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Deaf Y Latine en La Universidad: The Experiences of Deaf Latinxs in Higher Education

By

CARLA DANIELA MARTINEZ PLASCENCIA
THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Cultural Studies

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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2023

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Deaf Y Latine en La Universidad: The Experiences of Deaf Latinxs in Higher Education

by

Carla Daniela Martinez Plascencia

Master of Arts in Cultural Studies

University of California, Davis, 2023

This study examines the experiences of first-generation Deaf Latinx college students at a large teaching university in Southern California. I draw from Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality and Deaf LatCrit to analyze the ways racism and audism intersect and impact the educational experiences of Deaf Latinxs in higher education. This thesis is designed as a qualitative study that draws from 10 semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students. My findings uncovered that first, Deaf students are very proud of their Deaf identity despite having to compromise their identity within certain social spaces. Second, the study highlighted an egregious amount of audism perpetuated in the classroom, among students, and in social and cultural events geared towards Latinxs, such as Dia De Lxs Muertxs. Finally, there was proof of racism throughout the Deaf community that manifests itself commonly through microaggressions. Ultimately, these findings illustrate the dire need for institutional change that challenges pedagogical approaches to education and social justice spaces to include and work with Deaf Latinxs. Following these avenues, areas of future study will examine how undocumented Deaf Latinx students in higher education navigate their experiences, and how the framework of disability studies can potentially show a new avenue of theorizing on the Deaf+ and Deaf BIPOC experience.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the displaced peoples of the Americas past, present, and future. To all the People of Color who migrate to the so-called United States with hope in their heart. Lastly, it is dedicated to my family and ancestors who have passed, your resilience has led me to this point; this work is deeply rooted in my love and respect for you.

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Finally, my deep and utmost gratitude to the diverse Deaf community. To the Deaf Latinxs who shared their lives with me and trusted me, I will forever be in your debt. Thank you for allowing me to work alongside you, I will forever be inspired by your strength, resilience, and self-determination. Thank you for welcoming me in the struggle towards liberation.

Introduction

In the so-called United States, approximately 1 in 20 people identify as d/Deaf (Mitchell, 2005; Stapleton 2015). Within that, we know that Deaf students are attending college and university at an all time high and continue to grow (Lang, 2002; Woodcock et. al., 2007; Stapleton, 2017). As one of the largest K-12 growing populations in the nation, Deaf Latinx students face grave adversities within their higher education career (Garberoglio et. al., 2019; Karchmer & Mitchell, 2011). This manifests in their trouble in the retention of Deaf Latinxs and their completion of their postsecondary institutions. Racism and audism are an inherent part of the way society functions (Stapleton, 2014; Tate, 1997). To understand the nature of inequality surrounding Deaf Latinx educational support, it is important to evaluate data regarding each identity group. There is an abundance of Deaf students who may or may not have the proper support to succeed and graduate college. Universities consider the impact of identity on the academic success of students but few recognize hybrid identities as they progress through their academic careers, specifically in Deaf Latinx students. Deaf Latinxs are not represented well in universities and therefore are not properly supported to succeed. This disregard of intersectional analysis when it comes to identity and structural racism and audism has long been ignored. Audism, as Lane (1999) defined it, is the hearing way of dominating over the d/Deaf community which manifests in various capacities. In higher education, there is a massive disparity between students who identify as a Deaf Latinx and those of hearing ability (Garberoglio et. al., 2019). Due to their multidimensional identities, Deaf Latinxs have not received the attention and support they deserve to successfully navigate higher education.

A central issue is the lack of understanding regarding the experiences of Deaf Latinxs in higher education. I hypothesize that Deaf Latinx students experience audism and racism within universities because of an institutional lack of knowledge regarding their multidimensional

identity. The current academic system inadvertently allows for the exclusion of Deaf Latinxs in everyday school settings. Many people still see Deaf people in a pathological way; however, that way of thinking is outdated and offensive. In addition, excluding their multifaceted identity contributes to Deaf Latinx students feeling unsupported and devalued. Researching the experiences that the Deaf Latinx student population undergo will provide awareness to an extremely underrepresented population. This research will likely reveal a dynamic interplay between their Latinx identity and their Deaf identity, proving that the two are inseparable and thus crucial to understanding the complex nature of their academic experiences. The purpose of this phenomenological research will be to explore the stressors faced by the Deaf Latinx students in higher education. In this project, I will be using interviews and narrative experiences to explore the underlying stressors of the Deaf Latinx student population at a public Southern California state university. These stressors will generally define the barriers faced by individuals who are pursuing an undergraduate degree that can deter them from thriving in academia. Despite this federally recognized HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) state university's progressive agenda, Deaf Latinxs need to be better supported and represented by the institution.

Literature Review

Racism and Latinx Students in Higher Education

Latinx students encounter an ongoing battle regardless of their knowledge of race and racism when entering a higher educational setting (Acuña, 1996; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Throughout their lives, they have already faced discrimination and systemic racism whether it be through school, employment, housing, or even healthcare (Gandra & Contreras, 2010; Nuñez & Nuñez, 2013). Latinxs have been historically underserved and marginalized. In academia, Latinxs have long been underrepresented and weeded out of school (Hurtado &

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Carter, 1997). Their struggle and navigation through their university experience might be marked by "ongoing racialized and gendered incidents questioning their academic merit, cultural knowledge, and physical presence" (Yosso et. al., 2009). In education, Chicanxs and Latinxs are seen as "culturally deficient" and have been characterized as ignorant, backwards, unclean, unambitious, and abnormal, which are perceptions of the type of students they are at school (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Due to this racist ideology, the message that Latinx and Chicanx students are inferior and have no prior knowledge of their own continues to be prevalent in the educational setting. Racist discourse is not always overt and manifests in covert ways that are easily overlooked. These manifestations result in overcrowded and underfunded schools, low graduation rates, and the overrepresentation of Latinx students in special education classes. They also have low teacher expectations, are constantly placed in lower level classes, and receive dull and boring curriculum (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). These manifestations are what happens first to the students before getting to a higher education setting and have already given them a clear disadvantage to their white counterparts.

Racism in academia can also be subtle. According to Pierce (1974), "one must not look for the gross and obvious. The subtle, cumulative mini-assault is the substance of today's racism" (1974). Diversity is only flagged by a university not by being supportive to its Latinx population but to benefit the white students in college and show that at that university can aid white students in becoming more racially tolerant. This idea of interest convergence by Derrick Bell (1980, 2004) helps explain the irony and contradiction that institutions pose for their "diverse" students. When universities celebrate a group's culture with traditional foods and music but do not support students of color institutionally by providing equal access to opportunities, it is a clear distinction that they are allowing Latinxs --or students of color--to benefit from attending the institution

only as a convenience to the larger white society (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Thus, Bell argues that universities expect students of color to enrich the educational experiences of white students. Institutions are less interested in the value of the educational experiences of low income students of color.

In order to enrich their educational experience, students of color, and in this case Latinxs, often feel responsible for improving race relations in the classroom. They often feel as if they have to learn and accept the white campus subculture throughout their time in the university and in their classes (Delgado Bernal, 2002). In addition, Latinx students' real and perceived barriers affect them psychologically, leading to interpersonal tensions with white students and/or faculty, which then result in real or perceived acts of discrimination and racism. Nonetheless, these barriers aid the perception of a hostile climate that directly affects the students' sense of belonging in college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). To remedy the tension Latinx students feel, a strong social support system must be in place. Educating parents, professors, school administrators, and community leaders about the power of social support for Latinxs retention is necessary to improve the status of Latinxs in college (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Something the institution can do to help Latinxs stay in college is to create programs that strategically develop initiatives that are dedicated to retain the student in college from the moment they are welcomed into that college.

Disability Studies

Within the field of disability studies lie many diverse disabled communities. As Deaf students are legally and socially perceived as disabled, it was important for my research to also interrogate, understand, and be a part of the conversation in disability studies. I situate my work beginning with Chris Bell's 2006, *Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal*. This

underlying article is a testament to how the field of Disability Studies upholds white scholars and has the tendency to whitewash disability history (Bell, 2006). Bell calls for a more inclusive and critical body of work that addresses intersecting political identities in an effort to no longer exclude Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) from conversations. A strand of Disability Studies that is foundational to my work derives from intersectional feminist theory. The scholarship behind the field started around the late 1980s which focused on disabled women (Fine & Asch, 1988; Morris, 1989, 1993; Lonsdale, 1990; Rousso et. al., 1988; Schalk & Kim, 2020) and later helped Rosemarie Garland Thompson coin the term *feminist disability studies* in 1994 (Schalk & Kim, 2020; Thompson, 1994). Thompson's critique of feminist theory and the women's movement, which was bred in the 1990s, helped establish the field in the 2000s, and later in the 2010s that solidified the establishment of the field with Hall's "New Conversations in Feminist Disability Studies" in 2015 (Hall, 2015; Schalk & Kim, 2020). Noting this chronology, scholars Sami Schalk and Jina B. Kim attest to the fact that feminist disability studies as a field had "limited engagement with race as an analytic," while also making the connection that most of the scholars that helped establish the field were white women (Schalk & Kim, 2020).

Despite the white-centric origins of Disability Studies, there are multiple scholars that have established their work within the intersections of disability, race, and gender. Alison Kafer and Eunjung Kim (2017) theorize what it means to do intersectional work and utilize that to fill the gaps left by existing theories (Kafer & Kim, 2017). Crediting Audre Lorde with her writings where she critiques the women's movement on being hyper-focused on gender and not race or sexuality, Kafer and Kim intervene by using Lorde's observations on intersectionality to alter existing theories on gender and race by opening new lines of inquiry (Lorde, 1984; Kafer & Kim, 2017). They claim that it is not to compare disability to race nor is it "adding it to the list."

Rather, it's an effort to critically analyze how disability is enmeshed in age, race, class, sex, and other categories of difference (Kafer & Kim, 2017). Theorizing disability with an intersectional framework calls for solidarity, a means to invest in each other's battles (Erevelles, 2011; Puar, 2014). The deconstruction of essentialism has kept feminist of color occupied and thinking about how disability relates to other ways of existing.

Further, Erevelles and Minear (2010) prove that the omission of disability is disastrous, and at times even lethal, consequences for disabled BIPOC (Chapple, 2019; Erevelles & Minear, 2010). With this in mind, feminists of color focus their attention on how a disability studies critique should focus on relationships of power, especially over people's bodies (Cohen 1997b; Erevelles, 2011; McRuer 2006). Queer Chicanx scholar Gloria Anzaldúa has had numerous impacts to the field of Women of Color Feminism. Disability studies has built on how Anzaldúa contested the idea of homogenizing "otherness" due to the fear of other identity markers being ignored (Anzaldua 2001, 2009; Kafer & Kim, 2017). Crip theorist Robert McRuer contends that Anzaldua could be considered a late crip theorist who "was always adept at noting both how various progressive movements were congruent and how difficult it would be, nonetheless, to bridge the gaps between them" (McRuer, 2006). Suzanne Bost says that Anzaldua's pain and illness that reflect in her writings, expanded her understanding of *la conciencia* of *mestiza feminism* (Anzaldua, 2001, 2009; Bost, 2010). In other words, Anzaldua's pain framed her ideas about a new way of being in the world. Further, Julie Minich agrees that Anzaldua's writings of *el mundo zurdo* are in relation to her writings of living in the borderlands, of existing in a space with overlapping and intricate identities (Anzaldua 2001; Minich, 2014).

Living on the margins and grappling with how power effects and controls the body is what many crip theorists focus on. For example, Robert McRuer is known for his work queering

crip theory, as he links compulsory able-bodiedness to heterosexuality by way of power working to control people's bodies and lives (McRuer, 2006; Sandahl, 2003). Much like McRuer whose work aligns with Disability Studies and Queer Studies, Eli Clare is also well known for linking disability and queerness in his writings that have challenged the single issue politics of being disabled (Clare, 1999, 2009, 2015). As a community-based writer and activist, Clare bolsters the importance of crip pride while also holding space for discomfort around, "the need for and the rejection of the cure" and recognizes the importance of intersectionality (Clare, 2017). Acknowledging how systems of oppression inform each other and work in tandem he emphasizes that intersectionality is the key to understanding how disabled people live within, and navigate, these systems of oppression. Much like in Clare's conjuncture of challenging the single issue politics, the theory of intersectionality is an analytic which I will be employing within my area of study. Disability studies, and more specifically intersectional feminists in the field, have provided the opportunity to bridge theories, frameworks, and methods of Disability Studies and utilize them in regards to the Deaf Latinx community.

It is, however, important to note that there is a long standing disagreement between a certain mindset within the Deaf community and the Disabled community. According to Robinson (2010), in the late nineteenth century, many Deaf community leaders had accepted the ableist rhetoric that absolved Deaf people's "defectiveness" while accepting other ableist ideas of disabled people (Burch & Kafer, 2010). This idea that "deaf people can do anything but hear" was in an effort to minimize the audism Deaf people experienced by equating their d/Deafness as close to the hearing and able-bodied idea of *normalcy* as possible (Robinson, 2010). This sentiment was also inherently racist due to the inadequate schooling and limited communication skills Deaf People of Color received which led them to be vulnerable to accusations and

discrimination based on perceived mental inferiority and/or mental illness (Burch, 2002). Due to the Deaf community's distinctive past, Padden (2005) advocates for the acknowledgement of the Deaf community's history to be separate from the larger historical trajectory of the disabled community (Padden, 2005). She emphasizes the need for a deeper dive into each history of different disabilities since being disabled is not a uniformed, monolithic experience. Shifting from the ableist rhetoric that began in the nineteenth century, there is now a widespread acknowledgment to the many identifications and understandings of the relationship between Deafness and disability; one that welcomes solidarity and reimagines how the parameters of audism and ableism affect each other and ultimately how solidarity is key to liberation. I acknowledge this dispute and its history, not because I believe this is what everyone in the Deaf community agrees with, but because there needs to be a clear connection between how disability studies and the disabled community pair up with the Deaf community at large. However, within the conversations now, there is a sentiment of solidarity and inclusion amongst the multitude of ways that Deaf people are understanding and engaging with disability. Now the sentiment is much more of solidarity and celebration with Deaf, DeafDisabled, DeafBlind, and Deaf+ individuals.

Deaf Students

Historically, Deaf people have been identified in a pathological view and considered deaf and dumb, and are even thought to be mute even though most Deaf individuals are verbal (Branson & Miller, 2002). Not only is this highly offensive, it also feeds into the idea that they are *hearing impaired* which perpetuates the belief that Deaf individuals lack or are broken and are ultimately inferior to the hearing world (Padden & Humphries, 2009). Due to this historically paternalistic view, Bauman and Murray (2009) reinforce the importance of the term "Deaf Gain".

Instead of the pathological and deficit way of viewing Deaf individuals, they open the door to not only accept but empower Deaf people into claiming the identity proudly (Bauman & Murray, 2009, 2014). This Deaf pride movement empowers Deaf individuals and directly combats audism.

Audism was first coined by Tom Humphries in his unpublished dissertation in 1977. Humphries defined audism as, "The notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears" (Humphries, 1977). Audism refers to the discrimination towards Deaf people because of the idea of "normalcy" (Bauman & Murray, 2009) and the value that it places on the ability to hear. Much like Humphries described, Garrow and Fleischer described audism:

> the diachronic societal construct that oppresses Deaf people based on the ideological stance that humanizes specific perceived characteristics (e.g., hearing, speaking) while simultaneously dehumanizing the opposite perceived characteristics (e.g., don't hear, don't speak) that manifest themselves in a complex weave of micro, meso, and macro-aggressions that create both real and perceived barriers which leads to a system of overprivilege for hearing people and underprivileged for Deaf people. (Garrow and Fleischer, 2015)

This definition encompasses every facet of what audism refers to from the ideological background to how it manifests systemically and socially. Audism is a social construct that is a systemic advantage based on hearing ability (Bauman, 2004) and manifests covertly and overtly. Audism shows up overtly in the way of laws, policies, and behaviors that exclude Deaf people from society with no consequences; while providing reasonable accommodation represents a more covert form of audism (Eckert & Rowley, 2013; Stapleton, 2015). Due to this, Deaf people have historically been subjected to pedagogically learn the ways of the hearing world against their will. This idea of normalcy subliminally enforces institutional and social forms of audism in education.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), there are approximately 23,000 Deaf students who apply and enroll in postsecondary education annually (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002), with only 39.3% of Deaf students graduating with a bachelor's degree (Garberoglio et. al., 2019). While discussing Deaf students in higher education, one must acknowledge that there is still a lot to be done due to the lack of institutional support. Deaf students experience audism in their everyday lives and although there are some Deaf students who report a positive social experience, many report that social participation is difficult (Foster et al, 1999). Deaf students stated that they felt the need to work harder than their peers to achieve similar goals (Noble, 2010). Simply because Deaf students are attending a university does not mean that the university has the necessary tools to support the students properly. Often in schools, deafness is not considered nor taken into account and thus the Deaf community faces many barriers as they try to get access to information in the classroom setting (Noble, 2010). In a study in 2009, they found that d/Deaf students in higher education were affected by their family, access to tools (ASL as accessible language), and audiological factors as well as prior academic preparation (Convertino et. al, 2009). While these studies are crucial to understanding the complexities of what Deaf students experience throughout their educational trajectory, many studies fail to address the multiple identities of Deaf students and do not analyze race.

It is important to note that the Deaf community is not a homogenous group. The community actually has a rich racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and educational diversity (Leigh, 2012). This is important to note when it comes to education because there needs to be efforts to equitably engage and support Deaf BIPOC students, and more specifically, Deaf Latinx students. Thankfully, there have been some scholars that have brought attention to some

educational challenges racialized marginalized Deaf students experience throughout their schooling (Anderson & Bowe, 1972; Chapple, 2019; Cohen, 1997; Garcia-Fernandez, 2014, 2020, 2023; Gerner de Garcia, 1993, 2000; Guerrero-Cantor, 2019; McCaskill, 2005; McKay-Cody, 1998, 2019; Moges, 2020; Parasnis, 2012; Parasnis et. al, 2005; Ramirez-Stapleton, 2021; Stapleton, 2015, 2016; Wu & Grant, 1997). Some of their findings have proven that Deaf racialized students tend to be herded into non-college bound classes, eurocentric curricula, and have experienced prejudicial, racist and audist attitudes which impact their material realities (Garcia-Fernandez, 2020). These issues all hinder Deaf Latinxs' ability to succeed in postsecondary education, not because they lack aspiration, but because of the institutional audism and racism that hinders their growth and ability to.

In comparison to their white Deaf counterparts, studies show that Deaf Latinx students struggled significantly more throughout their educational career (Babbidge, 1965). Deaf Latinx students are less likely to graduate high school or some courses in college due to deficit thinking and low expectations from teachers which inevitably hinders the students' potential (Garcia-Fernandez, 2023, 2020). Unfortunately this is represented by the fact that Deaf students in higher education are less racially diverse and only 12% of Deaf Latinxs graduate with a bachelor's degree (Garberoglio et. al., 2019; Garberoglio et. al., 2020). Deaf Latinxs also tend to be barred from having full access to knowledge about their family's culture, history, and language since most of their families are hearing and do not sign at all (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011; Garcia-Fernandez, 2014; Guerror-Cantor, 2019). Due to the language barriers and the fact that most of their hearing families do not learn to sign, this may pose challenges with how they develop their Latinx identity. Additionally, throughout their education, Deaf Latinx students are faced with eurocentric curriculum (Cohen, 1997a; Garcia-Fernandez 2014, 2023;

Stapleton, 2016) and are often forced to assimilate into white Deaf culture instead of being able to celebrate and use their cultural knowledge to enrich their education.

The underrepresentation of Deaf Latinxs, within the Deaf community is alarming. The *Deaf first* narrative that started as a unifying sentiment within the larger Deaf community was later rejected by many racialized Deaf people because it inherently supports the problematic sentiments of "I don't see color" and "we are Deaf first over any other identities" (Garcia-Fernandez, 2020). Specifically, the leading scholar theorizing and analyzing the many facets of being Deaf Latinx is Carla Garca-Fernanez (2014, 2020, 2023). Her experience and her work serve to closely interrogate how audism and racism work in tandem to significantly impact the lives of Deaf Latinx students and their families. While Garcia-Fernandez's research does a diligent and thorough job of mapping out what Deaf Latinxs in K-12 face, there is still a need for a more in-depth analysis of what the experiences are of Deaf Latinx students while in college. Black Deaf college students have recently been the main participants in Stapleton's work which focuses on the history behind the educational gaps due to audism, while also exemplifying how the students use their Black Deaf Cultural Community Wealth as means to navigate college (Stapleton, 2016, 2017). Guerrero-Cantor has also dedicated her study to identifying the intersecting oppressions that Mexican Deaf undocumented women experience while in college (Guerrero-Cantor, 2019). These three scholars have really allowed me to build onto their work and bring my own approach to this particular area of study.

Conceptual Framework

CRT, Intersectionality, and LatCrit

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework developed by critical legal scholars of color who were interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and

power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The work of CRT scholars is guided by tenets or assumptions that radically reframe the traditional ways of analyzing marginalized communities. Critical Race Theory focuses on five major tenets. The first tenet states that racism is ordinary and endemic, the second tenet mentions intersectionality, the third accounts for experiential knowledge, the fourth tenet states CRT acknowledges that race is socially constructed and not biological, and lastly the fifth tenet establishes the social justice dimension (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). My research dives into the seminal texts of CRT and also the many branches it inspired. Due to its tenets and social justice component to it, this framework has inspired many different branches of it in relation to different communities. LatCrit is one of the many branches that derived from CRT. As CRT in Education derived from Critical Legal Studies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) LatCrit develops a theory that goes beyond the Black/White binary (Yosso et. al., 2001). Although LatCrit is useful for recognizing that Latinx students are impacted by issues beyond race/ethnicity, class, immigration, and language rights–to name a few–I gear my framework elsewhere because disability and deafness are not in the primary scheme of it thus prompting me to align with another framework that not only recognizes that intersection but uses it as an analytic.

In conjunction with the basic tenets of CRT, intersectionality is an important framework that I use within my research study. Intersectionality uses a social justice approach to analyze the complexities of the human experience (Collins, 2015). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) has been a framework for identifying how people of multifaceted identities can be accommodated. Crenshaw first coined the term intersectionality when focusing on Black women experiencing racism and sexism simultaneously, marginalizing them in a way that was being ignored (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Furthermore, Collins (2015) goes on to identify how

intersectionality theory serves as a field, an analytical framework, and a form of critical praxis, which is all grounded in social justice. The facet of structural intersectionality is a framework I apply while approaching a facet of my research since it deals with how systems impact certain marginalized identities (Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality is a key framework to analyze my research because it allows space to examine how Deaf Latinxs' complex identities are affected by audism and racism.

DisCrit

An integral part of CRT and how I approached my research is Dis/ability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit). Subini Annamma, David Connor, and Beth Ferri come together to write an article that combines parts of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Disability Studies (DS) to create a new theorizing body, DisCrit. Dis/ability Critical Race Studies, or DisCrit, is a theoretical framework that combines aspects of Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies to facilitate the dual analysis of race and ability (Annamma, Connor, Ferri, 2013). Drawing from a historical and pseudo-scientific context of the 19th century, these scholars explain how human differences were weaponized and used to justify white-supremacist colonial projects such as slavery, harassment, unequal treatment, segregation, violence, and ultimately the murder of Black and Brown people (Annamma, Connor, Ferri, 2013; Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997). This has unfortunately led to the complex link between race and ability that have resulted in segregated special classes which have an ongoing over-representation of, "students from non-dominant racial and ethnic groups, from immigrant populations, and from 'lower' social classes and status since their inception" (Annamma, Connor, Ferri, 2013; Erevelles, 2000; Ferri & Connor, 2006; Franklin, 1987). This is intended to bring forth a new way of understanding as it is a dual system of analysis of race and ability and can be applied in the field of Education as well.

First, DisCrit interrogates how both race and ability are socially constructed and are part of the same system of oppression experienced by People of Color differently. Furthermore, DisCrit scholars interrogate how there is an over-representation of Students of Color with mental disabilities is common while in disabilities that are sensory or physical in nature they are underrepresented (Annamma et. al., 2016). This proves how race and perceived ability (or lack thereof) are connected in subtle ways within society's structures. DisCrit recognizes that race and dis/ability are not interchangeable and within its seven tenets it allows race and dis/ability to be at the forefront of research. Their first two tenets recognize that racism and ableism work in tandem and affect multidimensional identities. Further, while privileging the voice of marginalized groups, it emphasizes the social construction of race and ability while considering the legal historical aspects of them. Finally, they link Harris' (1993) *Whiteness as Property* as ability being a form of property which in turn, DisCrit requires activism and supports any and all forms of resistance (Annamma et. al., 2016). This framework provides a great investigational tool for solidarity work amongst different disabled communities. I use DisCrit as a framework to explore the perceived disability of Deaf Latinxs, to identify power within the parameters of their educational trajectory, and to build on the solidarity amongst disabled communities, in order to resist any and all forms of oppression.

Deaf Lat-Crit

My research directly builds on with the Deaf Latina/Latino Critical Theory (Deaf LatCrit) framework proposed by Garcia-Fernandez (2014, 2020, 2023). Deaf LatCrit is another critical framework that derives from CRT which embraces the strengths of both CRT and LatCrit to develop a more intentional framework to recognize white privilege as well as *hearing* privilege (Garcia-Fernandez, 2014; Guerro-Cantor, 2019). Much like CRT, LatCrit, DisCrit, and the theory

of intersectionality, Deaf LatCrit challenges dominant ideologies, values marginalized epistemologies, and is rooted in social justice (Garcia-Fernandez, 2020, 2023; Guerro-Cantor, 2019; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moges, 2020; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Prior to Deaf LatCrit, Gertz (2003) proposed Deaf Critical Theory (DeafCrit) as a framework to analyze the experiences of Deaf individuals. DeafCrit theory is intended to interrogate the ways in which audism subordinates and marginalizes Deaf people due to the fact that it is a constant form of oppression experienced by Deaf individuals (Gertz, 2003). Unfortunately, in this framework, audism essentially replaces racism (Garica-Fernandez, 2020) which overwrites the racism centered aspect of CRT and erases Deaf BIPOC and their intersectional identities (Moges, 2020). By practicing intersectional erasure (Abes & Wallace, 2018) DeafCrit inherently diminishes the impact of racism inside and outside the Deaf community (Moges, 2020). Instead, I use Deaf LatCrit as the critical framework within my research because it is the most comprehensive framework that allows me to analyze the multifaceted experiences of being Deaf and Latinx.

In my research, I am cognizant of the many tenets Deaf LatCrit has to offer. Deaf LatCrit has four main tenets: intersectionality, a challenge to dominant ideologies, storytelling, and consciousness raising (Garcia-Fernandez, 2014, 2023). Thankfully, since this framework is relatively new to the field, Garcia-Fernandez welcomes other principles beyond the four main tenets (Garcia-Fernandez, 2014). Intersectionality is the first tenet as it is an applicable analytical framework from which to challenge the discourse of the singular Deaf identity in regards to Deaf Latinxs. After that is established, the challenge to dominant ideologies is a testament to the challenge of racism, audism, and white supremacy in its totality. Within her work, Garcia-Fernandez (2014, 2020, 2023) equates *linguicism* to how racism is enmeshed systemically as is racism. While she specifically equates linguicism to racism, I use this tenet as

a means to specifically challenge racism, audism, and ableism as it is perceived by society. The third tenet highlights the importance of generational storytelling amongst the Latinx Deaf community. Within the Deaf community, signed storytelling is a method of passing down stories intergenerationally (Padden & Humphries, 2005) as opposed to oral histories or being written, and this tenet validates Deaf Latinxs' epistemologies as it is attuned to their unique experiences. My research reaffirms this tenet, as my participants are the true creators of knowledge, and the methods they use to share their stories are legitimate ways of understanding the world. In an effort to decolonize and raise self-awareness amongst the Deaf Latinx community, consciousness raising is the last tenet of Deaf LatCrit. As Garcia-Fernandez (2023) theorizes, this calls for a shift in education through Deaf Latinx courses, seminars, prefromances, and anything that helps signing Deaf Latinxs to develop strategies to resist oppression.

Within my research, I employ these four tenets of Deaf LatCrit to critically analyze how my participants create their own knowledge. I apply these four tenets, as well as other tenets from DisCrit and other bodies of CRT frameworks, in order to better encompass the complexities of the experiences of Deaf Latinxs. Much like Moges (2020) stated about their Deaf-centered framework, I intend to employ Deaf LatCrit as a part of the movement for *pedagogies of resistance* (Ali & Buenavista, 2018) in an effort to imagine and build new world possibilities for post-imperial life (Tintiangco-Cubales & Curammeng, 2018) starting with challenging audsim and racism. Framed by the tenets of Deaf LatCrit, my research demonstrates that the educational trajectory of Deaf Latinx students is shaped by audism and racism. Further, it pushes against any additive forms of discrimination, instead, reinforcing how racism and audism work asymmetrically and in overlapping ways.

Methods

In order to recount my participants' shared knowledge, I had to take a qualitative approach to the study. Throughout the research process, Deaf LatCrit informed how I gathered and conducted the interviews with each participant. In research, CRT scholars value experiential knowledge as one of the main tools for countering the master narrative that often excludes students of color from the dominant discourse (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). By centralizing the storytelling of the students as the primary source of my findings, I am honoring their experience and holding their stories as detailed and in depth data that is well founded and true.

While conceptualizing how I would conduct this research, there were many avenues to choose from since the stressors of Deaf Latinx students are seldom looked at. The one that made more sense was using the tools that Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) has at its disposal. Scholars from many different fields have used CBPR in order to honor the lived experiences and knowledge that participants share with them. Just as Barbara Israel states, "The aim of CBPR is to increase knowledge and understanding of a given phenomenon and integrate the knowledge gained…to improve the health and quality of life of community members" (Israel et al., 1998; Wallerstein, 2018). Many people have different approaches to using CBPR depending on their research and what field they are in but ultimately it all involves a commitment to conduct research which centers the community and their needs in order to benefit them (Israel et. al., 2013). Further, CBPR has many iterations of what it does and the tenets it includes Israel's list of tenets are closest to the tenets I used for this particular study. Even though their tenets were specific for the health field, they apply to other ethnographic research such as this one.

First off, identity is viewed as a unit which allows CBPR to build on the strength and resources that already exist within the community. While building on the existing knowledge, CBPR allows for the collaboration between the community and the researcher as an equitable partnership from which to address inequalities and conceptualize different futures. Israel (et. al., 2013) emphasizes the need for the collaboration to be a mutually co-learning experience for it to be effective amongst all participants. They are very careful to express the fact that CBPR is a partnership that is held throughout the research process in which the results are eventually disseminated throughout the community once the study is completed; treating the participants and the extended community as if they were co-investigators and knowledge creators. Finally, CBPR also mandates for the researcher to continue and maintain the relationship to the community they once were studying because it is a long term commitment. This commitment often continues even when the study is over and allows the trust and relationship to grow outside of the normative studies which only extract from the communities and people they study.

Specifically within communities of color, CBPR allows some justice and agency to spread throughout the community when using this method. Research has been historically violent and exploitative to communities of color, which is why CBPR and its possibilities are revolutionary and ideal for my project. CBPR allows for research to be politically engaged research while also being advocacy work at its core (Rodriguez & Deeb-Sossa, 2019; Rodriguez & McDaniel P. N., 2019). Naturally, CBPR is aligned with Ethnic Studies tenets and also backed up by critical race feminista methodologies that Chicana feminists conceptualized when using the methodological *trenza* (Delgado Bernal et. al., 2016). While the methodological *trenza* is very nuanced and appropriate for this study, I also want to emphasize that the same Chicana

Feminists have paved the way to use *testimonios* as a valid form of collecting narratives from the Chicanx/Latinx community.

Much like the methodological *trenza*, testimonios continue to be "an approach that incorporates political, social, historical, and cultural histories that accompany one's life experiences as a means to bring about change through consciousness-raising" (Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, 2012). While testimonios have been historically used throughout Latin America to record the struggles of people from the margins, it differs from oral histories as it involves the participant in a critical reflection of their own life and their socio-political realities (Delgado Bernal et. al., 2016). This methodological tool allows me--a Chicana feminist myself--a mode of analysis that is collaborative and attentive with the community I am seeking to work and learn with. The modification I will make sure to name is how testimonios also differ from oral histories because in order to record people's experiences, they do not have to be spoken. Signed languages are still languages that are looked over and marginalized by assuming that in order for a story to be legit, it must be passed down by "word-of-mouth". The Latinx Deaf community has been sharing knowledge for years while communicating that are not considered to be "breaking silences". This theorization allows me to break new ground while still using a CBPR method that allows me to gather information and create knowledge while working with the Deaf Latinx community and building a long lasting, long-term relationship.

Research Participants

Participants for this study self-identified as Deaf, Latinx college students. Participants also had to be fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). As a part of the criteria, participants also had to be older than 18 years and younger than 40 years old in an effort to get a more recent

understanding of Deaf Latinxs in higher education. Although not a requirement for the study, all the participants self-identified as "Deaf" which is a deliberate political standing within the Deaf community. Deaf people who identify as "D" Deaf value sign language as their form of communication and have had their consciousness raised in regards to their Deaf identity and Deaf culture (Garcia-Fernandez, 2014). Anyone who did not fit the given description for an interviewee was not eligible to participate in the study. The participants were all Latinxs and were mainly the children of Mexican parents. There was some representation of gender variations with most of the participants identifying as female, some male, and one nonbinary participant. All of the participants, coincidentally, were first generation college students and first generation United States citizens, with their parents speaking Spanish as their primary language.

Table 1. Participant Profiles

Name	Age	Participant Identifies as:	Ethnicity	Major
Sebastian	28	Latinx & Deaf (male)	Mexican & Peruvian	Interior Design
Lily	24	Latinx & Deaf (female)	Mexican	Deaf Studies
Daniel	21	Hispanic & Deaf (male)	Mexican	Computer Science
Daniela	29	Hispanic & Deaf (female)	Mexican	Deaf Studies
Vanessa	29	Hispanic & Deaf (female)	Mexican	Deaf Studies
Blanca	33	Chicanx & Deaf (female)	Mexican	Masters in Chicana/o Studies
Johnny	20	Latinx & Deaf (male)	Mexican	Deaf Studies
Robin	20	Latinx & Deaf (non-binary)	Costa Rican	Deaf Studies & Queer Studies
Carlos	21	Hispanic & Deaf (male)	Salvadoran	Deaf Studies
Claudia	23	Latinx & Deaf (female)	Mexican	Deaf Studies (thinking about Chicanx Studies minor)

Data Collection

I was able to gain access to the participants by posting flyers about the research on social media and contacting clubs on campus that could help spread the word for potential interviewees. The flyer had the description of the participants needed, my contact information, and the incentive of a $10 amazon gift card after they completed the interview. As students began to contact me, I asked students for their availability in order to facilitate one-on-one interviews. In addition, I thankfully relied on snowball sampling since the sample size I was able to obtain also came from participants referring their peers who matched the target population of the study. It was important to keep their identity anonymous in order for the participants to feel comfortable and share their genuine experiences. The questions were predetermined and formulated to highlight situations that may be sensitive to the participant, thus confidentiality is of the utmost importance.

Once I set up dates and times for the interviews, I reserved a private study room at the university library. I elected to host the interviews in the study rooms at the library because the rooms are spacious, private, and were a close meeting point for all the interviewees. In order to record the interviews, I rented a Canon Camcorder along with a video tripod from the creative media Studio which was also located inside the university library. These materials were ideal because the camcorder could record videos in high definition for hours while the video tripod held the camera sturdy in place to facilitate the review of the videos later. While in the study room, I would place the camcorder and tripod on a table overlooking the participant to confirm it was recording the interview.

In an effort to understand the first-hand experiences of Deaf Latinx students, I looked closely at how these individuals create meaning of their experiences. Then I conducted a

one-on-one interview to engage in a conversation focused on questions related to my research topic. The one-on-one interview examined the complexities of their experiences as Deaf Latinx students. For my research, I conducted imbalanced conversations with participants in which the interviewee is expressing more than the researcher. There are three interview types usually used during one-on-one interviews or focus groups: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. For this research project, I used semi-structured interviews because my research topic of choice consists of counter-narratives and the value of experiential knowledge people have, so ultimately, letting the participant have more time to share about their experience was ideal. The semi-structured interview style was effective because it allowed for comfortable interactions while remaining within topic to get data that is specific and informative to the project. In addition, it allowed participants to feel comfortable to share in a more conversational interview than a very structured, almost formulaic one.

For the purposes of this research, I conducted ten unique interviews with varying duration from forty to seventy minutes long while having a consistent location in a group study room at the university's central library. The questions posed to the interviewees have predetermined wording and structure and all participants were asked the same questions. However, some interviewees did get asked more or different follow-up questions that had to do with their own personal experiences. The questions were modeled to be generic and easy to answer. Moreover, they were sectioned into portions that are centered on past experiences, challenges, and barriers that Deaf Latinx students experience while also focusing on the impact of race and audism in their everyday lives.

Data Analysis

After the interviews took place and I was analyzing and coding the data, I did not "translate" the interviews from ASL to English, I "glossed" them. Since I am not a certified nor a licensed interpreter, I cannot "translate" or "interpret" the interviews to English. What I can do is *Gloss* the interviews for it to be in line with what they signed but not have their exact words on the subject. *Glossing* allowed me to write the literal signing method each one of the participants used and from there, I was able to make out what they were expressing. Ultimately, *glossing* is much more ethical as it respects the linguistic aspect of ASL and overall respects the participant's agency. Regardless of the signing method used, the definition of the signs that participants use are limited in their meaning so they can be assumed given the context in which the conversation is taking place. Due to the population of the researched study, I found some challenges in recruiting participants because as a hearing person, I am an outsider in regards to the Deaf community. Historically, research that looks into the Deaf community does not serve to give Deaf people more positive visibility, which is a shared history of marginalized and racialized communities. It tends to be from an outsider's perspective, and thus simply extractive. Gaining the trust of the participants was a significant obstacle which was overcome by my attendance to Deaf social events and truly by sharing my own background and research interests. Fortunately, because I identify as a Latinx/Chicanx myself, once I shared some of my own personal experiences in higher education, the participants were more empathetic, and willing to share their own. After I conducted all the interviews, I then began to analyze and gloss the data. I analyzed the data by using a coding glossary, a set of codes that I came across that highlights the findings of the interviews, as a way to begin closely categorizing specific notes that encompasses ideas, themes or issues in the interviews. The codes also provide my research the ability to analyze the data in a way that I can categorize my findings.

I am an openly undocumented, openly Queer, hearing Latina (Mexican American/Chicana/x) who dedicates my academic career to Ethnic Studies and Deaf Studies. As a non-Black Woman of Color, I work within the margins and have learned to navigate systems that were not built with my multiple marginal identities in mind. Having been mentored and introduced to Critical Ethnic Studies and Deaf Cultural Studies, I am privy to how the intersections of audism and racism works against Deaf Latinxs in education. This orientation has led me to attend to the growing discussion on ableism, audism, and racism that Deaf Latinx students face in education and in their daily lives. Being a Deaf Studies student in my undergraduate career, learning ASL as my third language, and actively participating in community events, earned me the camaraderie and trust to be able to conduct this research ethically. As a critical scholar-practitioner, I have learned to keenly observe not just how the metaphysics of oppression work, but more importantly how the community affected not only navigates but resists them. For this reason, I believe my positionality helped me approach this research as an active work in progress.

Findings

Pride in Deaf Identity and Consciousness Raising

The first main theme of the study is the notion of students being very proud of their identity as a Deaf Latinx. There are varying identity development approaches but there were an overwhelming number of students expressing that their identity was something that they were proud of, no matter the circumstance.

The infrequent representation of Deaf Latinx people in their surroundings did not waver the strength that students felt about who they are. When Blanca was giving context about their

educational history before high school, they mentioned that in school they have always been

punished for trying to use ASL. The value placed on oralism, which is the focus on developing

speech patterns in Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, trumped the beneficial and necessary act

of signing to communicate. However, after being moved to an all Deaf high school in Wisconsin,

Blanca expresses that it was then when they finally proudly identified as Deaf:

> In the mainstream schools, they were too busy with trying to make me fit in with the
> other hearing world so I wasn't very proud of my Deaf identity. It wasn't until I went to a
> Deaf school that I felt like I was finally proud of who I was.

Another interesting aspect that Blanca, as well as other participants, recognize is the way they

identify changes depending on the space they are in. For example, when discussing Gallaudet

University and its lack of cultural tolerance towards People of Color, Blanca states, "at

Gallaudet, there is no 'Chicanx' at all, just Deaf… and when I was amongst the white Deaf

people there, I felt as if being Latinx was to be a second-class citizen". They later identify that, in

contrast to Gallaudet, this state university's Chicanx Masters program is a predominantly Brown

space so they prioritize identifying as Chicanx and Deaf. This is intertwined with their sense of

belonging and the need to build community in order to navigate institutions of higher education.

Even in Brown spaces, Deaf Latinx people have their identity contested. Another

participant, Sebastian, remembers the incident that happened with a community member at an

event:

> I was stunned when a well-respected leader of the Chicanx community at [state
> university's title redacted] called me a coconut! It was an interesting experience, at first, I
> laughed and I owned it! I was Brown from the outside and white on the inside. That gave
> me time to be self-analytical and reflect on what I knew about my Latinx identity. After
> that, I became increasingly involved with the Deaf Chicanx community which granted
> me my pride as a Deaf Latinx.

Sebastian was not at fault for not knowing much about his culture nor his history because there is

a lack of accessibility to space where the history of Latinx people is taught. The inherently audist

places where the teaching takes place, such as in classrooms or community events, skillfully exclude Deaf people thus perpetuating the lack of access to higher education. Nonetheless, Sebastian shows his appreciation for learning and being proud to be Deaf and Latinx and through that, has already begun his journey of raising his consciousness as a Deaf Latinx.

Lastly, there are students like Lily who challenge the normalcy of having Chicanx studies courses all through a hearing perspective. While as an undergraduate student, Lily recalls taking up space in class:

> I wasn't willing to sit and let the system continue to exclude my community. One time I confronted the professor to by telling her that the text was limited and only showed one picture of a Deaf Mexican man crossing the border without going into detail…I only felt comfortable because as Deaf Latinx, that was my space and I could ask.

This particular finding also shows that higher education allows people to gain some closure about how they identify. This is not to say that attending an institution of higher learning is the only way to develop one's identity, however, it does facilitate and inform the process. For this reason, and many others, institutions of higher learning, and in specific Ethnic Studies, should be accessible to Deaf Latinx folks. This is a method that can help raise their consciousness as Deaf Latinxs and can be an avenue to offer more accessible and inclusive curricula. Through their overlapping identity, these students embody resistance, resilience, and ultimately the core values of social justice by being secure with who they are no matter their adversities.

Audism in the Experiences of Deaf Latinxs

Audism is one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination that Deaf people face. The value placed on the ability to hear serves to dehumanize others who do not have that characteristic. Thus, Deaf people are left without the normalcy of being able to hear, which makes them stuck in a world that was not meant to accommodate them. When talking about Deaf

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students in higher education, it is inevitable to talk about audism. Alternatively, when talking

about Deaf Latinx students in higher education, audism is still lurking in their everyday lives, but

the places in which they manifest are unique to their experiences. Garrow and Fleischer (2015)

define audism:

> . . . the diachronic societal construct that oppresses Deaf people based on the ideological
> stance that humanizes specific perceived characteristics (e.g. hearing, speaking) while
> simultaneously dehumanizing the opposite perceived characteristics (e.g. don't hear,
> don't speak) that manifest themselves in a complex weave of micro, meso, and
> macro-aggressions that create both real and perceived barriers which leads to a system of
> overprivilege for hearing people and underprivilege for Deaf people.

Audism can manifest in many ways and perhaps the most prevalent is the overt audism that is

always set up against Deaf people. Although Audism can be overtly shown, it is not always the

case. Audism in the form of microaggressions are also valid in the experience of Deaf Latinxs

students in the classrooms, with their peers, and even at campus events which are meant to foster

a community growth.

Going through the interviews, the topic of audism in the classroom kept surfacing. The

students interviewed all had at least one experience where the institution was not helping in

providing them services they need to succeed in college. One student who was asked what some

of the challenges she faces as a Deaf Latinx are, she communicated with me that as a Deaf

student, she has noticed that, "One challenge that I face as a Deaf Latinx is that speech is used

everywhere and all the time while signing is ignored." The student Vanessa is alluding to what

another student, Lily, recalls that happens in classrooms:

> I remember in one English class I took . . . I would raise my hand to get called on and the
> professor would pick anyone else but me . . . That same teacher would always connect
> well with other students, with many students but with me, it never happened I was always
> the one left out . . . so at that point, I didn't want to try.

Although these acts in the classroom seem harmless to some, these microaggressions do have a negative impact on the student. The student then gets discouraged, feels left out, and thus further pushed away from engaging in the classroom. The value that is put on the ability to speak is clear when professors or classmates ignore the value of the students' thoughts because of their Deafness. Another student, Claudia, who was asked the same question, dove into her experience in community college and what she felt that was a crucial moment to her in her educational trajectory. This student also experienced audism in the classroom because of the professor:

> One person, an English professor . . . didn't understand my Deaf culture . . . I didn't understand the assignment and I wanted more information on how to do it so I emailed him and he would be annoyed by my questions . . . He told me to go back to remedial English and when he told me that I was offended, he clearly discriminated against me.

Professors have a lot of power and say in how the class conducts itself and how successful students are in the class. While in the first example, the professors were covertly discriminating against the Deaf students, this example shows a microaggression which was probably not seen to the perpetrator as something offensive to the student, but since the discriminatory acts were directed towards their Deafness, they negatively impact the students' sense of self and the way they view themselves in school. This discrimination is only one example of the way microaggressions towards Deaf students manifests.

While professors who dominate the classroom perpetuate audism intentionally or unintentionally, peers are also guilty of acting upon discriminatory acts towards students who are Deaf. The same way that the professors discriminate towards Deaf students, other students in the classroom and the peers of Deaf students also contribute to the upholding of audism and the normalcy of being discriminatory towards Deaf students. Many students interviewed expressed how they felt uncomfortable and unwelcomed in the classroom space because of the actual

students. Lily recalls that while in class, she would go up to hearing peers when there wasn't an interpreter to get the notes and she said:

> If I wanted to go up to a hearing student I would sign or make the dreadful move of writing notes back and forth—or even texting. However, the hearing students would sometimes get tired of it and wouldn't want to communicate with me! They don't want to put in the effort, they would rather go with someone else who is also hearing to talk to them because it's easier.

Based on this analysis, hearing students are acting out of their privilege of not having to deal with other students who are Deaf. By showing that they do not want to put in the effort of communicating with Deaf students, shows that they are conditioned to not value the efforts and ideas that Deaf people have. Although possibly not intentionally discriminating and acting upon their prejudice, they show that their conditioning of seeing Deaf people as subhuman reflects upon the way they look for another hearing student to accommodate their needs and not talk with a Deaf student.

Further than that, audism seeps into more than just the classroom. In college campuses, ethnic social events, which are usually hosted by different ethnic clubs on campus, have also been complicit in upholding audism in their lack of accessibility to their events. They further marginalize Deaf Latinxs folk by not standing in solidarity with their Deaf community members and making the environment cater to hearing people only–inevitably denying the lack of accessibility to Deaf students. One example in which this affects Deaf Latinxs is in the grand event *Dia De Lxs Muertxs*, an annual celebration hosted by MEChA annually. MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlan), is a longstanding national organization known for its activism and student organizers who pride themselves in being inclusive and supportive to communities of color (Delgado Bernal et. al., 2016). However, a few Deaf Latinxs students who

were interviewed said that although the event was beautiful, they did not feel welcomed as a

Deaf person. One such example is by Johnny where he states:

> I think it was last year when I was planning on going but then I told my other Deaf Latinx
> friends I was going and they warned me about attending! I asked them why and they told
> me it was bad to go because they [Deaf and Latinxs] didn't support each other. That really
> changed my entire perspective. When I asked further, they didn't want to tell me they just
> told me that they [hearing Latinxs] judge Deaf people because of our Deaf culture.

Johnny was eager to go to the event hosted by MEChA but once he told his other Deaf Latinx

friends, they all advised him not to go because it wasn't a welcoming space. Johnny clearly took

the advice made by his friends who were Deaf because they understand what it's like to not feel

welcomed in a space. Johnny is not the only student who brought up campus events not being

accessible nor welcoming. This is a recurring theme that came up in all the interviews. Each

student stated about how, even the little exposure they've had with a Latinx student event has not

been accessible.

Racism within the Deaf community

As stated before, being Deaf is not aligned with one specific identity. In fact, it is

convoluted and enmeshed in multiple ways of being (Kafer & Kim, 2017). Unfortunately, Deaf

People of Color are not excluded from experiencing racism within their own community. As

stated by Stuart and Gilchrist (2015), "Deafness does not erase racism". The students who were

interviewed are all proud to be Deaf and are thus very involved in the Deaf community, meaning

that they go to a lot of Deaf events and mingle with other Deaf students–which has promoted

many encounters that they painfully remembered and shared.

Fortunately, even when they are proud to be Deaf they are critical when it comes to race.

The students were reluctant to talk about race and racism at first, but after asking them more

about how they felt as a Latinx in Deaf spaces, they gave intriguing examples. Some

microaggressions that surfaced, which were also about race, were ones that mainly happened in social situations. For example, Daniel clearly says, "I feel like they only focus on Deafness and not race and they forget the intersectionality of other Deaf students of color within the space. They just focus on Deaf and that's it. But, we have more than just Deafness." Another student, Carlos, talked about the difference between Deaf Latinx and Deaf white students. He gave an example for when his peers in the Deaf community were being intolerant in microaggressions:

> For me I feel like they are immensely different. In the Deaf aspect, it's fine for support, but culturally they are not the same. For example, I brought my food which was a Mexican dish but other people would ask me with a disgusted face telling me "why did you bring Mexican food?" . . . I had brought a tamale . . . and they were judging our culture! But I don't judge their white culture!

This form of microaggression was perpetuated by a community member within the Deaf community. Although the Deaf community supports each other while fighting audism, they fail to recognize and combat racism. In this situation, the white Deaf student made what may have seemed a harmless comment to him but to the victim, in this case Johnny, it was a matter that was worthy of mentioning to notice the ways in which racism affects their daily lives. Not only does this happen when they are socializing, but it also manifests in the curriculum that is taught daily. The student Daniela goes onto stating that,

> I feel disconnected to Deaf Latinx culture because it hasn't been established yet…My education has been white, we [Deaf Latinxs] are all lost in the "Deaf first" narrative…I wasn't exposed to my culture until I physically went to Mexico and learned my culture from a Deaf girl who was a family friend.

This student clearly stated why she felt that her education was white. She was referring to how in her school, her entire life has been mixed into white ideologies and how she didn't even know about her own culture until she visited Mexico on vacation and met a Deaf friend who lived in Mexico. This explanation of being lost in the Deaf narrative reveals her feelings of being

marginalized and ripped from knowing her own culture. To echo the experiences of Daniela, Robin also pointed out the lack of Latinx representation in the Deaf studies curriculum:

> In other Deaf schools, Ethnic Studies is not offered. The classes that are offered that are connected to Deaf culture, like Deaf history, are taught based on European ideologies…Latinx information and history are just non-existent in those courses…If the school provided a space where Chicanx history was taught from a Deaf perspective, I would feel more 'woke' and would allow others to unpack their white guilt and white privilege.

This statement made by Robin directly states the need for a broader lens in the general sense of Ethnic Studies. While not stated directly, the student is alluding to the institutional racism that exists in higher education. The lack of Latinx representation within Deaf education inherently teaches the students that there is no value to be learned from marginalized communities. According to the students interviewed, the education of Deaf students has not placed enough significance to their community's knowledge, which alters their sense of belonging and success in academia. Not only do they challenge the norm of having a eurocentric curriculum, they call to change it completely and add that everyone, regardless of their ethnic background, would benefit if such classes and spaces were allowed and/or created.

Discussion/Implications

This study constitutes a Deaf LatCrit analysis by referencing the tenets of Deaf LatCrit in regards to Deaf Latinxs' education. The lack of racialized analysis when examining the Deaf community is racist within itself and effective at erasing the narratives and lived experiences of the Latinx Deaf community and their contributions to society. Similarly, the lack of importance given to the Deaf community by the hearing Latinx world is a form of audism that has a generational impact, as made evident by the aforementioned findings. Both phenomena have been the dominant master narratives in academia, a large source of information sharing, which is

a value widely shared and upheld in the Deaf community. The main themes in the study, as informed by the tenets of Deaf LatCrit, are also significant to Ethnic Studies. Ethnic Studies literature uphold principles that distinguish these avenues of study from traditional research disciplines and practices, granting People of Color the important role of creators of knowledge. Ethnic Studies aims to question neutrality, and in doing so, places the community participating in the center. In addition, Ethnic Studies has a goal of transformative social change that anticipates benefit for the centralized community. Ultimately, this study centers Latinx Deaf students as holders and creators of knowledge that inform the suggested outcomes in an effort to address the issues in the community. Overall, the knowledge shared by the Deaf Latinx community raises awareness surrounding an issue that has not been addressed adequately, despite potential to make a societal impact, while also making the community's education more accessible.

Conclusion

Deaf Latinx Students face adversities and challenges every day, yet their resiliency is strong enough to make an impact. Their unwavering pride in their identity is powerful and fuels them to continue on even with the real and perceived barriers that they face. Unlike their hearing or white Deaf peers, they are burdened with the daily impact of audism and the daily impact of racism outside, and within, their communities. With this in mind, this study had some limitations that were beyond the scope of my analysis. A few of the limitations include, the omission of analyzing gender, socio-economic status, and citizenship status in depth. There were also many instances where the participants identified as Queer and/or Gender Non-Conforming and I would like to analyze the role that cis-heteronormativity played in the development of their identity. Additionally, there were a few openly undocumented students that participated, in which I would like to further analyze in depth due to the nature of the complexity with which they navigate

society. Furthermore, I recognize that the study is very Mexican-centric and lacks the diversity within the Latinx community. The limited resources available to me, limited the likelihood of reaching out to more students from different Latinx backgrounds. Finally, the scope of my research was also limited to a populous teaching university in Southern California, and with the proper funding and more time allocation, I could work to have a more representative sample and broaden the scope of my research. This study has the potential to move forward in analyzing the different aspects that form identity which were left out. In particular, I would further investigate the educational experiences of undocumented Deaf Latinx students while in higher education. This would not be in isolation to the external factors such as their educational attainment in the K-12 system and their familial relationships as well as responsibilities. This study has had a personal impact, as I see more and more the dire need for marginalized Deaf communities to be included in conversations. My burgeoning passion for research has been fueled by the testimonios of the willing participants and community members, and for that I am beyond grateful.

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