Institutionally Responsive Pedagogies: A Community-Cultural Wealth Approach to Latina/o Student Engagement Across the Educational Pipeline

Louie F. Rodriguez

University of California, Riverside

Abstract

The educational system continues to inadequately serve Latina/o students across the educational pipeline. A key shortcoming is the system's inability to develop, support, and grow educational leaders that can respond. In this article, the author poses a series of pedagogical approaches using a Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) lens. In the spirit of *testimonio,* the author sets the context by articulating his own principles for engagement as a Chicano scholar directly engaged with Latina/o students and communities across the educational pipeline. Then the author shares four concrete pedagogical principles that have been used in his work with students, communities, parents, and in higher education, particularly in a leadership development program. The article concludes with a proposed set of principles focused on Institutionally Responsive Pedagogies driven by Community Cultural Wealth and centers on the ways in which institutions need to shift so that the cultural wealth of Latina/o students and communities are realized across the educational pipeline.

Framing the Problem and Possibilities

As a Chicano scholar I have been interested with the ways in which traditional teaching and learning spaces have engaged[1] or failed to engage students, especially Latina/o youth across the U.S. For the last 16 years, I have worked in three geographically distinct areas with very similar demographics, challenges, and possibilities. All three regions have been mostly people of color with significant immigrant and English Learner student populations. While these communities have faced numerous

---

[1] Engagement within the teaching and learning context is drawn from the work of Paulo Freire (1973). For instance, engagement occurs when students and teachers co-construct knowledge, when students are legitimized for their experiential experiences, and when the purpose of teaching and learning is not only about literacy and numeracy but also critical consciousness.

challenges, there have always existed "pockets of hope" (de los Reyes & Gozemba, 2001).

At the center of inquiry and action is to promote the Cultural Wealth of Latina/o students, and their peers that sit next to them in classrooms across the educational pipeline (Yosso, 2005). In the spirit of realizing a praxis-driven approach, I often ask, *In what ways are my research and engagement approaches driven by a perspective that respects, honors, and legitimizes the voices, experiences, and perspectives of Latina/o youth?* This question urges that my pedagogical and methodological approaches are driven by principles that value the wealth, knowledge, and truth of the people (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This approach obviously departs from the traditional assumption that knowledge is something to be acquired from textbooks rather than something that is co-created and realized in classrooms, schools, and communities. To this point, our communities *are* the curriculum, and a pedagogy driven by Community Cultural Wealth is centered and driven *by* our students.

In order to legitimize the role that Latinas/os play in the educational spaces we call schools, community colleges, and universities, we need a process. While many social justice and equity-minded educators and leaders espouse to engage in this work in authentic ways, there are often huge gaps between the realities on the ground (i.e., interracial conflict on high school campuses, disparities in disciplinary practices by race and gender, and curricular (ir)relevance particularly for students of color) and the methodologies that are used to engage educators. This struggle has to do, in part, with the ways in which teachers and educational leaders are developed in higher education. There remains an overemphasis on technical skills development versus an exposure to the social and cultural conditions that inform and drive much of the work of educators (Trueba, 1999). For example, a high school teacher can be exposed to the most up-to-date curriculum and assessment approaches in mathematics, but if they are unable to recognize, understand, and reach students via student-teacher relationships and community and cultural relevance, they will struggle. This condition then evolves into a pattern and deficit ideology that is not only destructive to students but seeps into school culture. This only exacerbates the counterproductive policies and conditions that face students and schools. So, the question becomes, how do we get ahead of

these conditions and what kinds of pedagogical approaches might an educator use if they are currently in the field as a teacher, leader, counselor, or community stakeholder?

In this article, I propose several concrete approaches that have effectively engaged Latina/o youth in powerful ways. The goal of this article is to articulate what those approaches look like and provide ways that K-12 practitioners, teacher educators, and others concerned with professional development initiatives can consider. Because there is often a research-practice gap between the realities on the ground and the ways in which universities develop educators, this article is particularly relevant to any educator concerned with using concrete pedagogical strategies that start with the educator, honor the community, and remain rooted in practice. Below I share five principles that guide my work followed by a discussion of four key pedagogical approaches.

Principles for Engagement: Teaching, Research, Service, and Leadership

In my university teaching, it became increasingly apparent that in-service and pre-service teachers, leaders, counselors, and other practitioners are likely to have been in the field or enrolled in an existing graduate program in education without any opportunity to articulate a set of principles that guide their actions. Therefore, I created an explicit pedagogical exercise for doctoral students in an educational leadership program that provides them with the opportunity to develop their principles *with* the input of their communities.

On the first day of class I introduce the assignment and share my five principles. I emphasize that my five principles have evolved, changed, are forever developing and emerging for as a long I am honored to work with my community. I charge the doctoral students, many of whom who are current and seasoned teachers in PK-12 and higher education, school leaders, school district executives, and community college and university leaders, with the task of developing their principles over the course of the quarter. Students can draw on previous experiences, current literature, and materials and concepts explored in the course, in addition to some aspirational considerations as they strive to complete the program and continue to serve their communities. Once they develop their five principles and a working definition of each principle, students are

asked to garner feedback from their communities/stakeholders. Some students elect to use social media, email, or some other medium. The goal is to explore the relevance and clarity of the principles with the people they serve. Once the feedback is received, students then incorporate the feedback and submit a complete draft to me. The assignment culminates with a final presentation to in-class colleagues and a final draft that can be displayed in the department offices. One cohort co-presented at a college-sponsored research symposium and shared via poster presentations. Once the quarter ends students are encouraged to frequently reference, add, edit, and build upon their five principles.

At the end of the quarter I once again share my five principles with the class. In the winter 2016 quarter, my five principles felt particularly good given the evolution of my research, teaching, and collaboration with the community. My five principles are: 1) humanistic, 2) truth-telling, 3) historical, 4) equity and excellence, 5) intentionality.

1. **Humanistic**: Through my work I intend to treat all people with respect driven by perspective-taking and reciprocal dialogue. A recognition that each person's intersectional identities are honored and considered throughout the teaching, learning, research, and collaborative process.

2. **Truth-telling**: There is a continuous goal of truth-building, truth-seeking, and truth-honoring throughout the engagement process. While everyone may not be ready to hear the truth, communities deserve to know the truth. Therefore, my teaching, learning, research, and engagement must be a vehicle to unearth that truth.

3. **Historical:** Ahistorical approaches to education must be erased. All communities exist within a historical context and we must learn, build, and in some situations honor this history to recognize our community's contributions to society and the world.

4. **Equity and Excellence:** Equity must drive the process and outcome we seek in our education and social systems. One approach is to use excellence as an organizing tool. Every community exemplifies excellence. We must use excellence to strive for equity. Our ability to use excellence as a tool is a

gesture of equity. Our inability to do this work through excellence says something significant about our context and ourselves.

5. **Intentionality:** Social justice and transformative change will not happen by accident. We must work in collaboration to intentionally co-create the conditions that facilitate opportunities for engagement and educational, social, and political change.

So, not only do I model my principles with my students, but I also use these as a reference and community accountability tool in my classes. These principles for engagement drive my direct work with communities. When it comes to actual praxis with Latina/o students across the educational pipeline, these principles become the guiding lenses that inform my work to help explore and unearth the Community Cultural Wealth they bring to the educational space.

Four Pedagogical Approaches for Latina/o Youth

There are no magic solutions to engaging Latina/o students across the educational pipeline. However, there are approaches that have proven to be particularly transformative in my work in engaging students in various spaces. In a project titled, The PRAXIS Project in the Inland Empire region of Southern California, I devised a set of pedagogical experiences that I have articulated elsewhere (Rodriguez, 2014). The goal of this section is to describe the significance of these pedagogical approaches for Latina/o students and for the educators that serve them. In an effort to apply with these pedagogical approaches, my own guiding principles for engagement must be a lens that informs this work.

Educational Journeys

Any community engagement approach must begin with a willingness to dialogue with the people. These dialogues must be rooted in respect and a willingness to listen and learn. One of the approaches I have used extensively is Educational Journeys/*Caminos Educativos* (Rodriguez, forthcoming). Educational Journeys were first introduced by my colleague Tara Brown at the University of Maryland College Park with her Participatory Action Research (PAR) work with youth in a continuation high school

setting. Over the last 10 years, I have developed Educational Journeys as a way to engage youth in powerful storytelling about their struggles, triumphs, and hopes and dreams. As the leader of the work, I always begin by telling my story and I push that all of my university or community team members do the same. Then, students are given the opportunity to share their Educational Journeys. Students are given a prompt to reflect on their PK-12 experiences in school and in the community and are asked to identify 2-3 experiences that were defining or transformative in nature. Students then develop presentations, videos, poems, raps, maps, or artwork on construction paper.

At the time of this writing, I am finalizing a conceptual framework that describes the conceptual foundations to Educational Journeys and the pedagogy of healing, building, and thriving through this approach (Rodriguez, forthcoming). By using this approach with high school youth, college and graduate students, parents, and educators, there are some powerful trends and learning experiences that have evolved out of Educational Journeys. Many participants talk about the healing nature of reflection, storytelling, and truth-telling. For instance, students often recall troubling experiences like embarrassment, public denigration, and low expectations and we discuss that the pervasive presence of these experiences are manifestations of racism, discrimination, policy irrelevance, culturally and community irrelevant curriculum and teaching and learning experiences. However, many of us have never been given the language or liberty to explore these experiences, especially as an academic/intellectual exercise. Educational Journeys serve as a vehicle to explicitly acknowledge those challenges and constructively theorize and build on those truths. In conjunction with the opportunity to tell one's stories, we bridge those experiences with policy realities facing Latina/o schooling conditions in the U.S. For instance, their stories are contextualized in the ways in which discrimination and special education designations are driven by race or language abilities, or situated in contexts of ability tracking, the use of standardized testing, school segregation, teacher quality, and a host of other issues.

Through the process of storytelling and theorizing about the ways in which experiences can be historicized and contextualized in school, district, community, state, and national/global realities and trends, the consciousness and scope of students' lenses begin to awaken/widen. Many students begin to ask why they have never been exposed

to the conditions in their communities or exposed to an analysis on the ways in which policy has impacted their people and communities.

Almost simultaneously, the healing evolves into a pedagogy of building. Because the story is being delivered to a group of listeners, many of the stories told by Latina/o students resonate in many ways with their peers. While there are always differences, students begin to reflect on the power of recognizing and understanding one's existence in relation to one another. The realization and shared space and experience often builds a collective consciousness and a realization of social injustice. On a very basic level, students begin to see each other through a different set of lenses, and as one student put it, "I now know I shouldn't hate or judge so and so (in reference to a peer in class). I had no idea they had been through so much." Of course one condition is to tell students that they are in no way obligated to share. It is optional and so is the content. However, the stories tend to be powerful. Similarly, we emphasis the power of triumphs as well. Students share the impact that a particular teacher had on their educational opportunities, the power of a program, or the leadership opportunities afforded to them. Participants often talk about that "one teacher" that believed in them, pushed them, or never gave up on them.

From Storytelling to Action

We have observed that healing and building leads to an opportunity to thrive. Students are provided with an opportunity to envision their future. Students begin to create and imagine the conditions required for them to thrive. They may propose projects, policies, or new directions in teaching practices that will have a direct impact on them. Students begin to create the stages, venues, and audiences that need to engage with their work. Students define their agency as a reflection of their emerging role as a public intellectual in their schools and communities. Along the way, they gain valuable skills in perspective-taking, presenting, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing information, relationship building, and a knowledge about power and politics. In one of our projects, students assembled a series of professional development sessions for pre-service teachers. The students were concerned about teacher quality issues and identified five characteristics of a high quality teacher. Students assembled themselves

into groups by theme, created surveys and observation tools that exemplify their particular characteristic (i.e, a caring teacher) and then used the school context as a laboratory for exploration. Then they assembled their findings, prepared a presentation, and provided a set of recommendations for policy and practice. It is our hope that students leave with an experience and set of skills that they can use elsewhere, while empowered to build their own educational pathway so that they thrive in and with their communities.

We have learned in this work that Educational Journeys become the foundation of our community work. In order for us to understand where we want to go as a community of scholars, we need to understand the struggles and triumphs that drive us. Educational Journeys facilitate rich "data" about each student that no file or transcript could ever tell us. Teachers engaged in this work are rewarded with a set of knowledge that makes student engagement inevitable, if, they are committed to centering their work on the knowledge, experiences, and truths of Latina/o youth.

Recommendations for Practice

- K12 leaders should share their Educational Journey with staff, students, and parents; they can use professional development time to encourage teachers to share their Educational Journeys.
- District leadership and policy should support the work through time allocation, materials/resources, and political support.
- University faculty should use Educational Journeys as a classroom assignment.

History of Educational Inequality

When I first met Juan he was withdrawn, wore black jeans about 4 times too large, a long white T-shirt, and never said a word. As I began to engage his class in a lesson on the history of educational inequality specifically for Black and Latina/o communities in the U.S., his physical posture suggested indifference. He sat slouched in his desk with his arms crossed and exuded a "I'm not interested" attitude. I occasionally passed by his desk, asked him questions, and all I got was a shrug. He never verbally engaged with me or the teacher on record.

It all changed one day when I taught a brief lesson on *Lopez v. Seccombe 1944* (Oseguera, 2010). This was a case involving the city of San Bernardino's discriminatory policies against Latinas/os' use of a public swimming pool and other public facilities. When a group of children were denied admission into the public swimming pool, a class action lawsuit was filed and the judge voted in favor of Latino community. This case was the first time the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment of the Constitution was invoked to protect the rights of Latina/os in the U.S. (see Oseguera, 2010 for a detailed overview of the case).

Juan suddenly sat up. "What?? That happened here? Why haven't we ever heard of this?" This information woke him up. For years he passed through the school system with very little interest in what school had to offer him. Based on what I observed in my brief experience with him, it is likely the case that his resistance to school was merely a reaction to an environment that failed to meaningfully engage him. Teachers could try all they want. They could tell him about the ramifications of his behavior on "his future." They could kick him out of class. They could fail him. In the end, he refused to entertain a school system and everything they had to offer because the system failed to recognize him, his community, and his history.

This is precisely the goal of engaging students in the History of Educational Inequality. Our approach includes a review of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Americanization movement for Native Americans, Women's access to education and women's suffrage, *Mendez v. Westminster*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, Chicano Walkouts, School Desegregation in Boston, and the more recent Jena 6 case. Students are provided with an opportunity to discuss its relevance for today. Documentaries, readings, news clippings, and social media are used to engage students and teach each case/moment. In some classes, students are expected to research the topic and deliver a 20-minute presentation on the case/moment, and explore evidence of its impact today.

The reality is that many of these events are excluded from the traditional state-sanctioned curriculum, especially in spaces serving most Latina/o students across the U.S. and most universities. While the exceptions lie in ethnic studies departments and given the recent expansion of ethnic studies in high schools in different states should be acknowledged, most Latina/o students will not learn about their history and these

pivotal moments in U.S. history unless educators explicitly engage students with the content.

As a pedagogical approach with Latina/o students, explicitly and intentionally engaging students in these approaches acknowledges the Community Cultural Wealth of their communities and their contributions to education and society (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2013). Most Latina/o children are never taught about the brilliance of their people. Such a pedagogy should be non-negotiable and can be integrated in any subject and content area. The challenge to educators is to collaborate with one another and with public partners like universities to approach the work authentically and with relevance.

Recommendations for Practice

- University faculty who are developing future educators should use local moments in educational inequality as curriculum. Students can research, share, and develop curriculum. These efforts should be practiced with transparency; future educators should engage youth in similar ways.
- Current K12 leaders should support and provide a platform for current teachers to explore topics of educational inequality in the U.S. *with* their students; such work should be publicized and celebrated with the community.
- District leaders and policymakers should fund and develop policy that builds upon the Cultural Wealth of students and the legacy of their communities.

Powerful Ideas in Education

The third pedagogical approach involves a deliberate attempt at exposing students to some powerful ideas in education. While in no way is this list of ideas comprehensive, it does introduce some transformative concepts that they normally do not get until college or graduate school, if ever at all. This is important because of the reality facing many of our "educational" institutions and the presence of a Literacy for Stupidification that Macedo (1993) addresses in his analysis of schools and society. That is, in many educational spaces, students, students of color, and Latina/o students specifically are not exposed to critical theories, concepts, or ways of seeing the world. In many instances, this prevention of access is deliberate. The struggle for ethnic studies in Arizona over the last 10 years is a perfect example. Teachers, scholars, and

researchers have worked with students to introduce powerful ideas such as Paulo Freire's (1973) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* or Rudy Acuna's (2015) *Occupied America*. To those of us in the field of education, sociology, ethnic studies, Chicana/o Studies and others, these are seminal texts. However, they often fail to reach high school or middle school students unless these works are ushered in by ethnic studies programs.

Without an ethnic studies program to work with, our work through The PRAXIS Project with Latina/o youth has committed itself to exposing students to concepts like the dialectic approach to teaching and learning and the banking/domesticating trends in education (Freire, 1973), power in classrooms and schools (Delpit, 1995), resistance theory and critical race theory (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001), and subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). Not only do we introduce the concepts, but we encourage students to take a critical look at their Educational Journeys/Caminos Educativos and draw connections. While many of our students have a critical view of their own educational experiences, they often lack the opportunity to reflect and bridge their experiences with concepts that exist in the world. For many students, feelings and experiences of shame or denigration by teachers or systems have been normalized largely because they do not have a language to critically analyze their social and educational conditions or their resistance emerged in counterproductive ways that resulted in the discipline, punishment, or exporting students from school (Fine, 1991). Learning about Valenzuela's (1999) subtractive schooling concept allows students to put a language to their experience and then work to envision and create a new reality.

Engaging with these texts is carried out in small groups of 4 to 5 students. Each group is assigned a college student when available. Each group is required to define a facilitator, note taker, and speaker although all students are encouraged to speak for the purposes of developing that specific skill. Rather than providing students with an entire text, excerpts are used to ease access to the material as many of the writings are considered theoretically dense, even for advanced graduate students. Students are encouraged to struggle through the material and identify key takeaways. Many students welcome the challenge especially when we tell them that this material is taught to students pursuing a doctorate in education. This latter point also addresses a major

void and pedagogical experience in middle and high schools serving mostly low-income Latina/o youth across the country: intellectual starvation.

Powerful Ideas in Education provide students with an opportunity to bridge their inherent forms of Community Cultural Wealth with theories and concepts that often reflect similar contexts, challenges, and possibilities. In the end, students walk away with a language, an analytical experience, and a set of practical skills that they can use later in school, in college, and beyond. Wrestling with content, making connections with their own lives, and building with others around these experiences results in transformative pedagogical experiences that help realize the purpose and significance of Community Cultural Wealth with Latina/o students.

Recommendations for Practice

- K12 teachers should create lessons where students explore the origins of key concepts, their origins, time periods/political contexts, and relevance/applicability today.
- District leadership and policymakers should provide material support for teachers engaged in this work with students; support needs to come from the top.
- University faculty charged to develop future educators should create similar assignments so they are exposed to the content prior to working in the school system.

Group Research Project

The culminating pedagogical experience revolves around the group research project. This project uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to engaging Latina/o students in work related to issues they identify as critical to their lives, especially in their schools and communities (see Ayala, Cammarota, Rivera, Rodriguez, Berta-Avila, & Torre, forthcoming).[2] Traditional research would simply facilitate opportunities to collect students' experiences via surveys, interviews, and observational techniques.   However, PAR actually engages students as the researchers to the point

---

[2] The author is collaborating with a group of scholars who are currently authoring a book on the *PAR Entremundos* approach to Participatory Action Research with Latina/o communities across the Americas.

where they name the issue to be explored (usually related to some significant theme that emerged from the Educational Journey/*Caminos Educativos* experience), construct a research question that addresses the issue, identify the kinds of data to collect and how to collect it, build bridges with the theories and concepts explored in powerful ideas in education, and collect, analyze, and disseminate their findings to various communities and audiences. The ultimate goal is to facilitate real change in practice and policy at the local level and beyond.

Researcher/facilitators pose a series of critical questions to initiate the process. Students' responses generate a list which is essentially a set of potential research topics. The collective group narrows the list to roughly 10 topic areas. Students then select and assemble themselves into groups by area of interest. There may be roughly 4-6 students in each group. Using a discussion template, students begin to discuss why the topic is a problem, to whom, and transforming the problem into a researchable question. Over time their research question is refined, data collection methods are identified, surveys and interview protocol are created when applicable, and students lead the data collection and recommendations process.

In previous work, students explored issues like teacher quality, student engagement in the classroom, school cleanliness, and student dropout issues. After a series of practice presentations, the school's principal and superintendent were invited to a presentation. Perhaps more important than the content of the presentations was the superintendent's awe at students exercising their voices via high quality academic work. In this particular instance, the superintendent seemed struck by the students' level of engagement and enthusiasm with the work. Shortly after this meeting, the superintendent decided to implement a district wide policy to be applied at high schools that centered around student voice forums and drawing students in each month to assess and monitor the school's culture. The goal was for each teacher to identify two students—a highly engaged/high achieving student and a disengaged/low-achieving student—and send them to the student voice forum. At the forum students addressed three key questions: What is working well in school? What is not working well in school? What are some solutions to these challenges? These forums served as an ongoing barometer check on the school culture and served as real time data that the

principal and district can act on as needed. Through this work, Latina/o youth exercised their role as public intellectuals. All they needed was an opportunity and a process to help get them there. But how did these opportunities emerge? It was intentional.

During the initial brainstorming session, we engage with problem-posing pedagogy in the spirit of Paulo Freire's (1973) work. We ask, why do some students succeed and some fail? Why do some graduate and some drop out? What is the difference between schooling and education? These kinds of questions generate exciting energy and dialogues with Latina/o students. Students generate endless reasons to these questions and demonstrate complex understandings of the issues. The facilitators must have strong sensibilities to group process and a mindful eye on both process and outcome goals. It is vital that the historic silencing of students' voices or devaluing of students' theories, perspectives, or ideas is not replicated within the PAR space. For years students have been socialized to believe that their stories, their *testimonios*, and their Educational Journeys/*Caminos Educativos* do not matter. PAR works as a process to desocialize students as identified by Paulo Freire (1973) and from these subtractive forms of education and replace it with an authentic approach that values their voices and experiences. However, this work won't happen overnight.

In one of my projects, a young lady in the back of the classroom sat silent but engaged for nearly three months. While she seemed engaged by producing her Educational Journey and engaging in small group discussions about the powerful ideas in education, she never stepped up to take a leadership role with the project. It wasn't until the Group Project experience where her voice and leadership was exercised. When we asked why it took her so long to engage with us she stated, "I didn't trust you guys. I didn't know if you were committed to us or if you would be gone next week." This experience spoke volumes about the work and the context in which the student attended school. The school had been struggling academically, socially, and economically for years. Leadership turnover was high, school violence was on the rise, parent and community engagement was virtually absent, and the school was on notice given it perpetual academic failure. Given this context, this student was rightfully suspicious about our intentions and commitment to students. In other words, it was one thing to say we were committed to students and the project; it was another thing to prove it.

Apparently we proved it after three months and this was a major lesson learned about the pedagogy and politics of this work.

Those wishing to engage in this work cannot simply implement a PAR-type approach with Latina/o youth or any other marginalized students in our schools/colleges/universities. There needs to be a commitment to the patience and process required to move the work forward. It will not happen overnight and facilitators may face resistance. The resistance is not personal. The resistance is not defiance. The resistance is not disinterest. The resistance is simply a learned response from a system that has largely subtracted their spirit from the teaching and learning process. The group research project and the PAR approach to make this happen is just one way where the Community Cultural Wealth of students can be used to engage in work that is relevant to students' interests.

Recommendations for Practice

- K12 educators can integrate PAR approaches during group project and significant assignments;
- School, district, and policymakers should support the work of teachers and students in terms of access to data, access to school, and freedom to engage in the field whether it is on campus or in the community;
- University faculty should model these approaches for future educators; if they experience it, they will be able to practice it in the field.

Where Do We Go From Here? Toward Institutionally Responsive Pedagogies that Foster Latina/o Students' Community Cultural Wealth

Much of what has been discussed above has been the why and the how. I addressed how my own principles for engagement shape my work with communities, research, scholarship, and teaching and pedagogical engagement with students across the educational pipeline. Then I described four pedagogical approaches that I have used with Latina/o students that create the conditions so they position themselves at the center of the educational endeavor. By engaging with these approaches, there is no shortage of curricular ideas, engaging students in creative ways, and findings audiences

who need to engage with this work. In fact, there are teachers and other pedagogues who do this work every single day.

The question now becomes, what conditions are necessary for this kind of work to flourish? How might institutions transform their practices to comprehensively make these pedagogical approaches the norm rather than the exception? The transformative possibilities of Community Cultural Wealth with Latina/o students will not be realized unless there is a commitment by leaders. Here leadership is not just positional authority as defined by an institutionally ascribed title. Rather, leadership is defined by a commitment from any community member—student, teacher, parent, principal, community organizer, nonprofit leader, curriculum specialist, counselor, community college faculty member, tenured university professor, college/university administrator— to exercise a pedagogy that centers on creating conditions *with* Latina/o students that facilitates opportunities to name, dismantle, rebuild, and thrive. At the same time, it is equally important to recognize that pedagogy is in part shaped by the context. Thus, for the purposes of this work, and with the intention of working to address the possibilities with Latina/o students, the power of policy needs to be included.

In order to set the stage for this work to grow and thrive, a pedagogical approach at the institutional level is necessary. Historically, pedagogy has been largely viewed as a teacher-centric, classroom level practice that is often confined to the four walls of a traditional classroom space. For the purposes of proposing an institutional pedagogy that is responsive to the power of Community Cultural Wealth, a series of principles that aim to push and promote institutional culture must be considered to move the work forward. Because leadership does not occur in a vacuum, institutional culture and all of its associated complexities must be considered as leaders engage with this work. It is my hope that these principles inspire a dialogue within the field that explores what kinds of conditions are required for Latina/o students' Community Cultural Wealth and all forms of capital (Yosso, 2005) to thrive.

Additive and Constructive

Leaders within institutions need to focus on additive and constructive work with Latina/o students. In this context, additive refers to the strengths and positive

developments and contributions within the Latina/o community, while constructive connotes a spirit of growth and improvement over time. The additive work in no way subtracts from naming, denouncing, and deconstructing all forms of past and present day oppression facing all marginalized peoples. In fact, that work must be done and perhaps prior to creating an additive agenda. Leaders should commit to guiding the community through efforts that build our own practices, pedagogies, policies, and power. It is through these practices that individual and collective consciousness is born. Inherently, when an additive lens is used as a guiding principle driving the work, it will be naturally constructive as it contributes to building more humanizing spaces that prioritize, legitimize, and elevate our lives, our communities, and our cultures, languages, and legacies.

Community as Curriculum

Secondly, leaders need to leverage the community as the curriculum. The Community Cultural Wealth framework allows us to recognize that our community is rich with power, knowledge, history, and skills. This deviates from the state-sanctioned curriculum that drives and defines most of our teaching and learning spaces and for that matter the ways in which our "educators" are trained in higher education. So, not only must leaders recognize the wealth of the community, but they must be action-oriented and willing to put the community front and center in course syllabi, lesson plans, and assessment approaches. One way to do this is to create content that reflects the rich history of the community. This requires an institutional commitment by leaders to create the conditions so this work can happen.

An equally important leadership commitment needs to focus on the *testimonios* of the people (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). Each of our communities has a rich history that has largely gone unexplored given the narrow, subtractive, and prescriptive approach to legitimate knowledge. Educational Journeys is one concrete approach. Another example is the 2014 documentary *Stolen Education* produced by Dr. Enrique Alemán at the University of Texas San Antonio. Through his own research on his family history he learned that his mother and aunts and uncles were at the center of a major desegregation/school discrimination case in 1950's in south Texas. He collected

documents, conducted interviews, and toured the community to tell a powerful story about his own community and the Mexican American struggles for civil rights in this country (Alemán, 2014). These are the types of stories that sit in our communities and will remain covered by a blanket of institutional racism unless we do something about it. Leaders play a key role in lifting this blanket so that Latina/o students actually lead these community exploration efforts.

Dialoguing—A Skill and a Disposition

There is no shortage of ideas and creative responses in our communities. However, what is often lacking are leaders who have the capacity to bring people together and have constructive dialogues with our communities and the people who serve them. I have met numerous progressive, equity-minded, and social justice-oriented leaders in many communities. However, they often find it difficult to move a group of people in one particular direction. One of the reasons has to do with a shortage of leaders who know how to employ certain dialoguing sensibilities with communities. Facilitating and leading group dialogues is both a skill and disposition and I will attempt to address both of these approaches together.

First the leader needs to be committed to dialoguing as a healing and knowledge-generating endeavor. The leader must recognize that the solutions to the various challenges facing our communities are *in* our communities. With recognition that our communities are culturally wealthy, leaders can proceed with co-creating processes that capitalize on a problem-posing approach as recommended by Paulo Freire. Through the dialogue, the leader must not only privilege the content and ideas that emerge, but recognition of the process must be monitored as a reflection of the temperature and tone of the community. Further, the silenced and the act of silencing must be examined by recognizing the process that comes with the work. Over participation and dominating behavior need to also be monitored and called out. Similarly, power dynamics by race, gender, class, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, and language must be acknowledged as well. Leaders must also be committed to moving the process forward by exercising a keen sensibility around process and outcome. While the goal is to always work toward equity, social justice, and liberatory outcomes for and

with our communities, the process is just as important as the end goal. The process itself is an educational struggle where participants learn about group process, capacity-building, group dynamics, individual power, group power, and much more. Leaders committed to this work must carefully monitor the process-outcome duality (Rodriguez, 2015) as they engage with communities committed to developing institutionally responsive pedagogies so that Community Cultural Wealth can grow and thrive.

Education for Liberation

The question that occasionally emerges, and perhaps should be asked more frequently is, Latina/o education for what? For whom, and for what purpose? Elsewhere I have written about Transformative Recognition and the role that education plays for Latina/o youth and communities (Rodriguez, 2012). For struggling communities in general and Latina/o students specifically, inequalities and injustices persist. Whether the analysis is on the input side of the equation or an examination of the outcome or impact of a policy, Latina/o students and the communities where they reside are largely operating in state of crisis. Yet, they demonstrate incredible collective resistance by overcoming considerable obstacles and showing up to school or class each day and symbolically say, "Show me what you got?" If what the teacher, school, or institution is deemed relevant or worthy, students engage. If not, they won't. The question remains, Will we take advantage of this opportunity?

I would argue that education for the basic skills is necessary, but not enough. Antonio Gramsci argues that education, in part, should aim to provide discipline, rigor, and skills for students (Giroux, 2000). But again, the question become, education for what? A liberatory agenda realizes what Paulo Freire (1973) calls reading the word and the world. Education should be about transgressing the boundaries as identified by bell hooks (1994). Education should afford opportunities to understand the self in the world as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) addresses in her work. These perspectives demonstrate that education is far more than an acquisition of skills. Leaders should work to develop liberatory education for Latina/o students and communities by creating conditions for students to generate knowledge, theorize about their communities, share their

knowledge, deconstruct their communities, and reconstruct their communities where they can grow and thrive.

Closing Thoughts

If we are committed to transforming the Latina/o educational condition in the U.S. today, we must be committed to developing and fostering leaders who are principled, bold, community-centric, and committed to education for liberation. Community Cultural Wealth as an approach not only gives us an opportunity, but requires a social, political, and educational commitment to be forthright and visionary so all our Latina/o students across the educational pipeline are recognized as agents of their own conditions and have the capacity to transform these conditions by growing, building, and thriving together.

References

Acuña, R. F. (2015). *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (8ᵗʰ ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Alemán, E., Jr. (Producer), Alemán, E., Jr. & Luna, R. (Writers), & Luna, R. (Director). (2014). Stolen Education [Documentary, feature]. San Francisco, CA: Video Project.

Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.

Burciaga, R., & Erbstein, N. (2013). Latina/o dropouts: Generating community cultural wealth. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal, 6* (1), 24-33.

de los Reyes, E. & Gozemba, P. A. (2001). *Pockets of hope: How students and teachers change the world.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Carmona, J. (2012). Chicana/Latina *Testimonios*: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical, and political. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 45* (3), 363-372.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Freire, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: The Seabury Press.

Giroux, H. A. (2000). *Stealing innocence: Youth, corporate power, and the politics of culture.* New York, NY: Palgrave.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Macedo, D. P. (1993). Literacy for stupidification: The pedagogy of big lies. *Harvard Educational Review, 62* (2), 183-206.

Oseguera, M. (2010). *Lopez v. Seccombe*: The City of San Bernardino's Mexican American Defense Committee and Its Role in Regional and National Desegregation. *History in the Making: A Journal of History, 3*, 1-31.

Rodriguez, L. F. (forthcoming). Our Educational Journeys: Toward a Pedagogy of Healing, Building, and Thriving with Students of Color Across the Educational Pipeline.

Rodriguez, L.F. (2015). *Intentional Excellence: The Pedagogy, Power, and Politics of Excellence in Latina/o Schools and Communities.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Rodriguez, L. F. (2014). *The Time is Now: Understanding and Responding to the Black and Latino Dropout Crisis.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Rodríguez, L. F. (2012). 'Everybody Grieves, but Still Nobody Sees:' Toward A Theory of Recognition for Students of Color in U.S. Education. *Teachers College Record, 114* (1), 1-31.

Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. J. (2001). From racial stereotyping and deficit discourse in

teacher education: Toward a critical race theory in teacher education. *Multicultural Education,* 2-8.

Trueba, E. T. (1999). *Latinos Unidos: From cultural diversity to the politics of solidarity.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 8* (1), 69–91.