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Critical Race Theory and Latino Identity Development

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Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) model of Latino/a identity development explains in depth the different orientations of Latino/a identity (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). The model outlines five orientations (Latino-integrated, Latino-identified, Subgroup-identified, Latino as other, Undifferentiated/Denial, and White-identified) instead of a linear progression of stages towards a final identity (Ferdman and Gallegos, 2001, as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Each orientation is established with traces of critical race theory tenets that ground the basis for why certain people choose to identify with that orientation.

Critical race theory states that race is a construct of society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) and consequently Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) argues that there is no racial umbrella that encompass all Latinos/a, rather different heritage umbrellas (as cited in Evans et al, 2010). By decoupling Latino/a race from Latino/a heritage, the Ferman and Gallegos (2001) model promotes the use of narratives from individual lenses (as cited in Evans et al, 2010). It aligns with the fourth tenet of critical race theory that each individual is entitled to telling his or her own story to challenge to master narrative in this case race (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

Finally, the White-identified and Denial orientation has many similarities to the precondition of critical race theory realization. According to Ferdman and Gallegos (2001), these groups experience internalized racism and attribute their oppression to individual acts (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explain that there must be a realization that racism is present everyday in a

very systematic way. Only then can individuals, in this case Latinos, move to other tenets of CRT and therefore a healthier Latino identity orientation.

In my past experiences, both professional and informal, I have very little knowledge of and identity development, especially Latino identity development. Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) model of Latino/a identity orientation stood out to me in the reading because of my lack of knowledge and I want to be intentional in pushing my comfort zone with multicultural competency. Before Seattle University, I had many informal encounters with identity development and multicultural competency. I think that understanding models of development of individuals different from my own identities will help me work with a diverse student population as a professional.

More and more, I am trying to apply the critical race theory lens to my graduate assistantship. After reading many articles that developed theories with a critical race theory framework, I see the advantages of CRT in student development. By looking at the four tenets explained by Delgado (2001), we can analyze our programs and policies and critically analyze them in terms of equity. Furthermore, we can assess using narratives and storytelling from the perspective of students who are a part of a minority population.

The five orientations reminded me of themes and concepts I studied in my social justice class. These themes included complex identity, critical race theory, cultural capital, internalized racism, and actionable solutions. Moreover, reflecting on the themes in social justice in terms of our reading in our class provided a more concrete context in student development.

References

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