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"We Want Spanish Songs!": Resilience in Latinx Students' Making of Counterspaces

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Resilience in Latinx Students' Making of Counterspaces

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As the Latinx student population in the U.S. continues to grow, LatCrit is a crucial lens for understanding students' experience and resilience in the face of white supremacy and English hegemony. This paper explores Latinx students' critical resilience in their making counterspaces with peers from other ethnic groups. I conduct individual interviews and focus group discussions with 21 fourth graders. Through thematic analysis, I find English hegemony manifests in the Latinx and the other students' attitudes towards Spanish songs. But in focus group discussions, Latinx students create counterspaces with non-Latinx students as they disrupt English dominance and deficit-based narratives about Latinx people. I call for researchers and educators to recognize Latinx students' critical resilience and create peer dialogue opportunities that allow ethnically diverse students to create exclusive and inclusive counterspaces.

Keywords: LatCrit Theory | linguistic hegemony | counterspaces | critical resilience

Introduction

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), the Latinx population has reached a record high 18% of the total U.S. population. Nearly one in every four children currently attending K-12 schools is Latinx (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). I use Latinx, instead of Latino/a, throughout this paper as a gender-inclusive term that includes all people of Latin American descent (Salinas & Lozano, 2019). In the current political landscape, white supremacy and English hegemony that targets Latinx people has been surging (Diaz & Ahmed, 2016; Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2020). As an extension of research from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a large body of Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) literature has examined discrimination and microaggressions experienced by Latinx students within schools (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Non-Latinx students tend to adopt racist narratives, form implicit biases against the Spanish language, Latinx people, and their culture, and commit covert or overt assaults. As a result, Latinx students suffer from internalized racism (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Solórzano, 2010). Many researchers find Latinx youth and adults show their *critical resilience* in creating counterspaces (e.g. Cerezo et al., 2013; Nuñez, 2011; Pulido, 2015). However, there is a dearth of studies on Latinx students' counterspaces in elementary schools (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). Scholars know little about how Latinx children demonstrate resilience and how educators can create conditions that allow them to embody resilience in elementary schools. A reconceptualization of counterspaces that makes Latinx students' resilience salient is of great importance.

To address this research gap, I apply the concept of racially exclusive and inclusive counterspaces to examine Latinx students' critical resilience. This paper answers the following questions: (1) How does linguistic hegemony manifest in Latinx and non-Latinx students' discussions? (2) How do Latinx students embody resilience in exclusive and inclusive counterspaces? In this paper, after reviewing the LatCrit literature, I explain the concepts of critical resilience and counterspaces that lay the theoretical foundation of my study. Next, I describe the methodology and methods to help me answer the research

questions. Finally, I share research findings and discuss implications for researchers and educators.

Literature Review

Educational scholarship has employed CRT widely to examine racial inequity and oppression within education (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Stovall, 2013). As an extension of CRT, LatCrit acknowledges that Latinx people experience subordination due to their immigration status, skin color, language, culture, and ethnicity (Moll & Ruiz, 2002). LatCrit breaks the Black/white binary that dominates race discussions in the contemporary U.S. (Anguiano et al., 2012; Stefancic, 1997; Trucios-Haynes, 2000). It recognizes Latinx people as knowledge holders and creators (Bernal, 2002), where Latinx people's experiences and perspectives are considered valid and legitimate. Through the lens of LatCrit, a plethora of research has found that Latinx students experience discrimination and racial microaggressions at K-16 schools including majoritarian narratives about their "illegitimate presence" and "lack of intellectual capabilities" (Gutiérrez, Willey, & Khisty, 2011; Solorzáno & Yosso, 2001, 2002; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). English-only policies establish the *hegemony of English* in most classrooms (Bratt, 2007; Macedo et al., 2003; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). They not only deny Latinx students the opportunity to learn in their native language but suggest the superiority of English and English native speakers' experiences and their cultures, reinforcing white supremacy (Bernal, 2002; Leeman, 2018; Pérez Huber, 2011).

The classroom is a charged space where children grapple with linguistic hierarchy. Non-Latinx students may adopt racist narratives and form implicit biases against the Spanish language, Latinx people, and their culture. When interacting with Latinx students, they may commit microaggressions, subtle verbal and non-verbal assaults directed towards people of color automatically or unconsciously (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Solórzano, 2010). Researchers find Latinx students have experienced internalized racism, which weakens their ethnic/cultural identity and self-efficacy (Hipolito-Delgado, 2010, 2016; Kohli, 2014; Núñez & Meráz, 2017). Latinx students may feel they are less than their white counterparts and respond by silencing themselves or assimilating themselves to the mainstream culture and other group norms (Urrieta, 2010). After the 2016 Presidential Election, classroom teachers have observed a resurgence of racial tensions and anti-immigrant sentiment in elementary schools (Costello, 2016). The increasing Latinx student population and discriminatory discourses necessitate the examination of how white supremacy and English dominance affect Latinx students' experiences in elementary schools.

Theorizing Resilience in Making Counterspaces

Scholars also employ LatCrit theory to recognize Latinx students' resilience and resistance in the face of continual racial and linguistic inequities (e.g. Morales & Shroyer, 2016; Pulido, 2015; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002). Campa (2010) uses the term *critical resilience* to emphasize Latinx students' navigation of asymmetrical power relations at schools. From this perspective, the Latinx students operate in the entanglement of the personal, social, cultural, and historical factors. A small body of research focuses on Latinx students' making of social counterspaces, an identity-affirming social setting in which two or more minoritized people challenge, disrupt, and heal from discrimination and racial microaggressions (Campa, 2010; Grier-Reed, 2010; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Many researchers find that Latinx youth and adults have created counterspaces inside and outside of classrooms (e.g. Cerezo et al., 2013; Nuñez,

2011; Pulido, 2015; Yosso & López, 2010; Yosso et al., 2009). For instance, first-generation Latinx college students created counterspaces in their Chicano Studies class as they coped with isolation and racism and built awareness of their cultural heritage (Nuñez, 2011). Middle-schoolers found different spaces, such as college preparation programs, where they found a sense of community, empowerment, and healing from racial microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012).

However, there is a scarcity of research on Latinx students' counterspaces in elementary schools (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). As a result, scholars know little about how young Latinx students demonstrate their resilience and how educators should create conditions that allow students to embody their resilience. One main reason is that counterspaces are historically conceptualized as shared settings exclusively for marginalized groups (McConnell et al., 2016). Yet, these spaces are not accessible to elementary school-aged Latinx students. In Morales's (2016) study of a group of fifth-graders making of counterspaces, the researcher had to create a course that centered on Chican@ studies in an afterschool program (Morales used Chican@ to reject the certainty with the traditional term, Chicana, which was used to designate gender identity). An extended conceptualization of counterspaces would make studying Latinx children's resilience possible. McConnell and colleagues (2016) argue that counterspaces can be open to diverse participants who hold intersecting identities and experience different forms of privilege and marginalization. Because the participants do not have a shared identity, they can become aware of their own and one another's vulnerability. Further, they are likely to disrupt each other's privileges and oppression. Similarly, Case and Hunter (2012) believe that the space for diverse members can be a site of "transformative dialogue and social justice across multiple oppressed and non-oppressed groups" (p. 267). These scholars contend that participants positioned in different power relations could work collectively to affirm the marginalized identities and perspectives. In this case, the critical resilience of the marginalized group manifests in their collaboration with the dominant group for equitable ends.

As part of their daily school experiences, Latinx students have dialogue with their peers from other ethnic groups, which serves as potential counterspaces. A close look at their dialogue can potentially make Latinx students' resilience seen and heard. For this study, I apply this new conceptualization of counterspaces to fill the research gap in Latinx students' critical resilience in elementary schools. This paper answers the following questions: (1) How does linguistic hegemony manifest in Latinx and non-Latinx students' discussions? (2) How do Latinx students embody resilience in exclusive and inclusive counterspaces?

Methods

Research Site

This study was part of my dissertation research, an ethnographic study on children's peer relations in a diverse elementary classroom after the 2016 presidential election. Nationwide, at that time, anti-immigrant sentiment and discrimination against Mexicans and other Latinx people were prevalent in the political and public discourses (Diaz & Ahmed, 2016). Conducting an ethnographic study helped me understand diverse students' interactions with one another in that specific political context. The research site was a fourth-grade classroom at an urban Title I elementary school in the Southeastern US. The school was purposely chosen for its racially diverse student population: 39% Black, 39% white, 12% Latinx, 6% Multi-racial, and 5% Asian. To obtain site permission, I submitted my research proposal to the local school district and met with the school principal and a classroom teacher, Mr. Oliver (pseudonym), to discuss my research plan. After I received their permission, I submitted my

research protocol to the IRB. Upon receiving IRB approval, I recruited participants during a class meeting and collected parental consent and participant assent the following week. All students and their parents agreed to participate in the study, except for one. Then, I started data generation with 21 fourth graders in Mr. Oliver's classroom.

Mr. Oliver was a Black male in his third year of teaching. His first language was English. He taught all subject areas except for PE and arts. The fourth-grade classroom was racially and culturally diverse (see Table 1). To engage students from varied backgrounds, Mr. Oliver integrated multiple genres of music into his teaching practice. He played hip-hop, popular music, rock, and so forth when students worked in small groups. Mr. Oliver also wrote subject-related lyrics to melodies that appealed to students. For example, he made *Angle's Song* to the beats of *Bad and Boujee*, a song by a hip-hop group, *Migos*, that some students liked, to help them differentiate acute, right, and obtuse angles in mathematics. In addition, during recess, Mr. Oliver played songs to help students relax and express themselves by singing and dancing. Several students said that the songs Mr. Oliver played made their classroom fun and special.

After a few visits to the classroom, I was impressed with Mr. Oliver's creative use of music and how passionate the students were about the songs. However, I noticed all the songs were in English. I learned from students that Mr. Oliver had never played songs in Spanish. All Latinx students were English Language Learners (ELLs) and they spoke English fluently. Some of them spoke Spanish at home and occasionally at school. I wondered what Latinx students felt about the absence of Spanish songs. Considering students' passion for the songs, I assumed that the students would be interested in discussing what songs to play. More importantly, students' attitudes towards playing Spanish songs could help tease out the effects of linguistic hegemony on the Latinx students and the others. I expected that students would possibly create counterspaces as they exchanged ideas and made negotiations.

Participants

I collected students' demographic information from Mr. Oliver. Participants' pseudonyms and demographics are listed in Table 1. Pablo, Martina, José, and Valentina were originally from Mexico. Carlos was from Guatemala. Agustina was from Venezuela.

Researcher Positionality

I am aware that my identities intertwine with the work I do. My intersecting identities have informed the research design, data generation and interpretation, and manuscript crafting of this study. I aim to create "an immanent subjective truth" (Davies, 2014, p. 734) in collaboration with the participants. I am a Chinese cisgender woman. I have worked as a researcher of color against the backdrop of systematic racial injustice for six years, and I am committed to justice-oriented, anti-racist education. Chinese is my first language and English is my second language. I have deep empathy for English Language Learners in this study because our home languages are not always valued and represented in schools and the larger society. I believe languages are not barriers, but bridges. Although I do not speak Spanish, I try to understand Spanish speakers' resilience in embodied ways. In addition, I strongly believe that children are capable agents who have powerful learning experiences when they have dialogue across differences.

As a researcher from the local university who does not look or sound like them, I am an outsider to the students' school lives. As an adult on the school ground, I am aware of students' perceptions and expectations of me. I avoid asserting adult authority and let students take the lead in our interactions. To build rapport, I visited the classroom frequently

(three to five days a week) and actively interacted with the students for four months, gleaning insights into their school experiences. I engaged in member checking with Mr. Oliver throughout the study. To accurately represent students' perspectives and dialogic processes in the focus group discussions, I spent time reading the data and interpreting students' accounts in specific contexts. I have made substantial effort to consider my own biases and how they impact my writing.

Data Generation

Individual Interviews

I conducted individual, videotaped, semi-structured interviews with 21 students. First, to elicit their general thoughts about the songs, I started by asking what they like and dislike about the songs Mr. Oliver played. I followed by asking the students if they noticed that all the songs were in English and none were in Spanish. Then, I invited them to share what they thought about adding Spanish songs and their reasons. Students' passionate responses confirmed my assumptions about their interests in the topic. These questions elicited their attitudes towards Spanish songs, the Spanish language, and Latinx culture, which answered my first research question: How does linguistic hegemony manifest in Latinx and non-Latinx students' discussions?

Focus Group Discussions

I conducted eight video-recorded focus group discussions. I asked four participants in each session to exchange their ideas about playing Spanish songs in the classroom. Peer dialogue was a pedagogical space for students to challenge their assumptions about self and others and experiment with emerging voices (Hauver, Zhao, & Kobe, 2017). Focus groups were kept small, four students per group, so that everyone would be able to share and be heard. Four participants sat at a rectangular table, two on each long side. I set up a camera on each side to capture as much body language as possible. All students participated in at least one focus group discussion. Some students participated in more than one session. To let them have free flowing discussions, I only spoke when they had questions for me.

To answer my second research question: How do Latinx students embody resilience in racially exclusive and inclusive counterspaces?, I grouped students intentionally to explore how racially diverse students engage one another in the dialogic process (see Table 2). I grouped Latinx students with their Black, white, and/or Multiracial peers in six groups, where the Latinx students were the linguistic minorities. Their resilience manifested in their body language and verbal responses to racist narratives and microaggressions. For potential exclusive counterspace (McConnell et al. 2016), I had one focus group with four Latinx students, who spoke Spanish at home. At the end of this discussion, I asked the Latinx students if they felt discriminated against or disrespected at school to gather their experience of racism. Lastly, I conducted a focus group with four non-Latinx students to see how the discussion would unfold when the Latinx students were not at the discussion table.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the individual interviews and focus group discussions, I applied thematic analysis to reveal the effects of linguistic hegemony and diverse students' resilience in making counterspaces. To answer the first research question, I applied open coding strategy (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) in qualitative research to non-Latinx students'

arguments against playing Spanish songs to allow the themes to emerge. The most frequent codes, such as "Latinx students need to learn English," helped me identify the theme of deficit-based narratives and other themes. In addition, after coding Latinx students' arguments against Spanish songs, I was able to infer their attitudes towards their culture, the Spanish language, as well as their perceptions of non-Latinx students, as effects of internalized racism. I extracted the themes of cultural assimilation and subordination from Latinx students' narratives of their school experiences.

To answer the second research question, I compared students' attitudes towards Spanish songs before and after focus group discussions. I found that although most students opposed Spanish songs in their interviews, all groups agreed to include Spanish songs for equity and inclusion. Students' positive attitudes towards Spanish songs indicated their successful make of counterspaces. Then, to understand how the changes happened and how students embodied resilience, I induced strategies the Latinx students and others utilized and paid attention to their collaboration. I developed codes, such as using personal narratives, to differentiate students' varied approaches to create counterspaces.

Findings

Students' arguments for and against playing Spanish songs in the classroom reflected their implicit biases against the Spanish language, which were the effects of linguistic hegemony in their school environment. I found that non-Latinx students were in privileged positions in the linguistic hierarchies, while the Latinx students experienced culture assimilation and linguistic subordination. Yet, all groups overcame discriminatory narratives and created counterspaces. Latinx students demonstrated resilience in varied ways.

Deficit Narratives, Linguistic Hierarchy, and Taken-for-Granted Privileges

In individual interviews, more than half of the class, including the Latinx students, said "no" to Spanish songs. Some English native speakers believed that only knowing Spanish was a deficit. For instance, Nathan (Multiracial) insisted on playing English songs because he thought the Latinx students needed to learn English. In his words, "Like Martina, she does struggle with reading [English]. Even though it might be easier for her to speak Spanish to do things, I really don't think it's ok." He did not consider speaking Spanish as a strength. With a deficit-based perspective about the Latinx people, Nathan believed playing English songs could help them with their English learning. Nathan also expressed discomfort with Spanish. He said,

> Because I am not a real Spanish speaking person, I don't know if they [Latinx students] will be able to pick some songs that are inappropriate. I don't really feel comfortable… I have heard things that are wrong. I get a little nervous when they [Latinx students/ people] do things that I have no idea about.

Nathan distrusted his Latinx peers or Spanish speaking people in general in terms of using appropriate language. This bias made him oppose Spanish songs.

Some students reiterated the significance of the English language and English native speakers' needs, reproducing the linguistic and racial hierarchies in the larger society. For example, Violet (white) said, "Everyone here knows English. They came in. They do English." She believed that English was the "normal" language at school, reinforcing the hegemony of English. A few English native speakers said Spanish songs were less important than English songs because Spanish songs could only meet the needs of a minority of students. These students seemed to assume that they could not enjoy the Spanish songs

because they did not understand the language. Therefore, they chose to follow the majority rule and only meet the needs of English native speakers.

English native speakers took their privileges for granted. Cliff (Black) and Shamarion (Black) did not think the language used in the songs was important. In Shamarion's words, "Everything is just a song. It doesn't matter what language it is." Both of them loved hip-hop songs which were played almost every day. They benefited from the English songs Mr. Oliver played and were unwilling to admit it. Harriet (Black) and Rebecca (white) said they believed their Latinx peers were content with English songs. In Harriet's words,

> I don't think they [Latinx students] prefer it [Spanish songs]. Because they usually are cool. They would say, "I like the song." Or they just go with the flow. They are not like, "We want to listen to Spanish music! We don't like the English music!" They like the rhythm of the songs. They don't want, at least I don't think they want, Spanish music. I think if they did, they had already mentioned it to Mr. Oliver. I don't think they would be offended by not playing Mexican [Spanish] music.

Harriet simply assumed that if Latinx students wanted Spanish songs they would have already told that to the teacher. She took the Latinx students' silence and "cool" attitude as their approval. Students like Harriet were unaware that having a voice was a privilege of members of the dominant group in inequitable power relations. They failed to consider that Latinx students could not request Spanish songs due to the implicit racial and linguistic hierarchies in the classroom, school, and the larger society.

Cultural Assimilation and Linguistic Subordination

Five out of six Latinx students argued against Spanish songs in their individual interviews, which suggested their cultural assimilation and daily subordination in the classroom. Some Latinx students were already assimilated into the hegemonic English culture, that is, listening to songs in English and preferring them to songs in their home language. Agustina said, "I don't usually hear a lot of Spanish songs. I don't know that much. Sometimes I listen to Spanish songs. But I just stuck English songs in my head. Mr. Oliver plays pop songs. So, I guess I am more into pop songs." She liked popular English songs because they were played frequently. One time she described the English songs as "normal." The songs and the languages Latinx students were exposed to on a daily basis probably shaped what they thought of as normal and enjoyable. As an exception, Martina was the only one who explicitly argued for Spanish songs. She said, "It would be better [to play Spanish songs] because I don't like American songs as much. The singers, not to be mean, don't sing good. I was taught how to sing from [what] I hear. Sometimes I listen to the Spanish songs while I am busy." Martina considered songs in English "American" and worse than Spanish songs. Listening to Spanish songs at home made her proud of her language and culture. The other Latinx students were assimilated to liking English songs due to little to no exposure to Spanish songs in and outside of the classroom. Thus, they did not care for Spanish songs or connect the language and music with their cultural identities.

Additionally, the Latinx students envisioned that the rest of the class would prefer English songs. Being aware of the racial and linguistic hierarchies in the classroom, they feared that arguing for Spanish songs would increase tensions. Some Latinx students believed English native speakers would be annoyed by Spanish songs. For instance, in his interview, José explained, "Because there is only a little bit of us speak Spanish. It's only about five of us that speak Spanish. The other people might not understand. They might get mad at Mr. Oliver." Therefore, the Latinx students did not ask for Spanish songs for fear of conflict with the English native speakers. Although knowing that their Spanish speaking peers might like to have Spanish songs, most of the Latinx students were unwilling to argue for Spanish

songs. As linguistically minoritized in the classroom, all Latinx students but one chose to conform to the dominance of English and prioritize what the English native speakers wanted.

Latinx Students Creating an Exclusive Counterspace

Maria, Valentina, José, and Pablo turned their peer dialogue session into a counterspace exclusive to the Latinx students. In this space, they were more adamant about adding Spanish songs. They shared knowledge of Spanish songs and singers and asserted their identity as knowledge holders. United and resilient, they were ready to face the expected pushbacks from the English native speakers.

At the beginning of the discussion, all of them expressed support for playing Spanish songs. Valentina said, "I don't mind," which was what she said in the interview. But, at the same time, Martina, José, and Pablo said "Yes!" José and Pablo sounded more determined than they did in their interviews. Then, Valentina immediately changed her response, "I don't mind unless it's Aleena [a Latinx singer]." She was emboldened by her peers' enthusiasm. Later, Pablo shouted, "Let's get back to the point that we want Spanish songs." Valentina raised her voice and said, "I love *Bidi Bidi Bom Bom*!" She waved her hands in the air with a big smile on her face. Martina blurted out "Me too" and giggled. Inspired by her Latinx peers, Valentina no longer withheld her liking for Spanish songs. The Latinx students affirmed one another and became more vocal about what they really wanted.

The Latinx students communicated their insider's knowledge about Spanish songs and Latinx singers. To help me understand what "*Bidi Bidi Bom Bom*" was, Martina explained, "It is a song by a famous singer." Valentina added, "Selena Gomez." She quickly corrected herself, "Oh, Selena Quintanilla-Pérez. She is the queen of pop. But she died." Martina interjected, "She was shot." José confirmed the girls' words by saying "Yeah, I have seen that episode." They were excited to share their insiders' knowledge about the legendary Latinx singer with me. After all of them took turns to express how much they liked to have Spanish songs in the classroom, Pablo added, "And it's funny to see other kids be like 'Wait, what?'" Pablo anticipated that non-Latinx students would be unable to understand the lyrics in Spanish or be amazed at the songs. He found it amusing probably because the English native speakers would see him as an expert, which was not always the case. Latinx students only spoke Spanish with one another during private conversations occasionally at school, rarely given a chance to showcase their language and culture to the rest of the class. Pablo seemed excited about the opportunity to change the unbalanced power relations. The exclusive session allowed the four Latinx students to display their knowledge of and passion for Spanish songs and their culture, which affirmed their perspectives and racial identities.

Although they expected different perspectives from the English native speakers, the group was determined to include Spanish songs, demonstrating their resilience. When I asked "Are there any kids who don't like Spanish songs?," all of them answered, "Yes." Valentina named Lamarion (Black) and explained, "Because he would not be able to make a remix." Lamarion was known for loving hip-hop music. As a student leader, he had a great influence on his peers. If he didn't want Spanish songs, many people might follow him. Martina nodded at Valentina to show agreement. Valentina's words resonated with José's deep-seated worry he expressed in his individual interview. He said, "That's what I meant in my interview. People might get mad." José expected pushbacks from the rest of the class. In Pablo's interview, he said he believed Lamarion, his good friend, would like to support playing Spanish songs. But after listening to his peers, Pablo changed his perspective, "Yeah, I think Lamarion would probably get mad." In fact, Lamarion strongly supported playing Spanish songs for Latinx students' sake. But the Latinx students' perception of him as a strong opponent suggested their envisioned conflicts between themselves and the rest of the

class. Nevertheless, the Latinx students disregarded potential pushbacks from the dominant group and decided to include Spanish songs. They strengthened their shared racial identity. They were not afraid to declare what *we* want to confront what *they* want. Four Latinx students formed a united voice and embodied resilience in this exclusive counterspace.

Creating Inclusive Counterspaces Collectively

In six intergroup discussions among Latinx and non-Latinx students, the supporters for Spanish songs shared their perspectives passionately and creatively. The Latinx students and their allies showed their resilience by convincing the opponents in creative, embodied ways and disrupting the deficit-based and hegemonic narratives. Consequently, all groups successfully created inclusive counterspaces that affirmed Latinx students' needs and the importance of Spanish language.

Latinx Students' Embodied Performance

The first strategy was embodied performance. The focus group with Violet (white), Harvey (Black), Eric (Multi-Racial), and Martina (Latinx) displayed genuine positive emotions for the idea of playing Spanish songs. Martina was a shy and reserved student. But she creatively used her body language and voice to show the other participants what Spanish songs meant to her. As soon as I delivered the task, Martina said "Yes!" assertively and cheerfully to express her passion for Spanish songs. After Harvey said, "For Throwback Thursday, I would rather have him [Mr. Oliver] paly a little bit of Mexican songs." Martina stood up suddenly, spread her arms in the air, and cheered "Yippee!" Her excitement was so contagious that the others laughed with her. A few minutes later, the group decided to have a designated day for every kind of music. Violet said, "On Mondays, we should do boys' songs. On Tuesdays, we should do Hispanic songs." Martina shouted, "Thank you," with a smiley face. Touched by Martina's resilience manifested in her expressive body language and emotions, Harvey suggested assigning two days for Spanish songs. In his words, "I like the schedule. But since, like Martina, there are some Hispanic students that like Mexican [Spanish] songs, we should have two days for Hispanic people." Martina's enthusiastic responses communicated how much she wanted the Spanish songs to non-Latinx students and made them change their perspectives. As a result, the group agreed to play Spanish songs regularly to make the Latinx students happy.

Latinx Students' Sharing Personal Stories

The Latinx students shared their personal narratives to convince others. Take Carlos (Latinx) for example. He was born in Guatemala and adopted by an American family. He spoke a little Spanish but highly valued his cultural heritage. When referred to as "Mexican" by his peers in one discussion, he clarified immediately, "I am Guatemalan!" It mattered to him that his peers knew where he came from. In the focus group with Isaac (white), Simon (Black,) and Nathan (Multiracial), Carlos told his story to convince Nathan, the determined opponent against Spanish songs. He said, "My mom is an American. She has to know Spanish because my birth mom doesn't know English. She needs to know Spanish to adopt me. If she doesn't know Spanish, I wouldn't have been here right now." Simon commented, "That makes perfect sense." Allowing himself to be vulnerable, Carlos demonstrated resilience and determination. His courageous share of his personal story touched Simon. Nathan was silent for a while, withholding his disagreement. Carlos strategically made themselves vulnerable for a moment to alter others' perspectives.

Inspired by their Latinx peers, some non-Latinx students spoke up for English language learners, becoming allies to the Latinx students in the discussion groups. For instance, Lamarion (Black) said, "It's important [to play Spanish songs] because [of] people like Valentina. She always talks with Agustina during the [English] songs. I bet if you turn on the Spanish songs, they would be like "Oh yeah!"" He raised his eyebrows with eyes closed, pretending to be one of the girls enjoying the music. His dramatic facial expressions highlighted the pleasure Spanish songs probably brought to Latinx students. In another focus group, Lamarion said, "All the Mexican [Latinx] people need to learn Spanish." He believed that listening to Spanish songs and learning Spanish were critical to the Latinx students' identities. In another group, after he noticed that Nathan was not fully convinced by Carlos's story, Simon encouraged Nathan to stand in another ELL's shoes. Simon said, "Remember when Samantha [Korean] was in our class. Think about how she felt when Mr. Oliver played English songs at the dance break. She couldn't understand that." Eventually, Nathan said "*Si*," which was "yes" in Spanish, to show agreement. Being allies to Latinx students, non-Latinx students like Lamarion and Simon invited others to reflect on their privileges and consider what ELLs wanted.

Disrupting Deficit-Based Narratives

Some Latinx students and non-Latinx students emphasized Spanish was a useful tool. For example, Rebecca (white) said, "If we speak Spanish, other people won't understand what we are talking about when we play capture the flag." Many Latinx students and non-Latinx students contended that listening to Spanish songs would help them learn Spanish words. In Carlos's (Latinx) words, "We will have Spanish class in middle school. And we will have hard Spanish class in college. I think we should learn some Spanish songs so people could speak some Spanish." In addition, a few English native speakers argued learning Spanish and other languages could help them communicate with local people if they went traveling or lived abroad. According to Jada (Black), "If you move to a different country or state, you will know how to speak their language, if they are speaking a different language." These students insisted on having songs in Spanish and other languages because all languages were helpful tools. They amplified that Spanish language was an asset.

Adopting a pluralistic perspective, some Latinx students and their peers of other ethnicities supported the inclusion of songs in Spanish and many other languages. They believed that all languages and cultures were important and needed representation. Therefore, songs in multiple languages should be included. For instance, Isaac (white) said, "I think it is important to change the language of the songs to mix the cultures of the songs that are played in our classroom. So, it would be English. Spanish." Inspired by him, Jada (Black) added, "Indian. Chinese." Agustina (Latinx) agreed, "It would be fun to try Indian dance." The group thought playing Spanish songs was important because Spanish was a unique language and Spanish songs represented Latinx culture. Other groups also mentioned integrating songs in Egyptian, French, and German to have a multicultural classroom. Students' pluralistic stances emphasized the understanding that different languages and cultures were equally important and unique, disrupting the hegemony of English and Eurocentrism. All students raised their awareness of diversity, inclusion, and equity in these peer dialogue sessions.

Discussion

Resilience is not an innate personal trait but the effects of the entanglement of personal, social, cultural, and historical factors (Attalah et al., 2019; Campa, 2010). This perspective offers a critical lens to recognize children's navigation of unequal power relations

in the contexts that seem mundane. Playing Spanish songs seems to be a trivial matter. Liking or disliking Spanish songs seems personal. However, students' arguments for and against playing Spanish songs reveal what songs the Latinx and non-Latinx students think are "normal," which language is more important, and who matters. It allows me to interrogate the effects of the hegemony of English on both Latinx students and the other children in the classroom. In our current political climate, CTR has been under attack (Ray & Gibbons, 2021), but as this study shows, it is a useful framework for justice-oriented academic research (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). In this study, Latinx and non-Latinx students transformed their peer dialogue in counterspaces and embodied critical resilience as they challenged English dominance. Collectively they challenged the inequitable discourses about languages and dismantled deficit-based narratives. This paper also shows that both types of counterspaces are critical in schools.

Our society is becoming more and more diverse. Shunning intergroup dialogue leaves racial biases intact or reinforced, which might develop into full-blown racism, xenophobia, and bigotry (Furin, 2009; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). Educators may set up potential inclusive counterspaces, where racially diverse students reflect on their own privileges and biases and do coalitional work (Howard, 2011). In this process, they may learn how to share power, appreciate diversity, and practice the art of talking across differences (Hauver, 2017; Ramsey, 2004; Sleeter, 2018; Zúñiga, Naagda, & Sevig, 2002). Latinx students can practice their resilience in strategic ways in conversations with peers from other backgrounds. To create conditions that enable students to creative inclusive counterspaces, educators may consider the following aspects:

(1) Discussions on marginalized perspectives are more likely to lead to equitable results (Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Focusing the discussion on playing Spanish songs made all students aware of the unfairness in the status quo in the classroom. Subsequently, they collectively reflected on the hierarchies and overcame biases and strengthened their participation skills, critical thinking skills, pluralistic values, and multicultural perspectives. Students turned from passive consumers of the "normal songs" to sophisticated citizens (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 2018). Thus, teachers may examine the marginalized perspectives in the classroom and let students discuss them with one another for equity.

(2) To have equitable and civil peer dialogue and strengthen students' resilience to bias and microaggression, educators may lay ground rules to prohibit vicious put-downs, racial slurs, and domination of dialogue. Microaggressions may occur in the process. For instance, some non-Latinx students referred to the Latinx students as "Mexicans," although not all of them were originally from Mexico. Teachers could make it a teachable moment by taking time to introduce the concept of microaggressions, have students reflect on their microaggression in peer interactions, and guide Latinx students to address it.

(3) During intergroup dialogue students might experience discomfort to different degrees. Many scholars argue for the positive potential of discomfort of the oppressed in intergroup dialogue with the oppressors (e.g. Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Roestone Collective, 2014; Weems, 2013). Teachers can emphasize discomfort is necessary for learning and allow students to withdraw from discussions when necessary. With practice identifying microaggressions and overcoming discomfort, non-Latinx students are more likely to be more culturally sensitive and inclusive. By helping Latinx students overcome discomfort in the dialogue sessions, teachers guide them to enact resilience and resistance.

(4) Trust played a critical role in their engaged, respectful making of counterspaces. Children's trust in selves and others shaped how they would perform in a dialogic space (Hauver, Zhao, & Kobe, 2017). In this study, Mr. Oliver's persistent effort in maintaining a close-knit classroom community set the tone for reciprocal peer relations. With trustful relationships, the Latinx and non-Latinx students fully engaged in peer dialogue as

they listened and responded to each other respectfully. Non-Latinx students seriously considered Latinx students' perspectives without sticking to their privileges. Teachers may foster trust among students to prepare them for peer dialogue.

Inclusive counterspaces alone cannot be the solution to the established English hegemony. In the homogeneous counterspace of four Latinx children, they affirmed what they wanted and their cultural identity. The exclusive counterpace served as a safe space supporting participants' voices and well-being (Roestone Collective, 2014; Stengel, 2010). Given the growing linguistically and racially diverse student population and the increasing racist nativism, I argue for creating exclusive counterspaces to strengthen minority students' cultural identities. Educators can create a space exclusively for them so that they can speak their home languages, discuss their concerns, celebrate their heritage, and heal from linguistic hegemony and microaggressions. To learn more about underprivileged students' critical resilience in elementary schools, researchers could create such dialogic spaces and examine students' creative ways to become resilient. Future research may examine students initiated counterspaces in their everyday classroom lives.

Author Note

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Table 1

Participants' Pseudonyms and Demographics.

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
Harriett	Black	Female
Jasmine	Black	Female
Jada	Black	Female
Cliff	Black	Male
Harvey	Black	Male
Lamarion	Black	Male
Shamarion	Black	Male
Simon	Black	Male
Heather	white	Female
Rebecca	white	Female
Violet	white	Female
Cody	white	Male
Isaac	white	Male
Agustina	Latinx	Female
Martina	Latinx	Female
Valentina	Latinx	Female
Carlos	Latinx	Male
José	Latinx	Male
Pablo	Latinx	Male
Erik	Multiracial	Male
Nathan	Multiracial	Male

Table 2

Racial and Ethnic Makeup for the Focus Group Discussions

Session	Participants & Race
1	Agustina (Latinx), Lamarion (Black), Jada (Black), Isaac (white)
2	Carlos (Latinx), Lamarion (Black), Cliff (Black), Rebecca (white)
3	Martina (Latinx), Harriet (Black), Heather (White), Cody (white)
4	Carlos (Latinx), Simon (Black), Isaac (white), Nathan (Multiracial)
5	José (Latinx), Shamarion (Black), Isaac (white), Cody (white)
6	Martina (Latinx), Harvey (Black), Violet (white), Eric (Multiracial)
7	Martina (Latinx), Valentina (Latinx), Pablo (Latinx), Carlos (Latinx)
8	Lamarion (Black), Jasmine (Black), Shamarion (Black), Rebecca (white)