

Long Island University

Digital Commons @ LIU

Selected Full Text Dissertations, 2011-

LIU Post

2021

A LATINX CRITICAL RACE THEORETICAL APPROACH TO TESTIMONIOS OF LATINX SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Karen Yulieann Ramírez
kramirez128@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liu.edu/post_fultext_dis



Part of the [Psychiatry and Psychology Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ramírez, Karen Yulieann, "A LATINX CRITICAL RACE THEORETICAL APPROACH TO TESTIMONIOS OF LATINX SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS" (2021). *Selected Full Text Dissertations, 2011-*. 33.
https://digitalcommons.liu.edu/post_fultext_dis/33

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the LIU Post at Digital Commons @ LIU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Selected Full Text Dissertations, 2011- by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ LIU. For more information, please contact natalia.tomlin@liu.edu.

A LATINX CRITICAL RACE THEORETICAL APPROACH TO TESTIMONIOS OF
LATINX SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

presented by

Karen Yulieann Ramírez

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Presented to the
Faculty of the
College of Education, Information and Technology
August 2021

Jeong-eun Rhee, PhD: Committee Chairperson

Heather Parrott, PhD: Committee Member

Lena Perez, PsyD: Committee Member

Long Island University
Brookville, NY

Copyright © 2021 by Karen Yulieann Ramirez

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Edna Ivette Machado-Ramírez, who encouraged me to pursue my dream of a doctoral degree many years ago. I am grateful for her unconditional love, wisdom, encouragement, and support. She is my inspiration and strength. I am truly blessed to have such an amazing mother. I owe all of my accomplishments to her. Te amo, madre!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I wish to thank my dissertation committee members, Dr. Jeong-eun Rhee, Dr. Lena Perez, and Dr. Heather Parrott, for their support and guidance. A special thanks to Dr. Jeong-eun Rhee, my committee chair, for her expertise, encouragement, and invaluable insight throughout my dissertation journey. I would also like to thank Mary Pigliacelli, the Director of the Writing Center at Long Island University Post, for her insightful feedback. Secondly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation for my fellow Latinx school psychologists for their willingness and courage to tell their stories. Thirdly, I am extremely grateful for my parents, and thank them for all they have done for me. Finally, I also wish to thank my siblings, and life partner, Andrew, for their love, support, and best wishes, and to my son, Noah Alexander, for bringing so much joy into my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	viii
Chapter I Introduction.....	1
Background of the Problem	1
Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study	4
Theoretical Framework.....	6
My Testimonios as a Latina School Psychologist	11
Testimonio 1	12
Testimonio 2	15
Testimonio 3	16
Testimonio 4	17
Testimonio 5	18
Chapter II Review of Literature.....	20
The History of the Racialized Eugenics Movement and its Influence on Education .	20
What is Eugenics?.....	20
Influence of Eugenics on Education	27
Racial Disparities in Education.....	29
Racial Disparities in Special Education	31
Deficit Thinking and Teacher Expectations	34
Test Bias and Eligibility Criteria	36
Intersectionality: Race and Disability.....	38
Roles and Practices of School Psychologists.....	44
Historical Background of School Psychology	44

Demographics of School Psychologists.....	45
School Psychologists as Practitioners in NYC Public Schools	46
The Roles of the School Psychologist in the Special Education Process	47
Experiences of School Psychologists of Color	49
Chapter III Methodology	51
Testimonio as a Method in Latina/o Critical Race Theory Research	51
Role of the Researcher	53
Participants.....	55
Biographical Profiles of Participants	56
Carlos	56
Carmen	57
Gabriel.....	58
José.....	59
Maria.....	60
Maya	60
Data Collection	62
Data Analysis	64
Validity and Trustworthiness	65
Member Checks	66
Analytic Triangulation	67
Reflective Research Journal.....	68
Chapter IV Data Analysis and Findings: Testimonios of Latinx School Psychologists.....	69
Experiencing Racism: Insider/Outsider Status	69

Witnessing Racism Against Students of Color.....	79
Deficit Views of Teachers and Other School Staff on Bilingual Students	79
Disability Classifications and Recommendations.....	81
Making the Invisible Visible.....	84
The Impact of Race, Ethnicity, and Language.....	84
Disrupting Inappropriate Special Education Referrals	87
Test Bias.....	89
Using Racial and Ethnic Identities to Make Connections	90
Navigating the System	93
Chapter V Discussion and Implications.....	97
Discussion of Research Questions Through Key Findings.....	98
Implications.....	104
For School Psychologists	104
For Teachers and Other School Staff.....	105
For Parents of Color.....	106
Limitations and/or Potentials	106
Recommendations for Future Research	109
References.....	111

ABSTRACT

As a Latina school psychologist, I use Latinx Critical Race framework with testimonios as methodology to document the individual and collective experiences and perspectives of six Latinx school psychologists in urban and suburban school settings regarding the role that race plays in the special education process. Their testimonios reveal how they are racialized in their profession through their intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, culture, and language. In particular, they testify to their everyday experiences of racial microaggressions, in which they are viewed through a deficit lens by supervisors, colleagues, and the parents of the students they serve. In addition, their testimonios describe how they experience emotional distress because of vicarious racism (Harrell, 2000) they experience when they witness the racism that students of color experience in the special education process. The collective voices of these Latinx school psychologists tell a story of how, despite the challenges they experience, they negotiate with racial disparities in multiple ways. First, they acknowledge and challenge racist-dominant ideologies that White teachers and other school staff hold towards students of color. Secondly, they recognize how a student's race, ethnicity, and language puts them at risk of being classified with a disability and disproportionately recommended to special education. Thirdly, the participants address (a) the misuse of IQ testing by making visible how intelligence tests are racially biased when used with students of color and (b) the importance of considering factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, language, and educational background during the decision-making process. Finally, they share a sense of obligation to support parents of color in navigating the special education system. This study is a valuable contribution to the field of school psychology because of the limited research on the experiences and perspectives of Latinx school psychologists. Through

the lens of Latinx school psychologists, this study also provides critical insights about the special education process for other educators and stake holders.

Chapter I

Introduction

Background of the Problem

NYC public schools have attempted to provide all students, regardless of race and ability, access to an appropriate and fair education. As stated by the NYC Department of Education (2012) in the *Family Guide to Special Education Services for School-Age Children*, “Your child will be educated with peers without disabilities as much as is appropriate. This is referred to as your child’s least restrictive environment (LRE)” (p. 17). *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which established that separate public schools for White and Black students are unconstitutional, opened the doors for equal accessibility to schooling for children with disabilities (Connor & Ferri, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005; LaNear & Frattura, 2007). Advocates of students with disabilities used the rationale behind the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and the Civil Rights Movement (Obiakor, 2011) to argue that students with disabilities should be included in public schools (Rozalski et al., 2010).

In 1975, Congress responded with the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (Rozalski et al., 2010), which later became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, and then the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Buffman et al., 2009). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act made it illegal to exclude students with disabilities from public schools and required that students receive services in the least restrictive environment (Buffman et al., 2009; Rueda et al., 2000). “[Least restrictive environment] refers to the legal principle that students with disabilities are to be educated as close as possible to the general

education environment” (Osborne & Dimattia, 1994, p. 6). Despite these mandates and regulations, racial bias and discriminatory practices deeply embedded in schools have resulted in racial disparities in special education, with students of color being overrepresented in certain disability classifications,¹ such as intellectual disabilities (ID; formally called mental retardation), learning disabilities, and emotional disturbance (ED), and “segregated” into restrictive special education programs apart from their general education counterparts (Annamma et al., 2013; Artiles, 1998; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Artiles et al., 2002, 2016; Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2014; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Reid & Knight, 2006; Skiba et al., 2008). The disability classifications of ID, LD, and ED can be problematic because they are considered to be subjective classifications that require clinical judgement (Annamma et al., 2013; Artiles et al., 2016; Connor & Ferri, 2005). In this field, the term “restrictive” is used to describe a classroom setting in which students are educated alongside other students with disabilities and therefore separated from typically developing or non-disabled peers. However, in this study, I will also use the terms “segregation” and “segregated” to highlight the consequences of a restrictive educational setting.

Since the beginning of my career as a school psychologist in New York City (NYC), I noticed significant racial segregation within the various educational programs. This segregation has made me more aware of the racial inequity and inequality that I am confronted with and the stories that I hear from some of my colleagues. For instance, the gifted and talented (G&T) classrooms are mostly White; the general education and integrated co-teaching (ICT) classrooms are mostly African-American and Latinx; and the dual

¹ The terms “classification,” “label,” and “category” will be used interchangeably in this study.

language classrooms are mostly Latinx. As a result of these segregated school program experiences, students of color are often segregated from their White counterparts in the cafeteria, during recess, and on school trips. Although school administrators attempt to integrate the students during enrichment activities such as dance and clubs, students tend to interact with the students from their particular classes. It is also important to acknowledge how students of color have historically been excluded from gifted education, as they are frequently overlooked by teachers who hold racial biases and low expectations towards students of color (Ford, 2014; Ford & Grantham, 2003).

The multiple roles and responsibilities that I experience as a school psychologist can generate conflicts and tensions. The more experience I have gained as a school psychologist, the more aware I have become of the racially based discriminatory practices against students of color, particularly within the special education process, by various educators including school psychologists, both historically and currently.

I have too often witnessed how a student's race influences the disability classifications and recommendations of special education services that are made by school psychologists and other members of individualized education program (IEP) teams. I find the emphasis that teachers and other school staff place on evaluation results to be problematic. It is important for schools to take into account factors such as racial bias and testing bias when evaluating students of color, as these could contribute to the reason for the special education referral, evaluation results, disability classification, and special education placement recommendation. I have also seen how some school psychologists are more hesitant to classify a White child with an intellectual disability or emotional disturbance even when the student meets the eligibility criteria. Instead, they might say that the behavioral difficulties

are due to an attention disorder or other “medical condition.” On the other hand, students of color are often given these subjective classifications and placement recommendations without much hesitation.

In my experience, many students of color are often recommended placement in more restrictive environments, such as segregated special classes in community schools and special education school placements. In particular, I began noticing differences not only in the number of referrals requested by teachers of students of color, but also differences in disability classifications and placement recommendation outcomes for White students and students of color when they are evaluated for eligibility for special education services. I noticed how some teachers tended to describe students of color with behavioral problems as being “emotionally disturbed,” but when the student was White, they would describe them as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or “sensory issues.” I also noticed that when a student of color is not making academic progress despite receiving special education services, teachers and administrators tend to recommend that they be placed in a special education program in a different public-school setting, but when the student is White, they are quick to recommend that the student be placed in a private special education school because of the resources and status that they have assigned to these educational settings.

Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study

These challenges and complexities have raised so many questions for me as a Latinx school psychologist. How do I address these racial disparities? Am I doing enough to advocate for students of color? Am I empowering parents of students of color to advocate for their children? I find myself making comments about these racial issues to some of my colleagues, including my White colleagues. Some of them seem to agree with me, but others

just look at me and say nothing. I tend to express my frustrations to those with whom I have an established relationship. I know how conversations around race and racism can make some feel uncomfortable, while others might think that these racial issues do not exist.

My primary goal of this study is to co-construct narratives with other Latinx school psychologists in order to examine their racialized experiences regarding the special education process through the lenses of critical race theory (CRT) and Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) aligned with testimonio. In order to get a deeper understanding of the experiences of other Latinx school psychologists, in-depth interviews were used as a method of data collection in this study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013).

I was interested in creating a safe space that would allow Latinx school psychologists to share their experiences regarding the role that race plays in their professional practice. This study will also address their personal thoughts and feelings about their own race and ethnicity when confronted with racial differences among students they evaluate and on whose behalf they make educational decisions that can impact their future. It is critical for school psychologists to understand how racial disparities exist in public schools, and the role that race plays in the special education process.

This study provided critical insights that can inform other school psychologists on how to work with students of color in culturally responsive ways, since decisions made by school psychologists can impact the lives of students. Prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), students of color were separated from White students solely because of their race. Although this litigation allowed students of color to be educated alongside White students, special education has often been misused to segregate students of color inappropriately, both

in the past and in the present (Connor & Ferri, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005). Furthermore, in the field of school psychology, racial minorities continue to be underrepresented (Beasley et al., 2015; Beeks & Graves, 2017; Blake et al., 2016; Castillo et al., 2013; Truscott et al., 2014). There is limited research on the experiences of school psychologists from minority racial/ethnic groups (Truscott et al., 2014). Therefore, my study contributes to the field of school psychology.

Research Questions

The central question guiding this study is:

What are the perspectives and experiences of Latinx school psychologists regarding the role that race plays in the special education process?

Subquestion 1: How are race, class, culture, and language narrated in their perspectives?

Subquestion 2: What are multiple ways in which different participants make sense of and negotiate the racial disparities?

Theoretical Framework

This research was grounded both epistemologically and methodologically in CRT and LatCrit. CRT is an effective theoretical framework that can be used to understand and address racial disparities that exist in schools (Dávila, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Gillborn, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Liasidou, 2014). CRT can provide insights, perspectives, pedagogy, and methods that seek to identify, analyze, and transform the structural aspects of education that perpetuate racial discrimination in schools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011).

Historically, CRT evolved from critical legal studies' response to perceived stalling of civil rights litigation in the U.S. court system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Taylor, 2009). Civil rights litigation that took race into account to address discrimination, such as school integration and the hiring of faculty of color at leading educational institutions, was not being properly implemented (Taylor, 2009). As a result of frustration, legal scholars, such as Derrick A. Bell, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier, and Kimberle Crenshaw, began to openly criticize the role of law in the construction and maintenance of racially based social and economic oppression (Taylor, 2009).

CRT claims that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Gillborn, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT suggests that race and the meaning attached to race are socially constructed and that researchers view it as a powerful feature of human social life (Henfield et al., 2008).

There are five basic tenets of CRT. First, racism is viewed as ordinary and as the everyday experiences of people of color in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Since racism is considered a normal part of society, it is difficult to address because it is not acknowledged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The second tenet, sometimes known as interest convergence or material determination, is the idea that when White people address racial injustices it is because of their own self-interest, not the interests of people of color. "Consider for example, Derrick Bell's shocking proposal that *Brown v. Board of Education*—considered a great triumph of civil rights litigation—may have resulted more from the self-interest of elite whites than from a desire to help blacks" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9). The third tenet of CRT holds that race and races are socially constructed; "they

correspond to no biological or genetic reality” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9). The fourth tenet of CRT is differential racialization and its consequences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Differential racialization has to do with the ways that dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times in response to shifting needs, such as the labor market (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For example, Delgado and Stefancic commented on the need for Mexican and Japanese agricultural workers at one point, but at the time, Japanese were not favored and placed in relocation camps. The final tenet of CRT is the unique voice of color, which holds that, because of their histories and experiences with oppression, people of color may be able to communicate about racial issues that their White counterparts are unlikely to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) seminal work, *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*, brought to light racial disparities in education. The authors pointed out that, although class and gender are factors in inequitable schooling, they are not powerful enough to explain all the difference in school performance. As they further explained:

Although both class and gender can and do intersect with race, as stand-alone variables they do not explain all of the educational achievement differences apparent between whites and students of color. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that even when we hold constant for class, middle-class African-American students do not achieve at the same level as their white counterparts. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 51)

Ladson-Billings and Tate reported that research has shown that class and gender alone do not account for the high rates of failure, school dropout, suspensions, and expulsion among African-American and Latino males.

Historically, the American government protected the property of society, which meant that women, children, and African American slaves were viewed as property. Consequently, since the government's goal was to protect the rights of property owners, they did not protect the human rights of African Americans. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that "those with 'better' property are entitled to 'better' schools" (p. 54). Curriculum also represents a form of intellectual property in that the quality and quantity of the curriculum varies with the property values of the school (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Furthermore, intellectual property can also be viewed as appropriately certified and prepared teachers, science labs, computers, and state-of-the-art technologies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Kozol (1991) found that schools that serve poor students of color are less likely to have access to these resources; as a result, they have less opportunity to learn regardless of the mandated educational standards. CRT pointed out that a consequence of the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was the continued segregation of students of color in special education programs (Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005). CRT scholars who engage in this framework are concerned for marginalized and oppressed groups and demonstrate a deep need to expose, confront, and advocate injustices concerning them (Henfield et al., 2008, p. 436).

Latinx scholars proposed LatCrit as a branch of CRT that can be used to analyze and articulate personal narratives, stories, and racial issues through which Latinos can challenge discriminatory educational experiences (Arreguin-Anderson & Kennedy, 2013; Dávila, 2015). LatCrit provides a framework through which Latinos could challenge racialized and discriminatory educational experiences stemming from deficit views related to students' skin

color, culture, class, immigration status, English language proficiency level, accent, and national origin (Arreguin-Anderson & Kennedy, 2013; Delgado Bernal, 2001; Dávila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

LatCrit as a CRT in education acknowledges the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality (Dávila, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT in education can be used to examine the role that race plays in practices and policy (e.g., tracking, high-stakes testing, school discipline) that are used to discriminate against certain racial and ethnic groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Yosso et al. (2009) theorized CRT in education as consisting of at least five themes: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (b) challenging the dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the interdisciplinary perspective.

Critical race theorists utilize methods such as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, testimonies, chronicles, and narratives (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dávila, 2015; Gillborn, 2015; Pérez Huber, 2009). CRT also challenges biological and cultural deficit stories through counter-storytelling, oral traditions, poetry, or films (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). An important aspect of LatCrit is that it provides a space for Latinx communities to articulate their lived experiences of racism and oppression through testimonies (Flores Carmona, 2014; Pérez Huber, 2009).

When CRT is used as a theoretical framework, the experiential knowledge of people of color is critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Therefore, the voice of people of color is necessary for a deep

understanding of the educational system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In the following section, I share my own counter-story as a Latina school psychologist.

My Testimonios as a Latina School Psychologist

My interest in studying Latinx school psychologists' experiences is connected to my personal and professional work as a bilingual Puerto Rican school psychologist in an NYC public school setting for 20 years. Since 2001, I have been working at a pre-kindergarten to 5th grade elementary school that is located in Manhattan. The neighborhood is diverse in terms of race and socioeconomic backgrounds, with housing ranging from luxury condominiums to public housing projects. Most of the students who attend the school live in the neighborhood, with some being bussed in from other neighborhoods.

Therefore, in the following section, I share my own counter-story as a Latinx school psychologist researcher. My school's student enrollment data before the pandemic shows that there are around 600 students. In terms of race, 43 % are Hispanic or Latinx, 30 % are White, 17 % are Black or African American, 6 % are Asian. There are 6 % English Language Learners, 19% are students with special needs, and 2.1% of students received reduced lunch.

My school does not have special classes, which are small classroom settings for students who have been grouped together in one class because they were identified as having special needs that cannot be met in a general education classroom setting. These types of programs are taught by special education teachers who provide specialized academic instruction. The NYC DOE also has District 75 specialized schools that provide citywide programs to students who have significant ID, LD, ED, and multiple disabilities.

The special education programs at my school include the following: (a) integrated co-teaching (ICT), which is a classroom setting consisting of a general education teacher and a special education teacher who provide instruction to both general education students and students with disabilities; (b) special education teacher support services, which is a supplemental program in which a special education teacher provides support to a student with disability in a general education classroom; and (c) related services, which support students with special needs to access the general education curriculum. Some examples of related services are speech-language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling.

Reflecting back on my career, there have been numerous moments in which race has played a significant role in the special education process. I will describe some of my own experiences and observations that involved students of color in the vignettes below as a way to illustrate how race is viewed in our society.

Testimonio 1

I was invited to take a group tour of a special education school with other school psychologists and social workers. I immediately responded that I was going despite being very busy with my caseload. I already knew that many of these specialized schools serve mostly students of color. While riding on the train on the way to the tour, I looked up the school website on my phone. The school enrollment at the time was 400 and served pre-kindergarten through 9th grade. The racial demographics were as follows: Hispanic: 48%, Black: 40%, White: 9%, Native American or Native Alaskan: 2%, Asian/Pacific Islander: 1%, and Asian: 0.6%. I was not surprised that the majority of the student body was minority despite its predominantly White neighborhood.

The White school psychologist began the tour by providing us with an overview of the programs that serve students with the disability classifications of ID, significant LD, significant speech-language impairments, and ED. We began walking through the hallways where the classrooms were as he spoke to us and answered questions. We were only allowed to look through the classroom windows; as I did, I noticed that most of the students were students of color. This experience generated feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration for me, since I am a school psychologist whose primary role is to evaluate students to determine eligibility for special education services.

The tour ended in the school cafeteria with a question-and-answer session. Afterward, most of the visiting clinicians left the school, but I stayed behind because I wanted to privately speak to the school psychologist for a few minutes. I felt that this was a good opportunity for me to hear the perspective of another school psychologist regarding the disproportionate representation of students of color, particularly Black students, in restrictive and segregated special education programs such as this. I decided to bring up the statistics that I read on the school website. I also mentioned to the psychologist that I only noticed students of color during the tour. He smiled and agreed with me, but then said, “There are some White students in this school, too, but most of the emotionally disturbed students in this school are Black.” This comment did not surprise me given that Black students in NYC schools are disproportionately classified with ED and recommended to restrictive environments (Fancsali, 2019).

I have witnessed differences in the perceptions of teachers and other school staff towards students of color who exhibit behavior problems in school. For instance, teachers and other staff are more likely to categorize a student of color with an “emotional

disturbance,” even prior to the evaluation. I have seen students of color in my school who were experiencing significant social-emotional difficulties in which teachers and other school staff felt that they needed a more restrictive school environment in a different school. During these types of referrals, teachers and other school staff stop by my office or stop me in the hallways frequently to ask me what I was thinking of recommending even before the evaluation process begins. Several of them come straight out and say that these students are “disturbed” and “psychotic” and need a more restrictive school environment in another school. On the other hand, they will attribute behavior problems in White students to ADHD or “sensory issues.”

I evaluate White students and students of color who exhibit significant behavioral difficulties in school. However, I notice differences in how school staff perceive these students and in the recommendations they make depending on the race of the student. Some of these students are so disruptive that school staff feel that a general education setting is not appropriate for them, and a more restrictive setting elsewhere would better meet their needs. This tends to happen more with students of color. For several of these students, I strongly feel that making a restrictive recommendation would be detrimental to their future, especially since many of them are evaluated for the first time and have not received adequate support in school. These IEP meetings are very difficult for me because I am in conflict with my role as a child advocate and being supportive to my colleagues. Many of the parents of the students of color will accept recommendations made by the school even when the recommendation is placement in a restrictive setting. On the other hand, many White parents request that their children remain in a general education setting with special education services or private special education schools.

Testimonio 2

I worked on the case of an 8-year-old Latina girl who was disruptive in class, disrespectful towards authority figures, and verbally and physically aggressive toward peers without any provocation. Her parents were called almost daily and asked to pick her up from school over a dozen times throughout the academic year because of temper tantrums and unsafe behaviors. A staff had to call 911 on one occasion because of “out of control” behaviors, including hitting staff and attempting to run out of the school building. Many of the school staff wanted this student to be recommended to a more restrictive setting in a different school. I evaluated this young girl and recommended ICT, counseling services, and a full-time behavior management paraprofessional. I also provided her parents with outside resources because I felt that this young girl needed more than what a school could offer her. The girl was evaluated by a psychiatrist and diagnosed with ADHD and oppositional defiant disorder; the psychiatrist recommended medication that treats impulsivity and helps with focusing. After several weeks of being on the medication, along with the school services, her behavior improved drastically. She was focusing, completing her work, following teacher directives, and getting along with adults and children in school. I did not let the pressure of the staff influence me in my decision to make a recommendation that allowed this student to remain in her classroom.

I have seen how some school staff have preconceived notions and prejudices towards students of color who have certain disability classifications, especially an emotional disturbance. Many students who are classified with an emotional disturbance are viewed as aggressive and at times even a danger to teachers and classmates. This disability classification tends to hold more stigma than other disability classifications and limits their

opportunity to be integrated into a general education setting. It is important for school psychologists to have a deeper understanding of racism, prejudice, and discriminatory practices in schools when making decisions on classifying students with restrictive classifications, especially an emotional disturbance.

Testimonio 3

I evaluated an 8-year-old African American boy who was attending a G&T classroom. He had been experiencing behavioral difficulties since the beginning of the academic year. His mother had requested a behavior management paraprofessional, a behavior management plan, and counseling services when the school expressed concerns over his behavior. His behavioral difficulties continued despite these interventions. The parent did not want to make a request to determine eligibility for special education services. However, when his behavioral difficulties became severe, she decided to make the request. I conducted the evaluation and noticed how difficult it was for him to sit still. Nevertheless, he performed high on the cognitive and academic assessment. In the midst of my evaluation, different school staff approached me to ask me if I was recommending a special education school placement. I was shocked to hear this coming from educators who were aware of this student's academic potential. How can a student who had never been recommended special education services be placed in a restrictive setting? I needed to be an advocate for this young boy.

During the IEP meeting, a staff member voiced her concerns about this student's behavior, saying that this setting was not appropriate for him and a special education private school would be more appropriate. My final recommendation was for the student to remain in his current program and to receive special education services of school counseling and a

behavior support paraprofessional to help implement strategies and interventions. I also emphasized the importance of outside psychological support for the student that the parent would be responsible for, as well as collaboration between the school and outside supportive services, in order to effectively help this student. My decision was based on what I believed was best for this student, although some school staff disagreed with my recommendation. “There are times when the education decisions being made are directly beneficial to the institution and not the child” (Vannoy, 2009, p. 17). This student of color was able to successfully remain in the G&T program and graduated from the 5th grade with exceptional grades.

Testimonio 4

I have also witnessed and been involved in significantly different recommendation processes for White and racial minority preschool students during the Turning Five process, which is the reevaluation of preschool children receiving special education services in order to determine whether they continue to warrant special education services as they transition to kindergarten. Some White parents bring expensive private neuropsychological evaluations with recommendations that they expect you to put on the IEP regardless of your evaluations. During these IEP meetings, many of the White parents expect you to develop the IEP according to what the private evaluator recommended. I explain to the parents that recommendations are made by taking into account all of the evaluations, including evaluations conducted by the DOE.

There have been several instances in which parents filed an impartial hearing against the DOE for reimbursement for a private school because they did not agree with my recommendation, although it was appropriate to the student’s needs. For example, the White

parent of a preschool girl with Down syndrome who was zoned to my school told the Latina social worker, who is my colleague, in the beginning of the evaluation process, “My daughter is not going to a Spanish school.” This parent filed a lawsuit against the DOE for failing to make an appropriate recommendation and enrolled her daughter in a private school in Connecticut. She seemed to prefer having her 5-year-old daughter traveling on a bus to Connecticut rather than attending a “Spanish school.” During a kindergarten orientation, a White parent asked one of the teachers in the ICT classroom she was observing, “Are there White children in this classroom?” Then she said, “I would like my child in a classroom with other children that he could relate to,” which is a subtle way of saying, “I want my child in a classroom with other White children.”

Testimonio 5

I evaluated a 10-year-old African American girl who was referred for a reevaluation to determine whether or not she would continue to have an educational disability that warrants special education services. She was attending a 5th grade ICT classroom and received speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and counseling services. She also received outside support to address social-emotional issues. I had known this student and her family for nearly 6 years when I observed her in a special class in preschool prior to arriving to my school for kindergarten. She was only 4 years old at the time and the only girl in a segregated special education classroom with 11 boys. During the observation, she was able to follow routines, remain on task, and participate in all activities. She related well to the teacher and classmates. She presented as a happy and friendly child who had a lot of strengths. The classroom teacher reported that she had mastered all her pre-academic skills and some academic skills as well. After this observation and speaking to her teacher, I was

convinced that she was ready for a less restrictive classroom setting. Her Latinx teacher and grandmother/legal guardian were pleased with my recommendation because they both viewed this young girl as bright and capable of a general education kindergarten classroom.

In conclusion, my own stories as a Latinx school psychologist can be used as a way to explore and understand racial disparities in special education. “Critical race theorists have built on everyday experiences with perspective, viewpoint, and the power of stories and persuasion to come to a deeper understanding of how Americans see race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 45).

Chapter II

Review of Literature

This chapter will provide the historical background and scholarly rationale for this narrative study on Latinx school psychologists' perspectives and experiences, particularly in the special education process. Using interdisciplinary approaches, the chapter engages with four topics: (a) the history of the racialized eugenics movement and its influence on education; (b) racial disparities in education with a focus on students of color in special education; (c) the intersection of race and disability; and (d) the history of the field of school psychology, demographics of school psychologists, roles of school psychologists as practitioners, and experiences of school psychologists of color.

The History of the Racialized Eugenics Movement and its Influence on Education

The literature review begins with an overview of historical origins of eugenics ideology and its profound influence on education at the intersection of race and disability. An understanding of the history of eugenics is critical in analyzing the racial disparities in contemporary special education settings, especially in relation to the overrepresentation of students of color in certain disability classifications and restrictive special education placement.

What is Eugenics?

Francis Galton, an English biologist whose research focused on human heredity, was the first to coin the term “eugenics” in 1883 (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999). He founded psychometrics and was responsible for beginning the testing movement because of his belief in the need for measuring mental characteristics and individual differences of people. Gillborn (2010) defined *eugenics* as, “the attempt to engineer a

supposedly stronger, more intelligent population by selective breeding and other approaches” (p. 244). The core principle of eugenics ideology was that an individual’s intelligence is genetically based, rather than influenced by their environment (Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999; Valencia, 2010). This ideology was known as biological determinism and defined by Gould (1996) as the belief that social and economic differences between races, classes, and gender, are influenced by genes and hereditary factors. Therefore, various scholars viewed the eugenics movement differently—as a scientific, social, or political movement. Here, it is important to note that the eugenics ideology was used to support discriminatory policies of immigration restrictions, segregation, programs of human selective breeding, and sterilization in the name of improving the human species (Clare, 2017; Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999; Valencia, 2010). This is relevant because the legacy of biological determinism is visible in schools with regards to the overrepresentation of students of color in restrictive special education programs exists because of deficits inherent in the student, rather than environmental factors such as institutionalized racism and racial biases.

Eugenicists wanted to find a way of determining racial hierarchy among the human race, and therefore claimed that worth could be assigned to individuals and groups by measuring their intelligence as a single quantity. The two main methods of measuring intelligence to determine racial hierarchy were craniometry in the 19th century and psychological testing in the 20th century (Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999).

While Gould’s (1996) *The Mismeasure of Man* is considered controversial, his opposition to biological determinism is a position to reckon with in exploring the history of racialized eugenics (Horgan, 2011; Jensen, 1982; Weisberg & Paul, 2016). According to Gould, craniometry, the study of the skull and its contents through measuring its size, was

one method used for racial ranking in the early 19th century. Samuel George Morton and Paul Broca attempted to demonstrate how White people were superior to people from other racial and ethnic groups by cranial capacity (Gould, 1996). Gould argued that an analysis of these studies revealed methodological flaws. Nevertheless, data from these studies were published and used to justify racial prejudices that already existed (see also Selden, 1999). Having noted his thesis, I acknowledged that there are controversies and debates around Gould's work. It is widely known that a study was published to debunk Gould's analysis of Morton's skull measurement, concluding that Gould's criticisms were poorly supported (Lewis et al., 2011). There were also other criticisms² about Gould's use of antiquated studies and handpicking studies to back up his beliefs (Jensen, 1982). However, there were others who defended Gould's fight against biological determinism (Horgan, 2011). For my study, I take a position that these debates are not settled and, in fact, demonstrate the continuing history surrounding biological determinism.

In the 20th century, the testing movement in the United States began to grow with the introduction of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test, which was developed by French psychologist Alfred Binet to help identify struggling students who needed remedial education. At the time, Binet argued that intelligence testing was intended to be used as a diagnostic tool for identifying students who needed help in school (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Gould, 1996; Sattler, 1992; Selden, 1999). He was concerned that schools would misuse intelligence testing to get rid of students who were viewed as problematic. Binet claimed that intelligence was neither inborn nor fixed, and students could increase their intelligence and knowledge with special education (Gould, 1996). Yet, American psychologists and eugenics

² Jensen critiqued Gould's 1981 book, *The Mismeasure of Man*.

supporters, such as Henry Goddard, Lewis Terman, and Robert Yerkes, believed that intelligence testing measured genetically determined intelligence and used it for the purpose of classifying and segregating people they viewed as intellectually deficient (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999).

In 1909, Goddard translated the Binet-Simon Scale from French into English, and in 1916, Terman published the Stanford Revision and Extension of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test (Gould, 1996; Sattler, 1992). In 1917, Robert Yerkes along with a committee of psychologists including Goddard and Terman, developed the Army Alpha and Beta Tests to evaluate the innate intelligence of American recruits for the First World War (Selden, 1999). Gould's (1996) examination of the Army mental tests attributed racial differences in test scores among recruits to cultural bias, poor testing condition, familiarity with American culture, and educational background, rather than innate intelligence.

However, eugenics beliefs and practices were popularized and integrated into American culture. For example, state fairs were used as a platform to disseminate eugenics ideology. Selden (2000) pointed to posters at the "Eugenic and Health Exhibit" at the Kansas Free Fair in Topeka in 1929, in which White supremacist messages about race and ethnicity were displayed. One poster ranked the literacy rate in the United States and pointed out that "the lower rate was a consequence of combining the 'native born' rates with those of the 'foreign born,' whose rate was 8:1 and with those of 'Negroes' whose literacy was an alleged 4:1" (p. 240–241). The reason for the lower literacy rate in the African American community at the time was the consequence of laws that made it illegal for African Americans to attend school. If they were not provided with the opportunity to get an education, how were they expected to be literate? Similarly, in current settings of special education, if students of color

are placed in restrictive educational settings, how will they demonstrate high academic performance?

The documentary film titled *Forgotten Ellis Island* portrayed the impact of the history of eugenics (Conway, 2008). I found this film extremely powerful; therefore, I would like to engage with it at some length here. At Ellis Island in the early 1900s, testing results were used to prevent immigrants deemed “defective” from entering the United States (see also Clare, 2017). These immigrants had to go through mandatory medical inspections to determine whether or not they were “healthy enough” to enter the country. Some immigrants were welcomed with open arms, while others were viewed as deficient and rejected as a result. Interestingly, these medical inspections were targeted towards immigrants who traveled in second or third class, while “the wealthier first class passengers received little more than a glance from public health physicians” (Conway, 2008, 09:22). The immigrants who did not pass the inspection were sent to a hospital on the island for treatment, while others who were considered to have incurable diseases would be deported. Such targeted practice and examination, as well as segregation, is something I have seen in the present as a school psychologist, as many students of color are viewed as deficient and labeled with a disability, and at times moved from their classrooms to be placed in restrictive educational settings.

According to the film:

The doctors on Ellis Island had conflicting duties: as physicians they had taken an oath to heal the sick, as public health service officers they had the job of gatekeeper deciding which immigrants were healthy enough to become healthy citizen. (Conway, 2008, 13:56)

At times, I also have conflicting duties as a school psychologist, particularly when working with students of color, advocating for the student while at the same time being expected to be supportive of the teacher who views them as deficient and/or emotionally disturbed and in need of a more restrictive placement in a different setting outside of the school building. According to Conway, “Many members of Congress endorsed the theory of eugenics, claiming that the American gene pool was being weakened by the newcomers” (Conway, 2008, 36:36). In congressional testimony (1911), Commissioner of Immigration William Williams argued for an expansion of medical exclusion, which included “testing for mental illness.” This was their way of further excluding more people that belonged to certain ethnic groups from coming to the United States. Federal law prohibited the admission of the “feeble-minded,” and thousands of arrivals, mostly from Southern and Eastern European origin, were diagnosed as “mentally unfit” and denied entry into the United States.

In the documentary, Columbia University Public Health Historian Amy Fairchild stated:

These types of mental exams were promoted by the political elite and a particular strand of the scientific medical community that had become very concerned that immigrants from these Eastern European countries were simply inferior physically and genetically to what they called Native Americans. (Conway, 2008, 37:27)

Goddard, who believed that intelligence tests could be used to identify the mentally defective, was hired by Commissioner William Williams to test arriving immigrants. He was also the first to use “the terms ‘moron’, ‘imbecile’, and ‘idiot’ to describe mental deficiency (Conway, 2008, 39:01). Goddard suspected that certain ethnic groups were less intelligent than others, but his testing did not fully support his belief, so he reportedly adjusted the

results. He claimed that roughly 80% of the tested Italians, Eastern European Jews, and Russians were mentally deficient, and his claim was brought to Congress to support the argument of those wanting to keep these immigrant groups out of the United States. Goddard's flawed data was published. Goddard's testing was not the only basis for identifying feeble-mindedness; facial appearance was also used. Records show photographs of immigrants with terms such as "anxiety," "low moron," "paretic," "dementia precox," "expression of feeble-mindedness," and "low grade imbecile" assigned to them. Ellis Island psychiatrists had doubts about Goddard's methods and developed other ways to test mental capacity. Nevertheless, records exist in which tools were ordered for the purpose of measuring the circumference of a person's head, the continuing impact of craniometry (Gould, 1996).

Conway's (2008) documentary provides an example of how the United States has historically used psychological and intellectual classifications to categorize and segregate people based on their race, ethnicity, gender, and ability. Moreover, how (dis)ability has often been conflated with race and ethnicity. Labels such as "imbecile," and "feeble-minded," were assigned to those eugenicists viewed as biologically inferior. In particular, eugenicists established and normalized associating race/ethnicity and disability to justify racial discrimination and negative perceptions against groups viewed as inferior. This move cannot be separated from the U.S. discourse of the 18th and 19th centuries that viewed Black people as "biologically inferior" and justified slavery and colonization (Gould, 1996). In the backdrop of this history, the following section will examine eugenics ideology in education.

Influence of Eugenics on Education

The eugenics movement has had a tremendous impact on education in the United States (Artiles et al., 2016; Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999; Valencia, 2010). In this section, I discuss the impacts of eugenics ideology on segregated education for students with disabilities and students viewed as intellectually gifted.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mandatory medical inspections were implemented as part of compulsory education laws, which required all children in certain age groups to attend school (Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994). Fagan and Sachs Wise (1994) acknowledged that “the attention to physical defects is understandable in an era of much poorer medical knowledge and practice” (p. 25). However, the problematic assumption was that “defects of physical health could be symptomatic of defects in ability, school achievement, and behavior as well” (Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994, p. 25). Public schools, particularly in major cities, were enrolling students with the three primary categories of exceptionality at the time “mental,” “physical,” and “moral” impairments (Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994) and creating facilities and programs for children deemed “slow” or “retarded” (Ferri & Connor, 2005).

Ferri and Connor (2005) argued that public schools during this time were successful in generating the lasting practice of segregating students of color from their White counterparts and students with disabilities from their general education counterparts. At this time, special education was not only for students with disabilities. “In addition to the common categories now in existence, special classes were provided for truant, delinquent, backward, adult education, and other categories that today are outside the legislated scope of

special education” (Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994, p. 27). Students who were deemed “seriously atypical” were mostly educated in segregated schools (Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994).

Eugenics has also had a major influence in gifted education. Leta S. Hollingworth, American psychologist and professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, was a eugenics supporter who advocated for the education of the gifted child (Selden, 1999, 2000). She argued that intelligence was hereditary and should not be attributed to the environment. Furthermore, Hollingworth believed that ability was passed down from successful parents to their children, who then achieved high scores on intelligence tests (Selden, 2000). She emphasized that there was a need for gifted children to be segregated into special classes. Yet, Hollingworth was not a proponent of institutions for the disabled because she was a strong believer that hereditary intelligence could not improve. She connected intelligence and ethnicity by pointing out differences among various immigrant groups, such as viewing American children of Italian parentage as having low average intelligence. Hollingworth further argued that the low average intelligence of Italian American children could not be due to language difficulties, since children of Swedish and Jewish parentage performed better on tests (Selden, 1999, 2000).

The history of eugenics provides a clear analytic perspective to understand the intersection of racism/racial segregation and ableism/special education. It is particularly important for school psychologists to understand how disability classifications and testing can be traced to eugenics ideology because school psychologists’ primary role in schools involves psychoeducational evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services. Therefore, developing a better understanding regarding the role that race plays in the special education process will be an important contribution to research, training, and

practical implications to the field of school psychology, particularly when working with students of color.

In conclusion, school psychologists need to understand the history of eugenics as it relates to education in terms of race and disability, as well as how eugenics were used to create policies that excluded and discriminated against students of color. School psychologists must be mindful of the disability classifications that are used to categorize students of color, as well as the decisions that place these students in restrictive and segregated educational settings that limit their educational opportunities.

Racial Disparities in Education

Racial disparities have persisted in U.S. education. Historically entrenched racist beliefs and discriminatory practices have been significant contributing factors of inequalities and inequities in public schools (Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2018; Farkas, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Wald & Losen, 2003).

In Jonathan Kozol's (1991) seminal and classic book, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, he provided a detailed account of the differences between affluent suburban schools and city schools in terms of the quality of education and resources. He also claimed that schools have a caste system that remains racially segregated between Black and Hispanic children and White children.

Unfortunately, the "savage inequalities" Kozol documented in 1991 are still with us in 2021. Compared to their White counterparts, students of color still tend to attend high-poverty schools that are insufficiently funded (Blanchett et al., 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2014;

McCartney et al., 2014; Oakes et al., 2018), demonstrate lower academic performance, and have higher dropout rates (Chu, 2011; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

Racial disparities in disciplinary actions have been documented nationally (Cook et al., 2018; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). For example, in the areas of discipline and punishment, students of color (particularly Black students) tend to receive harsher and exclusionary disciplinary consequences for misbehavior than their White counterparts (Cook et al., 2018; Rogers & O'Bryon, 2008; Skiba et al., 2002). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), in 2013-2014, a higher percentage of Black male students (13.7%) received an out-of-school suspension, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native students (6.7%), students of Two or more races (5.3%), Hispanic students (4.5%), Pacific Islander students (4.5%), White students (3.4%), and Asian students (1.1%). Skiba et al. (2014) found that racial disparities in school punishment for Black and White students are an indicator of systemic and prevalent bias. Their study documented how students of color are treated differently than their White counterparts even when accused of the same infraction. Numerous researchers have concluded that these educational outcomes are due to resource allocation, biased assessment procedures, institutionalized racism, classism, and biased teacher perceptions and attitudes (Banks, 2007; Chu, 2011; McCartney et al., 2014; Oakes et al., 2018; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Shriberg, 2009; Steele, 2003; Valencia, 2010).

In this larger context, I will discuss racial disparities in special education with a focus on deficit thinking and teacher expectations, test bias and eligibility criteria, and the intersection of race and disability.

Racial Disparities in Special Education

For decades, scholars in the field of special education have been documenting racially based disparities in special education (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Artiles et al., 2002, 2016; Blanchett, 2006; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Dunn, 1968; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Farkas, 2003; Ferri & Connor, 2005; National Research Council, 2002; Skiba et al., 2008; Sullivan & Artiles, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), 14% (7 million) of students aged 3 to 21 enrolled in U.S. public schools received special education services under IDEA during the 2017–2018 school year. The percentage of students receiving special education services differed by race/ethnicity. For example, the percentage of students receiving services was highest for American Indian/Alaskan Native students (18%), followed by Black students (16%); White students (14%); students of two or more races (14%), Hispanic students (13%), Pacific Island students (11%), and Asian students (7%; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Similar racial disparities were also found in NYC public schools, where Fancsali (2019) reported that Black and Latino students are overrepresented in special education. She found that, although the racial demographics of all students for the 2015–2016 school year were 27% Black, 41% Latino, 15% White, and 16% Asians, the racial demographics of students with special education services were 31% Black, 48% Latino, 13% White, and 6% Asian. In terms of disability classification, Black students are twice as likely as other students to be classified with ED. For example, 11% of Black students were classified with ED, compared with 5% Latino, 4% White, and 2% Asian. There are also differences in the placement recommendations associated with background and disability classification. For example, students classified with autism, ID, and ED were mostly recommended to self-

contained classrooms. “Because boys and students of color are disproportionately classified with these types of disabilities, they are also disproportionately recommended for self-contained classrooms” (Fancsali, 2019, p. 14).

Scholars have theorized that the overrepresentation of students of color in special education is one way of maintaining racial segregation after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) mandated school desegregation (Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005). By 1968, for example, Dunn had already framed the overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students in segregated special education classes as a significant civil rights issue. Dunn concluded that students of color who had mild learning problems that could have been addressed in a general education classroom were unfairly misclassified as “educable mentally retarded” and placed in a restrictive setting for students with mental retardation. In fact, historically, students of color (particularly Black and Latino/Hispanic students) were disproportionately labeled “mentally retarded” and placed in programs for such students (Artiles & Trent, 1996; Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Dunn, 1968; Fletcher & Navarrete, 2003).

Connor and Ferri (2005) also stated that, in the late 1950s through the 1960s, school officials developed procedures and structures in order to maintain racial segregation after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). They pointed out that there was an increase in the use of IQ testing for the purpose of academic tracking of students, an increase of special classes in school buildings and separate schools, and a rigid and narrow interpretation of ability. Connor and Ferri (2005) further explained that racial segregation under the “guise of disability” has become a more “socially acceptable, even normalized, category of

marginalization for students of color” (p. 454). This led to the belief that special education became a way to maintain racial segregation in schools, as it became more socially acceptable to segregate a student of color because of a presumed deficit rather than because of their race, ethnicity, or language difference.

Federal legislation and policies have attempted to remedy these racial disparities in special education. For example, the landmark *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979) case was filed on behalf of Black children who were wrongly placed in special classes for the “educable mentally retarded” by utilizing IQ tests that the court deemed biased and discriminatory (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Skiba et al., 2008). Similarly, the *Diana v. State Board of Education* (1970) decision argued that Hispanic children were inappropriately tested in English even when they only spoke Spanish (Blanchett et al., 2009). Furthermore, IDEA was amended in 2004 to add a requirement that states monitor and address racial disproportionality (Morgan et al., 2018; Skiba et al., 2008). Despite these attempts to address racial disparities in public schools, various studies have documented the overrepresentation of students of color in certain disability classifications—such as LD, ED, and ID—and how they are still placed in more restrictive and segregated special education programs (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Artiles et al., 2016; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Dunn, 1968; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Skiba et al., 2008). For example, Skiba et al. (2008) found that African American students are overrepresented in more restrictive special education settings in comparison to other students with the same disability.

While students of color have been overrepresented in special education programs historically (Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett, 2006; Blanchett et al., 2009; Skiba et al., 2008),

with the exception of Asians, they are less likely to be placed in gifted programs (de Wet & Gubbins, 2011; Fletcher & Navarrete, 2003; Ford, 2014; Ford & Grantham, 2003; National Research Council, 2002). Ford (2014) argued that many African American and Hispanic students are denied access to school programs that are essential to reaching their academic, intellectual, and economic potential and that hold promise for closing the achievement gap. She further stated that gifted education represents such a program for promoting these inequities. It is important to consider how unequal opportunities, structural and historical inequity, and biases lead to high referrals of minority students to special education (Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett et al., 2009; Chu, 2011) and limited opportunity to gifted programs (de Wet & Gubbins, 2011; Fletcher & Navarrete, 2003; Ford, 2014; Ford & Grantham, 2003; National Research Council, 2002).

Racial segregation is evident in my school building, in that the G&T classrooms consist of mostly White students; the general education, ICT, and dual language classrooms consist mostly of students of color. The implication behind this is that students of color are often perceived as not being capable of more challenging academic work. This leads to my next review on deficit thinking and teacher expectations.

Deficit Thinking and Teacher Expectations

The history of deficit thinking is deeply entrenched in eugenics theory and practices that supported the racist belief in mental, physical, and cultural deficits of racial minority groups in the United States (Gould, 1996; Selden, 1996, 2000; Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Valencia, 2010). In *Dismantling Contemporary Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*, Valencia (2010) explained that “the deficit thinking model, at its core, is an endogenous theory-positing that the student who fails in school does so because of his/her

internal deficits or deficiencies” (p. 7). This deficit-thinking model holds that non-White or racial and cultural minority students fail in school because of inherent internal, cultural, social, and linguistic factors, but ignores the responsibility of education for systemic factors such as segregation, inequalities in school financing, tracking, standardized testing, shortage of highly qualified teachers, and curriculum inconsistencies (Arzubiaga et al., 2008; Kozol, 1991). That is, the deficit-thinking perspective alleges that racial disparities in education are due to inherent deficits of students of color, rather than institutionalized racism and oppression. Valencia argued that deficit thinking itself is a form of oppression. If the blame is placed on individual students’ culture, ethnicity, linguistic difference, and environment, then how can we challenge racism and develop structural solutions?

Studies on deficit thinking have shown that teachers tend to hold racial biases towards students of color in the form of negative perceptions and lower expectations, while ignoring strengths (Artiles et al., 2002; Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Chu, 2011; Farkas, 2003; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Valencia, 2010). Consequently, these deficit-thinking practices have been attributed to low achievement in students of color (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Valencia, 2010). Teachers and other school staff who view students through a deficit-thinking lens place students of color at higher risk of being referred for a special education evaluation (Chu, 2011; Hart, 2016; Podell & Soodak, 1993). These teachers and school staff tend to justify their decisions by arguing how their students get the help they need without realizing their preconceived notions and biases towards students of color. “Research has been challenging in this area because teachers, who are predominantly White, have a difficult time recognizing racist thinking or deficit thinking within themselves” (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009, p. 45).

As a school psychologist, I feel an obligation to confront the racially biased language used by some of my colleagues when discussing students of color. I consciously try to emphasize the strengths of these students in my psychoeducational evaluation reports, observations, and during IEP meetings, because teachers and other school staff often emphasize the students' weaknesses and deficits only.

Test Bias and Eligibility Criteria

Partly due to the significant role IQ testing plays in special education classification, it is important for school psychologists, administrators, and other school staff to know how IQ testing has been historically used to justify deficit-thinking ideologies to segregate and exclude students with disabilities from the general education setting, particularly students of color from their White counterparts (Valencia, 2010). Historically, eugenics thinkers used IQ testing as a way to justify exclusion and control of immigrants and institutionalization of individuals deemed defective. Although testing has been beneficial to some students with disabilities by providing them with needed support and preventing schools from placing some of them in segregated settings (especially considering teachers' subjective evaluation of students' special needs based on their low achievement), its use has also been detrimental to the educational outcomes of many students, particularly students of color (Artiles et al., 2016; Blanchett et al., 2009; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Hyman, 1979; Valencia, 2010).

It is more than ironic that I have to repeat, in 2021, the critique Hyman made on IQ testing in 1979: "It is amazing that several generations of psychologists have been trained without understanding how IQs are used by policymakers to further bigotry, isolationism, racism, and elitism" (p. 1026). Scholars argued that IQ testing has been historically misused to support scientific racism by relating poor performance to genetics. These critiques are not

hard to find and continue to be made (Artiles et al., 2016; Gould, 1996; Selden, 1983, 1999; Valencia, 2010).

However, IQ testing is still one of the requirements to determine eligibility for special education services. I question if there are inherent problems with the eligibility criteria that can lead to the overrepresentation of students of color in certain disability categories and restrictive placement. During the decision-making process, the school psychologist and IEP team should consider many factors, such as classroom performance, social history and background information, observations, testing results, and the supports and strategies provided to the student, to ensure that the student is not classified with a disability as a result of perceived deficiencies in the classroom or as a result of limited English proficiency (NYC DOE, 2020). Students are eligible for special education services if they meet the criteria for one or more of the disability classifications. The eligibility criteria also state that a student is not eligible for special education if the determinant factors are due to a lack of appropriate instruction and English proficiency. On the Specific Learning Disability Justification form that should be filled out by school psychologists when suspecting that a student has a learning disability, it states that the student's learning problem should not be primarily due to "environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage," and if so, an alternative to special education services should be considered. However, I have witnessed over and over how teachers and other school-based staff tend to focus mostly on a student's performance in the classroom and testing results and less on other important factors that might be the cause of the low academic performance and/or behavioral difficulties. When school psychologists are not properly equipped to examine and understand the impacts that social and environmental factors can play in the education of students that will negatively impact their academic and

social-emotional functioning, then they may not be able to intervene in this institutionalized setting of evaluation and classification.

Therefore, it is important for school psychologists to understand why racial disparities exist in public schools and the role that race plays in the special education process. These disparities have led to the overrepresentation of students of color in certain subjective disability categories and restrictive special education environments.

Intersectionality: Race and Disability

Intersectionality can be an important analytic tool that can be used to understand the racial disparities in special education, since race and disability are socially constructed concepts and the meanings of race and disability have been historically intersecting with and constituting each other (Annamma et al., 2013; Artiles et al., 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Kimberle Crenshaw was the first scholar to articulate intersectional theory in her 1989 essay, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*. She argued that Black women experience discrimination and oppression because of two identities interacting. That is, she claimed that the experiences of Black women should be viewed through a lens that takes into account both race and gender, rather than viewing them as separate identities. As stated by Crenshaw (1989), “Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p. 140). Although there are multiple identities of intersectionality—including gender, class, and sexuality—for the purpose of my study, I will focus my analysis on the intersection of race and disability.

CRT and critical disability studies attempt to expose the experiences of people located at the intersection of multiple differences (Annamma et al., 2013; Artiles et al., 2016; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). CRT and critical disability studies scholars view race and disability as socially constructed and relational concepts (Annamma et al., 2013; Connor & Ferri, 2007; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Linton, 1998).

The association of race with disability has historically been used to constitute social hierarchy in schools, segregation, and exclusion of students of color. Scholars have documented that intersections of race and disability are responsible for the racial disparities in special education (Annamma et al., 2013; Artiles, 1998; Artiles et al., 2002, 2016; Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2014; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Reid & Knight, 2006). That is, students of color are at a higher risk of being identified with a disability and recommended to a special education program than students who are racialized as White. In addition, students of color are overrepresented in more restrictive and segregated special education programs and disproportionately labeled with high-incidence and subjective disability classifications. A student of color with a disability will experience both racial and disability discrimination because of their membership in two marginalized groups that have been historically interconnected in schools. Therefore, the special education process affects students of color differently than their White counterparts (Annamma et al., 2013; Dávila, 2015; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). “For students of color, the label of dis/ability situates them in unique positions where they are considered ‘less than’ White peers with and

without dis/ability labels, as well as their non-disabled peers of color” (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 5).

Leonardo and Broderick (2011) explored how the socially constructed notion of smartness has historically intersected both race and ability as ideological systems in schools. The ideology of Whiteness has historically been associated with smartness and intellectual superiority. White people have always been positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy, and the notion of Whiteness operates as property that provides access, opportunity, and privileges to groups who identify as White, while oppressing and excluding the “Others.” Leonardo and Broderick claimed that, for smartness as an ideological system to hold any meaning, there has to be a group that is constituted as “not-so-smart,” and since smartness has been closely associated with White people, the “not-so-smart” group is therefore associated with Black people or people of color. They pointed out that, in order to understand the overrepresentation of students of color in special education, particularly placement in the most restrictive and segregated settings, it is critical to interrogate how the ideology of smartness has been deeply embedded in schools. According to Leonardo and Broderick (2011),

Teachers routinely characterize some students as “bright”, “smart” and “academically gifted”, and the academic opportunities afforded to these students are rarely commensurate with the opportunities afforded to their peers who are alternatively characterized as “slow”, or simply not very “bright” or “smart.” (p. 2215)

The ideology of Whiteness has been used as a way to stratify and sort students in schools into categories based on the interdependent ideologies of race and ability (Annamma et al., 2013; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Leonardo and Broderick (2011) argued that “smartness is

nothing but false and oppressive,” and in order to create more inclusive and socially just practices in schools, it is necessary to abolish the notion of Whiteness and smartness, which has been used to justify discriminatory practices that have oppressed and excluded students of color identified with a disability (p. 2215).

Erevelles and Minear (2010) also explored the intersection of race and disability, showing how race and disability have historically constituted each other:

The continued association of race and disability in debilitating ways necessitates that we examine how eugenic practices continue to reconstitute social hierarchies in contemporary contexts via the deployment of a hegemonic ideology of disability that have real material effects on people located at the intersection of difference. (pp. 133–134)

Erevelles and Minear connected three narratives in different historical times and contexts to illustrate the experiences of people of color at the intersection of race and disability. They began with the first narrative, as told by Patricia Williams in her 1987 essay, *Spirit-Murdering the Messenger*, about Eleanor Bumpur, a Black, elderly, poor, and disabled woman who was shot to death by a police officer while resisting eviction from her apartment in NYC. Eleanor’s multiple identities created a dangerous and threatening individual in the eyes of police officers, despite her age, arthritis, and possible mental illness. As stated by Erevelles and Minear (2010), “Trapped at the intersections of multiple oppressive contexts, Eleanor Bumpur’s tattered body was quite literally torn apart by her multiple selves—being raced, classed, gendered, AND disabled” (p. 127–128).

The second narrative is the story of Junius Wilson, as told by Burch and Joyner in their 2007 book, *Unspeakable: The Story of Junius Wilson*. Junius was an African American

boy who was born into poverty in 1908 in the Jim Crow South. He became deaf as a toddler and was sent to the residential North Carolina School for the Colored Blind and Deaf. In 1924, he was expelled from school and sent home because of a minor infraction. As a result of his education, Junius communicated by touching or holding other people and stomping his feet. Consequently, he was viewed as threatening in his community. At the age of 17, he was arrested and taken to jail after being accused of assaulting and attempting to rape a young woman. He was committed to the criminal ward of the North Carolina State Hospital for the Colored Insane because of his perception as a “feeble-minded” and dangerous individual. As a consequence of eugenics ideology and practices, Junius was castrated and thus no longer perceived as a danger to society. He was sent to work on a farm and then transferred to a geriatric ward. Although the charges against him were dropped, he continued to be incarcerated and secluded. Junius’ story is an example of how the social constructs of race and disability intersect to produce oppressive conditions for people of color. Erevelles and Minear (2010) pointed out how Junius’ deafness was constituted as dangerous due to the sociopolitical context of “racial terror” in the Jim Crow South. This fear resulted in the institutionalization, false accusation, castration, and segregation of Junius.

The final narrative is a contemporary story about Cassie Smith, an African American girl who was labeled with various disabilities, such as ID, ADHD, and LD, depending on the context, in order to justify her continued placement in restrictive and therefore segregated educational settings. Cassie was transferred to her eighth elementary school because those who were there to educate her viewed her as an angry, dangerous, and uncontrollable girl. “Cassie’s ever-changing labels of MR, LD, and ADHD were used as the justification for her continued segregation in an effort to protect the mainstream from a dangerous racialized

Other—the economically disadvantaged disabled African American girl” (Erevelles & Minear, 2010, p. 141). Cassie’s intersectional identities of race and disability determined her educational trajectory of segregation and instability since she was frequently transferred to multiple schools. By analyzing and connecting these three narratives, Erevelles and Minear (2010) argued that race and disability are historically interconnected and therefore cannot be treated as separate categories.

The field of education has not sufficiently examined the intersection of race and disability and the consequences of intersectionality that students of color experience. “An intersectional analytic perspective illuminates the symbolic and material purposes of social markers (e.g., race, disability) and the consequences (e.g., academic and social opportunities and outcomes) that arise at the intersections of such identities” (Artiles et al., 2016, p. 781). Since school psychologists are primarily engaged in special education evaluations and the decision-making process, they must have an awareness of the consequences of the interaction of race and disability. School psychologists should use intersectionality as a lens to analyze students’ “interacting identities and how these interactions contribute to students’ experiences of discrimination and oppression” (Proctor et al., 2017, pp. 1–2). Students of color who encounter both race and disability discrimination will experience limited educational opportunities and success, as well as low expectations from teachers and other school personnel. In other words, students of color placed within certain disability categories will be socially marginalized because of their race and perceived disability.

Even though my study did not directly examine the experiences of students of color, I attempted to analyze how race, class, culture, and language are narrated in the perspectives of Latinx school psychologists regarding the racial disparities in special education. As a Latinx

school psychologist who is a member of a group that has been marginalized in the United States, I am able to recognize the discrimination and bias experienced by students of color in schools. On the other hand, I also believe that having the title of “school psychologist” places me in a position of power in which I can influence the decision-making process, especially for students of color going through the special education process. In this positionality, I move to review the field of school psychology.

Roles and Practices of School Psychologists

Historical Background of School Psychology

Fagan and Sachs Wise’s (1994) *School Psychology: Past, Present, & Future*, provided a historical background of the field of school psychology. According to Fagan and Sachs Wise, the origins of school psychology can be traced to an era of social reform in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was a time when the eugenics movement was gaining popularity (Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999). Also, there were a lot of social and political changes taking place, such as the initiation of compulsory schooling, juvenile courts, and child labor laws; interests in mental health and vocational guidance; and the growth of institutions serving children.

Compulsory schooling, for example, grew out of the need for a more educated labor force to coincide with increasing industrialization and as a response to issues of social order and the need to maintain the character and social structure of society. In particular, special education programs were created in many urban and rural schools in response to eugenic-based segregation ideology, which held that “feble-minded” and “backward” students should be educated apart from average and bright students. Consequently, school psychological services emerged to help sort children who were deemed to have mental, physical, and moral

impairments into segregated educational settings. These children were often institutionalized. Therefore, the role of school psychologists was that of psychometrician, whose primary role was to administer and interpret psychological tests. As stated by Fagan and Sachs Wise (1994), “The concept of the school psychologist, therefore, as an ancillary member of the system, and as a ‘gatekeeper’ for special education, has a long historical precedent” (p. 28).

Ever since, the primary role and practice of school psychologists employed in school settings has been to administer and interpret psychoeducational tests for identification and placement in special education. With the enactment of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which mandated special education services in schools and placement in the least restrictive environment, along with the requirement of psychological services in schools, school psychologists have become an integral part of the school system (Branstetter, 2012; Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994; Jacob-Timm & Hartshorne, 1991). Another important court decision that impacted the field of school psychology was *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979), which focused on the assessment of minority students and placement issues, as well as the need for more sensitive multicultural assessment (Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994).

Demographics of School Psychologists

Historically, the field of school psychology was predominantly a White, male profession. Although in the past several decades the number of females in the field has increased significantly, racial minorities continue to be underrepresented (Beasley et al., 2015; Beeks & Graves, 2017; Blake et al., 2016; Castillo et al., 2013; Truscott et al., 2014). For example, Walcott and Hyson (2018) surveyed members of the National Association of School Psychologists in 2015 and reported an “increase in non-White school psychologists since 1990, when 94% of respondents were White” (p. 8). They claimed,

Although the vast majority of school psychologists are still White and speak only English (87%), there have been noticeable increase in the number of Black, Asian, and Hispanic school psychologists, and a corresponding increase in the proportion of school psychologists who report fluency in languages other than English. (Walcott & Hyson, 2018, p. 8)

Despite the increase in school psychologists from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the field of school psychology remains a majority White profession that serves a consistently growing racially/ethnically diverse student population (Beeks & Graves, 2017; Blake et. al., 2016; Castillo et al., 2013; Truscott et al., 2014; Walcott & Hyson, 2018). It is important to have more racial diversity in the field of school psychology because school psychologists of color can advocate for students of color by providing them with the appropriate academic support that will reduce the number of students of color being mislabeled and misplaced in special education programs (Beasley et al., 2015; Truscott et al., 2014). Scholars further acknowledged that psychologists of color can challenge the misuse of testing and serve as consultants to teachers and other school staff who work with students of color (Beasley et al., 2015; Truscott et al., 2014).

School Psychologists as Practitioners in NYC Public Schools

Historically, the role of school psychologists was to test and sort children into segregated educational settings. Later, the role of the school psychologist was expanded to include intervention and prevention, consultation, and counseling (Branstetter, 2012; Fagan & Sachs Wise, 1994). Currently, there are many other official and unofficial roles and duties assigned to school psychologists depending on the state and school site (Branstetter, 2012). However, student evaluations persist as a primary function of school psychologists.

The Roles of the School Psychologist in the Special Education Process

In NYC public schools, school psychologists bear multiple roles and responsibilities, which can generate conflicts and tensions. The roles and practices of school psychologists' entail conducting psychoeducational and behavior assessments, student observations, interviews, report writing, developing IEPs, facilitating IEP meetings, and (most importantly) child advocacy. School psychologists provide counseling services to students who are experiencing social-emotional difficulties; consult and collaborate with school staff, parents, and other professionals to provide support to students; and actively participate in school-level committees.

Here, I will briefly discuss the different roles that school psychologists play, with a focus on the special education process and how these roles and responsibilities complicate school psychologists' work. The *Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual* (NYC DOE, 2020) will be used to describe the roles of school psychologists in the special education process.

The role of school psychologists in the special education process is multifaceted. School psychologists serve as case managers and district representatives when they are required to be members of the IEP team. Furthermore, school psychologists are involved in the assessment process to help determine eligibility for special education services for students who are experiencing academic and social-emotional difficulties in school.

As case managers, school psychologists are responsible for ensuring that the evaluations and placement processes is completed within the required timelines according to special education law. As district representatives, school psychologists must (a) be knowledgeable about the general educational curriculum and the availability of resources, (b)

serve as the chairperson of the meeting, (c) facilitate open discussions among the participants of the IEP meeting regarding eligibility for services, (d) ensure that the parent(s) participate, (e) provide information regarding the continuum of special education services, (f) provide an explanation that the law requires students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate, (g) ensure that all program and service options are considered, and (h) build consensus among the IEP team members.

School psychologists are also responsible for administering a psychoeducational evaluation as part of a special education evaluation to determine a student's intellectual functioning; academic skills; and social-emotional, behavioral, personality, and adaptive functioning. Aside from the psychoeducational evaluation, other aspects are analyzed and integrated into a report, such as a review of social history interview and student records; classroom observations; classroom-based assessments; and interviews with the student, teachers, and other staff. What I find problematic is the emphasis that school psychologists, parents, teachers, and other school staff place on test results without taking into account the other sources of data that were collected about the student. This is particularly relevant when working with students of color because of environmental factors like racial bias and test bias, which could have contributed to the reason for special education referral, the evaluation results, and the special education recommendation. It is also important for school psychologists to take into account the subjectivity of some disability classifications, such as "learning disability," "intellectual disability," and "emotional disturbance," and how these classifications tend to be given to students of color, while more objective disability classifications such as "other health impairment" are given to White students.

Experiences of School Psychologists of Color

There is limited research available on the experiences of school psychologists who serve urban schools (Graves et al., 2014), and even less research on the experiences of school psychologists from minoritized racial/ethnic groups (Truscott et al., 2014). In this section, I will provide a summary of a study that focused on the perspectives and experiences of African American school psychologists (AASPs) working in southeastern United States.

Truscott et al.'s, (2014) study re-analyzed 30 existing interviews on the perceptions of the opportunities and challenges of AASPs working in southeastern United States. Results of the original study (Proctor & Truscott, 2013) were reported in one article focused on the recruitment of AASPs and at the National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention (Harper et al., 2008). The interview protocol consisted of structured questions, open-ended questions, and query prompts. Although a review of the entire interview protocol was conducted several times for this study, eight questions from the interview protocol provided most of the data about the opportunities and challenges of being an AASP. I will only highlight the themes found in this study that involved issues of race and racism.

Findings revealed how the Black identity of AASPs worked as an asset and opportunity for them. AASPs reported that they were able to make positive connections to students, parents, and colleagues of color. They felt that they were positive representations of people of color. Furthermore, they seemed to possess racial sensitivity and awareness to advocate for students of color, particularly regarding disproportionality in special education. AASPs reported encountering obstacles and challenges, such as experiencing racism themselves. Some of their responses consisted of statements related to feeling underappreciated, overlooked, and/or made to feel intellectually incompetent by students,

parents, colleagues, and administrators because of their race. For example, one participant described an incident in which a White parent refused to shake her hand after learning that she was the school psychologist. Other participants described experiences in which teachers and parents questioned their professional competency and expertise as a challenge. Several participants reported that they needed to be mindful of their interactions at work in regard to voicing their opinions because of feelings of “stigma placed on Blacks” and not wanting to be viewed as complainers. Finally, their own personal experiences allowed them to be aware of preconceived racist beliefs of teachers and other school staff directed towards students of color. A participant reported concerns about racial bias leading to mislabeling students of color.

According to Truscott et al. (2014), “Although participants identified racial bias as among the most difficult challenges they faced, they perceived addressing these challenges as opportunities for AASPs to make a difference” (p. 379). Like these AASPs, I also view racial bias from teachers and other school staff towards students of color as both a challenge and opportunity for advocacy.

In conclusion, this literature review provided context for my study. There is a lack of studies on the perspectives and experiences of Latinx school psychologists, especially regarding the role that race plays in the special education process, and my research will contribute to providing more understanding in this area.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and discuss the methodology I used, including participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, issues of validity and trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. The central question guiding this study is:

What are the perspectives and experiences of Latinx school psychologists regarding the role that race plays in the special education process?

Subquestion 1: How are race, class, culture, and language narrated in their perspectives?

Subquestion 2: What are multiple ways in which different participants make sense of and negotiate the racial disparities?

Testimonio as a Method in Latina/o Critical Race Theory Research

This study used a narrative research design that allowed for rich descriptions of experiences and the meanings that participants derive from their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A CRT and LatCrit approach was aligned with testimonios as a methodology to explore and understand the experiences of Latinx school psychologists (Dávila, 2015; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2009), as a way to examine special education inequalities and systemic oppression in schools (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). LatCrit is a branch of CRT that allows researchers to analyze and articulate the ways Latinx people experience race, class, gender, and sexuality, while acknowledging their particular experiences related to issues of language, ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and phenotype. Therefore, it provides a space for Latinx people to tell their own counter-narratives (Creswell, 2013; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2009). Counter-narratives

can expose experiences of racial discrimination from the perspectives of Latinx people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Parker & Lynn, 2002). These personal testimonios are critical in order for change to take place. As stated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), “Difficult as it may be to tell a story the more difficult but important task is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change” (p. 71).

LatCrit and testimonios also allowed me to collaborate with the participants as their stories emerged through our interactions (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). That is, they allow researchers to also share their own stories, establishing solidarity with the participants (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). As a LatCrit researcher, I asked questions that invited a dialogue to take place to explore racially based discriminatory practices in the special education process, as witnessed by Latinx school psychologists, while also paying close attention to their stories (Dávila, 2015; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). CRT and LatCrit were used to analyze the data in order to explore ways in which race, class, culture, and language were narrated in the participants’ experiences and perspectives regarding the racial disparities in special education. LatCrit challenges discriminatory experiences unique to the Latinx population based on ethnicity, culture, immigration status, language, skin color, and national origin (Dávila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). An important aspect of LatCrit is that it provides a space for Latinx communities to articulate their lived experiences of racism and oppression through testimonies. According to Pérez Huber (2009), “*Testimonio* describes the injustices People of Color face as a result of oppression. A LatCrit lens helps expose the structural conditions which cause oppression in Latina/o communities” (p. 645). As further described by Flores Carmona (2014), “Testimonio is the telling of life

stories, autohistorias, lived experience, and lived oppression” (p. 118). That is, the voices of people of color are necessary in order to understand race issues and begin to address and promote social justice and equality in schools. In the following section, I will discuss my participant selection process, data collection method, data analysis plan, and issues of validity and trustworthiness.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Creswell, 2013). As stated by Creswell (2013), “The study reflects the history, culture, and personal experiences of the researcher” (p. 54). As such, qualitative researchers need to position themselves in their research by acknowledging and explicitly documenting their own personal experiences, biases, values, and assumptions, through the process of reflexivity (Creswell, 2003, 2013; Patnaik, 2013). Creswell (2013) described reflexivity as a process in which the researcher discusses their experiences regarding the phenomenon being explored through work, schooling, and family dynamics, as well as how these experiences shape their interpretation.

My perspectives on the factors that contribute to racial disparities in special education have been shaped by my personal and professional experiences as a Latinx school psychologist working in an NYC public school since 2001. These experiences brought my particular lens to the study because they influenced my views and interpretation of the research (Creswell, 2003, 2013). Therefore, I needed to position myself throughout the study by incorporating my own experiences and narratives with regards to issues of race and racism in the special education process. In addition, I needed to discuss how my experiences shaped

my interpretations, findings, and conclusion of the data (Creswell, 2013; Patnaik, 2013; Tracy, 2010). As a starting point, I have shared five vignettes in the introduction.

Since my positionality in this study was as an insider researcher because of shared identities with the participants (e.g., ethnicity, language, profession, workplace/organization), I was conscious of the advantages and complications of this insider status (Chaves, 2008; Patnaik, 2013). I found Chaves' (2008) work illuminating in this regard. She described some of the advantages and complications of insider positionality that she encountered during a study she conducted of her own family. Some of the advantages of insider status were (a) having an equalized relationship with the participants, (b) effectiveness of rapport building, (c) access to the field, (d) knowledge of the field, and (e) deeper insight during data collection, interpretation, and representation. Despite these advantages, there were complications that Chaves faced during her study that can potentially influence data collection and interpretation of the data. For example, an insider researcher can have difficulty (a) recognizing patterns due to familiarity with their researched community, (b) asking follow-up questions during the interviews that could be misleading, and (c) dealing with the possibility of the participants not providing detailed responses to questions because of the idea that the interviewer is familiar with their stories. My insider positionality worked for me to establish and maintain rapport with the participants, as well as to create a safe and comfortable space for the participants to be more candid and authentic in revealing their experiences and perspectives regarding the research topic. However, I also needed to be aware of the complications of insider positionality that can potentially impact my interpretation of the data, such as minimizing my influence on the participants' perspectives

through attentive listening and careful questioning that would elicit clarification and elaboration of the participants' responses rather than influencing them in any way.

Participants

I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) to select the participants of this study. The participants were six Latinx school psychologists working in school settings in NYC and its vicinity. The participants met the following criteria: (a) New York certification to practice as school psychologists; (b) identifying as “Latino or Hispanic” of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, or South or Central American descent regardless of race; (c) bilingual extension certification to evaluate in a language other than English;³ (d) experience conducting special education evaluations; and (e) at least 5 years of experience working with a racially diverse student population.

For recruitment, I emailed an invitation to members of the New York Association of School Psychologists. The invitation included a brief introduction of the study and time commitment required of the participants. Once any prospective participant expressed their interest, I arranged for a brief conversation over audio or video conferencing to further discuss the study and answer any questions they had. During this meeting, I informed the participants about the purpose and procedures of the study, and information in terms of possible harm and benefits from participating in the study, in addition to providing a consent form (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). I also discussed issues of confidentiality along with their rights as participants.

³ A bilingual extension allows school psychologists to conduct psychoeducational evaluations in a language other than English.

Biographical Profiles of Participants

The six bilingual Latinx school psychologists I interviewed for this study are: Maya, Carmen, José, Carlos, Gabriel, and Maria (see Table 1). Pseudonyms were used and identifying details were changed to protect their privacy. When I asked the participants what their racially identity is, they all self-identified using their ethnicity rather than their race, which is common in Latinx communities (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Collectively, the participants described their primary roles and responsibilities as school psychologists as “assessments to identify disabilities,” “identifying programs and services,” “behavioral assessments,” “consultation with teachers and others,” “chairing IEP meetings,” “report writing,” “IEP development,” “counseling,” “case management,” and “intervention.” In the section below, I provide the biographical profiles of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Interview Participants

Name	Place of birth	Ethnic identity	Racial identity	Years of experience
Carlos	New York City	Latino	White/Indigenous	13
Carmen	New York City	Puerto Rican	White/Black/Indigenous	13
Gabriel	Dominican Republic	Latino	White/mixed	12
José	Puerto Rico	Puerto Rican	Mixed/biracial	25
Maria	New York City	Puerto Rican/Latina	Other/mixed	19
Maya	Dominican Republic	Latina	White	23

Carlos

Carlos was born and raised in New York City. He is of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican descent. Carlos identifies as Latino in terms of ethnicity, but he seemed unsure when asked for his racial identity because of his racially mixed background. He shared: “As Latino. You

know that's always one of those trickier questions in terms of race. I'm not represented on the boxes for the census."

Carlos earned a doctoral degree in child-school psychology in 2009. He is a bilingual school psychologist who has been working for the public school system for 13 years. Carlos' perception of his role as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist is as follows: "someone who is able to advocate for students who are struggling students and students with disabilities, students who looked like me, students who come from different countries, students who are African American and Latino, and Asian Americans." Carlos views his role as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist as an advocate for students who are struggling regarding of their race, but also students of color.

Carmen

Carmen was born in New York City and grew up in Puerto Rico. She self-identifies as Puerto Rican in terms of ethnicity. Her response to "What is your racial identity?" was:

That is one of the questions I have a hard time answering because my skin might be white, but I know that in my ethnic background I have Black blood and I have Indian blood, so I don't fit any of those categories. So, I always write, "none of the above" or "other."

Carmen has a master's degree in school psychology with a professional diploma in the psychology of bilingual students. She has been working as a school psychologist in NYC for 12 years, but she worked as a teacher prior to that. She has worked at both the elementary and high school levels.

Carmen perceives her identity as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist as a pedagogical tool when working with teachers and other school staff and parents of students of color. She shared:

So, being a bilingual school psychologist, I have to do double work because not only do I have to work with people [teachers and other school staff] who don't want to understand and recognize those [racial] issues, but I have to educate parents on what the system is and how to advocate for their children and how to support their children at home.

Carmen feels a sense of responsibility to advocate for students of color, to educate and challenge educators who do not follow guidelines when working with students of color, and to teach parents of color how to advocate for their children.

Gabriel

Gabriel was born in New York City and grew up in the Dominican Republic. He identifies as Latino in terms of ethnicity and White or mixed Latino racially. His response to what he identifies as racially was as follows:

That's complicated because being Dominican, even though my appearance is white, sometimes I'm puzzled between choosing White Latino and mixed Latino because if you look at my family, my sister's brown. And then I have another sister who's whiter than me.

Gabriel acknowledges his mixed racial background, but at times he does not know what he should identify as racially. He emphasized that he tends to identify in terms of ethnicity.

Gabriel has master's degree in school psychology and a doctorate in school psychology. He has been working at the elementary school level for 13 years. Gabriel perceives his identity as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist as follows:

When I'm doing IEP meetings, they [bilingual immigrant parents] say "yes" to everything. I'm like, "Is she understanding what I'm saying?" When working with bilingual immigrant parents, I think for me, I have a little more compassion for people like that because it's very easy to just want to rush and just go.

Gabriel points out how he needs to be more empathic towards bilingual immigrant parents because of their tendency to agree with special education recommendations made by the IEP team. He takes his time during IEP meetings to ensure that they are understanding the special education process.

José

José was born and raised in Puerto Rico. Ethnically, José identifies as Puerto Rican. But racially, he described his racial identity as a mixture of White and Black. José stated, "I am mixed. My grandfather came from Spain, and my mother had African roots." José also self-identifies as biracial and as an immigrant.

José has a master's degree in school psychology and a doctorate in clinical psychology. He has been working as a school psychologist at a high school for 25 years. José perceives his identity as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist as follows:

I think it gives you an awareness and a vision that all these other factors are affecting the student, and it's not only a learning disability or an attention deficit, but there are all these other aspects in the background that are affecting the student that has to do

more with language, culture, economic barriers, and immigration status, that are really impacting these students.

José shares how his racial identity has a positive impact on his work with students of color, particularly bilingual immigrant/Latinx students in the special education process, because of his deep understanding of issues of immigration from the challenges he experienced as an immigrant when arriving to New York City.

Maria

Maria was born and grew up in New York City. She identifies as Puerto Rican and Latina in terms of ethnicity and “mixed” in terms of race. She checks off “Hispanic” or “other” on questionnaires. She elaborated on her racial identity: “A little bit of everything, yes. Spanish, Black, European. That constitutes what I’ve learned academically what Puerto Ricans are.” She then began working as a Spanish teacher for the NYC public school system, but she was told that she would need to obtain a master’s degree to continue. Maria then decided to pursue a career in school psychology. She explained how her identity as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist impacts her work. She shared:

Making the connections with them. The negative, I would say, is the large amount of cases, but the plus is being able to connect with them, the children, taking up the sensitivity factor and being able to listen to them.

Maria expressed that her racial and ethnic identities help in making connections with parents and students of color.

Maya

Maya was born in the Dominican Republic and immigrated to the United States as an infant. She self-identifies as Latina in terms of ethnicity and White racially. Maya did not

elaborate on what her racial and ethnic identities mean to her. She mostly used the terms “bilingual” and “bicultural” when speaking about her identity as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist. Maya described herself as a person of color once when asked what being a school psychologist means to her. She shared, “For students to see a person of color in a professional role and that way I could be a role model to students.”

Maya grew up in NYC and has lived in one of its suburbs for the last 20 years. She has a doctorate in school-clinical psychology. Maya has been working as a bilingual school psychologist in a suburb of NYC for 23 years. She has worked at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Maya has been working at her current high school, which she reported serves racially diverse students, for the last 16 years.

Maya perceives her identity as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist as an asset in her practice when working with parents and students of color. She stated, “I think that being of a different race and ethnicity, you’re more sensitive to those who are also from a different race, whether they are, you know, Latino or African American, or Indian or Muslim.” She perceives her role as a bilingual school psychologist as rewarding. Maya explained:

I feel lucky to have this role because I can educate those on how to incorporate the family, how to incorporate the student, how to incorporate culture. I find that it can be more work, but I find it rewarding because, since I’m bilingual, I feel like I’m more sensitive to those who are also bilingual or bicultural.

In addition, Maya highlighted how being bilingual allows her to translate for Spanish-speaking parents at meetings. She emphasized how being bilingual and bicultural helps in establishing rapport and trust with the parents of students of color.

Data Collection

In addition to Long Island University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I sought IRB approval from the NYC DOE prior to recruiting the participants. However, the NYC DOE IRB board determined that my study was not within their purview, since my recruitment would occur outside of the DOE and official DOE communication channels and the interviews would be conducted remotely, not using official DOE contact information and time. Therefore, my study did not have to go through their IRB process.

As the study was designed through narrative research methodology, my data collection methods were chosen to produce a collection of stories and experiences that are co-constructed between the researcher and the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of Latinx school psychologists regarding race in the special education process, I used individual in-depth interviews and kept a reflective research journal to document my reflections, insights, and biases throughout the study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013).

Brinkmann and Kvale (2009) described the interview process as producing knowledge that is “socially constructed in the interaction of interviewer and interviewee. The interview is a key site for eliciting narratives that inform us of the human world of meanings” (pp. 54–55). Therefore, interviews can provide opportunities for storytelling that can be analyzed for meaning and reported as narratives. I developed semi-structured in-depth interview questions that aligned with my research problem in order to elicit stories that addressed my research questions (Brotherton, 2011). In-depth interviewing provided the participants an opportunity to voice their experiences in a way that cannot be sufficiently

understood through close-ended surveys (O'Brien, 2011). I used an interview protocol consisting of eight open-ended questions with a focus on understanding the research problem (Creswell, 2013). I conducted in-depth interviews with each participant, including a follow-up and member-check process. In order to refine the interview questions and approximate the amount of time that I needed to spend with each participant (Creswell, 2013), I conducted a pilot interview prior to actual interviews. Based on my pilot study, the interviews would range from 60 to 90 minutes. However, the actual interviews ranged from 60 to 120 minutes.

The protocol included the following questions:

1. What does being a school psychologist mean to you?
 - a. Why did you want to be a school psychologist?
 - b. How do you perceive your role as a school psychologist?
2. How does your race/ethnicity influence your work?
 - a. Could you describe in detail a situation in which you felt that you were treated differently because of your racial and ethnic background?
3. How has being a bilingual school psychologist impacted your work?
4. What have you found to be rewarding in your role as a school psychologist?
5. What are some obstacles/conflicts that you have experienced as a school psychologist?
 - a. Do your responses to my questions on rewards and obstacles change if I ask you to discuss them as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist?
6. Drawing from your experiences, what role do you feel race and language play in the special education process with respect to special education referrals of students of color?

7. What are some of the similarities and differences that you have noticed regarding disability classifications and special education recommendations among students of color and White students?
8. As a bilingual Latinx school psychologist, do you feel any additional responsibility to advocate for students of color? Why or why not? If you do, how have you advocated for students of color?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I met with the participants over Zoom video conferencing three separate times. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, recorded via Zoom, and audio-recorded with my iPhone. The first session was dedicated to rapport building and collecting background information regarding participants' general experiences as school psychologists. The second session focused more on their perspectives and experiences on issues of race. The final session was a follow-up and member-check process in which I shared the preliminary analysis with the participants for the purpose of verifying the analysis.

Data Analysis

I used a CRT and LatCrit approach aligned with testimonio to analyze the data in order to explore ways in which race, class, culture, and language are narrated in the participants' perspectives. After having each recorded interview transcribed using the audio transcript feature on Zoom, I read them multiple times as I listened to the recording on my iPhone. This was done to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts and add further notes on any emotional actions, reactions, and interactions not recorded in the transcripts. Throughout the process, I took notes in the margins to generate analytic ideas and key concepts (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2009). I made sure to do this as soon as each interview was completed so that

I could actively engage in the ongoing data analysis process. As stated by Creswell (2013), “Here researchers build detailed descriptions, develop themes or dimensions, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views of perspectives in the literature” (p. 184). I developed major themes that emerged from the participants’ narratives through descriptive and in vivo coding using Quirkos qualitative analysis software. According to Saldaña (2009), descriptive coding allows for a summary of the data in a word or short phrase, and in vivo coding allows for the word or short phrase to be directly taken from the actual language of the participants. I completed this process after each individual interview, which allowed me to adjust my approach to each subsequent interview. In addition, I also read them through the lens of CRT and LatCrit by constantly comparing my data to these theories. At the same time, I paid attention to any outliers, contradictions, and tensions in individual and collective narratives. Finally, the research findings consisted of important themes that emerged from the collective story (Creswell, 2013; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). Creswell (2013) suggested that the codes be reduced and combined into five or six themes that can be used to write the narrative. Braun and Clarke (2006) described a theme as “something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 10). I used in-depth quotations to highlight the emerging themes and provide evidence to support my interpretation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Saldaña, 2009).

Validity and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research addresses issues of researcher subjectivity and bias differently from quantitative research. Therefore, I addressed the validity and trustworthiness of my interpretation of the told stories within the paradigms of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013;

Farber & Sherry, 2009; Stanfield, 2011; Tracy, 2010). According to Creswell (2013), validation in qualitative research is “an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants” (pp. 249–250). Polkinghorne (2007) further claimed that validity needs to be addressed for both the collected evidence and the interpretation of the evidence. Finally, narrative researchers can enhance credibility by providing detailed explanations of the participants’ stories, which can be accomplished by collecting extensive data from the participants. I collected enough data that provided detailed explanations of the experiences and perspectives of Latinx school psychologists. For this, active and constant collaboration with the participants was necessary, as well as my reflections about my own experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, I implemented the following strategies: member checks, analytic triangulation, and reflective research journal (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010).

Member Checks

Member checks were performed during the interviews, and after the interviews and data analysis, by collaborating with the participants to verify that the stories collected were accurate representations of their experiences and perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010). As stated by Brinkmann and Kvale (2009), “Clarifying the meanings of statements during an interview will make the later analysis easier and more well founded; asking control questions during the interview will facilitate the validation of interpretations” (p. 111). For example, I asked probing questions such as “Could you tell me more about that?” or “Could you give me an example?” and follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009).

I also provided the participants with my preliminary analyses, consisting of interpretations and themes, to ensure an accurate representation of their lived experiences prior to the member check and final session (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). This served as an opportunity for participants to verify themes, ideas, and concepts presented in the analysis. Brinkmann and Kvale (2009) described this process as a form of “member validation” by providing the participants with an opportunity to comment or elaborate their own statements. I utilized a process for the member check that allowed participants to collaborate in the construction of the narratives by asking them to read their analysis prior to the final session and make a note next to parts that were not accurate or they disagreed with (Chase, 2018).

Analytic Triangulation

The use of individual interviews, researcher journaling, literature on school psychologists of color, and using CRT and LatCrit as theoretical frameworks led to a more complete analysis of the data (Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Tracy (2010) pointed out the value of triangulation in various stages of research, explaining that “multiple types of data, researcher viewpoints, theoretical frames, and methods of analysis allow different facets of problems to be explored, increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent (re)interpretation” (p. 845).

While an individual interview is the only direct data collection method I utilized, analytic triangulation was achieved in different ways. For example, I triangulated each participant’s perspective with the other participants’ perspectives. I also triangulated a participant’s narrative with my own reflection, CRT and LatCrit as theories, and other literature on

psychologists of color. Analytic triangulation allowed for a deeper understanding of the problem and consistency in the interpretation of the data (Tracy, 2010).

Reflective Research Journal

In order to be more systematic and rigorous in practicing reflexivity, I kept a personal journal that included initial observations, impressions, and patterns that began to emerge as I collected data through interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Patnaik, 2013; Shenton, 2004). “During analysis, verification, and reporting, the work-journal will then provide the researcher with a frame for understanding and reflecting on the processes and changes in the knowledge production throughout an interview inquiry” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 113). I used this reflective research journal after each individual interview and prior to data analysis to document my observations, views, and biases as a way to prevent my own biases from influencing the data (Patnaik, 2013). The knowledge and insight that I brought to my study was beneficial in my ability to make meaning of the data without manipulating them to fit my perspectives (Dávila, 2015).

Chapter IV

Data Analysis and Findings: Testimonios of Latinx School Psychologists

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore ways in which race, class, and language are narrated in the experiences and perspectives of Latinx school psychologists regarding the racial disparities in special education. I used the theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit aligned with the methodology of testimonio to analyze the individual interviews. The emergent themes are as follows: (a) experiencing racism: insider/outsider status, (b) witnessing racism against students of color, (c) making the invisible visible, (d) using racial and multi-ethnic identities to make connections, and (e) navigating the system. These themes will show both their shared reality and individual particularities in ways they narrate their experiences.

Experiencing Racism: Insider/Outsider Status

The participants' narratives demonstrate how they experience insider/outsider status in their positionalities as bilingual Latinx school psychologists. This shifting was evident while listening to their testimonios, in which they described experiences of racial microaggressions, the often-subtle forms of racism that people of color encounter in their everyday lives (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015), while at the same time holding positions of power and status as school psychologists. As articulated by Pérez Huber and Solórzano (2015) when referring to the use of a CRT framework to analyze racial microaggressions: "This analysis articulates how People of Color are targeted by and experience racial microaggressions, and how those experiences are connected to institutional racism and ideologies of white supremacy" (p. 9).

Carmen, who self-identifies as a light-skinned, racially mixed Puerto Rican, was more explicit than the other participants in articulating experiences of racial microaggressions in her profession as a Latinx school psychologist. Her response when asked to describe situations in which she felt that she was treated differently because of her race and ethnicity was, “That is so often that I can write a book.” Her statement is evidence of CRT’s claim that racism is viewed as the everyday experiences of people of color in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The first incident that Carmen shared occurred at a meeting for school psychologists during the beginning of her career. In front of her colleagues, a White male supervisor approached her supervisor and said, “So, how is Miss Puerto Rico doing? Is she making the grade, or do we need to send her back to Puerto Rico?” There are racially biased implications behind his comments and questions. For example, addressing her as “Miss Puerto Rico” instead of using her name shows a lack of respect and professionalism towards Carmen. When he said that she’ll be sent back to Puerto Rico if she does not “make the grade,” it suggests that she is a foreigner and “outsider” who does not belong here and will be sent back if she does not “measure up” to their White standards. This White supervisor seems to hold low expectations towards her, as evident by his need to ask about her performance as a school psychologist in front of her colleagues. Carmen’s experience reminds me of how teachers and other school staff tend to hold racial biases towards students of color in the form of negative perceptions and lower expectations (Artiles et al., 2002; Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Chu, 2011; Farkas, 2003; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Valencia, 2010).

As I reflected upon Carmen’s testimonio, I questioned whether this would have occurred to a White male school psychologist or a male school psychologist of color. There

are times in which women of color and men of color are treated differently. As a Puerto Rican woman, Carmen experienced both racial and gender discrimination because of membership in two marginalized and oppressed groups (Crenshaw, 1989). She felt undervalued and not treated as a professional by this White supervisor.

Carmen shared another interaction with a White colleague, in which she experienced both insider and outsider status:

“You must be from an upper-class Puerto Rican family, right?” And I said, “What are you talking about?” “Well, you don’t speak like them, and you don’t act like them, and you don’t behave like them, so you must be from the upper class in Puerto Rico.” Apparently, Carmen’s colleague holds negative racial stereotypes towards people of Puerto Rican descent. She made the assumption that Carmen must be from an upper-class family because “she is not like them.” That is, she experienced insider status when she is perceived as a bright, well-spoken, and educated woman, but outsider status when she is noted as a Puerto Rican woman.

Carmen seems to have a strong sense of connection to her Puerto Rican racially mixed identity regardless of her experiences of insider-outsider status associated with her race, ethnicity, and gender. Carmen claims her space and has confronted her aggressors. For instance, during an interview for a bilingual school psychologist position in a suburb of NYC, she was told that one of her primary responsibilities would be to answer phone calls from Spanish-speaking parents because the school did not have bilingual clerical support. The interviewer stated, “But also, you need to know if the phone rings and it’s some parent speaking in Spanish, they’re going to transfer that call to your office.” Carmen was appalled by this and responded by saying, “Hold on a second, so you want somebody who has a

master's plus and experience in the field who is fully bilingual, and you want that person to answer phones for you, is that what you're saying to me?" Carmen felt as if her degree, language, and professional experience were undervalued because of her racial and ethnic background.

José, who self-identifies as a racially mixed and biracial Puerto Rican, also felt undervalued. He reflected on his graduate school experiences:

I've had experiences in which my contributions were minimized or were not really taken into consideration because some people assume that when you have an accent that you are less capable or that what you're saying is not making any sense.

Being viewed as an outsider in his program resulted in feelings of insecurities because he felt excluded, undervalued, and unappreciated for his knowledge and language. José's racialized experiences, particularly through his accent, are examples of how racism operates in the domain of language. As Harrell (2000) has pointed out, "retention of an 'accent' reflective of one's primary language can serve as stimuli for stereotypes and experiences of racism" (p. 49). José's experience is an example of how racism can manifest in every level of education, including graduate school.

Even after José became a school psychologist, his accent and language style affected his experiences. He spoke about how at times he is asked where he is from because of his accented English. José also spoke about comments made by some of his colleagues about the way that he uses hand gestures when speaking. José shared:

Well, besides saying, "Oh, you have a thick accent, where are you from?" or something like that at a meeting. Sometimes I tend to talk with my hands. I think

sometimes people think you are trying to be too intense. The way you move your hands when you talk can be misinterpreted.

José is often asked where he is from, reminding him that he is an outsider, although he has been living in the United States for decades. He is also perceived as “too intense” because of his use of hand gestures when he speaks. Again, José’s racialized experiences are examples of how the social constructs of race intersect with his accented English and ways to communicate.

Gabriel, who is of Dominican descent and self-identifies as White or mixed Latino racially, also experiences racial microaggressions at work based on his race and language. He explained:

People have made comments towards me in the school saying things like, “Oh, Gabriel’s an ELL.” Because let’s say, if I didn’t pronounce something correctly. And I’m like, “Yeah, I’m an ELL. ELL is for life. That doesn’t go away. I’m juggling with multiple languages.”

This testimonio shows how Gabriel experiences racism as the product of the intersection of race with language. He is reminded that he is an outsider by his colleagues, who perceive him as someone who is in the process of “learning English.” Evidently, Gabriel is being perceived through a deficit lens by his colleagues. Surprisingly, he did not seem upset, as he laughed and was nonchalant while sharing this experience with me. Could it be that Gabriel has normalized this racial microaggression because it occurs so frequently to people of color? CRT claims that racism is normal and permanent in our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). “Because it is so enmeshed in the fabric

of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11).

Carlos, who self-identifies as a Latino of White and Indigenous descent, seemed more reserved than Carmen, José, and Gabriel when articulating racial microaggressions he has experienced at work. Initially, he stated, “Microaggressions are difficult to recognize or remember.” But then after reflecting, he described an incident in which he felt that he was treated differently because of his race during an impartial hearing in which he was asked to testify as the school psychologist representing the district. Carlos shared:

It was an experience at an impartial hearing and basically the line of questioning started to go around something technical around the scores, or maybe the technical adequacy of the actual test. And so, the other attorney, the opposing counsel asked the question and I answered it and she tried to correct me with regard to something technical that I knew I was correct on, and so I corrected them back. I said, “No, it’s actually X, Y, and Z,” and then at that point, the impartial hearing officer jumped in, and she was a White woman, and she tried to correct my correction and tell me again something around the technical aspect of the test and she tried to have the last word about that, and I remember saying “No, actually it’s not like that, I’ve studied this, I’m a professional.” And I set the information straight again. Again, I thought to myself, “Would she have done this to Dr. John Doe who is White?”

Carlos experienced insider status as the school psychologist representing the district, but outsider status as a person of color who was perceived as not being knowledgeable and credible by the attorney and hearing officer. It seems as if the attorney and hearing officer doubted his professional competency and expertise as a school psychologist. Even though

Carlos was ambivalent as to whether or not he should attribute this incident to racism, he questioned whether this would have happened to a White school psychologist. The subtleness and invisibility of acts of racism can be difficult to prove empirically, but those lingering feelings that Latinx psychologists testify to should not be dismissed either (Sue et al., 2007).

Similarly, Maria, who self-identifies as Puerto Rican/Nuyorican and Hispanic of European and Black descent, talked about an incident that occurred at the Committee on Special Education in which she experienced racism when a parent did not want her evaluating her child because of her Spanish surname. The parent said, “Not for nothing. I am requesting a psychologist who is either of Italian or Irish background.” To this parent, a school psychologist from Italian or Irish descent was more qualified to evaluate her child than a Latinx school psychologist. This is an example of how Maria’s race intersected with her Spanish/Hispanic surname, which elicited negative stereotypes related to a lack of competency associated with people of Latinx descent (Yosso et al., 2009). In this context, Maria experienced insider status as a school psychologist who was assigned to evaluate a child, but outsider status as a Latinx school psychologist who was discriminated against by a White parent because of the social marker of her Spanish/Hispanic surname.

Maria has also experienced racial microaggressions from some of her colleagues based on her race, ethnicity, and language. She shared:

Because they have a misconception of us, our culture, background. Sometimes I feel like they feel that we’re not intelligent or capable of reaching goals academically. I had one of my colleagues engage in conversation with me and she said, “Where are you from?” And I said, “Puerto Rico. My parents are from there. I was raised here.” And she said, “You speak English very well!” She [colleague] was in shock. I walk in

and they [colleagues] could tell I'm Latina. A couple of times, they are baffled that we speak well, we can express our thoughts well.

Maria's example illustrates racism in the form of racial microaggressions, which stem from the intersection of her race, ethnicity, and language, that elicit negative stereotypical assumptions. Her perspective is indicative of feeling like her colleagues compliment her English because of dominant ideologies about Latinx not being as intelligent, articulate, or "well spoken" as White people.

Maya's experiences are different from the experiences of the other participants, in that initially she could not recall any racial microaggressions that she had experienced in her profession. She said, "I was thinking about that and honestly, I couldn't think of an example for me in my profession. I can think of examples for students. Not necessarily for me." After Maya took time to reflect, she was able to recall an incident that occurred at work in which she was questioned by the principal for speaking Spanish over the telephone. She explained:

He had heard from staff that I was using work time to make personal calls because I was overheard speaking Spanish. I was appalled to say the least. Here I was trying to enlist the support of district parents to educate them and empower them on how to become active members of their child's schooling, and because this communication was in Spanish, staff thought I was making personal calls and were passing judgement on my professionalism.

The fact that Maya's colleagues heard Spanish and made the assumption that it was a personal call implies that Spanish is not an accepted official language for the workplace since it deviates from the dominant English language, which is categorized as having higher status, thus positioning Spanish as having lower status. Apparently, the use of the Spanish language

was perceived as a personal or private language that is inappropriate for the workplace. This racist ideology prevented her colleagues from seeing that Maya is a bilingual school psychologist who works with Spanish speaking communities. Maya's experience is the product of the intersection of race and language.

Maya shared why she feels that she was unable to recall other experiences of racism or racial microaggressions at work. She explained:

Since I am a "light-skinned" Dominican, would my interactions be different or perceived as different if I had a darker skin tone or thicker hair, as other Dominicans have? My prediction is that there would be a difference, but given my current complexion, I might be overlooked as a Latina and appear to be more mainstream and treated as such.

Maya attributes not experiencing racial microaggressions at work to her light skin tone, therefore acknowledging colorism, which refers to a form of discrimination that privileges lighter-skinned people of color over those with darker skin tones (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Hunter, 2007). According to Hunter (2007), "A clear hierarchy is evident among Latinos with white Latinos at the top, 'others' in the middle, and black Latinos at the bottom" (p. 242). Interestingly, unlike Maya, Carmen, who also has a light skin tone, recounted many instances of racial microaggressions that she had experienced in her profession.

Even though Maya had been able to "blend in" and "belong" because of her skin tone, it seems that there were times when she was treated differently because of her race and ethnicity. For instance, she reflected on her experience working in a predominately White school community:

It's kind of hard to fit in, if you will. So, I kind of stay to myself. I do have two colleagues of color that I kind of gravitate towards. In the beginning, especially when I first started, it felt kind of lonely, like a lack of support. Over time, I met two people of color that I felt comfortable with.

There seems to be some ambiguity with regards to Maya's racial identity in her workplace. There are times in which she experiences insider status because of her light complexion, while at other times, she experiences outsider status when she is marked as racially "other" when she is questioned for speaking in Spanish and accused of conducting personal business at work. Although Maya appears "mainstream" and is treated as such, she seems to connect better with and have a stronger affinity with other staff of color.

Through these collectively shared testimonials, I highlight how my participants' colleagues and various professional educators have held and exercised racial bias towards them. How effective can these educators be in providing support to students of color if they themselves hold racial bias stereotypes and commit microaggressions towards their own colleagues? Their testimonials evidence complex workings of racism in school systems.

Although this section is not directly related to the special education process, it highlights how Latinx school psychologists narrate and negotiate the roles that race, ethnicity, culture, and language play in their profession. It shows that, although bilingual Latinx school psychologists share some commonalities in terms of their training, roles, and responsibilities, as well as certain aspects of race, language, and culture, they also have different racialized experiences, privileges, and perspectives. This impacts the way they practice school psychology when working with students of color. It also shows when school psychologists can recognize how their intersectional identities of race, ethnicity, culture,

language, and gender are connected with discriminatory and oppressive experiences. With this self-awareness, they can better understand how the intersecting identities of the students of color they serve contribute to the racial disparities in special education because of being viewed from a deficit perspective by teachers and other school personnel.

Witnessing Racism Against Students of Color

The participants have witnessed how racism affects the students of color they serve, especially in the special education process. In particular, they shared experiences regarding deficit views of teachers and other school staff and differences in the disability classification and recommendations of students of color. Their testimonios highlighted how such experiences generate emotional distress for them, including frustration, sadness, anger, and disappointment. “Racism exerts its influence not only through direct personal experience, but also vicariously through observation and report” (Harrell, 2000, p. 45). This section will show how these participants have experienced vicarious racism (Harrell, 2000) that affects their emotional well-being through performing their professional responsibilities with students in the special education process. At the same time, they have carefully found ways to fight back and mitigate the racism students of color experience, which, in turn, shapes their identity as Latinx school psychologists. The sub-themes that emerged under the theme of witnessing racism against students of color were “deficit views of teachers and other school staff on bilingual students” and “disability classifications and recommendations.”

Deficit Views of Teachers and Other School Staff on Bilingual Students

All participants have witnessed how students of color are viewed through a deficit lens by teachers and other school staff as a consequence of their intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, culture, and language. I will use Maria’s experience to show how bilingual

Latinx students are racialized as Latinx and therefore perceived from a deficit perspective because of their bilingual status. She shared the following:

I think they're quick to refer children that are bilingual. They're naturally assuming that, because they speak two languages, they are not going to achieve their academic goals. It's sad because their language acquisition impacts their academic skills. It's not because they have a true disability.

Maria expressed that she feels sad when bilingual students are viewed through a deficit lens because of stereotypical assumptions that being bilingual means that you are not capable of achieving academically. The way she feels toward these bilingual students is tied to her own racialized experiences and awareness of the negative perceptions that White people have towards bilingual Latinx people as having a deficit based on their language. Maria's way of coping with her feelings is by reminding parents that they can discontinue the special education services at any time. She explained, "I just reassure them eventually, or at any point, 'if you want to stop this, it can get stopped by you writing a letter, request it,' and at least that eases them a little bit."

José has also witnessed how bilingual students are viewed through a deficit lens by teachers. He explained:

Another conflict is that some teachers feel that a student who is an English Language Learner or comes from a different country, they assume that they have less capabilities, or that they are less smart than the other students in the classroom. There are a lot of barriers that prevent students from being successful and that the system translates it into, "Oh, they have a disability, they have a problem."

José's example illustrates how bilingual students are racialized as Latinx, and through this racialization their bilingualism and immigration status automatically make them less intelligent and less capable than White students. He views these encounters as a major conflict and obstacle in his profession as a school psychologist, and he responds to his feelings by always considering the least restrictive special education recommendation for students of color.

The testimonios of Maria and José highlight how Latinx school psychologists experience vicarious racism that affects their emotional well-being when they witness how students of color are viewed from a deficit perspective by their teachers.

Disability Classifications and Recommendations

All participants have shared how students of color tend to be classified with subjective disabilities, such as emotional disturbance, and are often recommended to segregated and restrictive settings. Although all of the participants talked about this racial disparity, I will use Carmen's experience to show how students of color are often being placed in segregated and restrictive special education classrooms. She explained:

I don't want to see a whole special education classroom full of Brown and Black kids, and it is just irrational to think that in a school system every freaking classroom that has special needs only has minority members. Why? Why? And so that's my pushback at every meeting.

Carmen expressed anger and frustration when speaking about her observations of only seeing students of color in special education classrooms. She has questioned teachers and other school staff on why only students of color are placed in these classrooms. Carmen is determined to resist and challenge the dominant ideology that students of color need to be in

segregated and restrictive settings because of perceived deficiencies that are tied to racist beliefs and assumptions.

The participants also spoke about differences they have noticed in the disability classification among students of color and White students. For example, students of color tend to be classified with subjective disability classifications such as “emotional disturbance,” while White students tend to be classified with more of a “medical” disability classification such as “other health impairment” for similar behaviors. Maya shared the following:

There might be a tendency to classify students of color with “emotional disabilities” versus if it’s a White student, they’re more likely to be “other health impaired.” It upsets me, the idea being that the same behavior could be interpreted differently. Maya became upset when she noticed how her colleagues interpreted behaviors differently among students of color and their White counterparts. She has dealt with her emotional response by educating the team on the difference between a behavioral difficulty and an emotional disability. Maya’s counter-story challenged the dominant ideology of students of color as having an emotional deficit (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

At times, Gabriel has struggled during the decision-making process for students of color going through the special education process. He explained:

It’s heartbreaking sometimes because you’re labeling kids that don’t necessarily need special education. But then inside you also struggle with, “Do I not give him services now?” I think the services themselves are going to make this kid feel a little bit normal because the services will be catered to where the kid is. They’ll be able to at

least feel successful. You're the one stuck with the dilemma, the moral and ethical dilemma.

Gabriel's testimonio illustrates the conflict that he has experienced during the decision-making process for some of the students of color he serves. His use of the word "heartbreaking" shows the intense emotional distress that he experiences during the disability classification eligibility process of students of color that he feels do not have a disability and therefore should not be categorized as such. As Gabriel processes these intense emotions, he has feelings of ambivalence because he is uncertain about which decision would be most beneficial for these students of color. Gabriel does not want to label a student of color who does not have a true "disability," therefore challenging the association of race with disability that has historically been used to exclude and segregate students of color (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013; Artiles, 1998; Artiles et al., 2002; Artiles, Dorn, & Bal, 2016; Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2014; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Reid & Knight, 2006). However, he also struggles with the idea of not recommending special education services and thus not "helping" the student succeed in school.

Latinx school psychologists not only experience racial microaggressions in their profession as school psychologists, but they also witness the racism experienced by the students of color they serve. Through witnessing this racism, they must confront and deal with their emotional responses that impact their well-being while performing their professional duties and responsibilities. The participants negotiate with the racial disparities by finding the most effective ways to work with students of color. While each participant deals with their emotional responses differently, they all shared emotions of frustration,

anger, sadness, and disappointment, as a collective experience of Latinx school psychologists that comes with witnessing vicarious racism. It should be noted that although Carlos has witnessed racism and discriminatory practices experienced by students of color in the special education process and he feels a strong sense of responsibility as a Latinx school psychologist to advocate for these students, he did not share any emotional responses during the interview.

Making the Invisible Visible

Latinx school psychologists are situated in a position in which they can challenge racism experienced by the students of color they serve by exposing racist ideologies, and racially discriminatory procedures in the special education process that contributes to the racial disparities in special education, thus “making the invisible visible.” That is, through a CRT and LatCrit lens, the participants challenge deficit perspectives, and the dominant ideology of colorblindness, which masks racism in schools (Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002) by making visible racist ideologies and procedures that disadvantage and oppress students of color in the special education process. The sub-themes that emerged under “making the invisible visible” were “the impact of race, ethnicity, and language,” “disrupting inappropriate special education referrals,” and “test bias.”

The Impact of Race, Ethnicity, and Language

The participants feel that it is their responsibility as Latinx school psychologists to make visible the role that race, ethnicity, culture, and language plays in the special education process. For example, José shared how his own experiences have shaped the way he views students of color who are referred for a special education evaluation. He explained, “the fact that I’m a bilingual school psychologist and my own experience as an immigrant gives me

more awareness of the importance of issues like language acquisition, acculturation, and the immigration status of people.” This quote illustrates how José works with bilingual immigrant students by acknowledging and making visible experiences that are unique to bilingual immigrant students that many times are invisible to teachers and other school staff that tend to only take into account academic performance and test scores during the special education process while ignoring factors related to their race, ethnicity, and language, which impact a student’s performance in school. José makes visible how race, ethnicity, and language, impacts the academic performance of students of color.

For example, José also spoke about differences he has noticed at his school regarding the rate of special education referrals and recommendations among Latinx students and White students from European countries. He shared:

In general, I have experienced students that immigrate from Europe who have a language barrier, but there a tendency for less referrals to special education and if they do, they may end up in less restrictive environments.

José’s testimonio makes visible how the special education process affects bilingual Latinx immigrant students differently than bilingual White immigrant students since students of color experience both racial and language discrimination because of membership in two marginalized and oppressed groups (Annamma et al., 2013; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Leonardo & Boderick, 2011). He also makes visible the dominant ideology that White students are superior and therefore more capable than students of color. José’s example shows how bilingual European immigrant students are racialized as “White,” and bilingual Latinx immigrant students are racialized as students of color, which results in their bilingual status being perceived differently.

Carmen also shared an incident that occurred at a team meeting with an ENL⁴ teacher who recommended a special education referral for a bilingual student because her “second language exposure” was interfering with her ability to meet an academic standard. She explained:

One of my colleagues, who at the time was one of the ESL teachers, said to me at the meeting that because the child had a second language exposure, they needed an IEP because that’s making their life harder and then they can really meet the goal of the general education classroom. And I looked at her, and I said, “You’re saying that this child’s background makes her inherently biologically different and incapable of meeting an English Language standard, is that’s what you’re saying?” She said, “Well, that’s not what I meant,” and I said, “Well, that’s what you said.”

In Carmen’s interaction, she made visible how her colleague teacher harbors the dominant ideology that being Latinx and bilingual makes you biologically incapable of achieving. She spoke out and confronted the ENL teacher’s racial bias that this bilingual student had a disability that requires special education services because of her language difference. Here, the student’s language status as a Spanish-speaking English Language Learner is racialized as Latinx, and then through this racialization, the student is perceived as biologically incapable of developing language fluency and thus marked as disabled. Without Carmen’s explicit verbalization of what was happening, such racist assumptions could not have become visible.

Gabriel shared how bilingual Latinx students are frequently referred for special education because of how their language is perceived by teachers. He explained:

⁴ ENL is the acronym for English as a New Language, formerly known as English as a Second Language.

But when it comes to referral rate, I think a lot of it is based on language. But with Latinos, a lot of times, I think teachers often a big mistake that's made has to do with language. That the kid is not understanding or that the kid doesn't say things a certain way. You have to get a sense of like, "Is this a problem? Does this kid need special education services or is this a difference in terms of how he uses language?"

In this example, Gabriel makes visible how bilingual Latinx students are racialized as Latinx and through this process, the student's language is perceived as a deficit and therefore in need of a disability classification and special education services.

Disrupting Inappropriate Special Education Referrals

The participants shared experiences in which they intervened during the special education referrals for students of color that they felt were inappropriate because of the system's failure to provide these students of color with the proper academic instruction. I will highlight Carmen's experience because it shows exemplary advocacy for students of color.

Carmen shared experiences in which she tried to put a stop to special education referrals of students of color that she felt were inappropriate. She stated, "They didn't have the experience of being in school before kindergarten, for example. Instructional issues that are out of the control of the administration and the child, like a rotation of teachers." Carmen recounts what she said during a meeting when discussing the referral of a student of color: "So you know at this point, we can't really label this child as having an organic difficulty, so can we just give them additional academic intervention?" The principal's reply was: "I am not going to have any person in my building questioning why my staff is submitting a child's name for an evaluation."

In Carmen's counter-story, she made visible how students of color are perceived as organically deficient, when in fact the system is to blame for their academic struggles. She was silenced by this principal, who used the words "in my building" to let her know that he holds the power and she does not have the right to question anyone who refers a student for a special education evaluation. Through Carmen's counter-story, she attempted to put a stop to the inappropriate special education referral of students of color. She used her voice to make visible a process that should take place prior to the special education referral, which is providing the student with additional academic support without the need to classify with a disability and recommend special education services.

Similarly, Maya shared how she has challenged racism at meetings when she noticed how students of color tend to be referred for a special education evaluation more frequently than White students. She said, "I think that sometimes when it's a student of color, they're quicker to refer to special education than a student who is predominately White." Maya reminded the team about factors related to race, ethnicity, and language that can impact the education of students of color prior to a special education referral. She shared the following:

Factors such as home life, level of parent education, SES level, school history, level of fluency in their native language (for ENL students), and performance in prior years need to be included. These factors should all be reviewed prior to initiating a discussion of a referral.

Maya made visible how the intersection of race, ethnicity, and language can impact the education of students of color, which can then be interpreted as a disability that warrants special education services.

Test Bias

All participants were cognizant of the racial bias inherent in the psychoeducational evaluations, particularly the intelligence tests that school psychologists administer as part of the requirements to determine eligibility for special education services. I will use José and Carmen's perspectives on test bias to show how they make visible a process that has been used historically to justify deficit-thinking ideologies to segregate and exclude students with disabilities from the general education setting, particularly students of color from their White counterparts (Valencia, 2010). José shared his perspective on test bias:

We all know that the tests are biased. We all know that the norms don't represent the students. So those standards that we are comparing the students against are not really appropriate. I think they have a purpose, they have a value, but it's limited. We need to acknowledge the limits of those tools and use them in a way that it can be integrated with other data and other information and make decisions based on that. So yes, they are biased, and I think it is the psychologist's responsibility to use those tools in a context, in a bigger context.

José made this systematic issue visible by acknowledging the limitations of intelligence tests when used with students of color. He pointed out that decisions should not be solely made by racially biased test results, but also considering "other data and other information" to ensure that students of color are not labeled with disabilities because of perceived deficiencies from performance on a test.

Carmen also shared her thoughts regarding test bias:

They think that because a test is standardized, it doesn't have cultural loading. At these meetings, I have to bring up the fact that verbal loading is verbal loading and cultural loading is cultural loading and I have to actually go through items.

It has been frustrating to Carmen that she has to repeatedly discuss test bias with her colleagues, therefore making visible to them a process that contributes to the racial disparities in special education because of the significant role that test results plays in special education classification.

Although Latinx school psychologists are members of a marginalized group, they are also in positions of power in which they can intervene during the special education process for students of color by making visible racist ideologies that position them as deficient because of their intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, culture, and language (Yosso et al., 2009). They also make visible how intelligence tests are racially biased when used with students of color, which may be invisible to teachers and other school staff, even though this procedure plays a critical role in the special education process when determining the eligibility of disability classification and special education placement.

Using Racial and Ethnic Identities to Make Connections

All the participants have used their racial and multi-ethnic identities as a tool in making connections with students of color and their parents during the special education process. These connections can lead to a deeper understanding of students of color during the special education process. This is particularly important, since school psychologists are involved in the assessment process to help determine eligibility for special education services for students who are experiencing academic and social-emotional difficulties in school. In

addition, these connections can help parents better understand the special education process and have a voice during the decision-making process.

Carmen, for example, was attracted to the field of school psychology because she thought that, as a bilingual Latinx school psychologist, she could make meaningful connections with students of color because of shared racial experiences. Carmen shared:

There's nobody there [school staff of color] like them [Latinx bilingual students] that can connect with them at that level. And they made a connection with me, and I felt so bad for them that they couldn't see themselves out there and nobody that looked like them and spoke like them understood where they were coming from to push them forward.

Similar to Carmen, José used his experiences as a Latinx bilingual immigrant to make connections with immigrant students. He explains:

I think that we all see things according to our own experiences, so I can really connect with the experience of immigration and coming with a different language. I am in a better position to help them navigate the system, particularly when you have parents that have language barriers.

José has used his experiences as an “outsider,” who learned to navigate the system and “crossed the barriers” himself, to connect with and guide these students and their families, who are entering this new space that is foreign and oppressive to them.

Carlos has also used his racialized experiences and growing up among people from various Latinx backgrounds to make connections with parents and students of color:

I had to learn how to navigate many different cultures, but not having my own culture represented here in New York. What I've been able to do is learn about how different

cultures navigate the world. And be able to kind of put myself in different shoes within the Latino culture. I grew up mostly with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans and being able to learn about those different cultures and then using what I've learned there and my language skills as well to be able to connect and understand folks of different cultures and Spanish speakers as well.

Even though Carlos recognizes cultural differences among Latinx communities, he seems to have formed connections and solidarity with, and cultural sensitivity towards, other Latinx communities because of shared experiences of racism.

Maria has used her race and ethnicity to build positive relationships with Latinx parents. She shared, "I can relate to them. They feel so much more comfortable, and they open up and you could see that sense of relief. Okay, I'm not going to be judged. That fear factor is removed." Maria has been able to make positive connections with Latinx parents because of shared racialized experiences. From her perspective, Latinx parents are not trusting of White school psychologists because of their awareness that White people tend to hold negative and racist stereotypes towards people of color and therefore White school psychologists might be critical of their racial and cultural backgrounds.

One way that these Latinx school psychologists negotiate these racial disparities in special education is by using their race, ethnicity, and language to make connections with parents and students of color. Although Maya and Gabriel's awareness of their own racial and ethnic identities and experiences allow them to positively impact the students of color they serve as school psychologists, they did not share any experiences in which they used their racial and ethnic identities to make connections with students of color and their parents during the special education process.

Navigating the System

The participants recognized the working of Whiteness in schools and therefore wanted to help parents of color “navigate the special education system” in order to gain access, opportunities, and privileges for their children the same way as White parents. As stated by Leonardo and Broderick (2011), the notion of Whiteness exists for the purpose of stratification, and it has historically provided opportunity, access, and privileges to Whites while oppressing and excluding people of color. Whiteness has also been associated with the ideology of smartness, with Whites positioned as “smart” and the “others” as “not so smart.” Interestingly, this notion of Whiteness also exists in the special education process, with White parents exercising their rights and having an active voice in the decision-making process during IEP meetings, in terms of disability classifications and recommendations. For example, many White parents request certain disability classifications that are not associated with cognitive, learning, or emotional deficits, such as “other health impairment,” and many times request private special education schools rather than special education programs in public schools because of the resources and status assigned to these schools.

All participants shared their experiences of combating the racism that students of color experience by providing parents of color with information on how to access programs and services that will benefit their children. José shared, “I am in a better position to be able to help them navigate the system and to help them get access to the right services, the right education, and the right programs.” He has also reminded parents that they have the right to disagree with the recommendations of the IEP team, and he helps them. José stated, “It’s about being vocal at the IEP meetings and being able to say, ‘I’m not agreeing to this recommendation or classification.’” He has used his racialized experiences and position as a

school psychologist to guide parents of color in reaping the benefits of Whiteness. Similarly, Carlos has felt obligated to help parents of color navigate the system the same way that White parents navigate the system for their children. He explained:

Maybe help a parent navigate the system a little bit better. I don't think that students of White families should be the only ones that have that "leg up." We should all have that same information. The White family who has been here for many generations, speaks the language, has the social supports and the financial supports to be able to have the success in whichever way they measure it. So, the "leg up" is what the Whites in the majority might have over someone who's a newcomer.

Carlos attempted to disrupt this ideology of Whiteness as property by helping parents of color navigate the system, having an active voice in the special education process and taking advantage of educational opportunities that are available for White students. He reflected upon his personal experiences being raised by immigrant parents who were not familiar with the educational system and therefore were unable to provide him with options that might have been available for him in school.

Carmen shared an example of working of Whiteness and how she has attempted to help parents of color navigate the system:

I mean, that's the reason why the Upper East Side gets before-school, after-school, and during-school-hours academic intervention services, but our kids in the South Bronx have to stay in the school building until 7:00 p.m. to get games, instead of academic intervention. So, I tell parents, "You need to demand this," but parents don't have the know-how. And I can't make that fight for a parent.

Carmen illustrated how schools that serve students of color tend to have fewer resources than schools that serve mostly White students. From a CRT lens, her testimonio challenges the dominant ideology that school systems make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Carmen has helped parents of color navigate the system by informing them that they can demand resources for their children, so that they too can have access to the same resources as White students. This is a clear example of the working of Whiteness, which provides access and opportunities to White students while excluding students of color. The participants negotiated with these racial disparities by recognizing the notion of Whiteness and working with parents of color, so that they too can experience the same advantages and opportunities for their children.

In conclusion, through collective testimonials, these Latinx school psychologists narrated and negotiated the roles that race, ethnicity, culture, and language play in their profession. In particular, they shared experiences of racial microaggressions because of the intersections of their race, ethnicity, and language, which give them both outsider and insider status in their field. The participants shared experiences in which they witnessed racism against students of color during the special education process and how these experiences produced emotional distress for them as they performed their responsibilities and duties as school psychologists. In addition, their narratives made visible dominant racist ideologies that students of color are deficient and therefore require special education services. Furthermore, the participants used their racial and multi-ethnic identities and racialized experiences to make meaningful connections with parents and students of color, which in turn can lead to a deeper understanding of students of color being evaluated for special education services. These Latinx school psychologists empowered parents of color to have a

voice during the decision-making process. Finally, they advocated for students of color by recognizing how Whiteness operates in schools and providing parents guidance so that they “navigate the system” in order to have the same access, opportunity, and privilege as their White counterparts.

Chapter V

Discussion and Implications

My interest in conducting this study is tied to my own tensions and conflicts as a Latina school psychologist working in a racially segregated school in NYC. I could not grasp why the G&T classrooms are mostly White, while the general education and ICT classrooms are mostly students of color and the dual language classrooms are mostly Latinx. I also became aware of the racism and racially biased discriminatory practices, particularly within the special education process, by educators (including school psychologists) against students of color. I felt an urgency to explore whether other Latinx school psychologists witness racism in the special education process, and if they too experience emotional turmoil when they notice how teachers and other school staff view students of color through a deficit lens.

At the beginning my doctoral journey, I could not find any qualitative studies that focused on the voices of Latinx school psychologists. This is an example of how, historically, the voices of people of color have been silenced in research (Pérez Huber, 2009). Therefore, my study is an important and valuable contribution to the field of school psychology because it is the only qualitative study on Latinx school psychologists' experiences to my knowledge.

My study documents the experiences and perspectives of Latinx school psychologists who hold status and privilege because of their title but, at the same time, belong to an oppressed and marginalized group. CRT claims that the experiential knowledge and voice of people of color are critical in understanding and teaching racial subordination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In this chapter, I will review the theoretical framework and methodology, discuss the findings in relation to the

research questions, and discuss researcher positionality, limitations, and recommendations for educators and future research.

I used a LatCrit framework to examine the experiences and perspectives of Latinx school psychologists through their testimonios (Pérez Huber, 2009). As stated by Delgado et al. (2012), “LatCrit is an extension of the efforts of CRT in educational research, used to reveal the ways Latinas/os experience race, class, gender, and sexuality, while also acknowledging experiences related to issue of immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture” (p. 643). That is, LatCrit is a framework that focuses on “Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 3120).

In this study, testimonio works as an individual and collective understanding of the perspectives and experiences of Latinx school psychologists with regard to the roles that race plays in the special education process. Testimonio is unlike interview or anecdotal stories in that it exposes racism and oppression, disrupts silence by giving voice to people of color, challenges dominant ideologies, acknowledges human collectivity, and commits to racial and social justice (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). Testimonio can also be used as a pedagogy tool for teaching and learning the realities of Latinx school psychologists that many people are unaware of (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Through these collective testimonios, practicing Latinx school psychologists and those in training can share a sense of solidarity and community because they will hear the experiences, perspectives, struggles, and successes that their peers have had when working with students of color.

Discussion of Research Questions Through Key Findings

The primary question guiding this study was:

What are the perspectives and experiences of Latinx school psychologists regarding the role that race plays in the special education process?

1. How are race, class, culture, and language narrated in their perspectives?
2. What are multiple ways in which different participants make sense of and negotiate the racial disparities?

An intersectionality lens was used to analyze the testimonios of the participants in relation to the research questions. In exploring the first subquestion, my analysis showed that through collective testimonios, the participants narrated how their identities of race, ethnicity, culture, and language intersect with each other in their profession as Latinx school psychologists. Although there are other identities of intersectionality, such as gender and sexuality, my study focused on the intersectionality of race, class, ethnicity, culture, and language as a way to explore how race works in my participants' experiences. While my research questions did not include ethnicity as a variable, ethnicity was visible in the participants' testimonios because it is closely tied to culture and language. Through their stories, participants shared their experiences of racial microaggressions, in which they were viewed through a deficit lens by their supervisors, colleagues, and students' parents because of their intersecting identities. As a consequence of this form of subtle racism, they felt undervalued, delegitimized, ignored, reprimanded, silenced, and disrespected in their role as school psychologists. For example, José and Gabriel both shared experiences of racial microaggressions at the intersection of race and language as they were reminded that they are outsiders by their colleagues, who pointed out their language differences and accented English as deficiencies and not fitting the "standard." In other words, their stories illustrate how Latinx bilingual school psychologists are viewed through a deficit lens by their

colleagues and fellow educators because of their intersecting identities. It is important to note that even “light-skinned” Latinx school psychologists whose English was less “accented” than some of the other participants also experienced racial microaggressions through their intersecting ethnicity, culture, and language. This shows how Latinx communities experience race and racism through the domains of language, ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and phenotype (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). By sharing their testimonios, these Latinx school psychologists are no longer silent about the racism they experience in their profession. In addition, they are teaching others how deeply embedded racism is in schools.

All participants had a clear sense of the roles that race, ethnicity, culture, and language play in the special education process for students of color; however, they narrated different levels of racial consciousness. The participants who were more explicit in telling their stories of racial microaggressions, such as Carmen, José, Gabriel, and Maria, were also more explicit in articulating how students of color experience racism at the intersection of race, ethnicity, language, and disability. While Maya and Carlos acknowledged the workings of race and racism in their personal experiences and in the special education process, they were not as vocal in their stories as the other participants. These differences among the participants show that, although they share certain aspects of race, ethnicity, culture, and language, as well as their realities in their roles as Latinx school psychologists, there are differences among them with regards to how they made sense of and thus narrated the dynamics of race, ethnicity, language, and disability that students of color experience in the special education process.

Even though the participants narrated race and racism in the special education process differently, they all engaged in practices to positively influence students of color. The ways that these Latinx school psychologists attempted to help students of color will be discussed in the section below.

For the second subquestion, my study revealed multiple ways that the participants have made sense of and negotiated with the racial disparities in special education. As collective testimonios, the participants narrated how they have experienced emotional distress, such as anger, frustration, disappointment, and sadness, when they witness racism that students of color experience in the special education process, particularly when they are recommended to segregated and restrictive settings. I also have experienced emotional distress when witnessing how students of color are placed in segregated and restrictive settings apart from their White counterparts (see Testimonio 1 in Chapter 1).

These Latinx school psychologists have gone through emotional distress as part of their responsibilities and duties as school psychologists because of vicarious racism (Harrell, 2000) they experience when they witness the racism that students of color experience in the special education process. CRT claims that society is structured in ways that disadvantage people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This emotional turmoil, in turn, has led these participants to want to advocate for the students of color they serve. For example, although all participants advocated for students of color in their narratives, Carmen and José's commitment to racial and social justice (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009) has led to conflicts with administrators, especially when students of color are recommended to segregated and restrictive settings, which organically addressed the second subquestion. Even though these participants were not trained to deal with these challenges, they seem to have

figured out how to negotiate with the racial disparities in multiple ways. First, these Latinx school psychologists' testimonios narrated that they are able to recognize and acknowledge how a student's race, ethnicity, and language put them at risk of being classified with a disability and recommended special education. This can be connected to research that shows how, historically, race, ethnicity, culture, and language have been factors in the racial disparities in special education (Annamma et al., 2013; Artiles, 1998; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Artiles et al., 2002, 2016; Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2014; Blanchett et al., 2009; Connor & Ferri, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Pérez Huber, 2009; Reid & Knight, 2006; Skiba et al., 2008).

Secondly, the participants shared testimonios in which they acknowledged and challenged racist-dominant ideologies that White teachers and other school staff hold towards students of color because of their intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, and language that mark them as disabled and in need of special education services, including segregated and restrictive special education settings. For example, they challenged racist-dominant ideologies by making visible to White teachers and other school staff how they racialize bilingual Latinx students as having a deficit, and thus having a disability.

Thirdly, the participants expressed an awareness of the racial bias inherent in the psychoeducational evaluations, particularly IQ tests, that they administer to students referred for a special education evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. That is, they made visible the misuse of IQ testing by showing how intelligence tests are racially biased when used with students of color, as well as the importance of considering factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, language, and educational background during the decision-making process. Finally, all participating Latinx school psychologists expressed a sense of

obligation to help parents of color navigate the system. For example, they have reminded parents of color that they have the right to disagree with the disability classification and placement recommendations made by the IEP team. Although this is an additional burden in a role that already has complex duties and responsibilities, helping parents of color navigate the system has given the participants a sense of pride in playing a role to combat the racism experienced by students of color in the special education process. Their testimonios work as a pedagogical tool by sharing how these Latinx school psychologists are empowering parents of color to have a voice in the special education process.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated, within a CRT and LatCrit framework, the ways that Latinx school psychologists narrate, make sense of, and negotiate the racial disparities that they witness in their schools through testimonios. It provided both individual and collective narratives that revealed how these six participants have experienced deeply ingrained racism in schools, albeit in different degrees and ways, and how it can affect different populations, ranging from the Latinx school psychologists, whose role is to help students be successful in schools, to the students of color themselves. A difficult, gripping reality shared by all participants, which has resonated with me so deeply, is how they experience racial microaggressions from their own colleagues, including White school psychologists, White parents, and other members of the school. How effective can these White educators be in providing support to students of color if they themselves hold racial bias in the form of stereotypes and deficit-thinking ideologies towards their own colleagues? In fact, they have testified that a lot of teachers and other school staff continue viewing students of color through a deficit lens that contributes to the racial disparities in special education, in terms of labeling students of color with subjective disability classifications that

rely on individual clinical judgment and recommending them to segregated and restrictive special education programs. Despite these challenges, these Latinx school psychologists have fought back by recognizing and acknowledging how students of color tend to be viewed through a deficit lens because of the intersection of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability, helping parents of color navigate the special education system and advocating for the least restrictive environment for students of color.

Implications

This study provided critical insights that can inform school psychologists on how to recognize, acknowledge, and combat racism that students of color experience because their intersecting identities lead to deficit-thinking ideologies from teachers and other school staff, which contribute to the racial disparities in special education. One way that this racism can be challenged is by using CRT, including more racially specific frameworks such as LatCrit, as a way to examine, understand, and unmask racism in the special education process. As I am in the process of completing my dissertation, CRT is currently under attack by people who view it as racist and divisive, when in fact it is a lens that is used to examine race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Consequently, some parents are demanding that school boards ban CRT as part of the curriculum. This controversy surrounding CRT makes my study even more important because it shows how CRT in education is a framework that examines and exposes racism with regards to the special education process by giving a voice to people of color.

For School Psychologists

Through these collective testimonios, these Latinx school psychologists' awareness of their personal experiences of racism in schools helped them recognize when teachers and

other school staff view students through a deficit lens because of racist beliefs. Truscott et al.'s (2014) study found that the personal experiences of racism of African American school psychologists allowed them to be aware of racist beliefs held by teachers and other school staff towards students of color. If other school psychologists of color can examine and recognize their own experiences of racism, they will be able to work more effectively with students of color because they will be able to recognize the racism that students of color experience in the special education process.

Since the primary role of the school psychologist is to evaluate students for special education classification and placement, it is important for school psychologists to understand how IQ testing is racially biased and continues to be misused to exclude and segregate students of color, with the justification of subjective disability classifications that not only stigmatize students of color, but also limit their educational opportunities. During the decision-making process, it is critical for White school psychologists to consider all of the evidence collected of a student's overall functioning in school, including the roles that their race, ethnicity, culture, and language play in their education, not only test results.

For Teachers and Other School Staff

This study demonstrates the great need for teacher preparation programs to prepare teachers to address the needs of linguistically and racially diverse students (Blanchett, 2006). Teachers and other school staff must also be aware of their racial biases towards students of color in the form of deficit thinking and low expectations. As consistently found in studies, deficit-thinking practices contribute to low achievement in students of color (Bruton & Robles-Piña; Valencia, 2010) and place students of color at a higher risk of being referred for a special education evaluation (Chu, 2011; 1997; Podell & Soodak, 1993). There is also a

need for ongoing training and supervision of teachers to ensure that students of color are provided with educational opportunities that will help them succeed in school.

For Parents of Color

It is critical for school psychologists, social workers, and other school staff to educate and empower parents of color during the special education process, particularly with respect to their understanding their rights during the special education process. Most importantly, it should be emphasized and encouraged that they (a) actively participate in the decision-making process, (b) voice any disagreement they may have with the disability classification and special education recommendations made by the team, and (c) withdraw consent for special education at any time if they feel that their child's needs no longer warrant special education services. Parents of color should be informed that they have the right to an advocate at the meeting for support. Many parents of color view educators as the "experts," which might explain their acceptance of disability classifications such as emotional disturbance, as well as segregated and restrictive settings, that could limit the educational opportunities for their children.

Limitations and/or Potentials

In this section, I discuss limitations of my study through challenges and complexities I have dealt with as a researcher. Also, this discussion encompasses what this study could not have included due to its scope and constraints on time and resources. First, in terms of my positionality as a Latinx researcher who has been perceived as White at times by society but does not identify as such, I felt a strong sense of solidarity with my Latinx community as I developed their collective testimonios. Through my insider positionality, I share certain aspects with the participants, such as profession, organization/workplace, and similarities in

ethnicity, culture, and language. However, I can shift to outsider positionality because my own individual experiences can influence my perspectives. As stated by Chaves (2008), “You are like me but with some differences” (p. 478).

Because of my positionality as a school psychologist, I have experienced some tensions throughout this study. When I listened to the stories of these Latinx school psychologists, I found myself thinking more about the students of color they work with, and the impact they make on these students, than about their own painful experiences, which also matter. But at the same time, their stories are my stories.

As a Latinx school psychologist working in this field since 2001, I have my own experiences and perspectives around the topic of race and racism in special education, which could have influenced the dynamics during the individual interviews, as well as during the analysis and interpretation of the data. For example, my positionality as an insider researcher seemed to influence the interview process, in that the participants did not provide detailed experiences at times because of the idea that I was familiar with their stories (Chaves, 2008). In addition, I was concerned about the possibility that, although I am a Latinx school psychologist, the participants might be hesitant to disclose their experiences and perspectives, since issues related to ethnicity and race may be viewed as sensitive in nature. The participants, except for Carlos and Maya, were explicit when sharing experiences of racial microaggressions.

My insider positionality might have also influenced the way I interpreted the data; however, I attempted to minimize my influence by actively listening to the participants' stories, asking questions that would elicit elaboration and clarification, and sharing my preliminary analysis prior to the member-check session in order to verify that my analysis

was an accurate representation of their experiences and perspectives. Nevertheless, my insider positionality worked for me in easily establishing rapport with the participants and creating a space for them to be more candid and authentic while sharing their experiences and perspectives. As an insider, I was also able to ask more insightful questions (Darwin Holmes, 2020) because of my familiarity with the field and sharing certain aspects of race, ethnicity, and language.

My primary goal in this study was to co-construct narratives about Latinx school psychologists' experience and perspectives, rather than to show that my findings are generalizable. As stated by Myers (2000), "There is agreement that the most rewarding results do not come from the ability to do extensive generalizations, but rather from the ability to seek answers to how persons or groups make sense of their experiences" (p. 8). Therefore, I would not consider the issue of generalization as a limitation of my study. Rather, a limitation to my study is that, although the larger context was set as NYC and its vicinity public schools, I did not contextualize the individual schools of the participants, nor did I compare the context of the participant who worked in a suburb of NYC with the participants who worked in urban settings, as my focus was on their stories. An ethnographical approach might have resulted in providing different insights on their stories. Another limitation is that, even though class is one of the variables in my research question, the testimonios focused more on race, ethnicity, culture, and language. Class was somewhat implicit, except in Carmen's story, when she was asked by a White colleague if she was from an upper-class Puerto Rican family because she is "not like them." However, it can be inferred that class is also visible in their stories because NYC students of color are mostly working-class.

Through the collective testimonies, these Latinx school psychologists were able to recognize racism when they viewed students of color through an intersectional lens, which is critical because the intersecting identities of students of color puts them at a higher risk of being referred for a special education evaluation due to perceived deficits. As stated by Proctor et al. (2017):

Intersectionality can serve as a powerful practice lens that focuses school psychologists on students' intersecting identities and how these intersections contribute to students' experiences of discrimination and oppression. This lens directs school psychologists to take into account students' multiple identities when considering how their academic and social worlds are constructed. (p. 19)

However, the spectrum of intersectionality was not fully explored because of the scope of my study. In conclusion, my study provided enough details and sound analysis that the findings can provide deep insights for the field of school psychology.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, I recommend conducting this nature of study in various locations/contexts, including suburban schools in New York, because different contexts might give different experiences. I would also recommend studies that would explore the array of intersectionality identities, including gender, because race and other identities constitute each other and produce oppressive conditions for people of color (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, studies show how women of color experience discrimination and oppression at the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Finally, there is a need for additional studies on school psychologists of other minority races, such as Black, Asian, Indigenous, and so on. Because of their particular racialized experiences, they can bring

different perspectives on race and racism in the special education process. CRT argues that people of color will have more understanding of racial issues than their White counterparts because of their histories and experiences with oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Therefore, school psychologists of color can potentially contribute valuable knowledge regarding race and racism to the field of school psychology.

References

- Anastasi, A., & Urbina, S. (1997). *Psychological testing* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall/Pearson Education.
- Annamma, S. A., Connor, D., & Ferri, B. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(1), 1–31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.730511>
- Arreguin-Anderson, M. G., & Kennedy, K. D. (2013). Deliberate language planning in environmental education: A CRT/LatCrit perspective. *The Journal of Environmental Education, 44*(1), 1–15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2012.665098>
- Artiles, A. J. (1998). The dilemma of difference: Enriching the disproportionality discourse with theory and context. *The Journal of Special Education, 32*(1), 32–36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002246699803200105>
- Artiles, A. J., Dorn, S., & Bal, A. (2016). Objects of protection, enduring nodes of difference: Disability interactions with “other” differences, 1916 to 2016. *Review of Research in Education, 40*(1), 777–820. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16680606>
- Artiles, A. J., Harry, B., Reschly, D. J., & Chinn, P. C. (2002). Over-identification of students of color in special education: A critical overview. *Multicultural Perspectives, 4*(1), 3–10. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327892MCP0401_2
- Artiles, A. J., & Trent S. C. (1994). Overrepresentation of minority students in special education: A continuing debate. *The Journal of Special Education, 27*(4), 410–437. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002246699402700404>
- Arzubiaga, A. E., Artiles, A. J., King, K. A., & Harris-Murri, N. (2008). Beyond research on cultural minorities: Challenges and implications of research as situated cultural

- practice. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 309–327.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001440290807400303>
- Banks, J. A. (2007). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Beasley, S. T, Keino Miller, I. S., & Cokley, K. O. (2015). Exploring the impact of increasing the number of Black men in professional psychology. *Journal of Black Studies*, 46(7), 704–722. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0021934715599424>
- Beeks, A., & Graves, S. L., Jr. (2017). Academic leaderships views of school psychology and Black students: The case of historically Black colleges and universities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 54(6), 612–623. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22018>
- Ben-Moshe, L., & Magaña, S. (2014). An introduction of race, gender, and disability: Intersectionality, disability studies, and families of color. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, 2(2), 105–114. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5406/womgenfamcol.2.2.0105>
- Bernal, E. M. (2001). Three ways to achieve a more equitable representation of culturally and linguistically different students in GT programs. *Roeper Review*, 24(2), 82–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02783190209554134>
- Blake, J. J., Graves, S., Newell, M., & Jimerson, S. R. (2016). Diversification of school psychology: Developing an evidence base from current research and practice. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 31(3), 305–310. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000180>
- Blanchett, W. J. (2006). Disproportionate representation of African American students in special education: Acknowledging the role of White privilege and racism. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 24–28.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035006024>

- Blanchett, W. J., Klinger, J. K., & Harry, B. (2009). The intersection of race, culture, language, and disability: Implications for urban education. *Urban Education, 44*(4), 389–409. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042085909338686>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (4th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Branstetter, R. (2012). *The school psychologist's survival guide*. Jossey-Bass.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Brotherton, D. B. (2011). Rehumanizing race-related research in qualitative study of faith-based organizations: Case studies, focus groups, and long interviews. In J. H. Stanfield, II (Ed.), *Rethinking race and ethnicity in research methods* (pp. 235–251). Left Coast Press.
- Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/347us483>
- Bruton, A., & Robles-Piña, R. A. (2009). Deficit thinking and Hispanic student achievement: Scientific information resources. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century, 15*, 41–48. <http://oaji.net/articles/2014/457-1395386739.pdf>
- Buffman, A., Mattos, M., & Weber, C. (2009). *Pyramid response to intervention: RTI, professional learning communities, and how to respond when kids don't learn*. Solution Tree Press.

- Burch, S., & Joyner, H. (2007). *Unspeakable: The story of Junius Wilson*. The University of North Carolina Press.
- Castillo, J. M., Curtis, M. J., & Gelley, C. D. (2013). Gender and race in school psychology. *School Psychology Review, 42*(3), 262–279.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2013.12087473>
- Chase, E. (2018). Time, third space, and counternarratives of achievement for young mothers in high school. *Educational Studies, 54*(3), 237–252.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2017.1413371>
- Chaves, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(3), 474–494.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1589>
- Chu, S.-Y. (2011). Teacher perceptions of their efficacy for special education referral of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. *Education, 132*(1), 3–14.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Clare, E. (2017). *Brilliant imperfection: Grappling with cure*. Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373520>
- Cook, C. R., Duong, M. T., McItosh, K., Fiat, A. E., Larson, M., Pullmann, M. D., & McGinnis, J. (2018). Addressing discipline disparities for Black male students: Linking malleable root causes to feasible and effective practices. *School Psychology Review, 47*(2), 135–152. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0026.V47-2>

- Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2005). Integration and inclusion— A troubling nexus: Race, disability, and special education. *The Journal of African American History*, 90(1-2), 107–127. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/JAAHv90n1-2p107>
- Conway, L. (Director). (2008). *Forgotten Ellis Island* [Film]. Public Broadcasting Service.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research designing: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Darwin Holmes, A. G. (2020). Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>
- Dávila, B. (2015). Critical race theory, disability microaggressions and Latina/o student experiences in special education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 18(4), 443–468. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2014.885422>
- Davila, E. R., & Aviles de Bradley, A. (2010). Examining education for Latinas/os in Chicago: A crt/latcrit approach. *Educational Foundations*, 24(1-2), 39–58.
- de Wet, C. F., & Gubbins, E. J. (2011). Teachers' beliefs about culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse gifted students: A quantitative study. *Roeper Review*, 33(2), 97–108. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2011.554157>

- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (with Harris, A.). (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). New York University Press.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555–583.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48>
- Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, J. (2012). Chicana/Latina *testimonios*: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical, and political. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 363–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698149>
- Diana v. State Board of Education, CA 70 RFT (N.D. Cal. 1970).
<https://sites.google.com/site/schoolpsychquickreference/legal-briefs/diana-v-ca-state-board-of-education>
- Dunn, L. M. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded—Is much of it justifiable? *Exceptional Children*, 35(1), 5–22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001440296803500101>
- Education of All Handicapped Children Act, Pub. L. No. 94-142 (1975).
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/94/s6/text>
- Erevelles, N., & Minear, A. (2010). Unspeakable offenses: Untangling race and disability in discourses of intersectionality. *Journal of Literacy & Cultural Disability Studies*, 4(2), 127–145. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2010.11>
- Espinoza, L., & Harris, A. P. (1997). Afterword: Embracing the tar-baby—Latcrit theory and the sticky mess of race. *California Law Review*, 88(5), 499–559.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3481066>
- Fagan, T. K., & Sachs Wise, P. (1994). *School psychology: Past, present, and future*. Longman.

- Fancsali, C. (2019). *Special education in New York City: Understanding the landscape*. The Research Alliance for New York City Schools.
https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/ks191/SWDs/Special_Education_in_New_York_City_final.pdf
- Farkas, G. (2003). Racial disparities and discrimination in education: What do we know, how do we know it, and what do we need to know? *Teachers College Record*, 105(6), 1119–1146.
- Ferri, B. A., & Connor, D. J. (2005). Tools of exclusion: Race, disability, and (re)segregated education. *Teachers College Record*, 107(3), 453–474.
- Fletcher, T. V., & Navarrete, L. A. (2003). Learning disabilities or difference: A critical look at issues associated with the misidentification and placement of Hispanic students in special education programs. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 22(4), 37–46.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/875687050302200406>
- Flores Carmona, J. (2014). Cutting out their tongues: Mujeres' testimonios and the Malintzin researcher. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 6(2), 113–124.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.18085/llas.6.2.gr44n072hhh72584>
- Ford, D. Y. (2014). Segregation and the underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics in gifted education: Social inequality and deficit paradigms. *Roeper Review*, 36(3), 143–154. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2014.919563>
- Ford, D. Y., & Grantham, T. C. (2003). Providing access for culturally diverse gifted students: From deficit to dynamic thinking. *Theory Into Practice*, 42(3), 217–225.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4203_8

- Gillborn, D. (2010). Reform, racism and the centrality of whiteness: Assessment, ability and the 'new eugenics.' *Irish Educational Studies*, 29(3), 231–252.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2010.498280>
- Gillborn, D. (2015). Intersectionality, critical race theory, and the primacy of racism: Race, class, gender, and disability in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 277–287.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414557827>
- Gould, S. J. (1996). *The mismeasure of man* (2nd ed.). W.W. Norton.
- Graves, S. L., Jr., Proctor, S. L., & Aston, C. (2014). Professional roles and practices of school psychologists in urban schools. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51(4), 384–394.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21754>
- Harper, E., Collins, A., Proctor, S. L., Powell, K., & Truscott, S. D. (2008, February). *Recruitment and retention of African American school psychologists: Practitioner perspectives* [Paper presentation]. National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA, United States.
- Henfield, M. S., Moore, J. L., III, & Wood, C. (2008). Inside and outside gifted education programming: Hidden challenges for African American students. *Exceptional Children*, 74(4), 433–450.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001440290807400402>
- Horgan, J. (2011, June 24). Defending Stephen Jay Gould's crusade against biological determinism. *Scientific American*. <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/cross-check/defending-stephen-jay-goulds-crusade-against-biological-determinism/>

- Hunter, M. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociology Compass*, *1*(1), 237–254. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006.x>
- Harrell, S. P. (2000). A multidimensional conceptualization of racism-related stress: Implications for the well-being of people of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *70*(1), 42–57. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0087722>
- Hyman, I. A. (1979). Psychology, education, and schooling: School policy implications in the lives of children and youth. *American Psychologist*, *34*(10), 1024–1029. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.1024>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Pub. L. No. 101-476, 104 Stat. 1142 (1990). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-108publ446/html/PLAW-108publ446.htm>
- Jacob, S., & Hartshorne, T. S. (1991). *Ethics and law for school psychologists*. Clinical Psychology Publishing.
- Jensen, A. R. (1982). The debunking of scientific fossils and straw persons. *Contemporary Education Review*, *1*(2), 121–135.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. Crown.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863>

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F., IV. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education.

Teachers College Record, 97(1), 47–68.

Lanear, J., & Frattura, E. (2007). Getting the stories straight: Allowing different voices to tell

an ‘effective history’ of special education law in the United States. *Education and the*

Law, 19(2), 87–109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09539960701547750>

Larry P. v. Riles, 495 F. Supp. 926 (N.D. Cal. 1979).

<https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/495/926/2007878/>

Leonardo, Z., & Broderick, A. A. (2011). Smartness as property: A critical exploration of

intersections between Whiteness and disability studies. *Teachers College Record*,

113(10), 2206–2232.

Lewis, J. E., DeGusta, D., Meyer, M. R., Monge, J. M., Mann A. E., & Holloway, R. L.

(2011). The mismeasure of science: Stephen Jay Gould versus Samuel George

Morton on skulls and bias. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1001071>

Liasidou, A. (2014). The cross-fertilization of critical race theory and disability studies:

Points of convergence/divergence and some education policy implication. *Disability*

& Society, 29(5), 724–737. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.844104>

Linton, S. (with Bérubé, M.). (1998). *Claiming disability: Knowledge and identity*. New

York University Press.

McCartney, K., Yoshikawa, H., & Forcier, L. B. (2014). *Improving the odds for America’s*

children. Harvard Education Press.

Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Cook, M., Strassfeld, N. M., Hillemeier, M. M., Hung Pun, W.,

Wang, Y., & Shussler, D. L. (2018). Are Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or

- language-minority children overrepresented in special education? *Exceptional Children*, 84(3), 261–279. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0014402917748303>
- Myers, M. (2000). Qualitative research and the generalizability question: Standing firm with proteus. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2000.2925>
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2019). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_rda.asp
- National Research Council. (2002). *Minority students in special and gifted education*. National Academy Press.
- New York City Department of Education. (2012). *Family guide to special education services for school-age children: A shared path to success*. https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/parent_guide_for_students_with_disabilites_updated_web.pdf
- New York City Department of Education. (2020). *Special education standard operating procedures manual*. https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/specialeducationstandardoperatingproceduresmanualmarch.pdf?sfvrsn=4cdb05a0_2
- Oakes, J., Lipton, M., Anderson, L., & Stillman, J. (2018). *Teaching to change the world* (5th ed.). Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781351263443>
- Obiakor, F. E. (2011). Maximizing access, equity, and inclusion in general and special education. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 12(1), 10–16.

- O'Brien, E. (2011). The transformation of the role of "race" in the qualitative interview: Not if race matters, but how? In Stanfield, J. H., II. (Ed.), *Rethinking race and ethnicity in research methods* (pp. 67–93). Left Coast Press.
- Osborne, A. G., & Dimattia, P. (1994). The IDEA's least restrictive environment mandate: Legal implications. *Exceptional Children*, *61*(1), 6–14.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001440299406100102>
- Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 7–22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800102>
- Patnaik, E. (2013). Reflexivity: Situating the researcher in qualitative research. *Humanities and Social Science Studies*, *2*(2), 98–106.
- Pérez Huber, L. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: Testimonio as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *22*(6), 639–654. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390903333863>
- Pérez Huber, L., & Solórzano, D. G. (2015). Racial microaggressions as a tool for critical race research. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *18*(3), 297–320.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2014.994173>
- Podell, D. M., & Soodak, L. C. (1993). Teacher efficacy and bias in special education. *Journal of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 247–253.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1993.9941836>
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *13*(4), 471–486. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077800406297670>

- Proctor, S. L., & Truscott, S. D. (2013). Missing voices: African American school psychologists' perspectives on increasing professional diversity. *The Urban Review*, 45, 355–375. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-012-0232-3>
- Proctor, S. L., Williams, B., Scherr, T., & Li, K. (2017). Intersectionality and school psychology: Implications for practice. *Communiqué*, 46(4).
- Quintana, S. M., & Mahgoub, L. (2016). Ethnic and racial disparities in education: Psychology's role in understanding and reducing disparities. *Theory Into Practice*, 55(2), 94–103. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1148985>
- Reid, D. K., & Knight, M. G. (2006). Disability justifies exclusion of minority students: A critical history grounded in disability studies. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 18–23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035006018>
- Rogers, M. R., & O'Bryon, E. C. (2008). Advocating for social justice: The context for change in school psychology. *School Psychology Review*, 37(4), 493–498. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2008.12087863>
- Rozalski, M., Stewart, A., & Miller, J. (2010). How to determine the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal*, 18(3), 151–163. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2010.491991>
- Rueda, R., Gallego, M. A., & Moll, L. C. (2000). The least restrictive environment: A place or a context? *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(2), 70–78. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/074193250002100202>
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Sattler, J. M. (1992). *Assessment of children* (3rd ed.). Jerome M. Sattler.

- Selden, S. (1983). Biological determinism and the ideological roots of student classification. *Journal of Education*, 165(2), 175–191.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002205748316500205>
- Selden, S. (with Montagu, A.). (1999). *Inheriting shame: The story of eugenics and racism in America*. Teachers College Press.
- Selden, S. (2000). Eugenics and the social construction of merit, race and disability. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 32(2), 235–252. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/002202700182736>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63–75. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Shriberg, D. (2009). Social justice and school mental health: Evolution and implications for practice. In J. M. Jones (Ed.), *The psychology of multiculturalism in the schools: A primer for practice, training, and research* (pp. 49–66). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Skiba, R. J., Arrendondo, M. I., & Williams, N. T. (2014). More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(4), 546–564.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.958965>
- Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Carroll Nardo, A., & Peterson, R. L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *The Urban Review*, 34(4), 317–342. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021320817372>
- Skiba, R. J., Simmons, A. B., Ritter, S., Gibb, A. C., Karega Rausch, M., Cuadrado, J., & Chung, C.-G. (2008). Achieving equity in special education: History, status, and

- current challenges. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 264–288.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001440290807400301>
- Solórzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308–342.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002>
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling—Chicana and Chicano graduate school experiences. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471–495.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365>
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (1st ed., pp. 131–147). Routledge.
- Stanfield, J. H., II. (2011). *Rethinking race and ethnicity in research methods*. Routledge.
- Steele, C. (2003). Stereotype threat and African-American student achievement. In T. Perry, C. Steele, & A. G. Hilliard, III. (Eds.), *Young, gifted, and Black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students* (pp. 109–130). Beacon Press.
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>

- Sullivan, A. L., & Artiles, A. J. (2011). Theorizing racial inequity in special education: Applying structural inequity theory to disproportionality. *Urban Education, 46*(6), 1526–1552. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042085911416014>
- Taylor, E. (2009). The foundations of critical race theory in education: An introduction. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (pp. 1–12). Routledge.
- Tenenbaum, H. R., & Ruck, M. D. (2007). Are teachers' expectations different for racial minority than for European American students? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99*(2), 253–273. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.2.253>
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837–851. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Truscott, S. D., Proctor, S. L., Albritton, K., Matthews, Y., & Daniel, K. (2014). African American school psychologists' perceptions of the opportunities and challenges of practicing in southeastern United States. *Psychology in the Schools, 51*(4), 366–383. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21753>
- Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203853214>
- Vannoy, N. (2009). *Intersecting spaces: A narrative exploration of intersectionality and African American female school psychologists* [Doctoral dissertation, Georgia Southern University]. Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/551>

- Walcott, C. M., & Hyson, D. (2018). *Results from the NASP 2015 membership survey, part one: Demographics and employment conditons* [Research report]. National Association of School Psychologists.
- Wald, J., & Losen, D. J. (2003). Defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2003(99), 9–15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/yd.51>
- Weisberg, M., & Paul, D. B. (2016). Morton, Gould, and bias: A comment on “the mismeasure of science.” *PLoS Biology*, 14(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1002444>
- Williams, P. (1987). Spirit-murdering the messenger: The discourse of fingerpointing as the law’s response to racism. *University of Miami Law School Review*, 42(1), 127–157.
- Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659–691.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m7071>