

June 4, 2025

ISSN 1094-5296

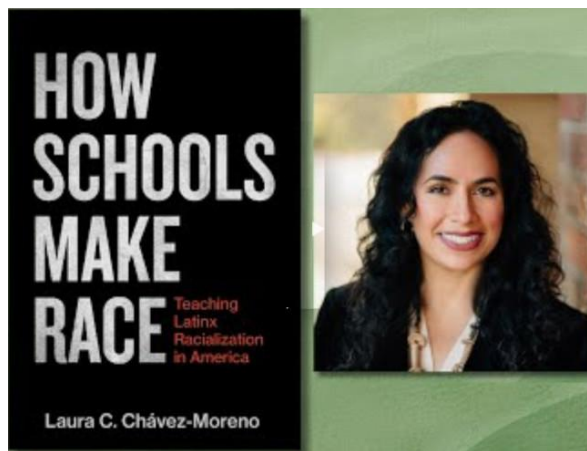
Chávez-Moreno, L. C. (2024). *How schools make race: Teaching Latinx racialization in America*. Harvard Education Press.

224 pp.

ISBN: 9781682539224

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Laura C. Chávez-Moreno's *How Schools Make Race* opens with the scene of the first graduating class of Oakville School District's secondary bilingual education program, which began 12 years prior. While speakers filled the graduation ceremony with speeches about the importance of diversity, the graduates eventually made their way across the stage without the procession incorporating Latinx students or the Spanish language. For Chávez-Moreno, Assistant Professor in the César E. Chávez Department of Chicana/o & Central American Studies at UCLA, the collective omission emerges as an eminent example of how uplifting Latinx students becomes secondary to the voices of those positioned as dominant in society's racial hierarchies. This absence becomes exemplary of the larger argument of the book: schools convey racial ideas that, in essence, reinforce oppressive racialized groupings.



How Schools Make Race chronicles Chávez-Moreno's study of secondary bilingual education and schools' role in producing race. Her study traces a Midwest dual-language program that began at "Oakville Urban" in response to active Latinx parental and community pressure to improve educational outcomes for Latinx students and Latinx multilingual learners. Through her inquiry, Chávez-Moreno reveals the limits of bilingual programs as a vehicle for education equity by portraying the racializing process of schooling. As she argues, practices such as the lack of purposeful, consistent instruction on race reify persistent ideas about race that serve to marginalize racialized Others and Latinx students.

Chávez-Moreno is not the first scholar to observe emerging problems with bilingual education. As scholars such as Cervantes-Soon et al. (2017) and Freire et al. (2022) have pointed out, the aim of bilingual programs to achieve equity for multilingual learners and immigrant newcomer students is often undermined as such programs become viewed as a linguistic commodity for consumption by wealthy

Rubinstein, C. F. (2025, June 4). Review of *How schools make race: Teaching Latinx racialization in America*, by L. C. Chávez-Moreno. *Education Review*, 32.

<https://doi.org/10.14507/er.v32.4129>

white students. However, Chávez-Moreno's research uniquely interrogates a gap in this scholarship, arguing that *racialization* is a critical and overlooked process undergirding the prevailing inequities of bilingual education and schooling more broadly. This framing helps reveal the racial dimensions of bilingual education, a program often viewed as teaching culture and language. The novelty of this argument partly stems from the conflation of race, ethnicity, and culture in education scholarship and practice, which obscures the ways these concepts are distinct and individually mobilized in bilingual programs.

Chávez-Moreno grounds her research in multiple frameworks of race, braiding scholarly work in racial formation theory, the concept of race-craft, relational racialization, and racio-linguistics. These theories serve as an essential entry point for readers to critically engage with race as a socially constructed reality with material ramifications rather than a biological or cultural fact of life. As the exposition unfolds, the contours of racial formation and the limitations of bilingual education to radically alter outcomes are brought into focus as Chávez-Moreno evaluates classroom lessons, participant interviews, Latinx advocacy meetings, school board minutes, and anonymized student data, among other data points. Split into three parts, *How Schools Make Race* allows readers to slowly zoom out and across dimensions of schooling, examining the racializing function of schooling from micro-level interactions to district-level political processes and state funding mechanisms.

In Part One, Chávez-Moreno focuses on the classroom, demonstrating how teaching and pedagogy and, by proxy, students of the program, conceptualize race. Few teachers in the study, for instance, incorporated intentional lessons that complicated dominant notions of race and racism that emphasized the social construction of race as opposed to race as a category based on physical traits. Despite their intentions, these teachers and others often reified Latinx as an ethnic category through underdeveloped notions of shared culture while paradoxically positioning them in relation to other racialized groups. This section thus explores how the program explicitly and implicitly presented conflicting ideas of race and imparts how this contradiction serves to racialize Latinx groups. This argument is extended in Part Two, where the author examines how the program relationally racialized groups through emphasized differences and comparisons made primarily between Black and Latinx students. For example, Latinx students in the dual language program were often deemed "model minorities" by those in the school and community when compared behaviorally and linguistically with Latinx students who were not in the program. These classifications were used then to differentiate Latinx students from Black students, often reifying racialized hierarchies. Thus, these chapters also scrutinize how Latinx students are positioned in relation to racialized groups and through which the boundary of the Spanish language principally sets Latinx students apart. As such, this book makes a valuable contribution to the field's understanding of Latinidad. Chávez-Moreno eschews the partiality of Oakville's construction of Latinidad as reductionist and overwhelmingly tied to the Spanish language. In kind, she offers an understanding of Latinidad as socially constructed and tied to the essentializing and dehumanizing process of racialization.

The material from Parts One and Two has implications for culturally relevant pedagogy. As Chávez-Moreno points out, “without educators challenging mainstream ideas of multiculturalism and what race is, [bilingual] schooling risks oversimplifying the complexities and contradictions of race and thereby may struggle to effectively address racism” (p. 151). In other words, culturally relevant pedagogy in the form of bilingual education, which avoids explicit discussions of race and critical consciousness, generally devolves into surface-level multicultural tolerance and celebrations. While Chávez-Moreno does not foreground culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy in her argument, it operates in essence to parse out the dialogic function of race, language, and culture in redounding racial meaning.

Part Three delves into structural practices and policies that shape racial meaning and, by extension, the allocation of material resources and benefits. As the author considers these structural constraints, such as program tracking and recruitment, it becomes evident how material depravity is a byproduct of racialization that affects Latinx students. By way of example, despite the bilingual program being delineated as a program for Latinx achievement, Latinxs were often placed in remedial classes with substandard learning opportunities as a result of testing and tracking. For Chávez Moreno, the racial project of schooling, and bilingual education in particular, is not solely founded on classroom practices but is also intertwined with the structural policies and practices that help produce the racialized “Other.” As such, racial ideas are constructed from these cumulative structural practices that reconfer racialized hierarchies. Chávez Moreno closes the book by preemptively cautioning readers against interpreting her findings as undermining bilingual education as a path forward to support Latinx students. As seen through Oakville’s program, even forms of schooling perceptively intended to alleviate racial injustice (i.e., bilingual education) can reflect and reconstitute racial injustice. In effect, even in its idealized form, it ceases to be a matter of *if* schooling and bilingual education will continue to be a racial project, but rather *how* it will operate as such.

Chávez Moreno’s *How Schools Make Race* is an important contribution in linking education to preserving societal meaning and boundaries of race. There is also a recognizable sociopolitical moment that contextualizes her findings (e.g., backlash against race-conscious teaching) that, despite the data being collected many years prior, holds value when interpreting her recommendations. This period of retrenchment poses an opportunity for bilingual education to rebuke the status quo race-evasive programming to bring forth educational equity. If I see a place for criticism, it would be the author’s focus on individual teaching and pedagogy as a way to support counter hegemonic racial meaning-making. By focusing only on classroom-based remedies, there remains an under-explored lens in the recommendations of what it means to foster coherence across multiple levels of schooling to bring bilingual education toward re-uptaking race-radical goals.

Beyond this critique, *How Schools Make Race* is an incisive inquiry into the deeply entrenched racial logics of schooling. The power of this book lies, in part, in its clarity. Chávez-Moreno explicates her insights in a way that will undoubtedly bring clarity to the field’s understanding of race, Latinidad, and the racialization process that imbues societal meaning to the former. In the context of education scholarship’s

prevailing trend toward under theorizing race, particularly for Latinx populations, the significance of *How Schools Make Race* cannot be overestimated.

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About the Reviewer

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