp. It was a full week away from my father and little sister. I lived in a dorm room, had a roommate, and played basketball everyday. A perfect summer for me. As a tradition, my father, along with my little sister, would drive me from Harlingen, Texas all the way to San Marcos, Texas two days before camp began. We would stay at my great-uncle Tio Benny's house, who lived across the street from the San Marcos River. My dad grew up swimming in that river, so he felt that it was important that his daughters experienced the joy of floating down the river.

My second year of attending camp, so I was eleven, we were doing our normal fajita grilling night before I had to be at camp. It was like a going away party for me because after my dad and sister dropped me off to camp, they would drive back to Harlingen. Whenever my dad grilled fajitas, he would pour some of his beer over the meat while they were cooking and smirk, "It gives them flavor." I remember being so embarrassed that he would do that, so finally I asked "Is this a Hispanic tradition to pour beer over the fajitas?"

My dad stopped mid-drink and looked at me as if I was speaking Shyriiwook (Chewbacca, from the movie Star Wars, language). He asked, "Hispanic?"

"Yeah, our culture, Hispanic?"

"Little girl. Hispanic is a catch-all word to identify Brown people," he explained.

"So are we Mexican? American?" I asked.

"Well, our background is beautiful and tragic," he replied.

"We were one of the families that decided to stay on our land after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but our people are native people from North America, which some refer to Chichimeca."

"What? We have Indian blood?"

"What are they not teaching you in school? Let me get another beer, so I can explain some more," he said with a deep sigh.

Needless to say, that night I had a *real* education through family oral stories about my people. This experience reminded me of scholar Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's words of the importance of history and how it needs to include the Indigenous experiences within curriculum. She argues that "Indigenous survival as peoples is due to centuries of resistance and storytelling passed through generations" (xiii). That night my father and great-uncle, Tio Benny, shared stories and pictures about our family. When I was dropped off to camp, I could not help to look around to the other girls. I realized then I was the only Brown girl, out of 120 girls, in camp. That oral story my dad shared with me changed me for the better. It provided me with pride that is hard to express, but that pride was diminished when I went back to school the next school year. The history I was taught in school did not illustrate the struggles of BIPOC people that was explained to me in the stories I heard.

Chapter 4

> "I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn." - Albert Einstein

In rhetorician Aja Y. Martinez's *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, she fuses the storytelling tradition with Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latinx Critical Theory (LatCrit), and intersectional and personal communities. She illustrates how stories have been around for centuries; however, Black, Indigenious, People of Color (BIPOC) stories have been often neglected and silenced. With the use of counterstory as a framework, Martinez reveals racial discrimination and stereotypes while also highlighting lived experiences of BIPOC people through four methods: narrated dialogue, allegory/fantasy, and autobiographic reflection. In addition, Martinez suggests that counterstory as a research tool will help educators choose between: "(1) To teach the courses we've taken or (2) to teach the course we wish we had taken and be the teacher we wish we'd had" (128).

Divided into four chapters, Martinez employs the framework of counterstory in three different methods inspired by the founders of CRT: narrated dialogue, allegory/fantasy, autobiographic reflection, and letter writing. In her narrated dialogue chapter, she analyzes the use of Richard Delgado's work as pioneering with utilizing counterstory as a methodology. Narrated dialogue provides an opportunity to share different perspectives within a conversation, which provides a space to develop concepts dealing with issues that affect BIPOC people. In her next chapter, Martinez centers her ideas on allegory/fantasy. She examines Derrick Bell's work of allegory as a rhetorical term. Bell demonstrates that with the allegory/fantasy method, it provides the audience to detach themselves from the real in order to comprehend issues in a less threatening way. Specifically, it provides a way for a white audience to enter themselves into a lived experience of a BIPOC person. In his work, he utilized allegory/fantasy to provide a

captivating way of relaying the truth (Bell, *And* 7). The following chapter Martinez assesses the method of autobiographic reflection. In order to illustrate this method, Martinez evaluates Patricia J. Williams's approach to this method. Williams argues that this approach provides an obtainable route to analyzing theory. Williams views her narratives as an attempt at translating theory or making 'visible some of the consequences of theory'" (Martinez 86). These three methods supply readers the truth of BIPOC lived-experiences in different frameworks that are easy to register and understand.

As an educator and a Latina woman, I understand the importance of bringing the voices and lived experiences of BIPOC students to the forefront of academia. BIPOC voices are essential to aid in the mending of our broken education system, a system that maintains Eurocentric ways. Eurocentricity was never created with BIPOC students in mind. In fact, these Eurocentric patterns were only to support white students and fail all BIPOC learners. So by incorporating story and counterstory of BIPOC voices into my work as a scholar and an educator will cultivate the academic journey of BIPOC learners and further demonstrates the capability of decentering white space in a classroom.

Teaching both public school and higher education systems, I noticed that both systems dismiss the reality of so many BIPOC students' experiences such as inequality and inequity within the educational institutions. By dismissing the hardships of BIPOC students sustains the white space that BIPOC students endure on a daily basis inside and outside of school. Most BIPOC students deal with real world issues such as helping with bills by having one or two jobs while attending school full time, taking care of family members (young/old), so why are we using the methodology pedagogy, and the instructional methods of teaching children? Some BIPOC students may be young of age, or lack maturity, but most BIPOC students in 2-year

colleges deal with major adult issues. Creating a methodology of pedagogy, andragogy, and critical race theories repositions two-year college English instructors' attention to design a diverse method of teaching for BIPOC students to learn and decenters the whitespace in the classroom. Updating the execution in teaching by transitioning between pedagogy, andragogy, and critical race theories will prove to be pivotal in decreasing the inequality and inequity gap in two-year colleges.

Chapter 4 contains a fictional interview with scholar Malcolm Knowles. Malcolm Knowles was a renowned educator, and although Knowles did not consider BIPOC students in his theory. He did expand the term andragogy that was created in 1833. Andragogy means to assist in adults learning, so this chapter provides an overview of pedagogy and andragogy and how combining the two theories of pedagogy and andragogy will facilitate in decentering white space in a two-year English classroom. In two-year college, the demographics have a high number of non-traditional students, so it would be detrimental if instructors use only pedagogy methods in teaching students from two-year colleges. It is a superior attitude to believe that all students learn the same way. It is imperative that instructors realize that teaching methodologies need to be altered in order for BIPOC students to progress in academia. So with the fictional interview, I also include ideas to help decenter white space for instructors.

Conversation with Malcom Knowles

The methodology shifts our attention to narrated dialogue, allegory/fantasy, and some autobiographical reflection of Martinez's four methods of counterstory in order to establish a connection between pedagogy, andragogy, and CRT. By doing so, I will establish that this connection will better suit BIPOC students in their academic journey, and the connection will

decenter white space within the classroom in order to provide a space where BIPOC students can dissolve the dominant discourse. In my narrated dialogue, I created a conversation with the late educator Dr. Malcolm S. Knowles to help navigate between background information of pedagogy and andragogy. Within this conversation, I will offer material on CRT and weave it into pedagogy and andragogy to illustrate how story and counterstory benefits BIPOC students in higher education. Educators need a combination of methodology of pedagogy, andragogy, and CRTEd in order to execute a well-rounded education for all BIPOC students. By combining these three methodologies, white space will be decentered for BIPOC learners and will not fall through the cracks of an educational system that was created for white learners. Educators can incorporate the blend of pedagogy, andragogy, and CRTEd into their environment of their faculty office and classroom, but also, they can integrate the combination into their content lessons, activities, group work, and assigned readings/literature. Most instructors have not been formally trained as an educator, so utilizing the mixture of pedagogy, andragogy, and CRTEd will be overwhelming, so it would be best to begin with small actions and then gradually learn to link all three methodologies together throughout the course and the semester. To explore this method, I provide a stock conversation with Dr. Malcolm Knowles and myself about pedagogy, andragogy, critical race theory, and critical race theory in education.

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Kassandra A. Ramírez-Buck: Thank you for meeting with me, Dr. Malcolm Knowles. It is a pleasure to meet the "Father of Andragogy" (Knowles, "Everything"). You introduced andragogy to the United States in the early 1970s to illustrate that adults and children learn differently. Granted, when you brought this theory to the United States, your goal was to introduce it to adult education such as continuing education courses and especially to white

learners since BIPOC learners were still segregated in some public schools due to the "all deliberate speed" from *Brown v. Board of Education II* (Delgado and Stefancic, *Introduction*). However, with the evolution of the education system today especially in higher education, not much has changed for BIPOC students. The statistics of BIPOC success in the education system continues to lag behind white students. I believe your theory can be applied to BIPOC learners within their freshman year of college in order to foster these learners to succeed in their academic journey. This theory should not be limited to adults in continuing ed. If it was applied to BIPOC learners, the future direction of higher education could break down barriers for BIPOC students. I just wanted to pick your brain about an idea I have to combine use of pedagogy, andragogy, and CRT in higher education.

Malcolm Knowles: Ah, yes. I would love to help, but I also would like to hear your thoughts on it.

KARB: Okay, let me open with the past when I taught public school. When I began teaching at a middle school, my undergraduate degree prepared me for the teaching profession, or I should say the 18 hours of education prepared me. After ten years of teaching, I decided to earn my MA in English. When I completed my degree, I decided not to go back to the public school system, but to give being an adjunct professor a shot. I knew that getting hired as a full-time professor at a 2-year college is extremely competitive, so I figured working my way up as an adjunct professor was the best plan. It was. I was an adjunct professor for about two years at four different campuses, and finally, a Dean of one of the colleges recommended for me to be hired full-time. As an adjunct, the college provides several professional development training and workshops, but I was not able to attend very many because of my crazy adjunct schedule. But now as a full-

time instructor, I look forward to attending as many professional development workshops as possible.

To my surprise, at my new college, every Friday, new full-time faculty are required to take a year-long professional development course. Each section dealt with different themes such as the basics Human Resources, health benefits, and how to create and maintain your individual plan (IP). The second theme was teaching such as what to expect on the first day of the semester, Blackboard basics, classroom management, how to create lessons, and how to be an effective educator. I thought these training sessions were strange. I felt that these training sessions were so basic. Who doesn't know how to be a teacher? What I quickly learned was that there are some new faculty have never been in a classroom before, so these trainings were vital to them. They were learning how to execute their expertise in ways where BIPOC students can thrive.

My only takeaway from a year-long training was that higher education was not different from public education. Let me clarify. I noticed that the training taught us how to teach children, which I am extremely versed in pedagogy, but from being an adjunct, I observed that the students that attend 2-year colleges were not children. Yes, they may be intellectually immature, but I should not be teaching them as I did my 7th and 8th grade students. To me this is a dilemma. Why are we using a method meant for children? This does not make sense to me. This is why I thought of you. I wanted to talk to you about your teaching principle - andragogy. Can you provide me with some information on this practice of teaching adults?

MK: Of course, but first, I did not come up with this word. I want to credit German schoolteacher Alexander Kapp for generating this term back in 1833. It is unfortunate that the

method didn't take off in the educational system. When Kapp discovered this method, he was just a teacher, so renowned German philosopher, Johan Friedrich Herbart, who had more credibility in academia dismantled Kapp's credibility and his concept of andragogy. Kapp had a different approach to Andragogik (andragogy) compared to me. His approach focuses on education for adulthood - "*Bildung im männlichen Alter*," which means education for men. Whereas, I emphasize individual development (Loeng, "Alexander Kapp" 630). These are two main differences between the approaches of European and North American andragogy hence why it has different meanings.

So, let me go back to the term -andragogy - especially the history of the term. Almost a hundred years after Kapp was discredited for his concept, there are records at the Academy of Labor in Frankfurt, Germany in 1921 that show that a German scientist, Eugen Rosenstock, resurfaced the term - andragogy. Poor man, he didn't realize that it was already discovered by Kapp, and with his ignorance of that fact, he ran with the concept. Rosenstock's theory derived from his belief that adults require different types of educators compared to young students. He also believed that adults also call for different ways of teaching. As you can see, there are several approaches and interpretations to the term. I came to learn about this concept in 1967 by a Yugoslavian adult educator, Dusan Savicevic. I was so inspired by him and this approach that I wrote my article "Androgogy, Not Pedagogy" in 1968 (Knowles, "Andragogy" 18). I was such a newbie with this concept that I even spelled the term incorrectly.

KARB: What? You misspelled the word? Fascinating. So how do you define the term andragogy? Pedagogy?

MK: Lesson learned on my part. Luckily, the word was corrected in all literature. I define andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Chan 27). As for pedagogy, its definition is "the art and science of teaching children" (Chan 27). So, allow me to illustrate some main differences between pedagogy and andragogy. Let's begin with preparing learners in both pedagogy and andragogy. In pedagogy, the learners have no say in what they are being taught. Instructors create, disseminate, and assess all of the knowledge to the students. It is knowledge passed on from the instructor to the learner, so the only learning is done by the student.

KARB: Ah, yes. Paulo Freire defines that as the "banking method". Freire's aim about this method is that it conquers the minds of the students, so they fall into the role that the oppressor wants them to be, a controlled state (*Pedagogy* 71).

MK: With andragogy, the learning goes both ways: from instructor to learner and learner to instructor. Experience, even mistakes, are crucial in andragogy.

KARB: In Critical Race Theory in education, scholars call that storytelling and/or counterstory. Allowing learners to share their storytelling and/or counterstory is a way for marginalized learners to be heard, and a way for instructors to learn from the learners. For Freire, he believes that a true education is when both the teacher and the student are simultaneously teachers and students (*Pedagogy* 72). I believe that most instructors stray from this ideology, so then their execution is very one way - one-sided.

MK: Now, to compare certain sides between pedagogy and andragogy, I will start with pedagogy and its climate, or as most educators call, the environment of the classroom. The climate contains authority-oriented lessons and has a formal and competitive feel for the learners, but with andragogy, the climate is relaxed, trusting, mutually respected (between instructor and student), inviting, collaborative, supportive, and warm. As for the lessons, pedagogical practices

involve teacher prepared lessons with no learner involvement. In comparison, andragogy is quite different. There is mutual planning between learners and instructors. When it comes to evaluating learners, in pedagogy, the instructor completes this task whereas in andragogy, it is a mutual collaboration between the instructor and learner. Finally, for designing lesson plans and activities, pedagogical practices involve subject matter, content units, and transfer of techniques; however, with andragogic practices, problem-solving and experiential learning are two huge components.

KARB: Okay, so your definition of andragogy is "the art and science of helping adults learn" to self-direct their learning (Chan 27). I understand your intention with the concept andragogy was to help adults within adult education such as continuing education, but throughout the years, the concept has endured within continuing education. So why isn't the term teaching included in the definition of andragogy? Can't adults be taught new concepts? What characteristics determine whether a student should have a pedagogical or andragogical approach to use on them?

For instance, I believe people put an age on the term children and adult, so is there an age limit that determines pedagogy and andragogy? The reason I ask this is because for ten years of teaching 7th and 8th grade, I noticed that every year, I would have a handful of students who were beyond what I was teaching and how I was teaching it. For example, if I was teaching certain critical thinking concepts, certain students would grasp those concepts easily, so then the rest of the six-weeks, they would be bored. I had to learn how to adjust my lessons to engage those students.

MK: Oh, no. There isn't an age limit for these theories. In order to indicate whether the instructor needs to use pedagogical or andragogical practices, the instructors need to refer to six

postulations. The first item that determines whether the student fits in the andragogy theory is if they are self-directed and independent. Secondly, the role of experience of the student is important. Students' experiences are a library of resources for learning. Thirdly, students need to have a readiness to learn. In other words, students will want and be ready to learn what they believe they need to know. The fourth is the orientation to learn, which means that adults learn for immediate benefit instead of future application. The next concept is that adults usually have internal motivation. Finally, adults want to know the value of learning and why they need to learn (Chan 28).

KARB: However, I also feel that pedagogy and andragogy, even heutagogy (self-determined learning), are not concepts that educators should keep separate. In actuality, higher education instructors should incorporate these three theories into their courses. Educators should observe these three theories on a scale. For example, when I teach freshman college students in ENGL 1301, I notice, at the beginning of each lesson, I have to use pedagogical practices, but by the midpoint to the end of the lesson, the students meet the required assumptions you mentioned. As an educator, I want my students to learn how to be self-directed and independent from the beginning.

KARB: Do you feel that andragogy can help in the actual classroom and not just continuing education programs? If so, how?

MK: Most definitely. By switching from pedagogy to andragogy will shift the power in the classroom. It will give students autonomy of what they learn. However, this power is something hard to set free for most instructors. As you mentioned, the execution is important on how to have a balance of power.

KARB: I agree. From my perspective, higher education maintains the pedagogical approach in their classroom, which means the instructors control the content and climate of the class, not the students. As a Latina student, this did not help me learn how to be self-directed in my own learning. It actually did the opposite; it foiled my understanding of how I best learn. For example, when I was in high school late 80s and early 90s, we were taught to memorize, to recall, but never to actually critically think.

I refer to this type of power in the educational system as white space. Let me explain. Earlier you spoke of power in the classroom. I believe that is an extremely vital word, but from different perspectives. My perspective is that this power represents white space. Meaning that white space is the oppressor's power within the institution and classroom, and with that white space, the equity of education for BIPOC students creates a lack in the higher educational system. In her article, "Whiteness as Property," Cheryl Harris argues that "Whiteness at various times signifies and is deployed as identity, status, and property, sometimes singularly, sometimes in tandem" (1725). Harris's point is that race and relations of ownership continue to lay a white space foundation in our society. This white space is the infrastructure in all levels of society's educational system within the content and policies. Now, with most white students the educational system works perfectly; however, for BIPOC students, it does not. White space undermines all learning opportunities for BIPOC students.

From my research, your andragogy approach failed to consider BIPOC students in the equation. In agreement, scholar Donald N. Roberson, Jr. argues that your andragogical approach maintains western thought, which leaves out cultures world-wide students (Chan 32).While educators

Raymond J. Wlodkowski and Margery B. Ginsbert believes that you leave out cultural perspectives (Chan 32). I believe that this major oversight of BIPOC learners has crippled their success rate in higher education.

MK: Is white space created only by white instructors?

KARB: White space can be created by BIPOC instructors as well. It is not limited to white instructors. White space can be in anything or any space that white ideology dominates such as the law, workplaces, city's public spaces, neighborhood, and the education system. I am focusing on white space within the educational system. In higher education, unfortunately, most instructors have not sustained any formal training to teach. So, to naturally compensate for this lack of knowledge, most instructors mirror the ways of teaching they witnessed their instructors teaching them. And by doing that, well, it just sustains the Eurocentric way of teaching, which is to disseminate knowledge to the students. This ideology fails our BIPOC students in numerous ways in their educational journey; however, I aim to explain that BIPOC students could be successful if we, educators, combine pedagogy, andragogy, and critical race theory into our classrooms.

I guess I am trying to wrap my head around this idea that an important element of teaching and learning is being bypassed with BIPOC students. In other words, I feel that by combining pedagogy, andragogy, and critical race theory in higher education will benefit BIPOC students in their academic journey.

MK: How does Critical Race Theory in education fit in?

KARB: Great question. We need to consider the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets in order to understand how CRT in education tenets align with each other. To avoid confusion, I will abbreviate CRT in Education as CRTEd, and Critical Race Theory as CRT.

CRT arose from legal studies in the 1970s to reveal that the law and legal institutions are inherently racist, and that race, a socially constructed concept, is used by white people to further their economic and political interests. Although there are several leading people who study and are experts in CRT, the most prominent ones are Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Kimberlé Crenshaw; however, from CRT, there have been additional chapters incorporated under CRT such as TribalCrit, LatCrit, and AsianCrit, and more continue to form even today. The main goal of these branches is to encapsulate all BIPOC voices within the law. Each branch contains experts and scholars that continue to uncover discrimination against certain ethnic groups. For instance, LatCrit focuses on issues that pertain to the Latinx community such as immigration, language freedoms, and identity issues. Despite the creation of CRT and CRT's branches, there are still some tenets that penetrate within all branches of CRT: Permanence of race and racism, challenge to dominant ideologies, interest convergence, race as a social construct, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, interdisciplinarity, centrality of experiential knowledge and/or unique voices of color, and commitment to social justice (Martinez 9).

Critical Race Theory in education developed out of the lack of equity within all levels of the educational system. For instance, standardized testing, bilingual courses, developmental courses, and multicultural courses have crippled the learning for BIPOC students. CRTEd scholars created guidelines to align with the CRT tenets in order for educators to be more cognizant of the needs of their BIPOC students. The first CRT tenet of permanence of race and racism, Derrick Bell argued that racism is permanent in our society, so with that in mind, educators need to realize that racism is an everyday occurrence for BIPOC students. Planning lessons, activities,

readings, and group work for your courses should have BIPOC students on the forefront of the educators mindset. The second tenet involves questioning and challenging dominant ideologies, and in education, that dominant ideology would be the Eurocentric ways of teaching, content, and policies, which is white space. This white space needs to be decentered within the institution, content, policies, and the classroom. Failure to decenter the white space will perpetuate the Eurocentric ways. The next two CRTEd guidelines both deal with content within the course and are aligned with four CRT tenets: permanence of race and racism, interest convergence, race as social construct, and interdisciplinarity. In these two guidelines, CRTEd scholars believe that educators need to connect their lessons with historical context and that educators should design their courses with interdisciplinarity in mind. For instance, it is essential that educators embed BIPOC works written by BIPOC writers throughout their lessons. To embed does not mean to throw in one or two BIPOC works. To embed BIPOC works is to be incorporated as an essential part of the curriculum. The last CRTEd guideline is bringing BIPOC's lived experience and knowledge into the curriculum as a focal point. Similar to incorporating BIPOC works into the course, educators should integrate the experiences and perspectives of BIPOC learners. By doing so, educators will be aligning with intersectionality and anti-essentialism of CRT tenets.

MK: Fascinating. I can see andragogy, CRT, and CRTEd working together.

KARB: Such a relief. So,let me explain why I consider pedagogy, andragogy, and CRTEd on a moving scale. Educators in higher education have to incorporate these three methods at any given time with any lesson during the semester. One main goal of all higher education instructors should be to form self-directed and independent learners; however, this does not necessarily happen for BIPOC learners. Higher education continues to maintain Eurocentric ideologies and practices, and this approach does not benefit BIPOC students. By utilizing the three methods of

pedagogy, andragogy, and CRTEd will not only benefit all students especially BIPOC students, but it will greatly challenge the traditional ideologies and practices in higher education.

The instructor, more than likely when teaching a new lesson, will have to commence with pedagogy methods. In pedagogy, the instructor prepares the lessons and activities, but when the instructor is bringing a new concept to the learners, this is expected; however, when the lesson begins, the instructor and the learner should be learning from each other unlike pedagogy where the instructor transmits knowledge to the learners without their input.

In pedagogy, learners are considered that they are not intellectually mature to understand the importance of an education and that students attend school because it is the law. In andragogy, adults want to know the value of learning and why they need to learn. In higher education, there are some learners who lack the intellect maturity, but that does not mean that they do not know the value of learning, which is why the execution is important. With BIPOC students, most know education is important, and that earning a degree can help them and their family now. Most BIPOC students are concerned about the welfare of their family while earning their education. Several BIPOC families work together to make the family afloat economically, so they want to earn an education in order to have an immediate benefit of future relevancy.

In pedagogy, learners are not involved in the planning, diagnosis of their academic needs, and their assessment to measure their advancement. Needless to say, in pedagogy, learners do not have a voice. In contrast, andragogy places the learner's voice into high esteem. Dr. Knowles, you believe that students' experiences are a library of resources for learning, which I totally

agree with you. However, educators, in higher education especially in 2-year colleges, do not share our sentiment. Most educators believe that BIPOC students do not have stories to share. I think the educators who have this mindset overlooks that most BIPOC students have experienced more than the educators realize. I speculate that if 2-year college educators would learn about their BIPOC experiences and learn from them, then BIPOC students would hold their instructors in higher esteem, which will lead them to trust their instructors and what the instructors teach them. By trusting their instructors BIPOC students will want and be ready to learn, which is the readiness to learn in andragogy.

With the fourth concept, the orientation to learn, which means that adults learn for immediate benefit instead of future application. With BIPOC students, I argue that they do both. Some BIPOC students seek certificates in automotive, HVAC, welding, and plumbing, but some earn a 2-year degree and transfer to a 4-year university, so BIPOC students do have an internal motivation, which is another andragogy concept, to complete either certificate or degree.

MK: And do not forget the environment of the class. Between pedagogy and andragogy, the comparison is quite stark. In pedagogy, the climate of the classroom is authority-orientated and very formal.

KARB: And with andragogy, the environment of the classroom is relaxed, mutually trusting, respectful, collaborative, supportive, and inviting. If educators in higher education would transition to andragogy, instead of pedagogy, BIPOC students would flourish in their academic journey.

Co-Creating Classroom Policies with BIPOC Students

Some instructors may believe they are trapped between state mandated objectives and policies and content of educational institutions. However, instructors can take smaller steps at decentering white space in their classrooms. These smaller steps can propel the onset of decentering white space fully in your classroom. Instructors can begin by creating an environment in their classroom and in their faculty offices to reduce the feeling of intimidation and fear that BIPOC students encounter while attending college.

Paulo Freire mentions dialogue education emphasizes that dialogue liberates while lecturing (one-sided monologue) oppresses (Freire, *Education* 42). With that in mind, I strive to create an open and welcoming climate whenever I deal with students whether that being in the classroom or my campus office. I want to have a dialogue with my students. In most classrooms in higher education, the layout induces a one-way transfer of information from instructor to student. The environment within the institution itself endorses a sense of hierarchy in the academic field, which promotes an intimidating and formal environment. Educators do not have much control of the layout of the institution and the classroom they are assigned to every semester, but educators do have control of the layout of their individual faculty offices. Faculty spend several hours a week in their individual office, and most decorate it to make it comfortable for them to work; however, does the faculty office promote a sense of collaboration when a student comes to office hours? What story does your faculty office tell a student about your sense of teaching and learning? Although there is limited research on the layout of faculty offices, there are some studies that illustrate the importance of an advisor's office being warm and inviting for students. Educator Diana G. Oblinger argues that "Space -- whether physical or virtual -- can have an impact on learning. It can bring people together; it can encourage

exploration, collaboration, and discussion. Or, space can carry an unspoken message of silence and disconnectedness" (1.2).

During my first few years of teaching in higher education, I noticed that students rarely came to visit me during my office hours even though I would endlessly promote my office hours during class. I finally asked my students why they did not come to my office. Some said they did not know where it was. Others said they were nervous exploring a building that they were not familiar with, some mentioned that the work hours prevented them from visiting me, but the one explanation disturbed me the most: faculty offices are scary. When one of my students mentioned that in front of the class, the rest of the students chimed in. They all mentioned that when they do visit faculty in their offices, it felt like they were sent to the principal's office. They felt like they did something wrong. I created a collaborative learning environment while in class, but I was failing to do so during office hours. My office is an extension of who I was as an educator and learner. Do I not want students to feel comfortable to visit me? The very next class I took them all to my faculty office.

Now, if it is a 45-minute course or an hour and twenty-minute course, I always find time, within the first week of the semester, to walk the entire class to my office. I allow three to four students at a time into my office (not a very big office) to inspect it. I ask them to look at everything in my office - pictures of my friends and family, my books on the shelves, my decor, and vibe. Once everyone has had a turn to glance at my office, we gather in a spot outside my office. Granted, my office is near a sitting area, which is convenient, but still doable if you do not have a sitting area near your office. In about five - seven minutes, we discuss my office. I ask the students if they have ever been brought to a faculty's office. The one common comment I hear when I ask that question is *I avoid having to come to any faculty's office*. My next question is

simple: “what are your thoughts about my office?” Most students say that it reminds them of a relative’s living room, or it smells great (wax warmer) or it has a relaxed feel to it. I remind them that my office environment will remain what they felt throughout the semester, so I encourage them to visit my office at any time. The value of having my students glimpse into my second home (campus office) provides a sense of trust between instructor and student. Creating a mutually respectful environment does not necessarily have to be limited to the classroom. In his book, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, Gaston Bachelard states that “all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home” (5). In other words, I want my students to feel comfortable and at peace when they visit me during my office hours.

Class Activity - Writing Log

Students really need an explanation repeated several times of why they need to learn how and to maintain writing logs. This does take time, but in the end, it benefits students in overcoming any anxieties about writing. Instructors can provide different prompts for each writing log. Each prompt can reflect a narrated dialogue, allegory/fantasy, or autobiographical reflection. The students need to write in these writing logs every class time for about 10 - 15 minutes of the day. These prompts can be groundwork to your lessons and assigned readings/literature, or they can be prompts to help generate ideas or as I say, “unclog the thinking tube.” By the second week, students are conditioned to write freely, and if I do use some prompts to be the foundation of the essay, students realize they can use their writing log for some of their essays. For instance, one of my major writing assignments is a rhetorical analysis. So, when we are at the beginning of the lesson, the writing log prompt directs the students to create a narrative dialogue with different versions of a rhetorical analysis or whatever we have planned. After two

weeks of writing, students refer to their writing log to help them develop concepts for major essays; however, the writing log produces a safe area for BIPOC students to create their storytelling and counterstories.

Additionally, not only does the writing log generate writing ideas and a safe environment for BIPOC students to share their lived-experiences, but also it will be a starting point for a collaboration of classroom policies between instructor and BIPOC students. For instance, as a lesson begins, the instructor may have to guide students such as in pedagogy, but as the lesson progresses, the students can decipher their new knowledge, which is andragogy. In other words, if an instructor has writing days scheduled into their syllabus, the instructor can sit down with each student and discuss their ideas and their writing plans. After a couple of writing sessions, the instructor can provide reflection time. The students and instructor sit in a circle to discuss their writing progress such as their questions, concerns, suggestions, and fears of the assignment. Having the instructor and the students in a circle deconstructs any type of hierarchy, which decenters white space in the classroom. By decentering the white space, the circle creates a safe environment where BIPOC students trust their voices will be heard. When students are discussing their questions, concerns, suggestions, and fears, the instructor should write down their needs and wants. Allow the students to answer each other's questions. If students cannot offer an answer, the instructor can guide them to the resolution. After questions are answered and everyone gets a chance to share their thoughts, the instructor can write or type their concerns, suggestions, and fears down where everyone can view them.

To continue, ask the students to prioritize some of the concerns, suggestions, and fears. Next, the students can propose recommendations that can help some of their concerns and fears. For example, if students are fearful and concerned that they will not meet the due date because of

work or family obligations, instructors can provide a compromise. For instance, if the essay was scheduled to be due on Friday, why not move the due date to Monday? Another option can be to compromise on the word or page count. These small changes will not devast the course schedule, but it does provide an environment where students and instructors can co-create classroom policies, so the learning contexts are equitable and inclusive.

Ultimately, at an early age, BIPOC students learn that the educational system was not made for them, which results in them feeling like an outcast in their own school. When they reach higher education institutions, their prior experiences of being an outcast intensifies. By providing a space where BIPOC students can share their storytelling and counterstories through their writing by utilizing narrated dialogue, allegory/fantasy, and autobiographical reflection provides a space where BIPOC students can be heard in the classroom.

Educational institutions preserve traditional values and patterns, which historically prove that these traditionalistic ways fail BIPOC students in their academic journey. In order to decenter the white space that devastates the higher educational system, combining pedagogy, andragogy, and CRTEd into their classroom and their office hours begins to displace white space in the classroom. It provides building blocks for BIPOC students to gain their voices that have long been silenced by a system made to neglect them. To decenter white space within the institution's policies may seem like an impossible task, but I suggest beginning within the individual classroom and faculty office because at times, instructors need to ignite change from the ground up.

Chapter 5

> "Tell Kassi that grandpa [Francisco Martinez Ramírez] talks to her when he sees her picture that we have in our room and that he misses her hugs."
> Angela Pescina Ramírez, letter to Anthony Pescina Ramírez, July 7, 1979

Counterstories, storytelling, and revisions of classroom policies and practices provide a venue for BIPOC students to express their experiences with racial discrimination, social injustices, and with revisions of classroom policies and practices, BIPOC students have a safe and comfortable environment to share their stories. By utilizing counterstory and storytelling as a methodology prioritizes BIPOC students' voices in order to be seen, heard, or understood. Research on CRT has relied primarily on counterstory and storytelling, but I extend CRT to account for the oral tradition in TribalCrit in order to provide space for American Indian students to incorporate their ways of storytelling, so they can share their knowledge and meaning making. In Aja Y. Martinez's, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, Martinez provides counterstory research and expounds the avenues counterstory can work as methodology. She illustrates that narrated dialogue, allegory/fantasy, and autobiographical reflection all provide different approaches to counterstory. I expanded her approaches with oral stories. In one of TribalCrit's tenets, it explains that American Indian stories are not separate from theory. In other words, stories are legitimate sources; however, most research does not include all types of different forms of counterstory and storytelling to fit the particular BIPOC group such as oral stories. For instance, *corridos* and *testimonios* are a form of storytelling in LatCrit, but TribalCrit does not expand their tenet to include oral stories. All types of counterstories and storytelling are crucial to CRT and the branches that have sprung from CRT such as LatCrit and TribalCrit.

When transitioning into a higher education institution directly from graduating high school, BIPOC students usually struggle with navigating through their educational journey along

with celebrating their culture and identity especially when higher education does not provide any celebration within the curriculum, environment, and policies. Within higher education institutions, BIPOC students struggle to find their place in a white space that was not originally intended for them. Granted, throughout the years, institutions have attempted to include BIPOC students by incorporating heritage months such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American/Alaskan Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Month. The institution may have campus activities, lectures, concerts, or any other event to engage BIPOC students, but once the month is over, this type of BIPOC engagement ends.

Equally important is the disconnect BIPOC students endure in the two-year English classroom. BIPOC students attend these courses to discover that they cannot relate to the curriculum because they do not identify with the curriculum being taught. With the combination of attempting to navigate in an institution that was not made with BIPOC students in mind, but also, to attend an English when the assigned readings, lessons, and activities have no connection to BIPOC students and their lived experiences. This lack of connection indicates that the white space dominates a space, either within the institution, classroom, or both, that prevents a true attachment to their learning experience.

Critical Legal Studies (CLS) scholars focus on laws dominated by white ideology and argue that this white ideology is innate with racism. Therefore, scholars took CLS and CRT was created to expose racial discrimination and laws that support any type of oppression toward BIPOC people. In CRT, five basic tenets CRT scholars observe. The first tenet argues "racism is permanent" (Bell, *Faces* 3). For the second tenet, Derrick Bell calls "interest convergence" maintains the theory that when white people tolerate or encourage any type of advancement of

BIPOC people, it will, in some way, benefit white people in a larger context (Bell, "Interest" 50 and Devin and Crenshaw 30). The third tenet declares that race is a social construct (Bell, "Who's" 80, Ladson-Billings, "Toward" 470, Delgado and Stefancic, *Introduction* 21). As for the fourth tenet, it challenges that white ideologies and experiences are the norm, which Eduardo Bonilla-Silva indicates there being a form of blind racism, which continues modern racial norms (Bonilla-Silvan, *Racism* 53). The last CRT tenet argues that BIPOC voices provide a crucial way for the white dominant ideology to comprehend the hardship BIPOC people continue to endure. It is with storytelling, counterstories and a modification in classroom policies white space can be decentered within the two-year English classroom.

The intention of this research is to bring forth the idea of decentering white space in two-year college English courses by utilizing CRT, Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTEd), Latino-Critical Theory (LatCrit), and Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). Although CRTEd, LatCrit, and TribalCrit have branched from CRT, each branch has its own identity that focuses on issues relating to the particular group of people. For instance, LatCrit concentrates on issues pertaining to the Latinx community such as immigration, language rights, and being between the Black/white binary. Whereas TribalCrit centers on the colonization of American Indians along with stressing the "liminality of our [American Indians] position (legally/politically and socially)" (Brayboy 427). To continue, CRTEd expands the CRT tenets in the educational system platform. It focuses on the racial discrimination and oppression against BIPOC students within the educational system from K - 12 to higher education. By providing CRTEd, LatCrit, and TribalCrit as a methodology in two-year college English courses will provide an environment where BIPOC students feel comfortable in sharing their lived experiences. BIPOC

students will realize their worth and potential in a curriculum tailored to their shared knowledge through *testimonios, corridos,* and oral tradition.

Every educator has their own style of teaching; however, as educators know, learning is never ending. As the educational system evolves with new policies and practices, most educators are in constant flux with change. However, most of the institution's policies and practices are not advantageous for BIPOC students. Some of these policies and practices continue to oppress BIPOC students in their academic journey. Regardless of this issue, educators have the authority within their own classrooms to make changes to benefit BIPOC students, so why not mold teaching methods where all students, including BIPOC students, can prosper? I recommend educators to challenge their own awareness in their way of teaching by reflecting on your curriculum, presence and environment you create, and how you execute the lesson. Statistics indicate that our nation is diversifying faster than predicted. In the 2020 census, data shows that "nearly four of 10 Americans identify with a race or ethnic group other than white . . . [it] will be the first in the nation's history in which the white population declined in numbers" (Frey). So how can educators incorporate BIPOC students' lived experiences and shared knowledge in order to develop their learning experience? Educators can integrate storytelling, counterstories, and oral stories into their curriculum. As I tell my students, writing is equivalent to our fashion styles. We all tend to have different styles, and these styles reflect who we are as a person. Well, in writing, I make sure my students understand that their style of writing, either it being jotting down ideas on a napkin compared to a detailed outline, is perfect for that particular student. Therefore, when I begin a writing assignment, I usually begin with stories, not newspaper or magazine articles, not peer-reviewed articles, not even written stories. To begin a writing assignment, my execution always begins with an exchange of stories between my students and

me. We are all a product of our history when a story is told, it is not forgotten,which is why this part of the writing assignment is crucial. I arrange the classroom where we are sitting in a circle or outside on a beautiful day, and we share stories. We should not be doing things for students, we need to be doing things "with" students so for the instructor to share their stories transform a pedagogical approach to andragogy because we are learning and facilitating, which the instructors become the student, and the students become the instructors. Granted, I have a theme for this lesson such as survival, loss, identity, family, etc. I provide storytelling, counterstory, and/or oral stories prompts that help students generate ideas that can potentially assist them in the assignment, but I have them provide a story about their lived experiences. I even share my stories of my lived experiences. I believe by sharing the instructor's story along with their students provides what bell hooks calls a "community" (hooks 40). By building a community from the first day of the semester creates a presence and environment of collaboration, safety, and comfort.

This part of the lesson is pivotal to the writing assignment; therefore, I suggest spending time on this part. I even have my students use their phones to record themselves when it is their time to turn to share their stories, so they can refer to their story as we get deeper into the writing assignment. After we share and record stories, we then type out our stories, but we put their stories on hold for a week. During that week, I provide stories written by BIPOC authors that maintain the same themes I am striving to accomplish in the writing assignment. For instance, if my theme was survival, I will choose survival stories written by BIPOC authors. Once we have read, discussed, and had group activities over the assigned readings, I have students pick the story they most relate to when it comes to survival.

Now that the students have their story of survival along with their chosen BIPOC author's story, it is time for a library day. This is where I have a librarian demonstrate how to find sources dealing with survival. These sources need to be from the past up to current situations dealing with survival. I ask the students to find two-three sources similar to their story and the chosen BIPOC author's story. For instance, their similarities of survival can deal with immigration, death in the family, economical issues, etc. Once students find their sources from the library, we learn how to analyze those sources through a variety of basic individual and group activities. Once I feel the students have a grasp of their sources, I have the students' go back to their stories. Again, the students wrote about the theme that corresponds to the assigned readings, so for this example, they shared survival stories. I provide them with some focus questions and a chart to guide them in comparing their story with their chosen story along with their sources. After a week or so of synthesizing their story to their chosen story and their sources, the students are ready to begin a synthesis essay using their story in any form (counterstory, storytelling, oral stories, *corridos*, *testimonios*), their relatable story, and their sources from the library.

I have interchanged this entire lesson with different types of themes and writing assignments such as rhetorical analysis, visual analysis, and argumentative essay. It does not take much to plan, organize, or create. However, every semester and sometimes, every course, I find myself tweaking the assignment in order to accommodate students. At the end, the BIPOC students feel that their story is being seen, heard, and understood. They realize that they are not alone when dealing with hard aspects of life.

I know most instructors have the best intentions when it comes to including "diversity" into their classroom; however, with my lived experiences as Latina student and instructor, I do

not believe most instructors are providing the best behavior and form. So if I may, I would like for my fellow white colleagues to understand a few concepts that may assist in incorporating counterstory, storytelling, and oral stories into their curriculum. First, systemic racism in higher education is not about you, so attempt not to be a "white savior," which again, it is not your role to "fix" or "save" BIPOC students. By being a "white savior," you are not being an ally to your BIPOC students. Second, be honest and transparent. Do not avoid talking to your students about societal issues in order to avoid conflict. By avoiding this important conversation does more harm than good. It will be uncomfortable, but it needs to be done in order for growth in attitudes and beliefs. The last is just to be still and listen to the students you want to help. Stop trying to save, fix, and make it about you. Just stop. Listen to your BIPOC students. My dear white colleagues it is time for you to shift your consciousness. It is time to decenter this embedded white space within your classroom and institution's policies and practices.

In my previous chapters, I intertwine my personal narrative storytelling and counterstory to emphasis the importance BIPOC voices can have when analyzing theoretical methodology such as LatCrit, TribalCrit, and CRTEd. Most CRT studies have focused mainly on counterstory and storytelling, and these are extremely important; however, I aim to extend the use of oral stories, along with storytelling and counterstory, into the classroom. By incorporating these items into your curriculum in creative ways will provide an avenue to begin decentering white space. To fully decenter white space in the classroom, it is important to create a presence and environment where your BIPOC students feel comfortable in the class and respect you, not only as an instructor but as a person, and to execute the curriculum in a way that BIPOC students have a sense of belonging. The significance for decentering white space in a two-year English classroom is vital to the evolution of the educational system. Historically, the educational system

has been an enemy towards most BIPOC students. This needs to change. It is long overdue for an overhaul in our educational system. It is time to dismantle and reimagine a system where white space does not dominate our BIPOC students. BIPOC students' potential is limitless, so by decentering white space will expose their potential.

I acknowledge that there are some limitations to this research. For instance, one of the limitations is not addressing students with disabilities. Another limitation is not including BIPOC student voices along with faculty voices. I understand that both these limitations hinder my research now. However, I can visualize future research in my limitations. Although there are several publications dealing with Latinx experiences in education, there is little literature on best practices within the classroom especially with respect to creating curriculum. I believe this type of literature of best practices could provide training for instructors throughout two-year colleges not limited to English courses. By teaching instructors how to decenter white space in their classrooms will provide a shift in meaning making of policies and practices in the classroom and the institution.

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