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My Story: Identity Dilution in Rural Indiana

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Introduction

In retelling the stories of a family that has crossed their life spans through different settings, Davidson describes a “presentation of self in a matrix of social relationships”(1996, p.164) which describe a more specific and in-depth journey Through this research, exploring the dilution of identity alters others’ perspectives who do not share these experiences, wherein environmental norms impact racial and ethnic identity.

In *Of Borders and Dreams: A Mexican-American Experience of Urban Education* the need for responsiveness (see Figure 1) is identified and emphasized as an educational implication (Carger, 1996). Inviting students to share their culture in settings such as a classroom is a paramount stepping stone to finding importance in their culture early on in life so as not to homogenize and/or marginalize their identities. Such invitations/opportunities may reduce the influence growing up in rural environments has on identity dilution. Shedding light on how heritage language can be discouraged in some settings is a very relevant topic when considering the implications of this research and the aforementioned research. This is just one component of how discouragement or embarrassment surrounding heritage language is an element that should be acknowledged by educators.

Significance

As a first generation resident of the United States, my journey originates from my family’s narrative as they traversed from Mexico into Texas and now settled in the State of Indiana. It is my intention to research the culture of my origin (Mi familia). This includes an examination of self, the experiences similar to my own (siblings, parents), my family (my grandma(Ama), my tias). This investigation centers on my current cultural experiences in this present community of rural Indiana. This rationale centers on tensions that exist between my interaction with the communities/peoples in rural Indiana, the institutions that shape me (e.g., university life), my employment, family roles and the alliances that form within these systems. It is a realization of an assimilation of self and what that means and how others, specifically white (Euro-centered) individuals’, interact with me.

Methodology

This research employs an autoethnographic method. It is inclusive of a multi-case studies. It is autobiographical utilizing personal writing and data collection to connect the personal (i.e., Priscilla Villarreal) to the cultural (e.g., rural Indiana, family).

Interviews will be conducted with family members so they may recount specific experiences and events that shed light on how marginalized identities form, specifically Latinx people, are treated in various environments. This will explore how moving to a rural environment alters family systems and dilutes those identities. Images, such as photographs, and objects will be used to guide these interviews as well as familial expression of identity throughout the lifespan.

This method offers an opportunity for the interviewee to examine and discuss family provided and discovered photos (and even personal belongings, heirlooms, tapestry, etc.). This method offers an opportunity for recollection for the individual to ponder who they are, and how they see themselves in relation to the image and/or object. This data collection permits an opportunity for family to express their experiences, beliefs, and feelings within a narrative form. Furthermore, images/objects visually displayed as identifiable descriptors serve as an anchor to ideas understood or implicit in the everyday.

Figure 1

The treatment of those within marginalized communities.

Reshaping educators/institutions approaches to learners with experiences that may parallel my own.

Awakening the identity and voices of individuals such as myself.

References

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