Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 11 Issue 1

2017

AMAE Open Issue

Editors
Patricia Sánchez
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors
Julie L. Figueroa
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Journal Website: http://amaejournal.utsa.edu

Developing Transformative Space for Student Resistance: Latina/o Students' Interruption of Subtractive Schooling Practices

Karina Chavarria

University of California, Los Angeles

Abstract

Social reproduction scholars and the literature on critical race theory and student resistance contend that schools are not neutral institutions existing in a vacuum free of the political and social struggles for rights and resources (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Fine, 1991). Instead, schools can be institutions that reproduce dominant ideologies and oppressive hierarchies or arenas from which to challenge power and status-quo policies (Freire, 1970). Drawing from two years of participant observations at Hillcrest High School, this study explores how Latina/o students in collaboration with their teacher engage in transformational resistance to subtractive schooling. I document how co-leadership in the classroom between teacher and students supports the co-creation of a transformative space for critical reflection. Similar to activist groups creating spaces to cultivate youth political engagement, classrooms can be reconstructed to foster the development of students as agents of change. This article presents the process through which Latina/o students gain critical reflection of social inequalities and systems of oppression that enables them to advocate for more inclusive and just schooling practices.

Keywords: Latina/o schooling, student resistance, educational inequalities, subtractive schooling.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.24974/amae.11.330

Introduction

Deficit-thinking models like subtractive schooling practices are defined by inequitable school structures that lead to uncaring school environments, inequitable opportunities, and repressive practices (Moll & Ruiz, 2002; Quiroz, 2001;Valenzuela 1999). Scholars demonstrate that Latina/o students' experiences with subtractive schooling practices detrimentally affect their educational attainment (Conchas, 2001; Conchas & Vigil, 2010; Gibson, Gandara, & Peterson-Koyama, 2004). Students, though, are not passive beings. Research investigating students' resistance to subtractive schooling practices reveals that their responses comprise negative and positive forms of oppositional behavior (Fine, 1991; Robinson & Ward, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). Yet, few have examined student resistance that carries the potential for social change. This article is informed by the following questions: What happens when we have a different model of schooling other than subtractive practices? How does a schooling model that values youths' social backgrounds affect Latina/o students' schooling experiences?

In the case of Chicana/o students, Solorzano and Bernal (2001) theorize transformational resistance as student behavior that demonstrates not just a critique of social oppression, but also carries a desire for social justice. Thus, transformational resistance presents the greatest possibility for social change. I offer new contributions to this notion of transformational resistance by examining, empirically, how Latina/o students develop and enact transformational resistance to subtractive schooling practices. Specifically, I bridge the idea of claiming rights via difference—from cultural citizenship scholarship—with perspectives that students are possessors of experiential knowledge—central to funds of knowledge frameworks—as a tool for documenting how Latina/o students and teachers co-construct the classroom as a transformative space for resistance. I define transformative space as intellectual and physical arenas that situate students' social backgrounds (race/ethnicity, class, and gender) as essential features of the learning process. Via participant observations in classrooms over a two-year period, I capture the contextualized interactions informing how teachers and Latina/o students co-construct transformative space for student resistance. I document three stages in this process: 1) co-constructing transformative space, 2) cultivating a sense of belonging to the classroom, 3) carving out a legitimate membership to school community.

I argue that students' sense of belonging to an academic classroom community composed of Latina/o peers leads to a conception of themselves as legitimate members of their school. Students attend school but they may not necessarily feel as legitimate members of that community. I contend that when students are invested as legitimate members, they build internal resilience that supports their confidence to transform feelings of belonging into actions. Students then take on leadership roles in the larger community of the school through participation in school-wide assemblies where they openly address social injustices. I conclude with a discussion of the significance that transformative spaces in

school can play in fostering students' awareness of systems of oppression and enacting strategies to affect social change.

Latinas/os and Subtractive Schooling

Valenzuela (1999), in her seminal piece on Mexican origin students' school experiences, identifies how subtractive schooling practices—the de-Mexicanization that promotes a de-identification from the Spanish language, Mexico, and Mexican culture—have a deleterious impact on students' educational outcomes. Teachers perceive and treat students' cultural and linguistic characteristics as deficits thereby hampering these students' academic success. Hence, Valenzuela (1999) challenges cultural deficiency models that blame families and students for their underachievement, demonstrating instead that the historical racialization of those of Mexican descent is inextricably embedded in schooling practices. She demonstrates that the clash between schooling practices and Mexican origin students' upbringing is especially harmful to these students who lose their connection to those cultural beliefs and folk world-views that promote emotional and psychological investment in educational success.

Scholars examining students' resistance to subtractive schooling draw our attention to how contradictions and struggles inherent in schools often give rise to opportunities for enacting resistance and social change (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Weis, 1990; Willis, 1977). Some students develop resistance strategies—including disengaging from academic instruction, leaving school altogether, or conforming—that often (re)produce the oppressive conditions experienced (Conchas & Vigil, 2010; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). But, for students who resist subtractive schooling by staying in school, the literature suggests that "transformational mentors" play a critical role in socializing and guiding students to enact their agency via more transformational forms of resistance (Ochoa & Ochoa, 2004; Solorzano, 1998). Yet, Solorzano and Bernal (2001) argue that contemporary literature on student resistance has not provided a model that accurately explains Chicana/o school resistance. They build on student resistance literature through their theoretical construct of *transformational resistance,* which they define as, "…student behavior that illustrates both a critique of her or his oppression and desire for social justice" (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 319). Their construct allows us to examine how students' resistant behavior is political, conscious, collective, and activated by a sense that individual and social change are attainable.

I build from Solorzano and Bernal's (2001) notion of "transformational resistance" by drawing from conceptual frames in *cultural citizenship* and *funds of knowledge* scholarship to document the day-to-day process by which Latina/o students and their teacher(s) engage in transformational forms of resistance. First, cultural citizenship is conceived of as the right to retain difference, while also maintaining one's right to participate in society (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). This focus on claims making

to social membership via mainting cultural identity allows for exploring the agency enacted by marginalized communities and the ways communities that have been denied access to dominant forms of power create new rights and practice citizenship. For example, literature on Chicana/o students' post-secondary experiences illustrates that marginality, for students of color, is more than just dealing with domination. Rather, these students reformulate marginality as a space of resistance and source of empowerment (Flores, 2003; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). I employ the idea of claims making via a racial/ethnic identity as a means to document how Latina/o students redefine claims to legitimate membership in their school community, thereby establishing the terms under which they become active participants.

Second, the funds of knowledge framework is conceptualized as the competence and knowledge students develop through lived experience (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Gonzalez & Moll, 2002). Scholars contend that working-class students and students of color accumulate experiential knowledge through the cultural values and daily experiences of survival (Andrew & Yee, 2006; Thomson & Hall, 2008). The experiential knowledge matters because it enables students to maintain high aspirations in the face of structural obstacles (Gandara, 1995) and to use essential kinship ties for emotional, moral, and educational lessons (Gutiérrez, 2002). Scholars propose that teachers who draw on students' experiences and priorities in schooling validate the knowledge and life values students bring to the classroom enabling students to scaffold learning from the familiar (de los Rios & Ochoa 2012; Moll et al., 1992). The affirmation of students' knowledge and life values as critical to the learning process allows students to cultivate a sense of belonging to the classroom that goes beyond feeling engaged with the academic content, identifying with peers/teacher, or being active participants in the classroom (Esteban-Gutart & Moll, 2014; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). This article, then, contributes to literature on students' resistance to subtractive schooling by presenting the day-to-day work Latina/o students engage in to gain critical reflection, cultivate a sense of belonging to the classroom, and carve out a legitimate membership to school community.

I contend that the work these students perform, in collaboration with their teacher, represents empirical evidence in support of "transformational resistance" strategies (Bernal & Solorzano, 2001). To specify how classroom daily interactions inform Latina/o students' use of strategies for transformational resistance, which represent positive interventions to subtractive schooling practices, I employ cultural citizenship and funds of knowledge frames. Cultural citizenship is manifested as Latina/o students' racial/ethnic identity, which informs their claims making strategies to a legitimate membership to school community. This process is grounded in students' experiences with being racially othered within and outside of schools. That is, students' racial identity becomes a filter for making sense of and responding to the classroom curriculum as well as their interactions with school staff/peers. In turn, from funds of

knowledge I borrow the notion that students hold school competencies and experiential knowledge as a tool to identify how students cultivate a sense of belonging to their classroom. This article addresses calls to capture and better understand students' engagement in resistance strategies that seek to counteract ineffective educational practices (López, 2003; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Solorzano, 1995).

Methods

I use a qualitative research design, participant observations of classrooms and school sponsored events (club meetings, assemblies) along with informal conversations with students over a two-year period (2012-2013 and 2013-2014), to explore how Latina/o students and their teacher(s) enact transformational resistance to subtractive schooling. To ensure the anonymity of participants, the school's name and those of all individuals who were observed and are quoted have been changed.

Site and Classroom

This article focuses on Latina/o students at Hill Crest High School (pseudonym), a public urban school in Los Angeles. As of 2012-2013, the school's student population was 54% Latina/o, 26% Black, 16% White, and 4% Asian. Although relatively more diverse in student body than other district schools, it still is a majority-minority school with Latino and Black students making up close to 88% of its student population.

The data in this article are based on participant observations in a Mexican American literature course and school events. The course was established in the mid-90s by the now principal of the school while he was one of the few Latina/o teachers at the campus. Following his promotion to principal, the course was taken up by one of the Latina teachers. In the subsequent years, she and the principal collaborated in developing the course syllabus and the content covered throughout the year. Although titled Mexican American literature, the course is more encompassing of the broader Latina/o experience given increasing numbers of Central American students who are part of the school student body. Each year, if enough students enroll, the teacher is offered two periods of the course with each class composed of between 35-45 students. The majority of students in both class periods are Latinas/os with 5-10 students who are African American, White, Asian, or other race/ethnicity. Many of the students choose to take the course as their alternative to the traditional senior English class. I became an active participant observer in both class periods, which over the two years totaled 160-170 students.

Data Analysis

The analysis stage began with the use of open coding techniques, applying conceptual labels on

interactions and events that reflected the pattern of interactions between students and the teacher. These labels were then refined into themes that included "establishing trust", "caring and bonding interactions", and "addressing social inequalities." For example, "establishing trust" involved the kind and quality of interactions with peers and teacher that influenced whether students shared in discussions over discrimination and social inequalities.

Further, I employed analytic memos to track emerging thoughts on how students made sense of the course content and class discussions. I paid particular attention to students' conversations in and outside of the classroom to assess the evolution of students' perceptions of themselves and their social location within school. I sought to grasp the process in how sense of belonging to classroom and legitimate membership to school community shaped the co-construction of the classroom as a transformative space.

After combining my reflective memos from the field with the analytic codes, I re-evaluated students' behavioral and verbal responses in the classroom as well as wider school activities to conceptualize the sequential relationship from co-constructing transformative space, cultivating a sense of belonging, and carving out membership. It is important to note that the process I document is not rigid or linear. Rather, the nature of interactions amongst students and between students and teacher over time involves more flexibility, a feature that is central to the process I chronicle.

Findings

In the sections below I describe the process by which Latina/o students engage in transformational resistance to subtractive schooling. First, I present the classroom as the foundation of relationship building and find that the teacher's modeling of emotional vulnerability initiates the co-construction of their classroom into transformative space. Then I detail how students' sense of belonging to the classroom as a community of racial/ethnic academic peers is cultivated from their experiential knowledge with prejudice. Next, I depict how students carve out membership to school by redefining legitimate forms of being active participants. I conclude with a discussion of the significance of developing transformative spaces in schools for fostering students' awareness of systems of oppression and setting the foundations for teacher/student collaborations toward enacting strategies for social change.

Co-constructing Transformative Space—Bonding via Vulnerability and Honesty

Co-constructing the classroom as a transformative space is a process defined by the mutual academic and personal risk taking of teacher and students, risk taking that is validated through respecting one another's vulnerabilities when the curriculum content produces emotionally charged responses.

Ms. Gonzalez, a Latina in her early 40s, teaches her classes from a Chicana feminist perspective fostering students' critiques of inequalities in the school, the city, and society. At this point in the class (second month of academic year), students have been introduced to events in the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements. Ms. Gonzalez is showing clips of a documentary, "Precious Knowledge," to help students connect youths' past struggles for rights with those of contemporary Latina/o youths' fights for educational freedom. The documentary presents the struggles of Latina/o teachers and students in Tucson, Arizona in their attempts to save ethnic studies classes from being banned.

> As we all watch the video, I notice Ms. Gonzalez's expression begin to change, furrowed eyebrows and glossy eyes as though tears are waiting to burst out. The video ends and she reminds students of her origins in Arizona and that her brother actually graduated from the high school featured in the documentary. As she speaks, her voice quivers and breaks. Tears streaming down her face, students instantly respond, "Ms. don't cry" and "Ms. you're making us cry." I look around, some girls are dabbing the corners of their eyes while some of the boys bow their heads. Ms. Gonzalez continues, "I'm getting so emotional because I have friends there who are going through this [fight for ethnic studies] and I can't help them. I just want you guys to understand why I get so emotional because what you will see right now is not history, it is happening now."

The classroom scene above contains a number of features that show Ms. Gonzalez modeling for students that emotional responses are legitimate forms of engaging with academic content. Through her emotional responses, Ms. Gonzalez guides students to be co-creators of the classroom as a transformative space. That is, as a space where students' intellectual and social backgrounds (race/ethnicity, class, and gender) are essential features of the learning process. Her emotional response is transformative on two aspects. First, by emotionally engaging with the visual images of Tucson students' campaigns to defend their Ethnic Studies classes, Ms. Gonzalez is countering the expected objective—often interpreted as unbiased, emotionless—position desired from both teachers and students within a Eurocentric dominant pedagogy. Second, her emotional response also communicates to students an honesty about her investment in the class's academic content and her willingness to openly address the educational inequalities that Latina/o students face. In this space, students are assured that they are in a safe space because Ms. Gonzalez is taking the risk of potential embarrassment. She is demonstrating a trust in her students that they will respect and be supportive of one another in times of vulnerability.

By revealing an emotionally vulnerable state, Ms. Gonzalez establishes her classroom as a place where students can share their personal experiences with each other and her as a type of family bonding. For example, the females' pleading, "Ms. don't cry" while dabbing their eyes reflects an

empathy for her pain and their attempts at providing Ms. Gonzalez some comfort. The students begin to create emotional bonds with Ms. Gonzalez, bonds that are built on the trust entailed in honestly sharing personal experiences that may give rise to vulnerable emotional states. The trust and bonds established are the grounds upon which students and teacher co-construct their classroom as a transformative space. In addition to engaging in the construction of a transformative classroom space by bonding emotionally through emotional risk-taking and trust, students were willing to openly discuss their own struggles with discrimination and exclusion that led to conversations about belonging.

Cultivating Sense of Belonging—Commonalities in Experiencing Prejudice.

Sense of belonging is mostly understood as an emotional attachment, as an individual's feelings of being "at home" and "safe" (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For students, in addition to feeling safe at school and their classrooms, sense of belonging also involves being part of an intellectual community of academically engaged Latina/o peers who share experiences with discrimination.

Ms. Gonzalez designed the course as a combination of literature and history to introduce students to the Mexican American experience and struggles of people of color in the U.S., including African American and indigenous. Students have learned through readings, documentaries, and field-trips about the social and legal struggles Latinos have faced. Today Principal Gomez is lecturing on the evolution of ethnic labels and their significance to developing a notion of a Latino community.

> Principal Gomez stands at the front of the class, dressed in black slacks, white button-up dress shirt, and tie. He has asked students a number of questions in Socratic method trying to help students make sense of why not all who are of Mexican descent would define themselves as Mexican American. He asks, "Do you feel that the U.S. has accepted you as full-blooded American? What would make you feel that you are not accepted?" 5 to 7 hands quickly shoot up. The principal first calls on a light skinned Latino male student. The student responds, "I was born here but that does not mean that I am accepted. I don't look American, I'm dark skin." I look around the room and see many students nodding their heads. Some students comment with, "Yeah, at the fancy stores, the workers follow us around" and, "People assume because you're dark, you're not from here."

Questions and comments as those above are key sources of discussions and analysis during class. The students' responses to Mr. Gomez's question draw our attention to two distinct aspects of belonging—physical presence and social acceptance. In terms of physical belonging, the term "US" refers to the the territorially bounded nation-state and to this idea the students respond by stating that they belong since they were "born here," referencing the physical boundaries of the nation. Yet, the label "American" is

understood by students to reference the White social community. It is to this community that students' personal experiences with prejudice tell them they are not accepted and, thus, they do not define themselves as accepted. The young man's response reflects a keen analysis of the relationship between phenotype and racial categorization that is central to notions about race in the US. Although he is a light skin Mexican American, the young man is clear on the fact that he is not light enough to be treated or accepted as part of the White racial category. We reach this conclusion from his claim, "I don't look American, I'm dark skin," even though phenotypically his skin is light with a pinkish hue.

Further, their comments integrate the idea that belonging to an ethnic/racial community does not necessarily translate into acceptance by or belonging to White or upper class sectors of society. Yet, it is in this struggle over feelings of belonging to the larger American community, understood as White, that students are learning the skills and tools by which to redefine their own claims to membership. The classroom discussions and schooling experiences initiate students in the practices implicated in establishing their legitimacy to claim membership in and rights to participate in America's social institutions. That is, they come to recognize that being White is not a necessary condition for belonging to American society. The schooling and social experiences, evidenced above, include both learning and becoming active rather passive learners in the classroom. Students learn and practice the skills to claim membership from within a place where they belong and are invested—their Mexican American literature class.

Carving Out Membership—Re-defining Legitimate Participation in School

The scene below illustrates how students integrate their personal experiences with prejudice and their newly acquired knowledge of Latinas/os' legal and civil rights struggles as a means to redefine being legitimate members of their school. The critical discussions of Mexican Americans' historical and contemporary battles for equality are opportunities for students to apply the lessons from these struggles to their own schooling experiences, shaping how students define themselves as legitimate members of their school community. That is, their connection to Latinas/os' struggles for rights influence students' investment in claiming membership to their school community. These students' claims to legitimate membership to school take a variety of forms, from taking ownership of knowledge production in the classroom to being leaders in school-wide events. The scene described next illustrates one of the forms that students enact their notion of legitimate membership to school.

Today the annual Latino assembly is being held in the auditorium. It is an all day event for students taking part in the performances. The Latino assembly has been part of this school's yearly event for more than 15 years now. But, this is the first year that the content of the information, if not

the dance performances, has centered on social and civil rights struggles for equality by different ethnic/racial groups (Latinos, African American, Native American, and Asian American) in contemporary American society. Approximately 100 students perform during the assembly. Although most are of Latina/o descent, there are a few African American and Asian American student participants. All the student participants are volunteers, spending months practicing the dances to be performed, writing and rehearsing poetry, and working on the content for the power-point. Students from all the small learning communities including the two magnets are attending the assembly: Whites, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and Central Americans. Teachers sign up to take some or all of their classes to see the performances. The majority of students are attentive, taking pictures or recording on their phones, with a few sleeping or talking with their friends.

The theme of this year's assembly is cultural and social revolutions. The presentation includes a power-point of the social revolutions in Mexico, Central and South America, and ending with the US This yearly assembly is an opportunity for students to learn about and celebrate each others cultural backgrounds as well as observe their friends participating as members of the racial/ethnic communities they belong to. This venue of a school-wide assembly is a community public space in that the assembly brings together students and teachers from different ethnic/racial groups and social classes.

> An hour in length, the first period performance is half way to the end. Many of Ms. Gonzalez's students participate. Jamie, one of her students, has taken center stage. He is of Mexican descent but is very light skin in complexion. He is performing a poem he has written titled "Colors." The poem speaks to the role that race and racism has played in U.S. society and still plays in students' lives. He addresses the various contexts in which color is still used to judge others. He speaks to how during lunch students segregate themselves by color, how teachers sometimes "only see students' color," and ends with an exhortation "color is just a color." Students, almost in unison, stand from their seats clapping and exclaiming, "Yeah, that's right" and "Preach."

Jamie's poem recitation reflects the bonding that has taken place in Ms. Gonzalez's class through honest discussions about racism and systems of oppression like class and patriarchy, as detailed in the sections above. Through his poem, Jamie is illustrating to the rest of his school peers a tool for channeling their personal experiences with discrimination and school inequalities and how these experiences fit into their broader social location. By addressing racism through the repetition of the word "color," Jamie draws attention to the visibility and constancy of race that is part of some students' school experiences through their encounters with being stereotyped and discriminated. Jamie's participation in this school-wide assembly enables him to engage his peers and school staff in a public conversation about students' schooling experiences. He is publicly redefining legitimate forms of

claiming membership to his school community, a membership that does not entail the relinquishing of his racial/ethnic identity in order to be perceived and treated as American.

Further, he is not only engaging in claims making to equal membership in school community, but also attempts to urge the whole school community to reflect on the impact of judging others based on phenotypical markers. The assembly also demonstrates how students, through the bonding relationships with school leaders (teachers/principal) and school peers, forge connections amongst other peers of color to form a broader community. Students' interactions during the preparation process for and participation in this school-wide assembly represent potentialities wherein students are empowered to employ their cultural and working-class experiential knowledge as sources of pride and agency. In taking part in this assembly and seeing their experiences defined as driving forces in contemporary social movements, students can begin to reframe their experiential knowledge as legitimate grounds by which to participate as equal members and citizens of the larger American society.

Conclusion

We have extensive evidence that subtractive schooling practices have been detrimental to Latina/o students' academic experiences and educational outcomes (Conchas, 2001; Conchas & Vigil, 2010; Covarrubias, 2011). Yet, as individuals with agency, students have resisted subtractive schooling practices in self-defeating or self-protective ways (Valenzuela, 1999; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Fine et al., 2004; Taines, 2011). Expanding the body of literature on student resistance, Solorzano and Bernal (2001) present a theoretical framework of Chicana and Chicano school resistance to capture a broader array of students' resistance that carries the potential for social change.

This study presents empirical evidence in support of the conceptual frame of Chicana/o transformational resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Based on two-years of participant observations, the researcher documents the process by which Latina/o students' interactions with peers and teachers are the foundation upon which transformative school space is co-constructed. In the day-to-day co-constructions of such transformative spaces, Latina/o students acquire critical reflection that assists in reframing their relationship to schooling. It is the reframing of their role in the schooling process that presents the potential for interrupting the devastating effects of subtractive schooling practices and often uncaring interactions with school leaders (Valenzuela, 1999). Instead of responding through what have been termed self-defeating or conformist forms of resistance (Fine, 1991; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), I illustrate that Latina/o students can engage in forms of transformational resistance that are oriented toward social change which is informed by social justice.

The findings corroborate prior research that transformative spaces within schools are critical to fostering positive student resistance (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Robinson & Ward, 1991; Yosso, 2000;

Cabrera et. al., 2014). Yet, students' sense of belonging to the classroom and their claims making to membership within the school community represent a new contribution. Within the Mexican American literature class, Latina/o students cultivated a sense of belonging to the classroom through sharing of common experiences with discrimination and poverty. These experiences represent a different approach to belonging in the classroom, which I contend goes beyond feeling safe and academically engaged (Cooper, 2013; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). That is, students employ their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002; Moll et al., 1992) in the form of experiences with discrimination and profiling in stores to form bonds with one another and with their teacher. This bonding fosters the establishment of solidarities across class, gender, and race/ethnicity (Stepick & Stepick, 2002). Further, students' identities as Latinas and Latinos connects them to a long legacy of activism in social movements informing a conception of themselves as legitimate members of their school. Specifically, they have rights to make claims for more transformational forms of schooling practices. I found that students re-define their legitimate membership to school community by taking on leadership roles via activist-inspired presentations in school-wide assemblies.

Finally, this article details the sustained interactive dialogue through which students engage in strategies for transformational resistance. The transformational feature of the classroom is found in the practice of an engaged pedagogy that includes a critical analysis of power, domination, and knowledge (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Solorzano, 1997). This engaged pedagogy surfaces in the process of *co-constructing transformative space,* which represents an alternative discourse and practice to traditional forms of engaging in learning where teachers and students are socialized to be objective thinkers by maintaining an emotional distance from academic material. This emotional distance often centers on an unwillingness to hold honest conversations about racism, poverty, injustice and the continuum of student reactions to such conversations such as anger, tension, sadness, and hopelessness.

Overall, this study suggests that when co-constructed as a transformative space—an intellectual and physical arena that situates students' social backgrounds (race/ethnicity, class, and gender) as essential to the learning process—the classroom can be crucial to fostering students' deployment of transformational resistance strategies. Further, this article contributes to our understanding of the potential of schools to be sites of transformational student resistance that can intervene in the damaging effects of subtractive schooling, which reproduce racial inequalities in education. Future work should continue exploring the relationship of sense of belonging and claims making to legitimate membership in students' resistance strategies as well as the difficulties and feasibility of engaging in processes of establishing classrooms as transformative spaces.

References

Andrews, J., & Yee, W. C. (2006). Children's funds of knowledge and their real life activities: two minority ethnic children learning in out-of-school contexts in the UK. *Educational review*, *58*(4), 435-449.

Cabrera, N. L., Milem, J. F., Jaquette, O., and Marx, R. W. (2014). "Missing the (student achievement) forest for all the (political) trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American studies controversy in Tucson." *American Educational Research Journal*, *51*(6), 1084-1118.

Conchas, G. Q. (2001). Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review*, *7*(1), 475-504.

Conchas, G. Q. & Vigil, J. D. (2010). Multiple marginality and urban education: Community and school socialization among low-income Mexican-descent youth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, *15*(1-2), 51-65.

Covarrubias, A. (2011). Quantitative intersectionality: A critical race analysis of the Chicana/o educational pipeline. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 10*(2), 86-105.

Cooper, K. S. (2013). Safe, affirming, and productive spaces: Classroom engagement among Latina high school students. *Urban Education*, *48*(4), 490-528.

Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Grassroots leadership reconceptualized: Chicana oral histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles school blowout. *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman's Studies*, *19*, 113-142.

de los Rios, V. D., & Ochoa, G. L. (2012). The people united shall never be divided: Reflections on community, collaboration, and change. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *11*(4), 271-279.

Esteban-Gutart, M., & Moll, L. C. (2014). "Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach." *Culture and Psychology*, *20*(1), 31-48.

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

Fine, M., Burns, A., Payne, Y. A., & Torre, M. E. (2004). Civics lessons: The color and class of bretrayal. *Teachers College Record*, *106*, 2193-2223.

Flores, W. V., & Benmayor, R. (Eds.). (1997). *Latino cultural citizenship: Claiming identity, space, and rights*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Flores, W. V. (2003). New citizens, new rights: Undocumented immigrants and Latino cultural citizenship. *Latin American Perspectives*, *30*(2), 87-100.

Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of educational research*, *74*(1), 59-109.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Seabury Press.

Gandara, P. C. (1995). *Over the ivy walls: The educational mobility of low-income Chicanos*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Gibson, M. A., Gandara, P. C., & Peterson-Koyama, J. (2004). *School connections: U.S. Mexican youth, peers, and school achievement.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Gonzalez, N & Moll, L. C. (2002). Cruzando el puente: Building bridges to funds of knowledge. *Educational Policy* 16 (4), 623-641.

Gutiérrez, K. (2002) Studying cultural practices in urban learning communities. *Human Development*,

45(4), 312–321.

López, G.R. (2003). The (racial neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *39*(1), 68-94.

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (1992) Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, *3*(1), 132–41.

Moll, L., & Ruiz, R. (2002). The schooling of Latino children. *Latinos: Remaking America,* 362-374.

Ochoa, G. L., & Ochoa, E. C. (2004). Education for social transformation: Chicana/o and Latin American studies and community struggles. *Latina American Perspectives*, *31*(1), 59-80.

Quiroz, P. A. (2001). The silencing of Latino student "voice": Puerto Rican and Mexican narrative in eigth grade and high school. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *32*(3), 326-349.

Robinson, T., & Ward, J. (1991). "A belief in self far greater than anyone's disbelief": Cultivating resistance among African American female adolescents. In C. Gilligan, A. Rogers, & D. Tolman (Eds.), *Women, girls and psychotherapy: Reframing resistance* (pp. 87-103). New York, NY: Haworth.

Solorzano, D., & Solorzano, R. (1995). The Chicano educational experience: A proposed framework for effective schools in Chicano communities. *Educational Policy*, *9*, 293-314.

Solorzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotypeing, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *24*, 5-19.

Solorzano, D. (1998). Role models, mentors, and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano Ph.D. scientists. In H. Frierson (Ed.), *Mentoring and diversity in higher education* (Vol. 2) (pp. 91-103). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Solorzano, D., & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory: Marginality and the experiences of students of color in higher education. In C. Torres & T. Mitchell (Eds.), *Sociology of education: Emerging perspectives* (pp. 211-224). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Solorzano, D.G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and Latcrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an urban context. *Urban Education, 36,* 308-342.

Stepick, A., & Stepick, C. D. (2002). Becoming American, constructing ethnicity: Immigrant youth and civic engagement. *Applied Developmental Science*, *6*(4), 246-257.

Taines, C. (2011). Intervening in Alienation: The Outcomes for Urban Youth of Participating in School Activism. *American Educational Research Journal*, *49*(1), 53-86.

Thomson, P., & Hall, C. (2008). Opportunities missed and/or thwarted? Funds of knowledge meet the English national curriculum. *Curriculum Journal*, 19(2), 87-103.

Yosso, T. J. (2000). A critical race and LatCrit approach to media literacy: Chicana/o resistance to visual microagressions (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

Yosso, T. J., & Solorzano, D. G. (2006). *Leaks in the Chicana and Chicano educational pipeline*. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, *40*(3), 197-214.

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

Weis, L. (1990). *Working class without work.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *25*(1), 68-81.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labor: How working class kids get working class jobs.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.