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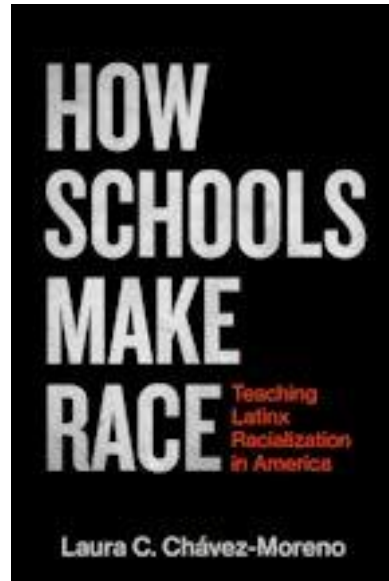
Chávez-Moreno, L. (2024). *How schools make race: Teaching Latinx racialization in America*. Harvard Education Press.

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How Schools Make Race provides a nuanced, rich, and critical analysis of the everyday practices of educational settings that are unique and understudied: secondary schools where instruction is available in two languages (English and Spanish) across various subjects and disciplines, in classrooms with students and teachers who self-identify as Latinx, Black, Asian, Indigenous, multiracial and white. Furthermore, the focal schools are situated in a relatively new migration destination in the U.S. Midwest. Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo (2015), conceptualized this region as the New Latino Diaspora, where demographics have shifted in the past few decades, and where experiences of schooling and intercultural interactions differ from those in traditional migration destinations or large cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York City.



Chávez-Moreno conducted this exploratory ethnographic study over a period of 15 months (February 2016 – June 2017) amid the tumultuous transition and heated rhetoric surrounding the 2016 presidential election and its outcome. Detailed methodological notes at the end of the book describe the ways the researcher documented classroom observations of teachers' pedagogy and curriculum, interviews and conversations with teachers, students, and community members, and analyzed district and school documents.

This book expands on Chávez-Moreno's previous scholarly contributions in highly regarded publications such as *American Educational Research Journal* (2021), *Research in the Teaching of English* (2022b), *Educational Researcher* (2022a, 2025), and *Review of Educational Research* (2024). In these publications, Chávez-Moreno has

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advanced understandings and theorizing of racial literacy as a continuum, the affordances and limitations of Latinx critical race theory, and the conceptualization of the term Latinx as a racialized term. Her work is situated in the areas of Chicax/Latinx education, at the intersection of education, pedagogy, language, literacy, and ethnic studies.

Chávez-Moreno primarily draws from research conducted in two secondary dual-language programs (one middle school and one high school) and shows how such programs serve as racial projects that actively produce and reinforce racial meanings, positioning Latinx people as a racialized group (p. xiii). The book is divided into three parts, each examining a distinct facet of racialization and how Latinx students experience schooling in the focal programs (p. xiii).

In Part 1, the author examines the kinds of message the dual language program conveys to students about race and the racialization of the Latinx group. The author focused her analysis on curriculum materials and lessons, which illustrated contradictory ideas about the Latinx racialized group with repetitive information emphasizing multiculturalism and bilingualism, rather than fostering students' critical-racial consciousness. In Part 2, she examines how the programs conveyed ideas about Latinidad and how Latinx students were positioned in relation to other groups. She explains how Spanish was used as the defining marker of Latinidad, which erases connections to Indigeneity, Indigenous languages, Afro-Latinx, and Asian Latinx identities. Chávez-Moreno found that the program comparatively racialized Latinx and Black students, framing both as model minorities in different ways and positioned them within a racial hierarchy. This reinforced anti-Black ideas among some school staff and prevented the program from achieving equitable practices for both racialized groups. In Part 3, the author examines the programs' racialization practices and how they impacted Latinx students' educational opportunities. Through its assessment and tracking practices and policies—such as tracking certain students to remedial or AP-level courses)—the programs relegated Latinx students to an inferior educational experience relative to whites. This led to perpetuating practices where Latinx students did not have equal access to advanced content or recognitions such as the Seal of Biliteracy, obscuring instances of structural racism.

The author concludes by offering three recommendations for reframing dual-language education as a practice that critically confronts racial inequities rather than reinforcing them. First, she calls on educators to adopt ambitious teaching (e.g., the STEM-oriented framework developed by Thompson, Windschitl, and Braaten, 2013), as well as “embrace theory,” drawing on Bettina Love's (2019) call for teachers to take an inquiry stance that integrates race theory into their practice. Second, she urges a return to dual-language education's justice-centered origins, reconnecting it with its anti-racist foundations. Finally, she calls for a rethinking of Latinx identity and constructions of Latinidad. Through ambitious teaching that grapples with the ambivalence of race, teachers can cultivate students' critical-racial consciousness and challenge the oversimplification of race and the persistence of racist structures.

Implications of this work include calls for moving beyond dual language education that is reduced to language education used to support biliteracy and multicultural diversity. Instead, the author proposes integrating ethnic studies and moving toward developing support for students to build critical consciousness of intersecting systems of oppression. Aligned with arguments made in previous work, Chávez-Moreno challenges the view of *Latinidad* as a shared language and culture. She argues for ambitious teaching to reveal how racial oppression, through colonialism, imperialism, and categorization of the Latinx group, has produced and continues to shape the Latinx racialized group. She also emphasizes confronting the anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity that have too often been overlooked and ignored in dual language education. Lastly, the author urges educators to address the ambivalence of race and to reorient bilingual education toward its social justice foundations, as these are described in a brief historical overview in the introduction.

This book arrives during a complex political and policy moment, as teachers navigate challenging landscapes reminiscent of the years when the study was conducted. The author offers recommendations for how teachers might incorporate a pedagogy of critical-racial consciousness into their schools. She acknowledges that institutional support is essential for teachers to teach ambitiously about race and stresses the role of policymakers and school leaders in working together to make this possible. However, the book does not provide a possible avenue for how such changes might be enacted on a larger scale (e.g., through direct shifts in policy or policy implementation), or in other contexts (e.g., teacher learning or teacher preparation). However, we understand that this kind of guidance is likely beyond the scope of this volume.

While this book may be of interest to scholars, practitioners, and leaders in dual-language education, secondary education, and Latinx studies, ethnic studies, or critical race theory, we find great relevance of this work for the fields of literacy and teacher education. First of all, the description of the challenges teachers faced in access to quality curriculum materials in Spanish illustrates the importance of culturally and locally appropriate texts for specific students. This is especially true when all that is available are direct translations from English, texts published in Spain or in countries of Latin America, hence resulting in elevating specific language varieties and experiences above others. Identity representation and erasure of specific cultural and racial groups in curricular materials are also problematic, especially as Chávez-Moreno highlights the complexity of students' perspectives about their own racial identities and family histories. As literacy educators in K-12 settings navigate challenges in the selection of equity-oriented texts that affirm the identities of the students they teach, this book showcases the consequences of a curriculum that may appear to “reflect” diversity but which may simplify or reproduce problematic stereotypes.

Second, this volume showcases the implications of literacy assessment in bilingual settings, and the impact of narrow frameworks to define biliteracy achievement, as students strive to gain access to awards such as the Seal of Biliteracy. Chávez-Moreno describes the type of literacy intervention students

with low test scores received for English literacy, and how advanced biliteracy courses were disproportionately enrolling mostly white students. The consequences for students whose literacy and biliteracy repertoires were not leveraged at school are powerful reasons for literacy educators to adopt racial literacy as a framework to explore their own practices and systems of instruction and assessment.

As teacher educators and researchers who center our work in partnerships with schools and practitioners, we consider this book a powerful example of thoughtful ways to make sense of school practices, while reflecting on our own identities as educators and racialized beings. At the end of the introductory chapter, Chávez Moreno provides a “caveat” on ways this ethnographic account may be interpreted by readers, showcasing the unique time and space where the work was conducted, and the ethics and care in her commitments to this work:

So I ask readers to remember that this book offers a timebound snapshot, and only from my perspective. Multiple stories could still be told; this book tells *one* story of how the present-day institution of schooling contributes to racialization processes, and how this then disadvantages racialized Others, focusing on Latinxs. (p. 23)

We encourage readers to engage with this story and Laura Chávez-Moreno’s voice and perspective, and dive deep into the affordances of racial literacy and racialization frameworks to make sense of their own educational contexts and histories.

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About the Reviewers

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About the Book Author

Laura C. Chávez-Moreno is an assistant professor in the César E. Chávez Department of Chicana/o and Central American Studies at the University of California Los Angeles. Her research has been recognized with multiple awards, including from the American Educational Research Association and the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation. She was a high school teacher in the School District of Philadelphia. *How Schools Make Race* is the winner of a 2025 AESA Critics' Choice Book Award, the winner of the 2025 AAHE Book of the Year Award by an Early Career Scholar, and the winner of the 2024 Foreword INDIES Silver Award for Education.



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