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## **A Snapshot of the Latinx Teaching Experience in the New Latino Diaspora**

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### **Abstract**

As the nation's classrooms (and the nation itself) undergo a demographic change, we have to wonder what will happen to the teaching profession and attitudes as minority teachers start to fill the ranks of this profession. This study seeks to contribute to this work with the interviews of four Latinx teachers who are working in the New Latino Diaspora. These teachers come from a variety of fields, math, English and social studies and work in different places. Their words and ideas help us understand the ideas and practices that they implement and how they will change the classroom. Exploring these changes provides one way that we can understand what minority teachers bring to the classroom and how they can help their students learn and grow.

*Keywords:* Latinx, teachers, minority teachers

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## **Introduction**

As the classroom and the nation become more black, brown, and yellow, the teachers who run and administer these classrooms remain White (Bower-Phipps, Homa, Albaladejo, Johnson, & Cruz, 2013; Busey & Waters, 2016; United States Census Bureau, 2010). There are hopes that the population of teachers will also reflect these changing demographics. This is because research has shown that teachers from minoritized populations connect well to their students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016) and help bring students, schools, and their communities together (Harklau & Colomer, 2015). As encouraging as these changes are, they reveal that the role of educators of color need to be further examined to discover and explore more about their work ethic and professionalism. Given how much of the history of minority teachers has been lost (Kafka, 2016), more inquiry into what Latinx teachers bring into schools and why their presence matters so much in classrooms is needed. The research questions for this project are: how do Latinx teachers see their role in their schools? How do they approach their students? And does their identity shape their career approach and outlook?

To contribute to this conversation, I spoke with four Latinx teachers about how they see themselves, their schools, and their systems. In alignment with national and regional demographic changes, Latinx teachers are more likely to represent their students as they can share experiences of marginalization and can serve as role models for their students. This article will explore the existing research about Latinx teachers before going into the methodological choices and why interviewing was used to generate the data for this inquiry. Then this article will explore the words that these teachers shared with me and will discuss how they framed their work with their students, schools, and community.

## **Theoretical Framework**

For this inquiry, Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) provided a perspective to shape the stories, identities, and insights of the teachers. LatCrit provides a theoretical vantage point to value the voices and knowledges of the underrepresented and marginalized (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). LatCrit does this while maintaining a focus on race and racism, and issues of language, immigration, and social justice (Raible & Irizarry, 2015; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Starting with the stories of these teachers provides a useful vantage point for examining structural issues and their approach to their jobs. LatCrit's emphasis on stories and structural analysis provides a wide-angle lens view for many teachers and understanding their context.

Personal narratives and stories are important to LatCrit, as they allow for the people themselves to tell their story and build from that to create knowledge (Urrieta, Kolano, & Jo, 2015). Most narratives about teachers stress deficits and challenges as opposed to talking about possibilities (Cochran Smith, Villegas, Abrams, Chávez Moreno, & Mills, 2016), and in contrast LatCrit positions the personal narrative as a valuable place to explore so we can question and explore how Latinx teachers place themselves in this debate and their work. This work contributes by looking at how teachers see themselves in the classroom and approach it given serious political rhetoric that is not acting in their favor. Exploring how Latinx teachers see and frame their personal connection to the school and the people in it provides an important point to discuss and share how this group is changing schools and what they are bringing to changing classrooms.

The other theoretical lens that matters for this story is intersectionality as it helps maintain a complex view of the world and the forces that shape it. Collins and Bilge (2016) wrote that “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor” (p. 2). Understanding how different identities come together to form and frame our experiences matters a great deal especially when thinking about and working with Latinxs. As Portes (2007) stated in his work, the Latinx population is diverse and complex with different socioeconomic, geographic, regional, and racial factors. For this work, Latinxs are also teachers, which implies they held diverse perspectives in terms of education and their role as educators. Balancing these theoretical frames allows for a better contextualization of the words and experiences of these teachers.

### **Research about Latinx Teachers**

There has been research about what Latinx teachers bring to the classroom; and the issue of underrepresentation constantly appears in these works (Carter Andrews, Castro, Cho, Petchauer, Richmond, & Floden, 2019; Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Vasquez Heilig (2005) mentioned the disparity between representation of students and teachers in their study about teacher preparation and teacher demographics. Their work exemplifies the problem that Busey and Waters (2016) and Bower-Phipps, Homa, Albaladejo, Johnson, and Cruz (2013) discussed the changing demographics of classrooms while teachers and teacher preparation programs remain mostly White. Their research represented one of the

continuous issues with how teachers come into the field and how they become teachers. Along with the specific struggles of Latinx pre-service and in-service teachers in the classroom.

While Latinx teachers struggle to get into the classroom, there has been research on what Latinx professionals bring to the school. Sokolowski, Antrop-Gonzalez, and Maldonado (2010) noted how schools in Central Florida struggled to serve an increasing Puerto Rican student population with “only a handful of Latinx teachers” (p. 226) while most Latinxs “were secretaries, guidance counselors, and ESL support staff” (p. 227). Their research examined a school with issues and a population that was struggling to integrate into the region. However, Latinx students and staff believed that they were listened to and were hopeful about the school becoming a better place. This optimism stands out because it highlights the ability to see communities change and overcome the challenges that they face.

Latinx teachers bring more to the school than just representation to their faculties and schools. Austin, Willett, Gebhard, and Laó Montes (2010) concluded after working with Latinx preservice teachers that this population brought different ideas and practices to the classroom. Furthermore, they found that these new ideas and practices persist throughout the program and as these teachers enter the classroom. Salinas and Castro (2010) voiced a similar theme noting that Latinx preservice teachers tend to value social justice and multicultural elements of education instead of more typical ones, such as deficit thinking and didactic teaching. Their research opens the idea that Latinx teachers approach the profession very differently than the typical pre-service candidate. Building on current literature, the present work seeks to continue building on how we understand Latinx teachers and their approach towards the different kinds of practices and the profession of teaching.

### **Method**

To explore the thoughts and experiences of Latinx teachers, this study utilized interviews with the four Latinx teachers. Interviewing stands as one cornerstone of data collection for researchers across disciplines and helps for the exploration and investigation into countless subjects (Roulston, 2010; Singh, 2015). These interviews sought to understand the many complex ways that teachers were seeing their role in schools and the classroom. I created a semi-structured interview for my participants that asked open-ended questions to get the participants to talk about and describe how they see their schools and understand the culture of their work. Looking at culture and the language are two tools and techniques that

connect to this work and methods to the theoretical framework of interviewing and critical theories (Madison, 2011 | Spradley, 1979).

In the interviews, the four teachers and I began our discussions with descriptions of how they framed their identity, their school, and career and then moved on to explanations of values, actions, and practices. Each teacher was interviewed for about an hour. Teachers chose their own pseudonyms to protect their identity. Each interview was then transcribed and coded following the interview. The scripts were read several times to create codes that tried to maintain the focus on the words and experiences of these teachers. The codes were then organized into themes that related to their experiences in the classroom. LatCrit maintained the focus on community and social perspective in the analysis of the data and generation of themes.

### **Context**

The New Latino Diaspora (NLD) encapsulates the regions experiencing growing Latinx populations (Wainer, 2004). In these regions, Latinx teachers can play a part in building connections across their changing community and schools for all students (Beck & Allexaht-Snider, 2008; Richardson Bruna, 2015). This is particularly important as the NLD reaches into regions not often associated with traditional immigrant gateways into the US and even seeing transformations within local communities as the Latinx communities become more diverse. This work peeks into the classrooms of Latinx teachers from across the NLD from Connecticut to Alabama to Florida that all experienced demographic transformations.

### **Participants**

The four participants of this study represent a wide range of teaching experiences and subjects. Marenia taught math in the Northeast and came from a Central American background and was the least experienced of the four. Monica, a social studies teacher from the Southeast, was the most experienced and from a Cuban background. Ben and Molley had experience in teaching in secondary and higher education classrooms for their subject matter, foreign language and English respectively. Ben came from a Central American background and Molley was from a Cuban family.

Table I			
<i>The teachers</i>			
<u>Name*</u>	<u>Subject/Location</u>	<u>Years of Teaching</u>	<u>Latinx Background</u>
Marenia	Math/Northeast	5+	Central American
Molley	English/Southeast	10+	Cuban
Ben	Foreign Language/Southeast	14+	Central American
Monica	Social Studies/Southeast	20+	Cuban

\* Note: names are pseudonyms

**Positionality**

The participants and I taught in different schools with different contents and contexts, and I see many similarities between their teaching experiences and my own. Being a Latinx teacher was one of the formative experiences of my career. It was as then when I first began to notice the large forces working inside my school and from society. For this reason, I aimed to find out how other Latinx teachers are framing their schools, practices, and potential contributions to these spaces. For myself, I knew being Latinx was a key part of this experience and I wanted to know how others felt about their experiences.

Being Latinx has always been a part of my identity, but one that can complicate this work. As a Mexican-American, I worked to be active in the Latinx community through organizations and I remained connected through various organizations and my work. Being Latinx helped me connect with these teachers and it gave us something to talk about, providing a common ground to share. Talking to Cubans, Central Americans or even other Mexican-Americans who grew up or worked in different parts of the country meant exploring the similarities and differences we had.

**Analysis**

Once the data was collected, the task of analysis needed to center in the voices of participants. To start, I transcribed these interviews at which point, I read through them line by line and created codes based off of those readings. Codes, according to the methods described

by Charmaz (2014), must be kept as descriptive as possible. Once these codes were created, I organized them into similar groups and from there I generated themes. I wrote brief memos about each of the themes which was followed with an overview of the data and I found the best examples express what the codes meant to the teachers in their words. Keeping the data and stories central to maintain consistency with the theoretical frameworks, so I kept their words at the heart of my findings, later writing a section about how theory informs these findings.

### **Findings**

My interviews with the teachers revealed many things about how they saw themselves and their schools. The themes that I pulled out of these interviews were that: 1) my participants valued what their Latinx-ness brought to the classroom and their relationships with students, 2) they paid attention to the social issues and contexts that affected their school, and 3) they placed a high value on professionalism and connected it to themselves. For these teachers, they were aware of how they approached their profession, students, and community. From playing “*escuelita*” (Ben, 2015) as a young child, meaning that he acted as a teacher for his toys, to taking part in the conversations around the teaching profession, teachers not only saw themselves as educators but as immersed in the school culture but also as contributing to the education and lives of their students. This carried through to how they saw their students and community.

#### **Professionalism Is Personal**

Teaching for the four participants was deeply personal and something they saw a part of themselves. They shared stories with me about wanting to be a teacher from an early age or an experience that convinced them that teaching was a profession for them. These earlier experiences came coupled with wanting to share a part of themselves and their expertise with others. Whether it was a love of languages like Ben, or math like Mariena, or writing like Molley, sharing something was so important to them grounded their drive to be a teacher. This section explores these drives and foundations.

It is meaningful that all the teachers saw teaching as something they did and wanted to do from a young age. Monica told me that “teaching is actually in my blood” and she comes from generations of teachers. Molley told me that having great teachers inspired her to enter the classroom. Marenia came to teach after tutoring. Having positive experiences with teaching planted the idea in their head they could be teachers and what they could accomplish in the



classroom—ideas they followed through and later realized. While it may be hard to say this early beginning is essential to getting Latinxs to become teachers, it is important to realize that it was an important impetus for these teachers and allowed them to have great perspectives about their career paths.

While Ben and Molley expressed hesitation to enter the teaching profession, Monica and Marenia never wavered from this goal. Ben had studied foreign languages in colleges and while searching for a job close to graduation, he found work teaching English abroad. This reconnected him to early days of teaching and set him up for a lifelong career. Molley got to college and “toyed briefly with being a journalist,” which did not last long when she found her true passion in English and education classes. Marenia did not finish the teaching certification program at her college and instead applied and enrolled in a master’s program at the same institution to get certified and become a teacher. Monica planned and picked her college based on wanting to become a teacher. The profession roots through these teachers and stemmed from their personal connections.

### **Connections to Students**

The teachers expressed a deep connection and concern over their students and wanted to help them regardless of race or ethnicity. This meant that they felt connected to their students and they wanted to do the best they could to help them feel safe and connected to the classroom so they could place priority on their learning. In these cases, the learning took a central role and the teachers thought of how they could help their students do and perform better in school.

These teachers cared about their students as people. Monica described this well, noting that her students:

...have shared their joys and triumphs but they’ve also shared the things with me that, okay, I need to do what I have to do and be an advocate for this child. (Monica, 2015)

Monica, like many of the teachers, embraces the difficult task of being there and being present for her students through many challenges and has enjoyed seeing her students grow, even describing that

sometimes they trust me with their deepest darkest secrets, and as a teacher I have this responsibility that I have to report anything that needs to be report [sic] and I’ve had to

and they still have that trust in me afterward because they know that I am there to take care of them. (Monica, 2015)

Monica focused on seeing her students and their challenges, not as problems or deficits, but as parts of who they are and part of their learning and growing. Her concerns included student learning and extended into how her students saw themselves as people in the world. This comes from a deep passion for learning about a deep connection she wants to build with her students.

Ben, in a similar vein, cared about his students learning and placed that at the center of the relationship. Ben told me that:

I think the role of affect and how you feel, and you know one of the things that was clear to me was that my students are going to learn better from people who they actually care about. And if you are willing to get to know your students... they are really going to perform for you. (Ben, 2015)

Like Monica, learning was important to Ben, and there is also the larger understanding that being in the classroom is more than just an exercise in teaching and instructing. Ben focused a lot of energy and attention to the experience of the classroom and wanted his students to feel a connection to him in that space. He came to this position after struggling to teach when he returned to the US. His students were not learning the way he wanted them to and connecting to his classes was difficult. Ben talked about being guarded as a young teacher and how that stood between him, his content, and his students. Once he gave up what he thought were foundations of teaching and worked more on reaching out to his students, he found new and exciting ways to teach and reach his kids and make them excited about learning.

Ben learned much on the job about teaching through his struggles. In his own words he attempted to do what he had seen his professors do without much success. He told me:

I had tried to emulate what my professors had done and I realized it wasn't working so I just started trying things and experimenting and messing up and sometimes having good days and see what was really working and I realized it had a lot more to do with personal connections than actual you know being very academic which is how I started...

Ben offers a quick summary of the learning he's done as a teacher stating that just replicating what he saw his professors do was not enough. It is only once he starts experimenting with his teaching and finding his own pedagogy that Ben starts to have some success according to his

account. It is telling that this success comes once he begins making connections with his students and valuing those connections. Just being academic was not enough for Ben to have success, he needs his students to invest and be successful in order for his classroom to work. This level of personal connection does connect to his Latinx-ness.

Ben knew that being Latinx as a classroom teacher meant something beyond wanting his presence to be a positive influence, Ben worked to make sure he was using the best pedagogical strategies. While he did not think he connected only to his Latinx students, he felt that those students were benefiting more from him being in the classroom. Ben told me:

I've been fortunate enough to work in schools that are, that have a large Latino population so I think that anytime you have a model of someone who not only you can identify with but who has also been able to do what you are trying to do ... and you see someone who is Latino... it makes their interest more real and the fact that they can succeed more. (Ben, 2015)

Connecting to his students was important, as was providing a different role model and example of what a classroom, and a teacher, can look like. For Ben, ensuring his students had multiple examples of success in school was important to him. This was a break from his own schooling experience; Ben talked about how most of his teachers were White, distant, and focused on learning content. Breaking that mold meant shifting and pushing himself out of his comfort zone.

### **Understanding Their School**

The teachers with whom I worked knew of the power dynamics in their schools and how they fit in them. Their identity as Latinxs played a role in shaping some of these dynamics but often, their presence and identities as hard working and capable teachers also shaped these experiences. A few of the teachers commented about how race and ethnicity, along with gender and religion, played roles in dividing and separating the teachers from working together. Monica discussed how even religion had played a role in one school where she worked, even leading to the formation of cliques in the school and groups that self-segregated around those issues. These teachers saw and accessed many tensions in schools but for the teachers in this study, their Latinx identity gave them a stronger ability to access their students and other conflicts in this way and this section will explore their ideas about this.

Monica knew language afforded her a great power in working with students and families, even if her Anglo-martial last name masked this commonality with her students and community.

Monica told me that often in the first days of school, the English Language Learners in her school would be nervous about having her as a teacher because they knew a lack of Spanish ability would make learning and discussions difficult. Once Monica spoke Spanish to them, the students and parents opened up to her, and she knew seeing her in person and meeting her helped to make this happen. Monica told me that after she spoke Spanish to kids and parents then [parents and students] speak to me and I understand them, and it really helps them feel better in the class because I am able to communicate with them in their native language and it helps students open up more to me. (Monica, 2015)

Sharing many commonalities with students and their families provided, for Monica, an important bridge to the larger community of her students and also, she saw it as a way for their community to connect to her. The act of speaking Spanish and being a Latinx helped Monica bridge gaps with kids with negative labels, and when she shared some of her skills, abilities, and self with them, they opened up to her and formed a more familiar classroom together.

Beyond language skills, the teachers had a heightened awareness of social dynamics in their schools. While Monica expressed qualms about exclusionary cliques in her school among the teachers, this was the experience for all of the teachers in this study. Almost all the teachers (including Monica when she talked about her current school) described their workplaces and work environments with great attention to detail. In her workplace, Marenia described groupings and cliques determined by perceived work ethic, tenure, and political power. She described an “old boys club” that wielded power by exerting pressure and making their presence and problems well known. This group, according to Marenia, voiced frustration to adapting to new policy initiatives, a sentiment that many teachers felt but few expressed. In Marenia’s words:

I think there’s a lot of pressure to change things right away and that’s like at the school level and the district level, so I think that sometimes does not come across in [the] best way because what happens is that the teachers feel [an] unfair amount of pressure to also create that amount of change in their classroom and it trickles down, I think that’s a part of it, this whole pass down pressure, administrators feel pressure from the district to make all this change and the administrators are sorta putting the pressure on the teachers to make change.. Um, what I found is that sometimes, I’ll have a one-on- one conversation with an administrator and I’m able to reason with them about why I can’t

make a certain change right away or why my data might you know something that might not you know on the surface look like a big amount of change. (Marenia, 2015)

Marenia's vision of the structural problems of her school are clear. She sees the different conflicts that impact her ability to teach in the classroom, ranging from district policies to school-wide issues and politics. There is an awareness of how the different issues weigh on different aspects of the school and the people in the school. Marenia saw the pressure that her administrators created and how it was created by the pressures of schooling. She knew the administrators only acted in response to policy pressures from positions far above the school level.

Along with a heightened knowledge about their schools, Marenia's statement also displays an ability to work within the system. Engaging with administrators about various issues one-on-one gave Marenia a better opportunity to explain herself and work with those in charge about what she was seeing and working on. The ability to change the subject from large institutional pressure to smaller scale observations has given Marenia many opportunities to work within her school to provide space for her work with kids. While this is not always possible, the ability for her and the other teachers to see this potential opportunity is enough to see that Latinx teachers, such as those in this study, knew of their school contexts and how they can carve spaces for themselves within them.

### **Teaching Context**

The teachers knew of challenges facing the teaching profession. Monica and Ben talked about pressures due to testing, increased bureaucracy, and intrusions into the classroom and content. Yet these are not the only ways that the teaching profession is being challenged. The teachers found themselves subject to tirades, run-arounds by administrators, lackluster working relationships with peers, and frustration with policies. The teachers themselves expressed frustration and found these behaviors difficult to deal with. They wanted to find better ways of being professional and working with their peers to make schools a better place despite the problems and the discourse that undermined their work.

Some of the behaviors that these teachers witnessed displayed the changing nature of the profession. Monica told a story about being berated in the middle of a meeting and being punished for what looked like bad testing results. She told me:

Not this past school year but before, the principal thought we did poorly on our state test, so on the last day he had everyone come in to see him in the cafeteria, this was after, we were supposed to leave at 12 and he called this at 1 and for about 30 minutes she really berated us and how we didn't really do our jobs and we, we needed to do better and we need to take professional development and that's something we've all done and at the end it was all for nothing because we got rated an A school. (Monica, 2015)

The awareness of how politics and performance affect schools reveal complex thinking, acting, and framing about the community and how it is working together. Monica's account of the tirade not only includes a demoralizing portrayal of the teachers, but also the students. Monica was troubled by how the principal was speaking to them and inaccurately portraying the school. She mentioned that the principal's action items were things that the staff already did. She felt even more upset once test scores and the school's rating were published, and she felt like the tirade was unwarranted. Monica felt that the principal had disrespected the staff and her, and she worried that this resulted from the precarious state of the teaching profession and the students they worked with which included many minoritized groups including Latinxs and English Language learners.

Molley talked about the state of the teaching profession being transformed and becoming de-professionalized. After teaching in high schools for many years, Molley worked in a teacher preparation program at a university and worried about the state of the profession. She told me:

I've heard people say this, like that teaching is not a profession, you know what I mean, and it's due to how poorly teachers are paid, the gender imbalance... I think we need massive educational reform in this country, and it begins with the teachers, and it begins with how teachers are educated, and how they are compensated, and how they're treated. (Molley, 2015)

Molley saw many structural problems with portrayals of teaching. Her own experience, what she saw how teaching was portrayed and described was detrimental to helping classrooms become better and helping teachers improve. She saw how teaching was being de-professionalized especially in how teaching was being attacked and maligned. Molley felt strongly about the various problems of teaching, the other teachers in the study shared similar

sentiments. They worried about classroom instructional prescription, the spread of testing, and these challenges of how administrators looked at and thought about teaching. For these teachers, they knew of their profession's precarious place.

### **Discussion**

LatCrit helps us see these Latinx teachers and their struggles by highlighting the various challenges of teaching and how policies weakened teachers through their words and valuing their knowledges. These teachers spoke about their jobs and their work with their students with great passion, and while they acknowledged the negative depictions of teachers, they did not care about it. Molley's idea about the de-professionalization of teachers connected to the language of the profession and one that she saw as dishonest and damaging for teachers and students. While they were discouraged by the language and sentiments brought against teachers, these teachers wanted to keep students at the center of the process and maintain the power of the teacher-student relationship.

Yet, using her identities combined, teacher and Latinx, Monica constructed a space where she could be help for her students and families. LatCrit shows how valuable language is at negotiating these different spaces. In a LatCrit framework, language provides an important vantage point for seeing inequality and inequity in schools (Irizarry & Raible, 2014; Pérez Huber, 2010; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Monica and the other teachers knew that while speaking Spanish gave her special access to her students and families, it also created a barrier between those same students, families, and the school. These teachers all placed helping students at the forefront of their career goals, and they used all their skills and abilities to reach that goal. Language and identity made these connections easier for these teachers.

For Marenia and the other teachers to take advantage of power and space in their schools, it would help if they knew of the issues of Intersectionality and LatCrit. Marenia understood the professional identities of her administrators and their pressures that they were experiencing in trying to help the school be successful. She did not wish to vilify them and instead wanted to figure out to make the best working environment for herself and her students. Using the lens of LatCrit, we can see a drive to disrupt harmful practices and behaviors on her part, but also to make her classroom into a space that listens to and honors the needs of her students. Sentiments that can be seen in Ben's and Monica's statements about wanting students to have a connection to the classroom and feel successful. These sentiments

express a desire about the nature of their classrooms to avoid harmful practices and see students be successful.

Just as previous research about minoritized teachers exposed how this group can change and transform their classrooms and students' learning (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Harklau & Colomer, 2015), this research connects to what these teachers are bringing into the classroom. These include an empowered self-awareness about what they bring into the classroom as they seek to connect to students who like them have faced structural problems and prejudices in school. They also carry into class a keen sense of professionalism to be the best teacher they can. This drive for excellence and to connect with the students provides us with an insight into what drives these teachers to be so transformational. Imbibing their classroom with this strong approach to work, we can start to see how these teachers make such a difference in the lives of their students and create better schools.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study sought to look into how Latinx teachers understood their professionalism and their role in education and schools. Milk (1994) comments that shared ethnicity is not enough to build connections in the classroom and that obstacles, like standardized tests and a lack of diverse teacher education, can prevent important connections from being made. Even as I have finished up the analysis portion of my work, I am left with some questions about how Latinx teachers might change and shift education across the nation and, in particular, in the states and areas that are a part of the New Latino Diaspora. Issues of identity within the community come to the forefront of my mind. Given how complex these demographic changes are, it would be an error to assume that there exists one method or approach that can help ameliorate these challenges. (Portes, 2007), but it is becoming a mix of nationalities, ethnicities, races, types of employment, languages, and even shares a variety of living locations around this nation. Instead of seeing it as a monolithic ethnic group. Flores and Huo (2012) described how mistakes about ethnic origin can negatively impact participants even if that identity fell within a pan-ethnic identity. Outside of academia, this conversation also holds relevance. In an interview with NPR Joanna Hausmann, a Venezuelan-American comedian, stressed that all Latinx groups and communities are different and have different takes and stances on issues and cannot hold to one voice or on a single issue (NPR, 2016). Not only is the Latinx population of the



US growing, Portes and Hausmann (2016) revealed how complex this community is and how it is being discussed over academic and popular discourses.

Previous research has discussed how Latinxs have complicated race and ethnicity in the U.S. (Odem & Lacy, 2009, Solórzano & Bernal, 2001), and are changing the landscape of politics and communities across the nation. What these teachers revealed was that as Latinx teachers, they were seeing these complex issues throughout their careers in the classroom. Even if we try, like Ben said, to keep the students and their learning at the center, that can become difficult unless you have a strong sense of mission and connections to the people who make up the classroom and school. This drive to help all of their students showed itself as they sought to work with their students and help them be better learners.

In conclusion, the teachers in this study revealed a glimpse of the complex ways that they think and work in their schools and how they approach their students. Being Latinx is itself is complicated and being a teacher is also complex. These teachers grappled with both aspects of their identities (and other things as well) as they molded their classrooms into meaningful spaces and their practices into powerful ones. LatCrit and the New Latino Diaspora have provided a new and shifting context for schools and teachers to address their practices. One benefit of using Intersectionality was that it allowed me to see and embrace these complexities and the different power issues that were accompanying these teachers. These teachers provided an insightful glance at how Latinx teachers see their classroom and schools and while it is not exhaustive, the insights open further questions about the role of how identity politics shapes the classroom.

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