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The Politics of Latina/o Social Agency:
Praxis & Policy in the Struggle for Educational Justice

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EDITORS' MESSAGE

We are pleased to share with our readers the 2012 AMAE theme issue entitled "The Politics of Latina/o Social Agency: Praxis and Policy in the Struggle for Educational Justice" guest edited by Antonia Darder, Pedro Noguera, Emma Fuentes and Patricia Sanchez. They have put together an outstanding collection of peer-reviewed scholarly articles and essays as well as a book review and poem. The guest editors provide an overview of the published manuscripts in their introductory chapter so we will not spend time discussing each individual manuscript. We highly recommend reading the introductory chapter, which frames Latino social agency in the struggle for educational justice. This set of scholar articles and essays help move the field forward in many important ways to help understand the complexity of the educational challenges and struggles in Mexican-American/Latino education.

The theme issue focusing on Latino social agency is timely and important given the complexity and restrictions within our educational system. Recently, policies based on political preferences along with economic challenges have put educators, parents and students in a difficult position. Do they passively accept the current conditions or do they actively resist unjust and ineffective policies, programs and practices? In an effort to counteract educational malpractice towards Latino students and communities caused by the forces of anti-immigrant sentiments, neoliberalism, privatization and top-down decision making, educators, parents and students must develop and enact social agency.

We would like to thank all contributors to this theme issue from the guest editors who stewarded this issue, to authors who submitted manuscripts (published and unpublished) to peer reviewers who provided invaluable critique and feedback to prospective authors. Without the extraordinary efforts of all these scholars and educators, this issue would not be to the caliber that it is. In addition, we would like to recognize all past AMAE editors in particular Jairo Sanchez for his stewardship of the AMAE journal in previous years. Without his leadership and efforts, the AMAE Journal would not have progressed into a leading scholarly journal in Mexican-American/Latino education.

Thanks,

Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Co-Editor
Antonio Camacho, Co-Editor

Liberating Ourselves: Agency, Resistance and Possibilities for Change among Latina/o Students, Educators, and Parents

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Latino communities across the United States are experiencing today the impact of the recent economic collapse in ways that only further exacerbate many of the same social inequalities that have been historically at work for over a century. Mass deportations, increasing unemployment and incarceration, poor health care, severe cuts in school budgets, the vilification of teachers, the silencing of parents and students, and wholesale attacks on ethnic studies are highly prevalent conditions in many neighborhoods where large populations of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Central Americans reside.

These conditions are just some of the assaults confronting Latino communities, despite the growing number of Latinas/os in this country. And as might be expected, education is at the center of many conflicts and struggles associated with these conditions, given its significant role as one of the few contested public spaces that remain within the ever-encroaching privatization schemes tied to neoliberal objectives. Hence, just as it was in the days of the Lemon Grove incident in the 1930s, the Mendez v. Westminster case in the 1940's, and the Chicano blow-outs of the 1970s, education continues to represent an important arena of struggle for Latinas/os in the U.S.—a place where the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of Latina/o students can be nurtured and supported.

Yet, so often the social agency of Latina/o students and their communities are fundamentally disabled and their academic and civic needs are rendered invisible by the impact of class inequalities, racialization, and other political and ideological forces that effectively obstruct democratic voice and participation—forces of cultural invasion that subsume the histories, language, and future yearnings of Latina/o students. Accordingly, many experience a growing sense of social alienation, left to contend daily with the forces of inequality and growing public disengagement that can result.

In light of these concerns, this special issue of the *Association of Mexican-American Educators Journal* is dedicated to the theme of resistance. We selected this theme because throughout the country educators, students, parents, and communities are rising up to actively resist attacks on our dignity, our expressions of culture and voice, and our right to participate as world citizens. Resistance is a complex social phenomenon that must be understood critically with respect to its meaning and the political intent that portends its rising within human beings. It is not solely a psychological mechanism. Nor is it simply a mindless individual response or a knee-jerk reaction to a perceived attack. Instead, Freire and others who have followed his tradition insist that critical resistance must be engaged as an emancipatory construct of everyday life.

As such, emancipatory resistance is rooted in the evolution of critical consciousness or what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1971), in his elaboration of a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, termed "conscientizaçao." As is true in much of his writings, Freire conceived the notion of critical consciousness not as a state of being, but as an active phenomenon born of collective struggle, rooted in the notion that as human beings participate

together in reflection and dialogue about the limiting conditions—many not of our own making—that suffocate our aspiration, we gradually become more conscious of the social, political, and economic policies and practices that constrain and silence our civic participation. As a consequence, through an on-going engagement with that which threatens our self-determination as individuals and a community, we become compelled to take action in order to counter, reconstruct, and transform our world.

As educators, scholars and activists, we draw heavily upon the work of Paulo Freire (and of course many others), as both a source of inspiration and as a conceptual guide for better understanding the limits and possibilities of resistance at this stage of history. Freire's understanding of resistance is closely tied to his understanding of *praxis*, a regenerative process, which he envisioned as the harbinger of social action, critical consciousness, and political solidarity, among those committed to the struggle for democratic life. For Freire, an emancipatory praxis is central to an education that prepares students to become beings for themselves. But more importantly, such a praxis can only be forged within the context of courageous dialogue; for it is only as we come to see the world as subjects who can act upon it—rather than as passive victims of circumstance—that we come to experience for ourselves what it truly means to be human. This is precisely what Freire meant when he wrote and spoke of empowerment as a pedagogical imperative.

There is no question that the contributors to this special issue share this vital understanding of social agency, consciousness, empowerment, and the political commitment that all of this entails. As such, the contributors embrace a commitment to the larger project of education as a means of student empowerment, through creating the conditions for critical thought. This approach contrasts fundamentally with the deeply fragmented, decontextualized, and racialized meritocratic culture of high-stakes testing, which functions, wittingly or unwittingly, to perpetuate the disempowerment and marginalization of the most vulnerable student populations. Inherent in the critical educational approach espoused here is also an uncompromising commitment to community organizing, through critical dialogue and problem-posing strategies, in an effort to achieve a shared understanding of what must be done to confront our own problems and to guide our collective efforts. But, above all, there is a commitment to a humanizing political vision, anchored in the recognition that without active, collective resistance, within schools and society, we run the risk of not only becoming further victimized, but of also becoming more fully marginalized and silenced even within our own communities.

Writing from their unique social locations as Latina and Latino teachers, principals, professors, student activists, and parents, the contributors rightly assert that not only is resistance to the forces that oppress and marginalize Latino communities possible, it is essential. Freire's vision of struggle is again central to this underlying thesis. It entails a pedagogical and political vision that is inextricably rooted in the radical idea that one person cannot act to liberate another, but rather that through dignity and respect for one another, love for all life, and purposeful and persistent dialogue, we together can devise those strategies that make resistance feasible and transformation possible.

As Freire so eloquently wrote, "Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects that must be saved from a burning building" (p.52). The authors in this volume embrace this sentiment. They understand resistance, not as a slogan or catch phrase, but as a pedagogical *and* political imperative. Through their writings, they demonstrate how resistance must function as an integral part of the educational process, one that affirms our human rights, nurtures our spirits, and makes possible the fulfillment of our revolutionary dreams.

At a time when policymakers clamor endlessly about the importance of standardization and accountability and educational leaders peddle the latest reform gimmick or instructional flavor of the month—phonics, open-court literacy curriculum, smart boards, commc ron core standards—to "save our schools," such an approach is not only refreshing, it is desperately needed to revive Latina/o pedagogical debates and a liberatory vision of education in this country.

We certainly hope that readers of this special issue will be as inspired as we are, by the excellent questions raised and the empowering possibilities for *liberating ourselves* offered by these contributing authors. We also trust that these writings will inspire readers to embrace education, once again, as a tool for empowerment, a means for disrupting poverty, a place for the building of solidarity, and as the most vital political tool we currently possess for countering ignorance and bigotry. For Latinas/os and for all people, we hope this special

issue of AMAE will indeed make it possible for us all to embrace education as an integral part of the struggle for social justice—a struggle so vital to the future of children and our communities.

The first part of the special issue contains six research studies. Linnea Beckett, Ana Paulina Moreno, and Ron Glass analyze the experiences of Latino/a parents in two popular education projects that engage in a process of community building as a form of resistance. In examining the pedagogical process of community building, the authors present new ways of understanding solidarity and agency. Their article is entitled: "A Pedagogy of Community Building: Re-imagining Parent Involvement and Community Organizing in Popular Education Efforts." The second study, "Mexican American Studies: The Historical Legitimacy of an Educational Program," focuses on the process that led to the development and implementation of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson, Arizona. The piece, written by Conrado Gómez and Margarita Jiménez-Silva, pays specific attention to the collective effort of the students, parents, and teachers that "dared to dream big on behalf of Mexican American students" in Tucson schools.

We next hear the *testimonios* of six Latina/o young adults who either left or considered leaving high school before graduation in the piece appropriately entitled, "Latina/o ~~Dropouts~~: Generating Community Cultural Wealth," by Rebeca Burciaga and Nancy Erbstein. This article, drawing on the community cultural wealth framework, addresses the low graduation rates of Latinas/os while at the same time provides voice to the experiences and strategies of school persistence. In the next article, Pablo Ramírez and Gustavo González share with readers the voices of four Latina teachers in Southern California who enacted agency and challenged institutional barriers impacting Latinas/os in the educational system. Their portraits, struggles, and triumphs are found in the article, "Latina Teacher Agency in Public Schools: Love, Tensions, and Perseverance."

Bianca Guzmán's "Cultivating a Guerrera Spirit in Latinas: The Praxis of Mothering" provides a powerful reflective piece on the ways that Latina mothers can nurture the *guerrera* spirit of agency and well-being in their daughters. Through her own *testimonio*, the author positions mothering as a form of decolonizing education. To conclude the first part of the special issue, a group of co-authors wrote, "Framework for a New Political Praxis: *Respeto, Dignidad y Conocimiento*," which brings together shared work involving the education of youth and the development of community—all modeled on practices of community engagement taking place in South Texas. The writers of this piece are Francisco Guajardo, Miguel Guajardo, John Oliver, and Lia O'Neill M. A. Keawe.

The second part of the special issue is devoted to reflective essays. The first is by Reynaldo Reyes III, who shares his insights in preparing Latina/o teachers in a border context; he calls for teacher candidates to use their own life stories and sacrifices in the development of their pedagoy. His essay is appropriately called, "Teachers of Latinos on the Margins: Beginning at a Pedagogy from Within." Anita Fernández and Zoe Hammer follow with their essay entitled, "Red Scare in the Red State: The Attack on Mexican-American Studies in Arizona and Opportunities for Building National Solidarity." In this piece, the authors provide a perspective of two social justice educators who bore witness to the Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American Studies program. The authors call for alliances to be built amongst transformative education projects, such as the MAS program, across the country. The last essay, by Belinda Hernández Arriaga, discusses the youth-led collective based in Oakland, California, which is committed to recognizing the 67 percent of undocumented youth and young adults who would not qualify for the DREAM Act, and is called, "67 Sueños: Inspiring a Movement for Undocumented Voices to be Heard."

Finally, the special issue closes with a set of poems by Marisol Ruiz entitled, "Silencing Resistance," that speaks to the courage of pushing back the ban against ethnic studies in Arizona and a book review of *Mothers United: An Immigrant Struggle for Socially Just Education* (Dyrness, 2011)—an ethnography of Latina immigrant mothers involved in the small schools reform movement in northern California.

A Pedagogy of Community Building: Re-imagining Parent Involvement and Community Organizing in Popular Education Efforts

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Abstract

Where dominant models of urban school reform often regard immigrant communities as obstacles that must be managed or reduced, the two projects analyzed in this study (*Alianza* and the Project) regard the community as a powerful source of knowledge and as partners working towards educational improvement (Nygreen, 2009). This paper analyses the ways in which Latino parents involved in these projects, come together to learn about their communities and engage in a process of community building that strengthens their capacity to resist, if not overcome, dominant ideologies and institutions. Latino parents in these projects do more than simply challenge the narrative of reform that continues to position them at the margins; they establish their own spaces of learning and solidarity that enable them to crystallize their perspectives and become agents of change in their local context. We posit that community building is key to creating sustained long-term relationships that can survive and withstand the struggle towards institutional change and open doors for Latino community empowerment in schools and the broader society.

Introduction

The education reform efforts of recent decades have made little impact on improving school outcomes or broader social realities and opportunities for youth from low-income, racially, culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Anyon, 1997; Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001). The "achievement gap" reflects neither the innate capacities nor the demonstrated abilities of these youth, but exposes an "education debt" that mires their schooling experiences within rote instruction, alienating curriculum, inadequate facilities and co-curricular programs, and lack of access to academically rigorous classes and high-quality teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The "education debt" disparities in schools for low-income, racially, culturally and linguistically diverse (LI/RCLD) students get multiplied by the inequitable out-of-school learning and development opportunities available for these youth (Rothman, 2007). Sadly, the LI/RCLD students who 'succeed' in the 'college for all' competition and enter post-secondary education must contend with the bitter irony that the structural "education debt" that they imagined they had transcended gets passed on in their personal school loans, with often devastating and far-reaching consequences for their individual lives (Glass & Nygreen, 2011). Scholars have thus started to look beyond the school to explore ways that families and communities, and their relationships with schools and school culture, could become a fulcrum for equitable and sustainable school reform to change outcomes for LI/RCLD youth (Shirley, 1997, 2002; Warren, 2001, 2011).

In this essay we extend the work of scholars focused particularly on Latino parent involvement in school reform (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Dyrness, 2011; Hurtig & Dyrness, 2011; Villenas, 2001) and unite findings from two studies of separate Paulo Freire-influenced popular education projects (*Alianza* in Los Angeles, CA, and The Project in Watsonville, CA). We examine some ways that Latino parents come together to learn through a process of community building that strengthens their capacity to resist dominant ideologies and the oppressive aspects of schools and other institutions. Both projects operate outside strictly school-centric domains of activity, but focus part of their work on reimagining and recreating the schools meant to serve the needs of their children. In both case studies we documented Latino parents investigating their social worlds, contesting deficit frames about themselves and their children, and creating counter-narratives that recast possibilities

for improving their lives. As the parents engaged these challenges, they creatively built relationships and a united vision of change. We argue that these dynamic processes of community building and ethical and political engagement suggest transformations in conceptions of parent involvement in school reform that could support meaningful and sustained change for schools in LI/RCLD communities.

In our analysis, we adopt a decolonial feminist perspective on popular education's theoretical frame in order to situate community building as a local and process-based pedagogy (Lugones, 2003). We position community building in spaces outside of school as a form of resistance that moves beyond reaction, and as an empowering process independent of reform outcomes inside schools. In this theoretical framework, we can begin to see how The Project and *Alianza* parents collaborate within their organizations to build community; they creatively examine preexisting values and principles in a collective process of remembering counter histories, recognizing individual subjectivities, and making knowledge together. The data show how the local and process-based community building experiences within these projects' spaces strengthens the parents' capacity to form participatory collectivities, a crucial step to being able to challenge and alter power structures; further, the achievements of these community building experiences do not hinge on actually mobilizing for structural change within the public sphere[1]. We argue that the participants in *Alianza* and The Project develop substantive competencies that are foundational for self-determination in their individual and collective lives, and although the transformations we witnessed are not often recognized in the research literature, they provide an opportunity to rethink what community organizing, parent involvement and school reform can look like and accomplish. In addition, we suggest that re-conceptualizing community building as a pedagogy could unlock new ways of understanding how people come together and build the capacity to change themselves and their environments.

Situating the Studies

Alianza. In January 2008, a Los Angeles community-based organization named *Centro de Educación Popular* (CEP) initiated a family literacy program called *Alianza* aiming to engage students, parents, and community members in critically analyzing their own educational development within the context of their socio-political reality. The ultimate goal was to enable the participants to become active agents of social change. *Alianza* became a base for grassroots parent and youth organizing on issues of educational equity when the participants attempted to seize an opening created by the introduction of a "pilot school" reform in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). LAUSD agreed to launch a limited number of small autonomous schools that would operate somewhat like charter schools but remain an integral part of the school district, and the *Alianza* parents and community members tried to secure this opportunity to establish a liberatory school for their children. Their decision to start a pilot/charter school emerged from deep concerns about the quality of education their children had been receiving and from parents' shared frustration with feeling silenced and excluded from mainstream public schools. These were not new concerns for Latino/a parents (Dyrness, 2007; Nygreen 2009; Snell, Miguel, & East, 2009; Villenas, 2001), but few such parents have had opportunities to take the initiative to construct semi-independent public schools (Baker et al., 2009). CEP started organizing and working with parents to establish their own pilot school, beginning with parent leadership workshops that prepared parents to be critical advocates for their needs in educational reform. One element of these workshops was *dinámicas*[2] that explored participants' everyday experiences as immigrants and parents, and this essay draws on ethnographic data related to those elements in particular.

The Project. Formed in 2006, The Project grew out of a conversation among leaders from community-based organizations, including the teachers union and other labor groups, and university faculty members who were exploring ways to address the systemic and extreme pressures confronting the low-income residents of the community. and sub-standard housing, poor health, unstable and exploitative employment, substance abuse, and crime, and The group began with the assumption that the community's very high rates of poverty, transience, overcrowded very low rates of educational attainment, political participation, and civic engagement were

1. Delgado-Gaitan (2001) explains the importance of seeing community empowerment as a non-linear process that is not dependent on actions of success or failure for the empowerment to have effects. We suggest empowerment happens independent of failure or success through a pedagogy of community building.
2. *Dinámicas* translates roughly as 'icebreakers.'

interconnected, and that any successful effort to transform them had to build from those interconnections and not focus on the issues in isolation. The Project sought to shape a broad strategic response, one based in active public learning processes that build critical consciousness, organizational coherence, and the capacity for transformative action. Drawing on Paulo Freire's theory (Freire, 1970), The Project decided to utilize digital stories[3] as codifications of everyday experience to focus structured community dialogues on an analysis of the limiting conditions of their lives and on strategies for change; The Project also adopted a slogan: "Another School and Another Community are Possible!" The digital stories were grounded in generative themes that emerged from a series of focus groups with ~125 school parents and community members, ~50 youth, and ~25 teachers, and they were crafted in intimate story circles facilitated by some of The Project members. The community dialogue circles were shaped by a series of questions intended to guide a participatory, collective investigation of the life experiences depicted in the stories. This essay draws on ethnographic data and interviews of storytellers and Project members collected during the period when the community dialogues were being developed.

Although the ethnographic studies of The Project and *Alianza* were undertaken separately and in relationship to different primary research questions, we have joined the studies in this essay in order to illuminate a similar theoretical contribution they make. While each arose under somewhat different principles and circumstances, they are both Freire-influenced reform efforts that employ the basic framework of popular education, they are situated in predominantly Mexican and Central American immigrant communities, and they implement processes designed to elicit LI/RCLD parents' engagement not only in school reform, but in broader civic struggles for equity.

Methodology

Our findings draw from two distinct preliminary studies that were "snapshot ethnographies" (Cruz, 2011); data were collected during either one year (The Project) or three months (*Alianza*) of long-term community-based efforts to build capacity for strategic change in the schools and broader communities. We undertook extensive observations and artifact analysis, and in the study of The Project, the researcher also conducted three semi-structured interviews with parents who were Project members and storytellers. During the data analysis from the two studies, we discovered similar themes focused on the deconstruction of deficit framing of immigrant and LI/RCLD parents and families, and on the construction of counter-narratives; we also discovered the need to analyze the physical and dialogical spaces for both projects in order to elucidate their significance. We argue that these processes of de/construction collectively represent important elements to the experience and space of community building as a pedagogy with transformative possibilities.

Deficit Frames and Counter-Narratives

Parent involvement has largely been defined by participation in within-school activities, but this excludes the variety of ways that Latino parents engage in their children's schooling at home (Snell, Miguel, & East, 2009). Dominant approaches to urban school reform often regard immigrant communities as presenting problems that must be managed or reduced and little attention has been given to how Latino parents actually embody parental involvement (Zarate, 2007). The belief that low-income Latino parents do not value education reflects historically embedded deficit theories that cast Latino family culture as responsible for their children's low test scores and low graduation rates; that is, some claim that LI/RCLD students "fail in school because they and their families have internal defects, or deficits, that thwart the learning process" (Valencia & Black, 2002, p. 83). This 'blame the victim' ideology fails to acknowledge the structural barriers that inhibit the participation of low-income Latino parents in their children's education and the cultural differences that shape more informal styles of participating in the home. Nonetheless, far too often, deficit theories influence teachers' and school administrators' perceptions, and thus immigrant parents are "frequently subjected to parental involvement practices that are primarily designed to change or "educate" them" (Olivos, 2006, p. 49). In contrast, The

3. Digital stories are brief, 3-4 minute, personal narrative videos.

Project and *Alianza* productively resisted these normative constructs of parent involvement, and built forms of engagement that operated outside school-centric domains or frames. This occurred through activities in which participants investigated their social worlds, contested the deficit frames that limited them, and created counter-narratives that positioned them as historical subjects.

Alianza leadership workshops fostered capacity building that enabled parents and parent organizers to challenge deficit constructs of Latino immigrant parents and to work towards building parent empowerment by redefining their involvement in their children's education. While the workshops were designed to convey specific content or knowledge that was needed in *Alianza*'s campaign to launch its own public pilot/charter school, they also had both deeper and broader objectives, from preparing parents to organize the creation of Parent Centers at their respective schools to taking district-level leadership. The workshops consistently re-framed immigrant parents as both teachers – *Los primeros maestros son los padres y nuestros abuelos. Entonces reconocer la importancia del rol de los padres en la educación de los niños.* [The first teachers are parents and grandparents. Thus, we need to recognize the important role of parents in the education of children.] – and as classroom partners and educational leaders whose voices and experiences matter:

> *Entonces queremos… nada más se incluyen los padres que están allí tomando notas, o haciendo copias, sino que ustedes tengan un rol en la clase como maestros, que pueden ser maestros igual que los maestros…Y la segunda parte es el involucramiento de liderazgo de los padres, como los mismos padres se convierten en los propios abogados de sus niños, al saber sus derechos, al ser informado, al desarrollar su liderazgo. Pueden tomar un rol más activo en mejorar la educación, no nada más para sus niños, o los niños de nuestra escuela, sino para [los niños] del todo distrito.*
>
> [So we want to … not just have parents taking notes or making copies, but rather that you also have a role in the classroom as teachers, and that you can be teachers just like school teachers…And the second part is parent leadership. So that as you learn about your rights, become more informed, and as you develop your leadership skills you become an advocate for your child. You can take a more active role in improving education, not just for your children, or the children in our school, but for all [the children] in the district.]

One key pedagogical component was the use of *dinámicas*, whose interactive experiences, critical dialogues, and self-refection exercises facilitated the parents' investigation of their social world. A dinámica often introduced a new topic, or served as a transition from one topic to the next during a workshop. For example, in one dinámica, parents formed into groups that used art, songs, *dichos* (sayings) and games to reflect on their own childhood learning experiences. The groups then came back together in a large circle to share responses to or reflections on the exercise; parents laughed, and some cried, as they listened to the others recount emotion-packed personal narratives about their childhoods. Each group then picked a game, song, or dicho with which to engage all the other workshop participants in dialogue. The workshop facilitator (a parent who was also employed by CEP) elicited key similarities and differences among their experiences of learning and socialization within their families and Mexican schools versus the learning and socialization that their children were currently undergoing in the family and in LAUSD schools; thus the personal stories became opportunities for critical reflection on their immigrant experience and on how schools served the needs of their children. The facilitator also fostered discussion about the importance of the parents getting to know one another, and of building the relationships that provide a sense of community and collective identity. *Nosotros creemos que el aprender no es nada mas una cosa de uno como individuo, sino uno aprende de los alrededores y de la gente que está allí.* [We believe that learning is not just done alone as an individual, but rather we learn from people and our surroundings.] The *dinámicas* provided a pedagogical tool for parents to center their own histories and begin to recognize and develop positive self-confidence about their skills and cultural resources.

The central tenet that drove CEP's work is the empowerment and participation of parents, not just in circumscribed "parent roles" (like fundraising and volunteering), but in all aspects of school governance, curriculum, and vision (Nygreen, 2009). As one CEP leader argued, they needed to "break the paradigm that [Latina/o] parents don't care about education" and challenge the standard approaches found in many parenting

interventions in schools and in Title I programs responding to the legislation's demand for parent involvement. The tendency thus becomes to quantify parental involvement by the amount of time parents spend attending their child's extracurricular activities, volunteering in the school or classroom, or reading to and doing homework with their child. For many LI/RCLD immigrant parents, however, these measures ignore the substantial time and economic constraints they face as well as their (and their extended family's) many non-measured modes of engagement with the development of their children. In contrast, CEP and *Alianza* acknowledge the culturally specific ways that low-income, immigrant parents and families engage with their children at home, and recognize the values and knowledge that LI/RCLD students and families possess, and thus they work to integrate these "funds of knowledge" (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) throughout their programming. In addition, CEP and *Alianza* directly include the parents and families in the workshop designs and implementations, enabling them to practice leadership skills as they learn them and to become active agents and decision makers. By challenging the deficit framing of parents that prevails in dominant discourses that rationalize the marginalization of LI/RCLD parents, and by constructing spaces for the parents' own learning and leadership, CEP and *Alianza* build capacity for extending parent engagement far beyond the boundaries of the school.

Similarly, The Project positioned itself at the nexus of school and community change, and built capacity among immigrant parents and LI/RCLD community members by facilitating pedagogical processes that critically examined everyday life, the limits imposed by dominant orders, and the transformative possibilities residing in the power of the parents. However, unlike *Alianza*'s use of *dinámicas* as a codification of reality, which have the drawback of being ephemeral, The Project developed digital stories that could have a curriculum developed to accompany them and could therefore be used repeatedly in different contexts. In one story, which in part explored an immigrant mother's relationship with her children's schools, Claudia[4] explained her fear of talking to her children's teachers. She felt shame going to school with dirt on her clothes from working in the strawberry fields, and with her limited English, she felt uncomfortable and had difficulty speaking with the teacher to explain her perspective about her children's learning experiences. Claudia did not simply name the barriers of shame, class and language differences, and emotional distress; her counter-narrative re-centered her power by also detailing her refusal to be defined by those limits. Her story problematizes dominant perspectives on parent involvement from the perspective of a Latina immigrant mother who works long hours in the fields simply to provide subsistence living for her family. Using the digital story as a curriculum tool enables other parents, teachers, students and community members to explore multiple ways to overcome these barriers and to resist the way that Latino parents are positioned by dominant ideologies. This exploration can disrupt the stereotypes, create alternative narratives, and open spaces for more positive constructions of Latino parental engagement in their children's learning and schooling. Graciela, an undocumented immigrant parent learning through The Project how to support her daughter's education and to advocate for herself, explained why she decided to tell her own story:

> *Otros padres pueden o podemos hacer algo con mi historia pues de ayudar a más personas a dejar de ser tan tímido, de que hablen, de que no importa si no tenemos papeles o porque más que nada de hablar en las escuelas de que no se quedan callados en lo que es injusto porque muchas personas se quedan calladas*
>
> [Other parents can do something with my story to help more people to not be so timid, to speak that it doesn't matter if we don't have papers because, more than anything, to speak at the school and not sit silent in what is unjust because many people are silent.]

Graciela's and Claudia's counter-narratives resonate in a different register than that typically found in dominant constructions of immigrant parents, and offer voices that are productive, positioned and powerful. Through the investigation of their social worlds and their articulation of their experiences, Graciela and Claudia can initiate a generative process of exploring alternatives not only for themselves, but also for their entire community.

4. All names used for The Project participants are pseudonyms.

Physical and Dialogical Spaces

Resistance takes place on a terrain always already defined by and permeated by dominant ideologies, by white, patriarchal, middle-class imaginaries; on this terrain, it is difficult for conversations to arise that are not tainted by inequitable power relationships that re-inscribe dominant/subordinate subjectivities and thus constrain the transformative potential embedded within the situation. This can occur even when schools or education authorities are explicitly trying to reach out, to be inclusive, to provide spaces for parental involvement. We witness these dynamics in studies by Andrea Dyrness and Sophia Villenas that describe the ways school-sponsored forums, activities, and outreach projects can continue to position LI/RCLD and immigrant parents as problems to be addressed, or as disruptive to the processes of reform; in these spaces, it seems that the authentic voices and concerns of parents can easily become too loud, noisy, questioning, and assertive to be contained and reinscribed in the dominant order, and so the very parents who are 'included' and 'involved' get re-marginalized, and only those parents who are docile and fit the prescribed roles are welcomed into the process (Dyrness, 2007, 2011; Hurtig & Dyrness, 2011; Villenas, 2001).

In order to move beyond spaces defined by dominant ideologies, *Alianza* and The Project held meetings and conducted their work outside of the confines of school, in spaces that privileged the local knowledges of the community. *Alianza* parent leadership workshops took place in the second floor offices of CEP, a community non-profit organization located in the Pico Union neighborhood of Los Angeles. The location was symbolic to many of the parents because the space represented years of community grassroots organizing and activism efforts. In this space, parents felt comfortable with personal sharing, with learning new things, and with working together in new ways; parents embraced this space as an opportunity to re-tell their stories of frustration and exclusion from schools. As one parent said in a workshop:

> *Ese es el tipo de cosas que es muy importante, que ustedes den el espacio cuando van a trabajar con padres, que los padres tengan la oportunidad de expresarse verdaderamente. No sabemos, cuando vamos a dar los talleres, y luego como decían el otro día verdad, allí en la [escuela], tenemos como 20 años de conocernos y no me sé tu nombre ni si quiera. Porque eso pasa y mucho menos sabemos el problema que está viviendo alguien. Es bien importante, cuando una vez que los padres expresan sus problemas, sus preocupaciones, lo que nosotros podemos hacer es revisar la tabla de los derechos*
>
> [These are the types of things that are very important, that you provide the space when you work with parents, so that parents have the opportunity to truly express themselves. We don't know, when we attend a workshop at the school, like they said the other day, we have known each other for 20 years and I don't even know your name. Because that is what happens, we know even less about the problems that person is experiencing. It's very important, once parents express their problems and share their worries, what we can do is turn to the Parents Rights Table[5].]

The parent contrasts the physical and dialogical space that they collectively created, one founded on trust and solidarity and in which they listen to and support one another, to the school space in which they could 'know' each other for twenty years and not even know one another's name. His comment illuminates the importance of a space defined and controlled by the parents themselves, a 'home' space that elicits alternative imaginaries to the dominant parent involvement methods and offerings, and that escapes the exclusionary and unwelcoming confines of the school itself.

The Project also met outside official school spaces in places that were 'home' to various project members: a community center, or a community college classroom, or a parent's house. Occasionally, school-based allies provided space in the widely respected Migrant Education program, or in the safe stronghold of the local teachers' union offices.[6] The Project's evening meetings included potluck meals and convivial conversation

5. The Parents Rights Table listed parents' rights with regard to the schools and their children's education, and was used as a reference by the parents when discussing the problems they faced in the schools.

6. The union president and several other members of the union executive committee were widely recognized supporters and active members of The Project; similarly, several teachers in the Migrant Education program were Project activists.

about the intimacies of members' lives as they analyzed the digital stories and developed questions to use as dialogue guides with groups in the community. Project members would compare themselves and their worlds to the life represented in the digital story being analyzed, repeatedly linking their seemingly personal experience with various social realities. As they talked about the contrasts and connections, they re-centered their own histories, and supported each other in reclaiming and reinventing their heritage. Claudia, a mother and grandmother who had been in the U.S. for two decades, reflected on her experience of watching her own story as a codification of the social reality of the community: *I know that it was my life, but I didn't really see it until when I saw my [digital story]*. She was well aware of her life story, but she acquired a deeper, more structural knowledge of her life through The Project's processes.[7]

Others who watched her story were able to make connections to their own lives, and to untangle the ways that they were shaped by historical, cultural, and economic forces. Omar, a second-generation Mexican-American in his early 20s, re-imagined his parent's stories through Claudia's, envisioning their struggles as similar to hers. In her story, Claudia recounts being left alone without a mother at a young age, needing to care for her siblings, and marrying and starting her own family at fourteen years old, all before facing the many difficulties of migrating to the U.S. and establishing a life here. Omar reflects on his own mother's isolation from her mother: *su mamá no estuvo allá con ella porque estaba trabajando* [her mom was not there with her because she was working]. Then he imagines his mother's challenges when marrying and starting a family:

> *… y se caso con mi papá y yo imagino que ellos pasaron por lo mismo de venir siguiendo la ilusión de que iban a tener trabajo y no. Aquí fue muy dificil para ellos y yo me recuerdo cuando estaba pequeño y tampoco teníamos casi para comer. No fue hasta que… mejoraran las cosas, pero no entendía desde pequeño*
>
> […and married my father and I imagine that they went through the same to come here under the illusion that they would have work and they did not. This was difficult for them and I remember when I was young and we had almost nothing to eat. It was not until…things got better, but I didn't understand ever since I was young.]

Omar responded to Claudia's story with "loving perception" and was able to "world travel" between his own experience and Claudia's world, and then also project the insights he gleaned from the themes of Claudia's story to travel into his parents' world in ways he had never done before (see Lugones, 1987). Glimpsing the social realities of the older generation, he was able both to make sense of his parents' subjectivity and to grasp a deeper truth about his own life. He had not previously understood his family's hunger and life difficulties outside the context of their particular day-to-day experiences, but the dialogue and analysis surrounding Claudia's story uncovered the structuring forces of immigration, poverty, farm work, and the struggle for an education. He was finally able to make critical sense of his own subjectivity within the supportive dialogical space of The Project.

Within the intimate spatial contexts of The Project meetings and digital stories, parents, teachers, youth, and community members could dwell in one another's worlds, and try to grasp the structural technologies shaping the contours of their lives. The meetings flowed organically from the conversations and needs of the participants, with agendas responding to those present and to the emergent analyses and tasks. In these spaces, the digital stories opened possibilities for engaging differences through dialogue, free from disciplining efforts to homogenize, discredit, or erase difference (Rutherford, 1990). Hence, the focus was on building relationships or community, on deliberative discussion and active listening, and on learning from one another rather than on the actions or products produced from the meetings.

Homi Bhabha developed the notion of a "third space" to identify an ambivalent space that transects the dialectic of binaries enforced by the dominant ideology; such a "third space" opens up possible futures that break the limits rooted in the realities of the day. The hybridity revealed in these spaces engenders a transformed intersubjectivity that embraces cultural difference at the same time as it yields a solidarity that can reorient

7. Cherríe Moraga (2002), in her piece La Güera, explains "click" moments wherein she came to reconnect with herself by breaking through to a deeper level of knowing. Often, through the digital stories, participants encountered these "click" moments where they developed deeper understandings of their lives.

the nature of the public sphere to incorporate a politics "based on unequal, uneven, multiple, and potentially antagonistic, political identities" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 208). We witnessed these dynamics at work in the spaces of The Project and *Alianza*. We thus can begin to theorize parental engagement in school and community reform outside of a product-based paradigm and instead emphasize the meaning making and learning happening in these communal spaces, and see these as building capacity for even deeper transformations, including of the parents themselves.

Significance of Community Building

The Project and *Alianza* worked to establish forms of resistance to dominant ideologies grounded in social relationships that could sustain people and communities for the long haul demanded in social justice struggles. According to María Lugones (2003), "reaction does not add anything creative to the meaning contained in that which is resisted, except some form of 'no'" (p. 29). Reaction remains within the confines of existing social constructs, merely negating the unjust impositions of the dominant order. In contrast, resistance goes beyond a physical, psychological, or logical reaction to encompass an embodied, cognitive, and reflective response that is a creative, clever, complex and imaginative engagement with "the very intricacies of the structure of what is being resisted" (Lugones, 2003, p. 29). Dyrness (2011) uncovers this form of resistance in a study with Latina women working for school reform. These women do more than challenge the narrative of reform that continues to position them at the margins; they establish their own spaces of learning and solidarity that enable them to crystallize their perspectives and become agents of change in their local context. Hurtig and Dyrness (2011), highlight the work of parents in changing how they see themselves and consequently feeling more able to speak. In our studies of The Project and *Alianza* we found these same dynamics at work.

When resistance becomes creative of new positions and not just reaction, then it becomes possible to understand community building as a pedagogy that enables a collective investigation of the social that is positioned, embedded and reflective (Freire, 1970; Lugones, 2003). As we witnessed in The Project and *Alianza*, in the process of collaborative investigation the participants gained a "cognitive and emotional distance from experience," (Glass, Ball, & Crain, 2008) and understood more about their dialectical relationship with the world, not only enduring it but creating it. This kind of cognitive and emotional distance is not a move away from, but a "depth into the social" (Lugones, 2003, p. 214) in which participants explore their everyday lives and their community with a critical grasp of how their lives are interconnected not only with one another but with larger social, cultural, and economic structures. They come to understand themselves as embedded and positioned, constrained by the dominant ideological limits, but always with possibilities of acting against and beyond those limits to open up possibilities of transformed futures (Freire, 1970).

Alianza and The Project demonstrate how critical, creative, dialogical spaces can yield more agentive subjectivities and imaginaries. Our research findings push beyond previously conceptualized notions of resistance to name community building as a process wherein community members can operate from their own center. From this new center, it becomes possible not just to sustain the resistance, but to establish the creative processes that build both new subjectivities and new situations. This re-centering space allows participants to open themselves to what is revealed in the *dinámicas* and digital stories, then to re-imagine and re-invent themselves, not only in the space of their work together but in the other spaces of their lives. This community building gathers together the participants' own center of gravity, giving them a way to operate with integrity and force to change their lives. The community building spaces and processes of The Project and *Alianza* provide an opportunity for a deep re-grounding of their lives, rooting the individuals in meanings and ways of being that reach beyond the dominant discourses toward more self-determined lives. We do not mean to suggest that the participants become wholly free of the distortions in thought, feeling, and action imposed by the dominant ideologies, only that their resistance becomes stronger, and their vision for a more equitable future becomes clearer and more compelling to them. This is why we emphasize the significance of the space of community building that creates a new center from the marginal space allotted or assigned to the LI/RCLD and immigrant participants in The Project and *Alianza*.

Concluding Comments

Through contesting deficit frames and creating counter-narratives, The Project and *Alianza* participants began to feel a sense of agency; even though they were not necessarily actively enacting power in the public sphere in organized ways, they were becoming more powerful. This becoming illuminates the pedagogical processes of knowing and learning that emerge during a collective, participatory and reflective investigation of the social, and through creative responses to the discoveries that result. The critical consciousness that arose in the communal pedagogical spaces of these reform efforts came not from a singular moment, but from the sustained relationships and dialogues that were central to the activities of The Project and *Alianza*. Drawn into these efforts through a desire to overcome the immediate problems their communities faced, participants began to build community as a necessary foundation for any kind of deep change, whether near-term or more long-term and strategic, whether on a personal or social level. Community building thus needs to be explored empirically and theoretically as a site of pedagogical work. We believe that if the transformative and pedagogical power of spaces of community building could be better understood then we might better be able to establish broader movements for structural change. We think it is important to give the micro-political its due; the smaller elements of resistance, of communal solidarity in 'home' spaces, should not be overlooked. It is time to expand approaches to school reform and parental involvement beyond the confines of the school or even of community organizing in order to explore possibilities for even deeper decolonial and critical pedagogical work. We hope that our reflections on the inspirational efforts of The Project and *Alianza* can contribute to this new direction for researchers and activists alike.

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Mexican American Studies: The Historical Legitimacy of an Educational Program

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to increase understanding of the factors that most significantly influenced the decision made by the Tucson Unified School District to implement the Mexican American Studies program in the late 1990's and early 2000's. This article outlines the process that led to the adoption of the program. The article further delineates the political and social circumstances that made the process smooth, transparent, and effective. To accomplish this goal, the article draws from historical accounts, legal documents, personal renditions, and research publications that were used to arrive at an educational program that was long due to the Mexican American young people of Tucson.

Introduction

In the spring of 2012, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) Governing Board decided to dismantle the Mexican American Studies program that was designed for and had been successful at meeting the needs of Mexican American students for over a decade. In spite of considerable community protest, the Governing Board carried out this action in response to pressure from the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction supported by the Arizona legislature that had enacted legislation targeting the Mexican American Studies program specifically. Dubbed HB2281, which passed in the spring of 2010, the measure prohibits classes that (1) advocate ethnic solidarity, (2) are designed primarily for students of a particular race, (3) promote resentment toward a certain ethnic group and (4) promote the overthrow of the U.S. government. This article, therefore, attempts to give a historical background for the reasons why Mexican Americans Studies Program was created in an effort to address the educational inequality Mexican American students experienced in the Tucson Unified School District.

In 1998, after many attempts at meeting the educational needs of its Mexican American students, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) adopted an educational approach that incorporated students' identities and backgrounds as a foundation for their education. The overarching goal of the TUSD in endorsing such a program was to adopt a research-based approach that would bring into the fore cultures that have been largely denied or omitted from the school curriculum. The intent of this article is to take the reader through a historical journey of how the TUSD, in its attempt at identifying and addressing the needs of Mexican American students, arrived at its decision to develop a Mexican-American Studies Program. This journey is unique in that it sets the stage for a program that would prove successful, albeit controversial.

The resulting program was based on what Ladson-Billings (1995) and other researchers (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001) have described as culturally relevant pedagogy and has been recognized as an effective way of meeting the academic and social needs of culturally diverse student populations. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a vehicle for collective empowerment of students as they experience academic success in the context of maintaining and/or educing their cultural competence and developing a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It also serves as a means of making learning more relevant to students who have traditionally been marginalized from the mainstream curriculum by validating and affirming their culture and their contributions to the classroom context. Culturally relevant teaching taps into students' background knowledge and their frame of reference to facilitate academic success and cultural competence. In addition, culturally relevant teaching asserts that students develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness in order to critically engage in social issues such as educational inequities. Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students on an individual as well as

a collective.

This article, however, will not report further on how the Mexican American Studies program was designed, implemented, or evaluated. A full discussion of the program proper is beyond the scope of this article; interested readers are encouraged to see Cammarota and Romero (2004), Cammarota and Romero (2006), and Romero (2008). This article, rather, will serve as the historical backdrop for the program's inception. It is the intent of the authors to inform readers about the responsiveness of a community to its students through a program that was intended to meet, above all, their academic needs.

Historical Background

The purpose of providing Tucson's historical background is to establish the claim and the foundation that Tucson is different than the rest of the state because of its track record of moderate political and social harmony. This predisposition on the part of Tucsonans for peaceful resolution to conflict facilitated the passing of the recommendations to address the needs of a very important segment of the population, the high school students of Mexican American decent.

Founded by Spanish-speaking settlers in 1775, Tucson, Arizona remained a frontier garrison of México up until 1854. In that year, Tucson became part of the United States when the United States and Mexico negotiated the Gadsden Purchase. In the years after the annexation, Mexicans maintained a majority in Tucson, making contributions to the political, economic, and cultural life of Southern Arizona and the state as a whole (Sheridan, 1986). Tucson was a beautiful desert oasis. Nestled along the Santa Cruz River and surrounded by four mountain ranges, Tucson developed a tolerant attitude about the diverse groups that were to soon migrate to the Southwest (Sheridan, 1986). Consequently, Tucson did not go through the growing pains of social and ethnic strife to the same extent that afflicted other parts of the area that once was Mexico. On the contrary, groups not indigenous to the southwest, Asian Americans, African Americans, and others, soon found a place where to establish themselves among a variety of ethnicities and nationalities.

Following the Gadsden Purchase in 1854, many Mexican families migrated north to eke out a living in the territory that had become part of the American Union. In Southern Arizona, Tucson became a magnet for many of these families. Through determination and hard work as well as impacted by various political, economic and social class factors, families like the Carrillos, the Ochoas, the Samaniegos, the Elias, and many others left their imprint in the history annals of a country that they came to respect and honor. They served in city, county, and state governments; they were businessmen and entrepreneurs; and they started the first modern public school in Arizona (De La Trinidad, 2008). These Mexican pioneers made such an impact in the economic, social, and cultural development of the area that modern day Tucson still benefits by the influence of their legacy (Sheridan, 1986).

In October of 1867, the Arizona Territorial Legislature passed legislation that enabled the creation of public school district (Cooper, 1967). Arizona Governor Safford was "an ardent supporter" of public education and with the support of two Tucson businessmen, Estevan Ochoa and Sam Hughes, he was able to convince the legislature of the advantages of public schooling. In Tucson, a partnership of community leaders and educators existed that made the creation of a school district possible. Soon after, the state legislature passed a school finance law which set a property tax to pay for the costs of public education (Cooper, 1967). One important side-bar to this historical narrative is the fact that enrollment was limited to males whose primary language was Spanish. One of the first teachers hired for the school was John Spring who taught by first giving instruction in Spanish, and then in English (Cooper, 1867). The public school district that the Mexican pioneers were instrumental in starting has survived the test of times. Now known as the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), it is currently the second largest public school district in the state of Arizona. Its fascinating history from 1867 to 1967 is told in detail in a book written by James F. Cooper (1967). So proud is the TUSD of its history that Cooper's book is posted in its entirety in the TUSD website.

The Desegregation Question

As the district expanded and the issues became complex, new programs were implemented to meet those needs. The population explosion of the 1940's and 1950's caused by the baby boomers along with Mexican immigrants seeking employment in the mining industry (Cooper, 1967) strained the district's resources. The increased enrollment in TUSD brought about the need for additional classrooms. Pre-school examinations and inoculations to insure that children entered school in a healthy condition was an additional issue that was addressed at this time. Other areas engaged by the district at this time included programs for crippled children, school lunches, anti-tuberculosis care, dental examinations, and special services for low-income children (Cooper, 1967). However, one of the biggest challenges for TUSD was the Desegregation Question which spanned from late 1968 to 1983. Even though TUSD had voluntarily integrated its African-American students in the fall of 1951before Brown v. Board of Education was decided (De La Trinidad, 2008) and had led the federal government in approving federal funding for bilingual education, there were still vexing issues that had neither been addressed nor resolved. The 1C program in which Spanish-speaking first graders were placed, the practice forbidding the use of Spanish in classrooms and playground, over assignment of students to special education classes, ability grouping in the high schools, and district staffing practices were among the queue of unresolved issues about which both Mexican American and African American parents were concerned (Brousseau, 2011; De La Trinidad, 2008).

Attempts by the District to address the issues included an ethnic transfer policy allowing easier mobility of students within the district, redrawing of attendance lines, a moratorium on new school construction, no further closing of minority schools, establishing of bilingual programs, purchase of bilingual and multicultural books and materials, teacher inservice programs, promotion of involvement of community groups, and increased recruitment of minority and bilingual teachers. Nonetheless, these attempts did not eschew two lawsuits filed in late 1976, one on behalf of Mexican American and one on behalf of African American students, (Brousseau, 2011). The two lawsuits were consolidated by a judge into one group lawsuit which became known as *the Fisher-Mendoza v. TUSD (1978)* court case, a case which took a year and a half for the judge to resolve. Both plaintiffs were parents of children in the District concerned over a plethora of issues facing the sprawling district. They were openly critical of past educational and administrative practices, school violence caused by racial and cultural incidents, and over the educational needs of bilingual and minority children– all of which were recurring problems not addressed satisfactorily by previous attempts (Brousseau, 2011).

When the two sides finally settled on June 5, 1978, its implementations proceeded in three phases starting in the fall of 1978. In phase one, the District (1) closed three inner-city, minority schools, busing the students to other nearby district schools; (2) adopted uniform standards for suspension and expulsion of students; (3) pilot tested an intensive phonics instructional program for a cohort of Mexican American first graders; (4) designed a Standard English and a Second Dialect (SESD) for African American students; and (5) mandated cultural sensitivity training for teachers and counselors at all schools involved that emphasized addressing low expectations of minority students(TUSD District History, 2011).

In phase two, which started in the fall of 1979, three magnet schools were started, two of which were elementary schools and an additional middle school located in minority neighborhoods. The process involved involuntary busing of K-8 students to predominantly White schools and involuntary busing of White students to a magnet middle school placed in a predominantly minority neighborhood (TUSD District History, 2011).

In phase three, which started in the fall of 1981, the District created four magnet schools in inner-city barrios to voluntarily attract both White and minority students (TUSD District History, 2011). During this phase the District created a Black Studies program and offered Standard English as a Second Dialect (SESD), offering courses in Black history and culture for nearly 3,000 African American students (Brousseau, 2011). An important footnote to add to this discussion is that while the District created an African American Studies Department creating a Mexican American Studies Department was not discussed. It took several years for this inequality to surface as will be evident subsequently.

The Exultation Period

TUSD's legal troubles did not end with the peaceful settlement of the *Fisher-Mendoza* desegregation case. In the early 1980's, a group of Mexican American and Native American parents from the predominantly Mexican-American west side of the District, filed a civil lawsuit on behalf of Mexican American and Native American students in federal district court. The parents voiced concerns over various matters, including the poor state of facilities serving minority neighborhoods, the lack of rigorous programs for minority students, and the unsystematic approach to addressing the needs of English language learners (ELLs). The district and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) came out with an agreement, known as the Alvarez-Jasso Consent Decree, that avoided a court confrontation (L. Basurto, personal communication, September 16, 2011). The case was filed in 1987 but a Consent Decree was signed in 1994 (Brousseau, 2011). Due to a benign and visionary district administration, the district was able to design procedures in identification, placement, and exit for ELLs from bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs. In addition, a staff development program for teachers and other employees who were responsible for the education of English language learners was designed and carried out. The facilities and the materials issues also were addressed at this time through an increase in the budget for the affected schools.

TUSD's greatest accomplishment during this period was the amount of time and effort parceled out to address the needs of ELLs in several areas: special education, gifted and talented education, speech and language programs, material development, and staff development. A unique result of this effort was a comprehensive plan for bilingual education and a compliance procedures manual that was used to monitor programs for ELLs in TUSD schools. The comprehensive plan was so effective that OCR used it as model for other school districts in the country to emulate (L. Basurto, personal communication, September 16, 2011). Addressing the needs of English language learners was first and foremost in the minds of district administrators, even though the Alvarez-Jasso complaint included the lack of a systematic approach to teaching multicultural education. The Tucson Unified School District administration decided to maintain the label of Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department for economic expediency. To add a second department to house the Mexican American Studies instead of simply keeping the add-on of Hispanic Studies to Bilingual Education saved the district considerable expenses. However, no additional funding was allocated to the existing Department and consequently a formal Mexican American Studies department and program per se were not instituted.

The Unaddressed Matter

In January 1997, a group of Tucson Unified School District Hispanic parents filed a lawsuit claiming that the District discriminated against Hispanic students by failing to run a comprehensive Hispanic Studies Department (Tully Tapia, 1997, January 8). In a letter to the editor of the Arizona Daily Star, Rosalie Lopez (1997), a parent and one of the leaders of the group of parents outlined the parents' concerns. Their grievances were based on the fact that Mexican-American students did not have a program to address their needs nor a department to spearhead these efforts. They pointed out the success that the African-American and Native-American Studies departments were having with their respective populations and they wanted Mexican-American students, the largest ethnic population in the District, to partake in the effort. Additionally, a group of supporters, called the Coalition of Neighbors for Mexican American Studies, attended board meetings to promote the proposal to establish a new department under the Mexican American Studies rubric (L. Basurto, personal communication, September 16, 2011).

As mentioned before, Hispanic Studies up until that time fell within the purview of the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department even though the Hispanic studies component had not properly and systematically been addressed. The parents claimed that the department focused primarily on students' language needs and slighted Hispanic students who were not English language learners (Tully Tapia, 1997, June 29). They also argued that the District had overlooked the low academic achievement and high dropout rates among Hispanic students. Romero (2008) reports that 1,805 Mexican-American high school freshman entered the Tucson Unified School District in the fall of 2001; yet, only 1133 of them graduated four years later in the

spring of 2005, a 37.3% loss.

Furthermore, they pointed out the fact that the District had an African-American Department and, by that time, a Native American Studies Department and the Mexican-American parents' perception was that these departments had been instrumental in boosting academic achievement among students of those particular ethnic groups (Tully Tapia, 1997, June 29), and that a Mexican American Studies Department, instead of a Hispanic Department, was justified based on the fact that about 26,600, or 42 percent, of TUSD's 63,300 students were Hispanic. The lawsuit's intent was to have TUSD launch a full-fledged Mexican American Studies program by first instituting a Mexican American Studies Department with proper administrative to overview it.

Responding to the lawsuit and community pressure, as well as concerns over the mounting legal fees to fight the lawsuit, the TUSD school board established a committee to muster public input in the areas of bilingual education, multicultural education, and Hispanic Studies. This marked the first time that the TUSD school board officially sought to address the Hispanic Studies issue (L. Basurto, personal communication, September 16, 2011).

Legitimizing and endorsing the formation of the Committee and its charge, a federal judge urged TUSD and plaintiffs in the lawsuit to settle the matter out of court since everybody seemed to agree that something needed to be done to solve the dropout rate of Hispanic students in the District (Tully Tapia, 1997, July 2). In fact, James Christ, the TUSD school board president, in a guest editorial in the Arizona Daily Star (1997), wrote that the proposed Hispanic Studies curriculum in the Tucson Unified School District presented a great opportunity to bring immediate relevance and motivation to thousands of students at all grade levels. Rosalie López, mentioned previously, in her letter to the editor of the Arizona Daily Star (1997), predicted that the voters in the court of public opinion would change the complexion of the TUSD governing board at the polls. She predicted that when the complexion of the Board changed, Mexican-American Studies in TUSD would become a reality. She continued by stating that only then would the Tucson residents see improvement in Hispanic students' Stanford Achievement Test scores. Lopez (1997) claimed that TUSD high schools with significant numbers of Hispanic students scored 30 points below the national average in reading, 25 points in language, and 20 points in math. With Lopez's pronouncement regarding the need for the complexion of the Board to change, Lopez prognosticated the success that the Mexican American Studies program would attain in TUSD in just a few short years.

In 1997, the time was ripe for TUSD to take a serious look at developing a Hispanic Studies Program and the Committee that had already been established was going to be used as a vehicle to study and legitimize the program. It is worth mentioning that the Tucson Unified School District Governing Board had taken independent action in early 1997 by hiring the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), an outside consulting firm, to conduct an audit of the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department (L. Basurto, personal communication, September 16, 2011). The IDRA audit was intended to evaluate the performance of the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department and to study the feasibility of establishing a Mexican American Studies Department separate from and independent of the Bilingual Education Department. The Board's intent was to have the two independent reports, IDRA's and the Committee's, along with recommendations, brought to the District Governing Board in early 1998.

According to Gómez & Benton (1998), in the Committee's charge, drafted by the TUSD governing board, the Committee was asked to:

- review the Bilingual Education/Hispanic Studies Department in terms of existing programs as they relate to bilingual/multicultural education and second language acquisition
- review existing national research and programming related to multicultural education, bilingual education, Hispanic Studies, and second language acquisition
- hold several community meetings
- make recommendations to the governing board and the superintendent

The TUSD superintendent generated a list of thirty-four members of the community to serve on the Committee. The Committee's make up was thorough and diverse: Parents, community leaders, teachers,

administrators, union leaders, and university professors, and a student. The committee was given a year to conduct the process which called for bi-weekly meetings and included three public community hearings. Recommendations would be submitted to the District Governing Board at an official public meeting in the spring of 1998.

At the first Committee meeting, both the president of the TUSD school board and the school district superintendent addressed the Committee members. The former expressed the seriousness of the committee's task in terms of how its work was intricately related to the board's goals; the latter stressed how the committee's mission fit within his vision of where he wanted to take the district. Their talks had a decisive impact on Committee members' disposition and outlook. This was a privilege, a once in a long time opportunity to make a contribution to the education of hundreds if not thousands of students in TUSD (Gómez & Benton, 1998).

During the ensuing months, the committee members immersed themselves in their work. They approached their charge with dedication and diligence. After the Committee was divided into three smaller subcommittees, Committee members read and discussed the latest professional literature on their specific topics. They listened to endless presentations by representatives from the different district departments, finance, curriculum, drop-out prevention, compliance, bilingual education, etc. ad nauseam. Beside the Committee of the Whole weekly meetings, committee members scheduled individual subcommittee meetings that met independently. Committee members were also critically involved in organizing and attending the community meetings, which were the highlight of the process. Ultimately, they were voluntarily involved in drafting and debating the content of the report that went to the Superintendent and the District Governing Board. But more importantly, they were part and parcel of the debates that ensued when the time came for drafting specific recommendations to the Board.

Three subcommittees were established to (1) listen to expert testimony, (2) review current literature on the topics, and (3) report to the committee of the whole once a month. Hundreds of hours went into this process. Concomitantly, the Committee conducted the three hearings at strategically located high school sites throughout the district. Between 500 and 600 people altogether attended the meetings and many of them expressed their opinions, pro or con the issues in the Committee's charge. All proceedings were taped (Gomez & Benton, 2008), transcribed, and included in the report that went to the school board. The point here is that the process was open to the community and the community became engaged in the process. Over ninety-five percent of the speakers at the public hearings favored the creation of a Mexican American Studies program.

As a caveat to the process, it is worth mentioning that on September 16, 1997, the day prior to the Committee's first public hearing, the Tucson City Council on a 6-1 vote urged the Tucson Unified School District Governing Board to create a Mexican-American Studies Program (Burchell, 1997, September 16) based on their perception that the District curriculum largely ignored the history and contributions of Hispanics. With this measure, the Tucson City Council was representing and agreeing with the larger Tucson community's sentiment to seriously address the educational needs of Mexican American students in TUSD.

On March 10, 1998 the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the independent agency hired to report on the same issues as the Committee, presented its yearlong audit of the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department. Beside IDRA's favorable review of the bilingual programs in TUSD, IDRA recommended that a Hispanic Studies curriculum be placed in all schools, and its focus should be separate from bilingual education.

The Committee submitted their own report to the TUSD superintendent at the beginning of March of 1998 and it was officially submitted to the TUSD school board at an official meeting in mid-March of that year. The decision that is germane to this article is that the committee recommended and the Board approved the establishing of a Mexican American Studies Department with the responsibility to design a Mexican American Studies curriculum in grades K-12. Almost immediately, a Mexican American Studies program coordinator was appointed to spearhead the program, fulltime positions were allocated to the department, and a budget also was determined.

As a show of support for decisions made at the local level, Arizona state superintendent Lisa Graham Keegan, a Republican, remained silent on the new Hispanic Studies Program designed by TUSD. Her strong belief in local autonomy was demonstrated years later when she filed court documents against state superintendent Tom Horne, a fellow Republican, when the Arizona Department of Education wanted to require charter schools

to align their curricula to state prescribed curriculum, despite its lack of regulatory authority. In a show of bullying from the pulpit, Tom Horne would later interfere with and intrude in the implementation of the Mexican American Studies program in TUSD despite the fact that the Tucson community had so decisively embraced the program.

Conclusion

Community engagement is the inclusion of community members in school decisions such as planning, activities, visioning, communication, and other school-related functions. After years of neglecting the Mexican American student population, in 1997 the TUSD initiated a process by asking the Tucson community not only for involvement but for permission (Vollmer, 2001), permission to adopt a fundamental change in the approach to teaching students of Mexican American descent. The clamor of the community in support of such a program was decisive as was determined by their showing at the three public hearings set up for the purpose of eliciting public input.

Beside the fact that the Tucson community was overwhelmingly in favor of this transformative educational program, there were other factors that contributed to the welcoming approval of the program by the community and the TUSD School Board. Historically, the polyglot Tucson community, as related above, had created a zeitgeist of tolerance and acceptance toward diverse cultural and ethnic groups. In 1991, TUSD, reflecting the community's sentiment in the area of ethnic relations, adopted a Diversity Appreciation Education Policy with the intent of eradicating the dehumanizing influences of sexism, racism, prejudice, and discrimination from its schools and facilities. In addition, the history, anthropology, Mexican American Studies, and education colleges and departments at the University of Arizona in Tucson had been graduating a cadre of teachers who were committed to this type of education.

These were the best of times in TUSD and its Mexican American student population. The Mexican-American Studies program in TUSD was based on a unique social science program that emphasized an innovative curriculum that serves the cultural, social, and intellectual needs of Mexican-American students. Called the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP), the program provides students with all the social science requirements for their junior and senior years of high school (Romero, 2008). During the two-year duration in the program, students engage in and develop a curriculum that is culturally, socially, and historically relevant, with issues of race and racism at its center (Romero, 2008). The teachers involved in this project were trained in the specific methodology and content required by the curriculum.

Evidence of success includes results from the 2004–2005 reading section of the AIMS test, where the Mexican-American Studies participants outperformed all other 11th grade ethnic cohorts at the four sites where the program was implemented. In three of the four participating sites, the gap in performance was equal to or greater than 23%. On the writing section, program participants outperformed all other 11th grade ethnic cohorts at the four sites and the gap in performance was equal to or greater than 23%. At two of the four sites the gap in percentage passed was equal to or greater than 25%. The 2004–2005 math section of the AIMS test is the only section that program participants did not outperform all other 11th grade ethnic cohorts at the four participating sites. At one of the sites, Anglo students outperformed project participants by one percentage point. This trend continued consistently through school year 2008.

In 2008, 389 program participants were surveyed with the following favorable results (Romero, 2008):

- 95% agree and strongly agree that working on this project or taking this class has improved their writing skills.
- 96% agree and strongly agree that they talk to their parents and/ or other adults about what they have learned in the project or in the class.
- 97% agree and strongly agree that the project or the class has better prepared them for college.
- 97% agree and strongly agree that working on this project or taking this class has improved their reading skills.
- 96% agree and strongly agree that they are willing to do homework in order to keep the project

moving along on tome to ensure participation in class.
- 97% agree and strongly agree that working on this project or taking this class has helped them believe that they have something worthwhile to contribute to this class.

The community at large had provided the Tucson Unified School District with a blueprint for the future (Gómez & Benton, 1998). When the TUSD School Board approved the Committee's report in April of 1998, it immediately became policy. Shortly thereafter, the District hired a Mexican American Studies Director whose responsibility was to design and implement the program. The Tucson community and the University of Arizona experts in the field were involved in the program design. The overarching goal of the program was to boost student achievement among Hispanic students by providing them with curriculum materials embedded in Hispanic history and culture (Gómez & Benton, 1998). While the initial study cohort in 2001 consisted of only 17 students (Romero, 2008) it is important to note that nearly all the students in the project had been labeled "at risk", and many had already dropped out or were on the verge of dropping out of high school. Two years later in 2003, the program was implemented in a total of 4 high schools (Romero, 2008). In just a few years, the program, especially at the high school level, spread and gained popularity among students, especially among the marginalized groups of students that for years had experienced educational neglect.

Unfortunately, not everyone in the state of Arizona felt elation from the program's success. Tom Horne, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, in his capacity as the chief education officer for the state of Arizona, started probing into the program in 2007. In spite of the program's popularity and success among Mexican American and other students, and the markedly positive support it had among the entire Tucson community, Tom Horne, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Arizona State legislature passed laws that targeted the program and made it difficult for the District to sustain it. Euphoria soon gave in to despair on the part of the teachers and students in the program. The onslaught of attacks on the program led to the worst of times for students of Mexican American descent in the Tucson Unified School District. Only time will tell what becomes of an idea that had strong roots in the tolerant and caring Tucson community.

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Latina/o ~~Dropouts~~: Generating Community Cultural Wealth

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Abstract

This article builds upon a community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) to discuss how strategies for school persistence are articulated, cultivated and employed through individual aspirations and practices. The analysis draws from testimonios of six Latina/o young adults between the ages of 18 and 20 living in California's 9-County Sacramento Region who left or considered leaving high school before graduating. Findings suggest that the use of "dropout" to describe students who leave school before graduating both shifts disproportionate blame to them and masks the wealth of insight and experiences these youth contribute to their families, communities, and society. To better understand and address the crisis of low graduation rates for Latinas/os, it is imperative that we include their voices in our quest for addressing disparities that contribute to educational inequities.

Introduction

I didn't drop out of school. I still continued all the way. I tried until my senior year. -Joaquín

Joaquín's voice provides a counter-narrative to widespread perceptions of young people who leave school without graduating as disinterested and disinvested. Indeed, there is much to learn from young adults who are dismissed as "high school dropouts" but have a wealth of perspectives on their ability to persist and resist despite not earning their high school diplomas in traditional ways. Their insights are critical to improving educational opportunities for Latina/o youth. To this end, this work offers an overview of the experiences of 6 Latinas/os between the ages of 18 and 20 living in California's 9-County Sacramento, California Capital Region who left or considered leaving high school without graduating. We build upon a community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) to discuss both the challenges faced and resources utilized by these young adults.

Literature Review

At first glance, the national average for high school completion is a promising 70%. However, the dropout rate for Students of Color and poor students is disproportionately high (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2010). Only 56% of all Latinas/os who begin element ary school receive a high school diploma (Burciaga, Pérez Huber, & Solorzano, 2010). Even when controlling for class and citizenship status, Chicana/o students still have lower rates of educational attainment than their White peers (Covarrubias, 2011).

There is an inextricable link between individual and institutional factors that influence high school completion (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Fine, 1991). School factors that have been shown to negatively and disproportionally affect Black, Latino and Native American students include academic tracking, disproportionate placement in Special Education, high stakes testing for which students are under-prepared, limited support for high school students that have fallen behind academically, school climates that are not conducive to learning, low teacher and administrator expectations and over-reliance on and uneven implementation of punitive school discipline policies (Noguera, 2008). In addition, lack of bilingual teachers, counselors and adequate advising especially affects Latino students and families (Reyes 1990). Beyond school walls, broader patterns of regional and local investment, community development, and school finance often converge in ways that also constrain the educational opportunities and outcomes of low- income youth and Youth of Color (Anyon 1997; Noguera, 2003). In recognition that multiple factors which impact individuals' school persistence are well-beyond their

control, some scholars and advocates have taken up the phrase "school push-out," which was first used by Michelle Fine (1991) to describe school practices of actively discharging students into GED or other alternative programs rather than ensuring they received needed support to complete high school. In comparison, school "pull-out" theories have been described largely as financial and communal responsibilities to family that may compete with the completion of education (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011). Together this body of work suggests that both schools and broader contexts are central factors in school completion.

Despite this research, Latinas/os poor educational outcomes are often attributed to students' and families' lack of caring about education (Valencia & Black, 2002; Valencia & Solorzano, 1997). In response, researchers are documenting how families and communities play important roles in students' educational and occupational aspirations (Burciaga, 2007; Ceja, 2004; Gándara, 1995, 1999; Solorzano, 1986). Dynamic conceptual frameworks undergird these efforts to understand the myriad ways that Latina/o families and communities positively influence young people's agency in and out of schools (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Yosso, 2005). In particular, Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth conceptual framework has been increasingly influential in highlighting the agency of Latina/o youth in the absence of structural support from schools (Liou, Antrop-González & Cooper, 2009).

Community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) specifies values and capacities cultivated by Communities of Color that enable persistence and social mobility in the face of significant obstacles. Such resources and values are often overlooked in widely used analyses of cultural capital and social mobility that tend to frame Communities of Color and other marginalized populations as merely deficient with respect to a constructed norm (Bordieu & Passeron 1977). In doing so, such analyses obscure resources that are produced, deployed and could be further engaged. Yosso (2005) has identified six types of community cultural wealth:

- Resistant capital: challenge inequity and/or subordination
- Linguistic capital: communicate through different languages and/or styles
- Navigational capital: maneuver social institutions
- Social capital: social networks and/or community resources
- Familial capital: cultural and/or family knowledge and histories
- Aspirational capital: aspiration and/or hope despite challenges

These forms of capital are fluid in nature – one's experience can reflect multiple elements. While some of these values and resources are inherent within families and communities, others are cultivated as protective and resistant measures against the absence of opportunity and basic needs such as quality education, health and social services.

These understandings offer an important conceptual framework for scholarship that challenges incomplete and deficit-based portraits of Latina/o communities and provide a powerful foundation for practice and programs that support school persistence. However, to-date, there has been limited attention to how students who do not complete high school are generating and using community cultural wealth.

Methods

We draw here upon research conducted through Healthy Youth /Healthy Regions, a partnership between the UC Davis Center for Regional Change, the Sierra Health Foundation, and The California Endowment to document the connections between improvements in youth well-being and regional prosperity in California's Sacramento Capital Region (London, Erbstein et al., 2011).[8] The project adopted a transdisciplinary, mixed-method approach to learning about young people and the region, producing a multi-faceted dataset that offers insight into their experiences of education, employment, health, civic engagement, and the social and built environments. This research was conducted in accordance with Human Subjects Protocols approved by the UC

8. Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions was commissioned and funded by Sierra Health Foundation with additional funding from The California Endowment. For more information see http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/projects/healthy-youth-healthy-regions

Davis Institutional Review Board; additional protection of participants' confidentiality is afforded through NIH Certificate of Confidentiality CC-HD-10-30.

Participants

We discuss findings associated with six Latina/o young adults[9] between the ages of 18-20 who left or, in the case of Araceli, considered leaving high school without graduating. Participants were recruited though a purposive sampling method targeting young adults ages 17-24 years old who embodied demographic and experiential characteristics common to youth in the region who are not completing high school in large numbers. We connected with potential study participants through adults considered by community members to be allies of this young adult population. Table 1 provides limited background information on the six Latinas/os discussed in this paper. All names are pseudonyms to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality.

Table 1. Study Participants

	Angélica	Araceli	Benjamín	Graciela	Joaquín	Ricardo
Age	18	18	19	21	19	20
Community	rural/suburban	rural/suburban	Rural	urban	rural	urban
Immigration History	2nd generation	2nd generation	1st generation undocumented	1st generation	2nd generation	2nd generation
Grade of Exit	12th	N/A	12th	11th	12th	12th

Method(ology)

While methods are the tools and technique of gathering and analyzing evidence, a methodology is "a theory and analysis of how research does and should proceed" (Harding, 1987, p. 3). This study employed ethnographic methods and the methodology of *testimonio*. *Testimonio* is a qualitative methodology developed in Latin America that incorporates the political, social, and cultural histories that accompany one's life experiences. *Testimonio* is similar to oral history and critical ethnography, yet challenges conventional approaches to collecting and compiling narratives by repositioning the power relationship between researcher and participant (Cruz, 2012). Here this involved establishing a rapport and providing participants with interview questions and a personal, confidential journal prior to their interviews so they had an opportunity to consciously construct a narrative of their experiences. Doing so better facilitated their reflections on personal, political, spiritual, and intellectual understandings of self and community (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). *Testimonio* therefore provides a co-constructed epistemic lens to support analytical inquiry of narratives of education, health, civic engagement, employment, and the built environment (Benmayor, 1988; Burciaga, R. 2007; Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Negron-Gonzales, 2009; Partnoy, 2006; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

Testimonios were revealed across three meetings. Each began with a semi-structured interview and discussion between the researcher and participant. Participants received a copy of the questions prior to the second and third interviews. In addition to the *testimonios*, we employed a demographic interview questionnaire at Meeting #1, a mapping activity (Lynch, 1960) on perceptions of their environment at Meeting #2, and photographs (taken by participants between the first and second meetings) reflecting important aspects of their life-stories at Meeting #3. Participants were given honoraria of $25 in Target gift cards at each of the meetings.

Testimonios were coded in NVivo8. One coding focus was factors contributing to young people's school persistence, or lack thereof. In addition, we aimed to identify ways in which community cultural wealth was produced and employed,

9. The larger sample includes 17 young adults.

particularly in relationship to school persistence. Although the sample size was limited to 6, findings are aligned with themes that emerged through interviews conducted with other youth of different backgrounds and adults in the region.

Findings

By many societal measures these young adults would not be considered successful. All have struggled with school, and some have experienced abuse, the juvenile justice system, or teen parenthood. Each has faced family, community and institutional challenges. Yet community cultural wealth was abundantly evident within their *testimonios*. We provide here examples of the six forms of community cultural wealth as they manifested in participant experience: resistant, linguistic, navigational, social, familial and aspirational capital.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital, the ability to challenge inequity and subordination, was prevalent among all six participants. When asked to describe common stereotypes of dropouts with respect to their own lives, each noted and resisted stereotypes of dropouts as lacking intelligence and motivation. Moreover, the term dropout was used sparingly by the participants and possibly only because this study suggested it as one of many terms (including pushout and pullout) that described their high school completion status.

While the term "dropout" evokes the sense of a sudden leave, all six countered the idea of an impulsive departure, describing leaving (or considering leaving) high school as a process. Multiple factors – both within and beyond school – contributed to leaving before graduating. For example, while Angélica remembered the date she dis-enrolled at her counselor's recommendation, "March 10, 2009," she chronicled challenges including years of residential and school mobility, her family's dependence on her for childcare, and difficulties securing Americ an Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for her parents. She shared,

> I would always explain to [school officials] that my parents can't hear. They always said, " I want to talk to your parents directly. " I was like, " the only way you can do that is if you bring an interpreter. " And they were like, " Oh. Well, can your mom bring one? " Even if we were to be able to bring one, they are too much money . . . I've been pulled out of school [to interpret] a lot.

Angélica did not experience support for her parents at any of the seven schools she attended.

Given their understanding of school departure as a complex process, their resistance to the term "dropout" may reflect their sense that leaving school was neither a sudden decision nor a long-term plan. These young adults never gave up their pursuit of high school completion. Araceli pushed through a period of questioning to graduate. Joaquín and Ricardo completed their GED through alternative programs; the others maintain this as a goal.

Resistant capital was most often demonstrated through challenging inequity and subordination and articulating a vision for rethinking misconceptions. The aversion to labeling themselves as dropouts and the associated negative connotations signals important critiques of how our society disposes of youth who leave school before graduating, as well as an ability to maintain their own self-esteem in this social context. This resistant capital offered a basis for persisting in school, or their intent to some day complete high school, in the face of difficult conditions with inadequate support.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital highlights capacity to communicate in various modalities (Yosso 2005). We provide examples here and extend the construct to include art as a form of communication that facilitates identity development, exploration of ideas and civic engagement, especially among adolescents (Kárpáti & Kovaks, 2002; Stickeler, 2006).

Six of four participants grew up in households with primary languages other than English (Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL)). The concept of linguistic capital promotes attention to these young adults' roles as linguistic and cultural brokers for people who might otherwise not be able to communicate as effectively, re-framing family as a locus of powerful skill development rather than merely as deficient and linguistically isolated. The contributions to family well-being of these bilingual and bicultural young people are often overlooked by the institutions intended to serve them and society more broadly. For example, Angélica spoke at length about her experiences with interpreting for her parents in schools and places of employment. Having assumed this role in her family at an early age, she described the nuances involved in interpreting from English to ASL, ". . . if I were to talk to you, just how I am now and translate it to my parents, they wouldn't understand it. I [would] have to sign it in a way [they could] comprehend and it's hard." Indeed, it is common for ASL interpreters to work in teams of two to monitor accuracy during conversations as well as to provide breaks for the interpreter (Atkinson, personal communication, January 27, 2010). Through serving as her family's primary interpreter Angélica, like other child interpreters, has developed remarkable skills including metalinguistic awareness, civic and familial responsibility, social maturity and cross-cultural awareness (Orellana, 2003).

Young people's use of the arts (including writing, music, and visual arts) as a form of discovery and communication is often overlooked as a rich resource. In Benjamín's case, a local community art center became an outlet for his artwork. Benjamín explains, "they were trying to make people stop tagging so then we started painting and I met this guy, I met [a local Chicano muralist] and we started [painting] murals. Ever since I met him I've just been hanging out with him and learning new things." As a result Benjamín renewed his commitment to high school completion and began developing his portfolio saying, "I want to be an artist when I grow up."

Navigational Capital

All young adults interviewed had cultivated navigational capital – a set of capacities that enable them to navigate complex social institutions and processes. Each demonstrated a propensity to employ these capacities on behalf of others' health, education, and economic well-being. We present two examples of young adults navigating Capital Region educational contexts in addition to the efforts of Angélica mentioned above.

Joaquín serves as a primary advocate at school for his younger brother, who has a speech impediment that makes it difficult for people to understand him. Joaquín's father, a migrant worker, is not often home; while his mother attended as many of the school conferences as she could, her employer's strict phone use policies limit her ability to communicate with school officials during the day. Joaquín's mother had requested his help advocating with teachers, principals and district administrators on behalf of his brother. Joaquín shared his frustrations with the school.

> Teachers are telling him, " Here's a book, read it. " He's not going to learn from it! ... If I show him how to do things, he'll pick them up immediately … every time I go in [to school] I have to convince them that he's not retarded, and they think he is. It's like, " Are you guys serious? We've gone through this already. " I have to convince them [because his teachers] put him in a mentally challenged class ... and I'm like, " No, my brother is not going to be in there ... I told them, just because you guys don't want to give him the attention, you're going to send him there...to get him out of your way? " That's how I see it with him. They don't want to give him the time of day so they'll just send him into an easier class, back to what they think he is.

Frustration with school officials led Joaquín to become more involved (another example of resistant capital). Through regular meetings with school and district staff, Joaquín successfully negotiated his brother's removal from the special education class and integration into mainstream classrooms. Joaquín's role as an advocate continued despite living an hour's drive away and working to complete his GED.

> I try and help him as much as I can in school. I would make him give me almost weekly reports. I called at school randomly, " Hey, how's my brother doing? Is there anything you guys need? " Or they call me, " Hey your brother's acting up, you need to talk to him. "

Joaquín's familiarity with the school system, belief that he had a right to advocate for his brother, attendance at school meetings, and willingness and ability to speak up challenged school officials' approach to educating his brother. Joaquín's navigational capital enabled his advocacy even when not living in the same city.

Ricardo demonstrated clear navigational capital as a young man who was deaf and openly gay. Ricardo never formally learned any signed languages or lip reading and had limited reading and writing skills. Despite these challenges, Ricardo earned his high school equivalency, became a self-advocate for resources including transportation and interpreting, and became active in his local LGBTQ center by starting a support group for the deaf.

A striking commonality among the six participants was their movement through different neighborhoods, cities/areas, states, in some cases nations, often for reasons that were mostly financial in nature such as periodic homelessness and following employment as migrant families. This mobility also resulted in their transfers to different schools. Participants attended an average of six schools from kindergarten to high school.[10] This movement often placed them at a disadvantage for various reasons including peer relationships, credit transfer problems, and needing to learn new systems and curriculum (the material had already been covered and they were bored or were advanced having missed important information). This level of mobility at times overwhelmed young people's capacity to adapt and/or overcome social and institutional challenges. Nonetheless, these young adults possess navigational capital as a result of their perseverance in maneuvering across new school environments from kindergarten through high school. When Joaquín was asked if he dropped out of school or was pushed out, he stated "No, I didn't drop out of school, I still continued all the way, I tried until my senior year." Their experiences challenge us to inquire what it must have taken for these young adults to stay in school despite significant obstacles.

Social Capital

Depictions of social capital amongst these young adult interviewees reflected Yosso's (2005) description of social capital as human and community resource networks. While peer networks were important to these young adults, here we focus in particular on relationships developed and cultivated with adult allies.

The young adults interviewed spoke highly of the few adults with whom they had established close relationships. Most of these adults were employed by social services, some worked at schools, and others were family or community members who dedicated time to provide individualized support to the young people they served. Throughout most of our work, we call these "adult allies" because they are in meaningful, authentic relationships with young people, providing critical assistance and advocating on their behalf. Ricardo Stanton-Salazar's (2011) concept of "empowerment agent" helps further explain how some young adults were served through this type of relationship. Empowerment agents provide not only institutional resources but also "a commitment to empower youth with a critical consciousness, and with the means to transform themselves, their communities, and society as a whole" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.1068).

Adult allies played a key role in anticipating and supporting access to material resources instrumental in day-to-day living and fostering social mobility. For example, while waiting for a participant to arrive, the interviewer noticed a young man trying on dress shoes in front of one of the adult allies' desks. Upon asking about this exchange, another adult ally replied,

> . . . frequently we have to [do] " creative " things to get our students what they need. We buy things with our own money when they are on sale or keep stashes of whatever under our desks (we can hardly scoot in [our desk chairs] for the hygiene kits and duffle bags).

10. This may be a low estimate since two participants had difficulty recalling all schools attended.

> Whenever we are out we pick up job listings and meet management staff. Case management is more than 40 hrs a week. Really, you have to be on constant lookout for things the students might need. It's about anticipation. (SA_A_001 personal email communication, June 14, 2010).

The most trusted adults were those that participants felt genuinely cared about them and supported them unconditionally. In fact, some young adults shared examples of distancing themselves from adults who could provide institutional support but were perceived as uncaring, reflecting research demonstrating that the efficacy of resource networks depends heavily on the quality of their engagement with those they are intended to serve (Valenzuela, 1999).

When asked about what they liked about schools, caring teachers or school staff, in cases where they had experienced them, were framed as the most significant resource. When Joaquín became involved in a gang, teachers that he described as authentic and honest told him he was smart but was not going anywhere; their comments, in the context of their meaningful relationships with him, played an important role in his persistence. In contrast, when Graciela arrived at the front office of a new high school in the third trimester of her pregnancy, she vividly described the cold response from a staff member indicating that she did not belong in that school. More often than not, these young adults refused knowledge, material resources and enrichment opportunities offered in schools when the adult providers showed disrespect towards them – a finding consistent with previous research (Valenzuela, 1999).

Familial Capital

Familial capital includes the cultural, family, and communal knowledge and bonds that model the importance of caring, coping, and providing for others (Yosso 2005). While familial capital is often discussed as a dynamic within immediate family, this section also demonstrates how familial capital fosters a consciousness of caring and goodwill towards others that positions young adults as producers of social capital themselves.

Most participants spoke of family bonds that promoted school persistence. For example, Araceli shared that her parents supported and encouraged her through bouts of depression:

> I mean they [family] were always supportive. It was never really stated. Like I realized like from the way my dad was so happy when I got awards that I waslike, " Oh, ok. I guess I'm doing something good. "

She noted that her parents communicated their caring, and the importance of caring, through the rituals of regular family meals as well as acts such as driving Araceli to activities and taking in struggling nephews even when it caused hardship.

We found that these young adults in turn regularly engaged in the civic life of their communities, in some cases in ways that enabled survival and school persistence. Everyday examples ranged from walking a friend home from the local community college at night because the bus stops running to opening their homes to classmates who faced family challenges so they could stay in school. These participants did not describe this engagement as purposeful volunteerism, but rather something they felt compelled to do in addition to pursuing their educational and professional goals. While this everyday civic engagement could be considered a form of familial capital because the dedication to help others in need is informed by a spirit of communal good-will, our findings suggest that this may be a new form of community cultural wealth – civic capital because they draw upon accessible resources to meet critical individual and community needs. For example, while all of the participants were socioeconomically poor and spoke of the economic poverty in their neighborhoods, many were considerate and empathetic towards those who had less than them. Graciela saves bottles and cans for two homeless people in her community.

> He always comes to my door and goes "Good morning, ma'am. Do you have anything for me today?" I'm like, "Yup, I do." So he knows when to come and it makes me feel good because

> you know I am helping somebody out, you know hopefully somebody could help me out, cash me out and hopefully I can move but in the meantime that's all I could do. So another lady you know started noticing and he goes you got anything for me? So I am like "not today" so what I do now is like take turns for both of them, I mean that's the only thing we can do . . .

In return, the homeless man began to pick up leaves from her front yard and she insisted that he not, telling him, "No, I do this because I want to do it. You don't have to do work for me." She explained, "He's an old guy. He's very old and when his knee gives up, he's in his wheelchair pushing the cart and it's like, 'No, [you don't need to do this].' " Graciela, amongst others, identified a caring consciousness as an important part of who she is despite the tendency of our society to characterize young people like her as "stupid, lazy, and/or irresponsible."

Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital – the ability to aspire and dream despite challenges (Yosso 2005) –was abundant amongst participants. Interviewees articulated aspirations for themselves, their families, their communities and their localities. Many of these aspirations were related to education.

These young adults each challenged the notion that youth who leave school early do not care about their education. Ironically, all participants described points at which their schooling was a barrier to their learning. Subject-specific interests that were stymied included psychology, math and a desire to know more about their own history and culture. All shared the desire for opportunities to connect what they learned in school with their own lives and future plans.

All young adults interviewed had educational aspirations for their families, as evidenced in some of the examples from Angélica's and Joaquín's *testimonios*. Participants who were parents spoke extensively about their aspirations for their own children. Despite their own challenges in school, all aspired to provide their children with better educational opportunities. Some, like Graciela, planned to move away from their cities with this objective in mind. With limited resources themselves, these young parents invested tremendously in caring for and teaching their children. Some participants were certain most of their aspirations are within reach. For example, although motherhood prompted Graciela to scale back her initial goal of becoming a judge, she continues her studies for the GED while planning her route to the local community college to become a certified court reporter.

Others were unsure about their ability to achieve their visions, highlighting challenging and intersecting personal and systemic barriers (London, Erbstein et. al., 2011). For example, Benjamín's resource-rich social network and optimism about his future as an artist are counter-balanced by uncertainty about his future in the United States as an undocumented immigrant – even with more education.

Conclusion

In summary, these six young adults provided insights regarding the multitude of challenges they have faced in the past are facing in the present and anticipate facing in the future. Although the sample size is small, their stories of cultural wealth and significant structural barriers echo those revealed by quantitative data and other young people and adult allies from throughout the region (Eubanks Owens, Nelson, Perry & Montgomery-Block, 2010, London, Erbstein et. Al 2011).

The cultivation and employment of community cultural wealth among these participants complicates predominant views of "dropouts" as simply disconnected and apathetic people who have made poor choices. Instead, our findings reveal these young adults to be contributing community-members who have neither had equitable access to opportunities nor adequate levels of support.

We advocate for a reinvestment of resources to support the various forms of capital that young people manage to create and maintain despite the challenges and disappointments they face. While community cultural wealth alone cannot mitigate all systemic or personal barriers, the various forms of capital used to navigate these obstacles are important to everyday persistence and are too often overlooked. As young adults who have

navigated, are addressing, and anticipate facing more challenges, they hold critical insight into how to approach change—wisdom well beyond what could be compiled in this overview. As such, it is critical for decision-makers, adults who work with children and youth anywhere, to recognize the community cultural wealth generated and utilized by these young adults. Their insight is critical to developing more effective programs and practices aimed at supporting school persistence.

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Latina Teacher Agency in Public Schools: Love, Tensions, and Perseverance

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Abstract

This article examined the manner in which Latina teachers' enacted agency to challenge institutional barriers impacting Latinas/os in the educational system. A theoretical framework is suggested as a tool to describe the practices of four Latina teachers working in elementary schools serving a high population of Latino students in Southern California. Using qualitative mixed methods, as an exploratory study, the classroom teachers identified three themes representing their journey in search of an equitable education for Latinas/os.

Introduction

Current demographic trends reveal that we are in the midst of a shift in California's K-12 student population. Nearly one-third of the nation's English Learners (ELs) are found within California (California Department of Education [CDE], 2007), with a total of 1, 571, 463 students identified as ELs during the 2009-2010 school year. Over the past 25 years, over 75 % of English proficient Latinos have been underachieving in basic skills of reading, writing, and math by the fourth grade (CDE, 2007). Consequently, the federal government's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicates that Latina/o students continue to lag behind White students in reading (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009). A recent study by Gándara and Rumberger (2009) on English learners demonstrated that ELs attended segregated schools where facilities and conditions were poor and had teachers with less training, receiving little professional development to aid them in teaching English learners. Consequently, graduation rates for Latina/o students reveal a decline in recent years (CDE, 2009).

To challenge and transform current conditions faced by Latinas/os in education, teachers must advocate for Latinos at all costs. This form of agency examines, critiques, and transforms institutional barriers, shaping the participation and success of Latino parents and students in schools. Furthermore, the teacher's role is key in attaining equality for Latino school communities. (The term Latino school community is used to define a school community where the majority of the student population is Latino.)

We begin this article by providing an overview of relevant literature informing the research study. A Cycle of Liberation Framework will examine the manner in which classroom teachers enacted agency in their particular school site. Next, the methodology section will describe the approach used to collect and analyze data. Three themes emerging from the data are presented, which include: (1) Intentionality of Action, (2) Transformative Resistance, and (3) Negotiation of Practice. Consequently, the authors will discuss the major findings in regards to teacher advocacy in Latino school communities. Lastly, recommendations are presented in support of teacher agency in schools and communities.

Overview of the Literature

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy (CP) has been acknowledged as a process in which teachers and educators are able to challenge, question, and transform existing status quo practices in public schools (Giroux, 2008; McLaren, 2005;). A review of the research (Darder, 2002; Duncan- Andrade, 2007; Giroux, 2008) reveals that critical pedagogues have used critical pedagogy to identify, examine, and critique socio-political factors influencing teacher practice and student achievement in the educational system.

According to Freire (1974), a liberatory education is guided by love. Studies regarding the influence of love and caring in schools (Ladson Billings, 1995; Noddings, 1984;Valenzuela, 1999) explicate that both constructs are significant to the success of culturally and linguistically diverse youth in the K-12 educational system. For example, Valenzuela (1999) draws from Noddings' (1984) conceptualization of teacher caring as a moral ethic caring driven by a need to nurture and value relationships between teacher and student. Bartolomé (2008) contends that love must be authentic in education settings where teachers serve culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Bartolomé's (2008) study on teacher beliefs found that teachers believed that love, respect and cariño outweighed any linguistic and cultural difference between teacher and student. Following this vein, bell hooks (1994;2003) affirms that love is essential in combating dehumanizing practices that exist in the educational system. Love, as defined by hooks, is a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust.

Teacher Agency

Bound closely to acts of love and caring, teacher agency is a component of critical pedagogy that challenges and transforms schooling conditions, shaping the lives of students and communities (Freire, 1974; Giroux, 2008). Duncan-Andrade's (2007) study of urban teachers working in restrictive school settings revealed that teachers that enacted agency were risk takers with students, the curriculum, and associated their teaching with the struggle for human dignity and justice. Similarly, Nieto's (2006) study of teacher dispositions found that effective teachers in public schools saw themselves as effective because they had both the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge and a passion for social justice. These studies also reflect the need for examining the manner in which power is used to control teachers. The works of Apple (2005), Kozol (2006), and Foucault (1977) have outlined the manner in which the power of institutions is exerted on teachers. More specifically, Foucault contends that those with the most power in society are also those whose ideas are considered to be universal and unbiased truths. Pignatelli (2002) posits that in education there is a need to illuminate essential truths about students and teachers. Thus, it is imperative to challenge power structures in the educational system. Unless leaders transform power structures, schools will remain under "surveillance." Within the context of education, teachers, through advocacy, are seeking a shift in power in schools so that democracy is enacted and schools can be a place where all individuals are valued.

Jiménez-Castellanos' (2010) study of one Latino teacher coalition found that critical teacher networks had a significant influence in the decision-making process at the school district level. The Latino teacher coalition was composed of one group with 30 members. The teachers advocated for Latino youth and consistently challenged their school district for more than 10 years. This study reveals that Latino teacher networks are influential in challenging power and transforming schools in regards to the success of Latinos.

Teacher agency in Latino school communities has been regarded by scholars as necessary for the achievement of Latinos (Trueba, 1995; Valencia, 2002). Research on Latino parents (Olivos, 2011; Valencia, 2002) has demonstrated that the education system, historically, has disregarded the contributions of Latino parents as it relates to students' academic trajectory. Along this vein, in a recent book on Latino parents, Bicultural Parent Engagement, Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa (2011) recommend that teachers must engage with their community and provide opportunities for parents to engage democratically with schools. Further, through a democratic process, Latino parents have an opportunity to become critical leaders that examine, critique, and challenge barriers shaping the educational terrain of their children.

Theoretical Framework for Naming Teachers' Actions in Schools

The Cycle of Liberation Framework (CLF), Figure 1, draws from Freire (1974) and critical pedagogy, as discussed earlier. The CLF was used to analyze actions enacted by classroom teachers in this study—i.e. to closely examine their teacher agency. The CLF illustrates the process for analyzing inequities and action towards liberation (Harro, 2000). The CLF involves a process of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and systemic change with love at the core of all action (Freire, 1974; Harro, 2000). Tension is part of the CLF. Hence, tension derives

from institutional constraints causing stress on individuals seeking equality and liberation. Specifically, the CLF is composed of three stages: (1) Waking Up and Reaching Out; (2) Building Community and Coalescing; and (3) Creating and Maintaining Change. A description of each stage follows.

Waking Up and Reaching Out. In the first stage, the intrapersonal tensions caused by critical incidents create an enlightenment of one's place in the world, where one's known reality is now questioned and challenged as being true. Individuals or groups in this phase begin to take steps toward self-empowerment by further questioning and understanding the contradictions they have brought to their consciousness (Freire, 1974; Gioux, 2008). For instance, a teacher that is forbidden to speak Spanish by a school principal realizes that her view of education has changed because someone in power is diminishing her most valuable cultural asset in working with Latina/o students. The teacher uses this critical incident to empower herself and consequently, names injustices in her school.

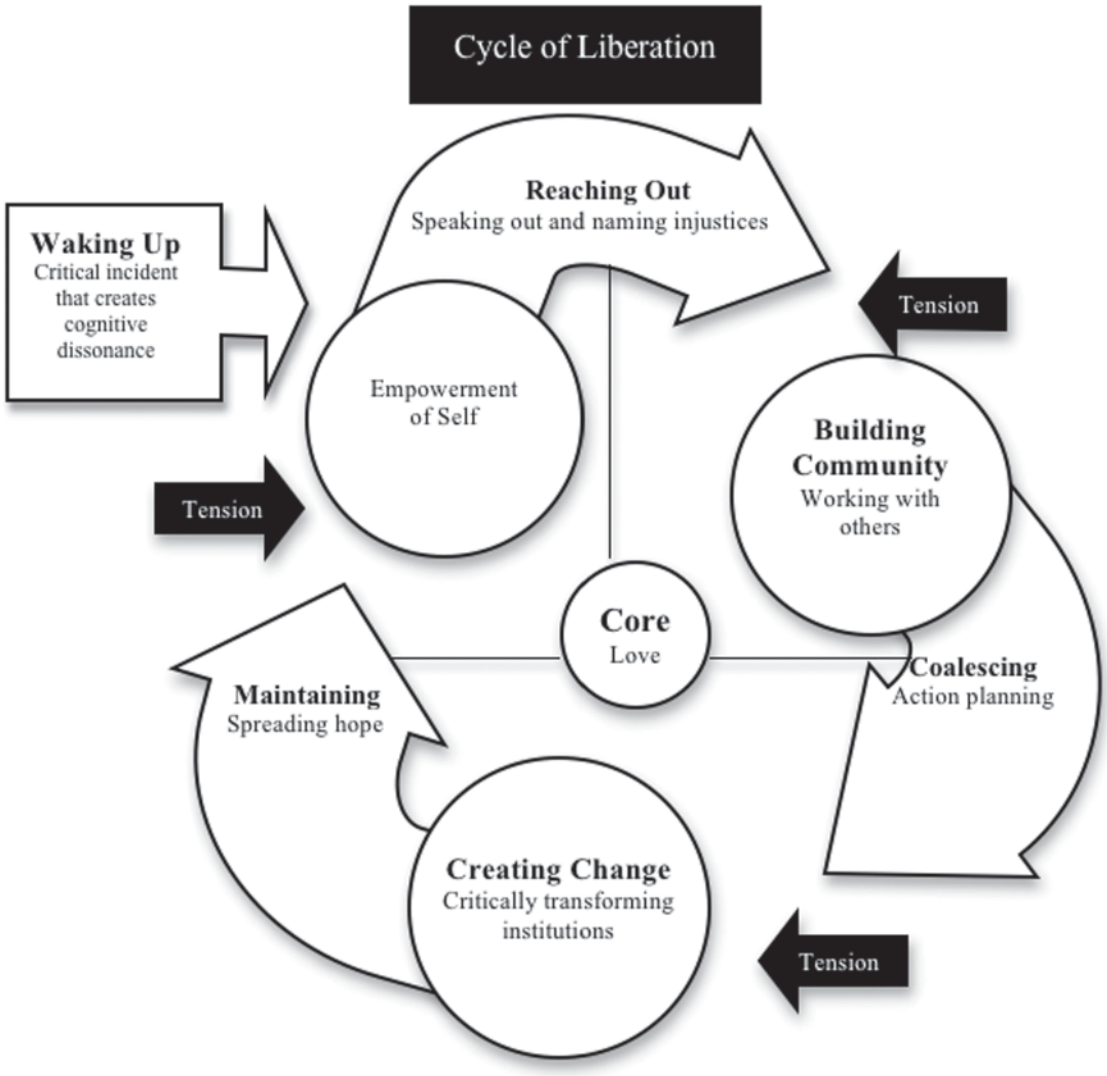
Building Community and Coalescing. In the second stage, the interpersonal tension that drives the CLF involves a change in an individual's worldview triggered by the need to further understand the personal, social, and systemic forces that cause inequitable conditions. Building community allows a space for dialogue with individuals or groups that have similar and different perspectives. A classroom teacher that participates in professional development seeks to build relationships with all members, regardless of ideological differences, in the pursuit of equality in education.

Creating and Maintaining Change. The final stage, creating and maintaining change, is fueled by tensions that challenge existing structures, assumptions, philosophies, rules, and roles that stifle transformative change (Harro, 2000). The challenge is to strengthen and integrate change into the daily lives of everyone, through dialogue and cooperation, towards the possibilities for equality, justice, and humanness (Freire, 1974; Giroux, 2008). A teacher that wants to integrate a program that will benefit schools, such as technology classes for Latino parents, uses dialogue and hope to challenge power structures and institutional barriers undermining Latinos' potential. Love, which is the core of the CLF, is a fundamental quality needed to battle oppression waged against Latinos in the educational system. We have observed a dual language school in Southern California that exemplifies the CLF. Latinos in this school community continue to go through the stages of the CLF as new barriers are presented in the educational system.

Significance of Study

This study sought to examine the manner in which four Latina teachers enacted agency in their school community. These processes are significant for Latinas/os in education given the constrictive practices presently enforced in the public school system (such as the elimination of bilingual curricula and high stakes testing). The investigation was guided by two questions: 1. What guides teacher action? 2. How do teachers enact agency in the educational system?

Figure 1. Cycle of Liberation Framework



Methodology

A multiple case study approach (Yin, 1994) was used to collect data and examine how the four classroom teachers enacted agency in four distinct K-5 elementary school settings. Interpretive research (Denzin, 2000) was utilized to analyze participants' practices and beliefs regarding their school community. Critical pedagogy was used as a lens to examine how classroom teachers named and challenged the barriers faced at their school sites.

Selection of Participants

The participant selection process for this study began by asking California scholars and experts, who are well known in their field of study in education—and have extensive background knowledge in the area of critical pedagogy research, curriculum, and educational processes—to recommend four to five Latina/o K-6 teachers from San Carlos County[11] (located in Southern California) whom they determine enact agency in the educational

11. Pseudonym given to county.

system and qualify as having advocacy strengths. In addition, the participants in this study had to have more than five years of teaching experience and work in a school providing services to ELs, bicultural students, immigrant students, and other culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

In total, 30 teachers, who are Latino/a and teach in K-6 schools, were recommended. The ten most identified teachers were contacted. From initial contact and discussions with each of the ten teachers, four were selected based on their willingness to write an autobiography, be interviewed, and be observed in their classroom and community settings. Upon agreeing to participate, the four teachers were assured that their names, those of their students, school and district would be kept confidential. The teachers include: Mrs. Cruz, Mrs. Paz, Mrs. Flores, and Mrs. López.[12] Each of the four teachers has more than ten years advocating for Latinas/os in the educational system.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of evidence were essential in gathering data that would address the research questions. Because of the qualitative nature of this study, it was important that both validity and reliability be established. This case study included autobiographies, interviews, and classroom and community observations for data collected from September 2010 to August 2011. The participants wrote autobiographies examining pivotal moments in their lives that influenced their beliefs about education. Each participant was interviewed three times. The questions focused on tensions they faced in the school setting and instructional practices in support of ELs. Each participant was also observed three times in the classroom setting and two times in a school-community environment. Observations in the classroom and school community were essential in terms of examining congruency between teacher ideology and practice.

Data Analysis

Once the data was conceptualized, a thematic content analysis approach was utilized to code and identify patterns in the data. The themes were determined based on a thorough analysis of interview transcripts and observation notes. Moreover, descriptors were highlighted to identify patterns. After the data was coded and patterns emerged, those particular descriptors were placed under a stated theme. This process was repeated three times to seek clarity of themes. Consequently, themes were member- checked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by classroom teachers for accuracy and content validity.

Teachers' Agency Enacted in School Communities

Three salient themes emerged from the autobiographies, interviews, and observations: intentionality of action, transformative resistance, and negotiation of practice. The themes directly correlated with the three stages of the CLF.

Theme One: Intentionality of Action

Intentionality of Action represents the manner in which pivotal moments or experiences in a teacher's life shaped the beliefs and attitudes regarding Latinos/as in education (Bartolomé, 2006). Their ideological grounding led them to enact intentional actions in the educational system and in Latina/o communities. Their practices take into consideration social, political, and racial factors that interplay with the success of Latinas/os. At the same time, these actions originate from a love teachers have for the school community which is closely tied to Stage One of the CLF. Teachers' deep sense of care is demonstrated in their advocacy for Latina/o students and parents. Consequently, teachers have empowered themselves to speak out and name injustices that exist in their school community.

12. Pseudonym given to classroom teachers.

Mrs. Cruz has taught in a biliteracy classroom in a kindergarten and first-grade setting for the past twenty years. In this study, we observed her in a first-grade biliteracy classroom. Mrs. Cruz, through her autobiography, commented on her beliefs regarding immigrant students' and Latino families' success:

I see myself as an immigrant always. I came to this country believing in the United States' democracy. It exists here, but for immigrants it is different. I feel that my work is to support immigrant students and parents as much as possible because they deserve all the rights possible to be successful in the current education system.

Over the past 20 years, Mrs. Cruz has been a leader in multiple organizations in her school community, including English language advisory committees (ELACs), teacher committees, and a Latino parent school organization.

Mrs. Paz has been a kindergarten teacher for the past 15 years and consequently has taught most of her career in a bilingual classroom setting. In this study, she was observed teaching Kindergarten students. Mrs. Paz has faced discrimination and scapegoating in both her personal life and as a Latina teacher during the past 25 years. She describes in her autobiography her beliefs about the power of being Mexicana and bilingual and how it impacted her identity:

> I have always seen myself as a Mexicana first, then American. This goes way back to when I was growing [up] in southern California. During this time, there was horrible discrimination towards people of color, but specifically Mexicans in Southern California. I lost my identity by not being able to speak in Spanish at school.

Due to her ideology, Mrs. Paz has been a key member of bilingual committees in San Carlos and in California. Mrs. Paz is a leader of bilingual school committees that work to restore bilingual education in San Carlos County School District. In addition, for the past 15 years, she has been a contributing member in community and parent organizations in San Carlos.

Equality for Latinas is the foundation of Mrs. Flores' teaching ideology. Mrs. Flores has been teaching fifth grade Structured English Immersion (SEI) classes for the past 10 years, and consequently, teaches in the community she was raised in as a youth. Mrs. Flores has been engaged in community programs for the past 10 years providing mentorship and support in academics to Latina youth. In her autobiography she chronicles her community work with two Latina youth:

> I mentor two young ladies every Saturday. They are very bright girls but they are also struggling. Most come from single parent homes, just like me. So I tell them I have been through this. When we meet we have real conversations about problems they are going through. They trust me and tell me when they don't understand something. If they fail, I fail. This is my community. The young ladies that I meet with—we have strong bond. I love being part of their lives and helping them be successful in life.

Mrs. Flores' is invested in the community where she grew up. She has high expectations and encourages Latina youth to persevere despite challenges they may face. Mrs. Flores provides mentorship driven by her own lived experiences. Love is key to Mrs. Flores community work. She expresses care and commitment regarding the relationship built with Latina youth.

Theme Two: Transformative Resistance

Transformative resistance is a method by which critically-minded teachers challenge oppressive conditions in schools that perpetuate deficit-based practices in the educational system. The classroom teachers are resisting detrimental parental programs, discrimination, and institutional constraints that seek to exert deficit-based schooling practices in their particular school community. Moreover, they strive to transform oppressive conditions that have historically shaped the success of Latinos/as in the educational system. The teachers in this study are in the process of creating change, which is reflective of Stage Three of the CLF. Teachers are

transforming the process by which schools service Latinos by providing mentorship to parents and students, thus, strengthening their leadership skills.

Mrs. Cruz is able to enact transformative resistance practices in her school site because of her past experience and working relationship with school administration. According to Mrs. Cruz, parents have not been valued in her school site. She has developed parent literacy classes that support their overall learning and builds leadership skills for Latino parents. Although she was met with criticism by school administration, Mrs. Cruz negotiated space for parents as documented in an interview:

> All the work that I do in this literacy project is connected with parents and students learning together and student achievement. Parents want the best for their children. They believe in it. I tell parents they may participate when they have time and they are always welcomed.

Mrs. Cruz seeks space for Latino parents so that they can become leaders and be able to understand the educational system. In this context, Latino parents are valued for their intellectual capabilities. This challenges status quo perceptions of Latino parents that are pervasive in schools and undermine Latino parents' value. Within the context of parental engagement, Mrs. Cruz describes the history she has collaborating with Latino parents in her school community. She discusses, through an interview, her role with parents:

> I have been doing this for most of my career. It's who I am. I love talking and learning from my parents. Most of the parents I have known have been disrespected by schools. Yet parents continue to come back! I admire my parents so much.

Mrs. Cruz understands the struggles Latino parents encounter. Mrs. Cruz loves her community and admires their resilience. This form of parent engagement is developed through building community and trust.

Mrs. López has been teaching fifth grade biliteracy and has been a key member of a Latino community organization (Comunidad en Acción[13]) for the past 10 years. She is passionate about supporting Latino parents' rights and has challenged school administrators about school practices detrimental to parents. Mrs. López believes schools should provide human rights classes for parents, especially, since many parents in her school are undocumented Latinos. Mrs. López expounds on this topic through an interview:

> I have talked to Latino parents about community issues such as immigration raids, fear, and education. I have voiced this concern with the school principal and asked for human rights' forums. The principal does not believe in transformative parent involvement in this school. This is a long process. It takes time.

Mrs. López advocates for undocumented parents by engaging in dialogue with the school principal regarding human rights' classes. By critiquing the political position that her school takes against Latino parents, she identifies institutional tension that currently exists. Mrs. López seeks, through a political lens, to transform the manner in which her school views parent involvement.

Along with parents, Mrs. López also advocates for her students with great passion. Mrs. López is conscious of the fact that many Latino students need to be full participants in their education. Many of the students in the community organization, where Mrs. López is a member, are undocumented Latinas/os. She describes, through an interview, the role of the organization:

> Students want to be part of the social justice movement and want to take action in their school and community. Some of my students like Cornelia [pseudonym], who is undocumented, wants to go to college regardless of barriers. Students we work with learn to empower themselves. Schools do not do enough.

13. Pseudonym for organization.

Mrs. López is aware that Latino students are not treated equally. She provides critical mentorship guided by social justice. The community organization is a facilitator for information, and consequently, faults the public school system for the lack of communication towards undocumented Latino students.

Theme Three: Negotiation of Practice

Negotiation of Practice refers to the manner in which teachers who subscribe to critical pedagogy dialogue, reflect, and challenge the educational system so that students and parents obtain the best services a school can provide. The teachers illustrate Stage Two, Building Community and Coalescing, of the CLF. Teachers are in the process of working and collaborating with school administration in regards to the needs of Latino youth. Nevertheless, tension, in the form of institutional constraints, influences dialogue.

Mrs. Paz has had to struggle in order for the kindergarten biliteracy program at her school site to begin. She is constantly addressing the role of biliteracy in her school community. Mrs. Paz, describes in an interview, the challenges faced when advocating for biliteracy:

> Our school is beginning a biliteracy program in some K-1 classrooms, and I have been demanding for things that were owed to us. I have questioned my principal about our resources and curriculum for K-1 classes. I attempt to have conversations with my principal in our professional development meetings. Most of our conversations are very tense. I won't give up my beliefs about bilingual education and she knows that.

Mrs. Paz is in constant dialogue with the school principal and is assertive in negotiating for resources needed for Latino students. The process is significant because it allows her to challenge the power structures in her school site. Her perseverance allows her to maintain a critical dialogue with the school principal, which is key to the negotiation process regarding biliteracy programs.

Mrs. Flores struggles to negotiate with peer literacy coaches at her school site for quality instruction for Latino ELs. She has documented, through interviews, that her school believes in providing quality instruction, but, in the end there is no follow through:

> In the past six months, all of our fifth grade team has had to change our schedule in terms of our literacy and math instruction due to peer coaches. I have had disagreements with them in regards to the best way in supporting the needs of students. In many instances, they have critiqued the work I have done with my students. What hurt the most is that sometimes they perpetuate deficit perspective [s] onto my students. I am very honest, and I tell them that as a school we need to reflect on how to best support Latino students

Mrs. Flores is aware of the symbolic practices enacted by her school regarding EL youth. She names and documents discrimination towards her students and her classroom instruction. Further, Mrs. Flores advocates for all ELs and understands the ramifications of Latinos not receiving quality instruction. Her presence and critique are instrumental in negotiating for Latino students.

Overall, the four teachers are committed to their school communities despite tensions their actions may produce. The teachers in this study have unconditional love for their school community. Love is reflected in the teachers' constant efforts to transform oppressive conditions that exist in their school and community. Teachers face tension from school administration due to their beliefs and ideology regarding equality for Latinos/as in their school community. Moreover, teachers are challenging power structures in schools by negotiating for services needed for Latinos in their particular school community. Perseverance allows them to continue to advocate for parents and students and to create transformative change in their school community. Unconditional love and perseverance guides teachers through the CLF.

Conclusion

In this article, we document a one-year qualitative study that examined the manner in which four veteran Latina teachers enacted agency in their school community. This study employed the CLF to analyze practices operationalized by teachers serving Latino school communities. The CLF was important in examining three overarching themes: *Intentionality of Action, Transformative Resistance, and Negotiation of Practices.*

Stage One of the CLF, Waking Up and Reaching Out, was exemplified by all four teachers. Teachers were influenced by pivotal moments in there lives, consequently shaping their beliefs regarding issues of equality for Latinos in education. More specifically, their ideology influenced their advocacy for Latino students and parents. Gándara and Contreras (2009), affirm that the best teachers for Latinos are those that understand Latinos' struggles and experiences—consequently, leading to advocacy on their behalf. Teachers in this study are invested in their school community. Teachers in this study have advocated most of their career for the advancement of Latino parents' rights, bilingual education, and Latino students' academic success. Moreover, their ideology and beliefs, which are undermined in the educational system, are powerful tools utilized to unveil the oppression that Latinos face on a daily basis.

The Latina teachers were able to name injustices and challenge practices that dehumanize Latinos/as. Further, love was a significant construct that shaped their advocacy and ideology. The classroom teachers' actions in their school community reflect hooks' (2003) definition of love, which encompasses care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, and trust. Mrs. Flores' love and commitment to her community was illustrated through the powerful relationship she developed with Latina youth in her school community. The love that teachers have for their community prepares them to combat tension. This resonates with Bartolomé's (2008) findings in regards to the significance of love in educational settings.

Stage Two of the CLF, Building Community and Coalescing, represented the process by which the four classroom teachers attempted to collaborate with others in their particular school site. The study revealed that tensions were produced when attempting to work with other school members that had opposite ideological beliefs about Latinos/as in the educational system. The study reported that negotiation and dialogue were significant in addressing the need of Latinos. The teachers were astute and assertive when seeking resources and instructional programs for Latino youth. Mrs. Flores and Mrs. Paz denounced their schools for not effectively providing support for students in regards to biliteracy and effective instructional practices for Latino students. This form of advocacy aligns with Duncan-Andrade's (2007) findings in relation to teachers being risk takers. More specifically, the four Latina teachers understood the significance of being part of decision-making processes with school administration. Their actions were focused on transforming the political and ideological beliefs that schools had about the education of Latino youth.

This practice reveals a shift in power that the teachers were seeking in reference to the dignity and success of Latinos/as in the educational system. Mrs. Paz, who advocated for biliteracy, understood that it was critical for the school administration to support biliteracy. She addresses this concern directly to school administrators through multiple meetings and conversations. Mrs. Flores attempted to engage with peer coaches to consider effective instruction for Latino students. Her presence and critical voice interrupted the manner in which her school addressed the needs of Latinos. Perseverance was a key characteristic that guided teacher advocacy. Teachers did not conform to their schools' ideology regarding Latinos. Their perseverance guided their interaction with others who did not share the same beliefs about Latino students. This disposition is key in challenging deficit-based schooling practices and power structures pervasive in the educational system.

Within Stage Three of the CLF, Creating Change, all four teachers were critical about the discrimination and marginalization of Latino parents and students. According to Olivos (2011), teachers must be advocates for democracy for Latino parents at all costs. Moreover, the classroom teachers in this study believed that Latino parents were intelligent leaders capable of empowering themselves and others. Teachers worked towards preparing parents to be key members of their schools. In addition, teachers understood parents' struggles in the community and challenged their schools' political beliefs regarding Latino parents. The parent literacy class developed by Mrs. Cruz, which focused on leadership skills, illustrated a change in the manner in which parents were treated in her school. Teachers' actions countered the deficit perspectives (Valencia, 2002) of Latino

parents, which were prevalent in the school system.

The community action enacted by Mrs. López in her school community illustrates stage three of the CLF. She enacted agency outside the school and collaborated with Latino organizations to serve as a mentor. Mrs. López, through her community organization, provided advice to undocumented Latinos regarding college access and social justice. This form of mentorship was guided by a social justice lens. Mrs. López understood that Latino/a youth do not receive access to information from schools and, conversely, engaged youth to empower themselves. Critical Latino organizations have an influence on the success of Latino youth. This form of community action creates change needed in the educational system (Duncan-Andrade, 2007).

Given the findings shared in this article and the existing literature regarding Latinos and teacher agency, we offer recommendations focused on the advancement of teacher agency in schools. Schools must recruit Latina/o teachers that are invested in the community. Latina/o teachers' love for a school community influences the success of its students and families. Model teachers that exemplify a deep sense of care and commitment for Latino school communities are an asset. Furthermore, teacher mentorship is vital in Latino school communities.

Latina/o teachers must continue to provide mentorship to other teachers that seek justice and equality in the educational system. This mentorship must be guided by a socio-political lens required to challenge and transform power structures in schools. Moreover, Latina/o teachers are needed in leadership positions in regards to the evaluation of school curricula and programs geared towards Latino youth. It is essential that teachers advocate for Latino youth's culture and language in relation to curricular development. In regards to community organizations, schools must make sure teachers are mediators between the community and school so that the best educational services are provided for Latinos. This process will have a profound impact on Latinos' academic trajectory, and perhaps, ensure future student leaders return to their communities.

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Cultivating a Guerrera Spirit in Latinas: The Praxis of Mothering

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Abstract

In this article I argue that mothering in the home is an educational tool for creating positive self-agency in Latina girls. This essay articulates the ways in which my lived experiences as a Latina mother informs the socialization of *guerrera* girls. I engage in a process of *testimonio* to demonstrate how mothering, by using tools such as stories- *cuentos*, advise- *consejos*, conversations- *pláticas* can create instances where learning can occur for both mother and daughter that disrupt the racist discourses Latinas face in their everyday lives. I discuss how the use of a decolonial imaginary process provides both mothers and daughters ways to re-create the daily lived experiences of marginalization so that they become instances of regenerative resistance. As a tool of Latina mothering, I propose the use of suspended spaces within moments of everyday life where individuals simultaneously suspend the social hierarchies that constrain personas to have *pláticas* that promote a *guerrera* spirit. Finally, this essay is testament to the strong *guerrera* spirit Latina mothers carry and share for future generations of *guerreras*.

Introduction

Arizona passed SB 1070 in April of 2010, which makes it a crime to lack proper immigration paperwork in the State. In addition, Arizona also passed HB 2281 a month after SB 1070, which officially prohibits public schools from conducting courses or classes, which "promote the overthrow of the United States (U.S.) government" or "resentment towards a race or class of people." In practice, this targets the highly successful Mexican American Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District. As recently as January of 2012 Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) also released an initial list of seven books to be banned from its schools that contain historical information about Mexican American and Latino history. Similarly, during the 1990s in California, proposition 187 denied undocumented individuals the right to social services like healthcare and education, and proposition 227 eliminated bilingual education in the classroom. These laws and restrictive policies, which target Latinos in the United States, negatively impact our system of education and the psychological wellbeing of our children by marginalizing the histories of communities of color in the U.S.

Given the current climate in the U.S. about non-white individuals what histories do Latin@ children learn in school? How do schools practice equity when racist legislation suppresses histories of oppression and resistance? As a Latina mother[14], cognizant of the power of education, I argue that the home is an extension of the classroom in that it is a learning environment that can be utilized to promote agency and positive self-image for Latin@ children. I am also suggesting that until there is a radical transformation of the U.S. educational system which acknowledges the contributions of Latin@s and other minorities, much of the responsibility for promoting the psychological wellbeing of Latina girls, falls within the home. The home is the first educational setting for children where loving mothers[14] and family members have the ability to inoculate and potentially offset some of the negative effects of a racist society and educational system.

By definition I will be using the term "*guerrera* spirit" to signify a sense of positive self-agency in Latinas. To expand on this definition, when I use the term *guerrera* I am referring specifically to a warrior spirit that invokes resistance and resilience. To be a *guerrera* is to courageously disrupt the deficit discourses perpetuated about our communities through a healing and transformative self/community love manifested in a decolonizing counter-narrative. Moreover, I offer an analysis of my own mothering practices with my two teenage daughters as a *testimonio* to what mothering tools can be utilized develop a *guerrera*.

As a community psychologist who teaches Chicana/o Studies at an urban university in the Los Angeles area, I acknowledge that I have a relatively privileged position in terms of my education and socio-economic

14. The argument is not to minimize the role that fathers or male family members play; however, the emphasis is to examine the roles that mothers have played in the division of household.

status and therefore I may have more access to knowledge about certain types of mothering than other Latina mothers have. In this sense, my mothering and class status are inextricably linked. It is also the case that this is a tentative privilege because although I received all my education in the U.S. and hold a professional degree, it does not discount the fact that I am an immigrant woman who was mothered by an immigrant single mother with few economic resources. My mothering practices are in constant dialogue with the history of my various class positions. At heart I still retain the working class ethic my mother and my Latino community taught me. Therefore, while I do have some newly attained privilege I continue to also have the history of my working class heritage. This I argue allows my mothering analysis to be useful to many different types of Latina mothers. Furthermore, I propose to use a method of *testimonio* to analyze my mothering practices, which I will explain in more detail in the following section.

Testimonio to theorize Latina Mothering

In order to fully understand my mothering analysis I must first discuss why *testimonio* is the most appropriate choice for my analysis. Bertaux and Kohli (1984) have written an extensive paper on why using the "Life Story Approach" or *testimonio* is a powerful tool in explaining the lived experiences of individuals in countries like Europe, the United States, Canada and Latin America. This type of testimonial narrative has come to prominence in the social sciences in recent years in part because it intertwines the desire for objectivity and the desire for solidarity in its very situation of production, circulation and reception (Beverley, 2005). *Testimonio* has been used effectively to provide the often-chilling stories about the human rights atrocities that have occurred in Latin America (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012). So, in essence, *testimonio* is a powerful form of storytelling methodology which privileges the voice of the storyteller while illuminating the political context from which it emanates.

The definition I will use for *testimonio* is a novel or novella-length narrative produced in the form of a printed text, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events she recounts (Beverley, 2005). Its unit of narration is usually a significant life experience. Furthermore, the word *testimonio* carries the connotation in Spanish of the act of bearing witness to an event. Within Chicana/o studies *testimonio* has been used to provide a historical context to breathe life to the oppressive experiences of Latinos. Some of the early Chicano and Latino scholars that have used *testimonio* narratives include Galarza (1971), Villarreal (1959), and Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983). During the 1980s and 1990s, as cultural studies and postmodern methodologies began to frame critical scholarship as subjective and political, Chicanas in particular drew on the reflexive form of *testimonio* utilizing such concepts as agency, hybridity, subaltern, and indigeneity (Anzaldúa, 1999; Lomas, 1994; Pardo, 1998; Perez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000). Chicana feminist epistemology (Delgado-Bernal, 1998) also influenced Chicanas and empowered them to develop the narrative format as redemption—as takers of the stories, as readers of the narratives, and as creators of the analysis. Therefore, this is not a new methodology in the field and it has been used successfully to provide a framework for understanding the lived experiences of individuals.

More recently, Latina scholars such as the Latina Feminist Group, who analyzed their own education experiences as marginalized, used *testimonio* as a way to narrate their stories and/or collective histories (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). In this anthology, eighteen Latinas share *cuentos* and *consejos* with each other and provide a framework for a type of *testimonio* that critically analyzes their own experiences, thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. Based on the information about *testimonio* reviewed here I find that this is the most useful methodology to examine how my own mothering practices impact my daughter's sense of positive self-agency or *guerrera* spirit. Moreover, I offer that sharing mothering practices is a dialogical and experiential learning process that simultaneously transforms both my daughters and myself. The following section provides a framework by which to examine mothering.

Defining Latina Mothering

According to Merriam-Webster mothering is "to give birth and to care and protect." Since everyone

has, or has had, a mother or mother figure, most people have strong feelings and opinions about the institution of mothering. In the mainstream media it may appear as though mothers are primarily defined as apolitical and perhaps isolated with their children in a world of pure emotions. While I acknowledge that motherhood is an individual and highly personal experience it is also a social institution that by its very nature cannot remain apolitical. When we discuss Latina mothering[15] in particular it is important to point out that as mothers we belong to a historically oppressed group in the U.S. and by this very notion we transmit life lessons through our daily actions and rituals which become pedagogical moments or moments of teaching and learning that are political (Villenas, 2006). Delgado-Bernal (2001) has referred to this as the "pedagogy of the home." It is through mothering that many of us develop coping skills, empowerment strategies, and ultimately agency. For the current analysis I propose that mothering is a form of compassionate teaching for Latina girls that involves learning while encountering conflicts and contradictions that require healing and transformative modes of cultural practice.

In order to examine the mothering practices that advocate for a "pedagogy of the home," I will use the framework of Bernal (2006b) who proposes that mothering occurs for Latina women through *consejos* or advice, *cuentos* or stories, and *pláticas* or conversations (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). *Consejos* are usually a unidirectional form of nurturing advice and moral lessons designed to influence behaviors. *Cuentos* are stories that are usually told to teach a moral lesson, and *pláticas* are bidirectional conversations that involve the sharing of personal thoughts and experiences as a means of healing the mind, body, and soul. These relational tools assist Latina mothers to teach their daughters how to survive everyday life by providing them with the understanding of how certain situations occur, why certain conditions exist, and how to handle these situations/conditions in and out of school settings. In the following section I will examine how the decolonial imaginary also determines the "pedagogy of the home" in which my mothering is nested in as both a teaching and learning experience.

Decolonial Imaginary and Mothering

Emma Pérez (1999) offers the decolonial imaginary to describe the space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated, a space that is intangible, almost a shadow in the dark, a liminal space where women of the Americas—generations of mestizas and Indias learn to survive sexism, class oppression, and discrimination, while making their mark on the world. As a mother, I am challenged with this concept of the decolonial imaginary in my own home and what that means for my daughters. Emma Pérez introduces a "third space" for negotiating the decolonial imaginary in which we can unearth the voices of silenced *mujeres* (Perez, 1999). This decolonial imaginary helps me to understand how teaching and learning between and within mothers and daughters also becomes a space of teaching double meanings, where I teach what my culture traditionally expects of women, while also teaching lessons of resistance. By way of illustration, during a plática one day I asked my fifteen-year-old daughter if she had shorts under the mini-skirt she was wearing. She looked at me and asked, "Why?" I replied, "because there are men out there that will look at you in a sexual way, and I don't want them to do that." Shocked at my words, I stopped and thought back to the times my mother told me, "Women are not supposed to provoke a man, sexually," adding that wearing short skirts, dresses, or tight pants invites trouble. My utterance at that moment sprang from a subconscious well of internalized patriarchal discourse.

I instantly wished I had not responded to my daughter in that manner. Although I believe that Latina mothers who are teaching their daughters about Latina feminism should not respond as I did, I understand that my immediate response is to protect my daughter from being objectified. I realize that the internalized conversation that I have inherited from my mother is that women who wear short skirts are whores- *putas*. Aída Hurtado (2003) describes the *virgen*/*puta* dichotomy as a cultural ideology in which Latinas have been historically viewed as either being the good woman who is a *virgen* and sacrificing and *putas*, on the other hand, framework makes me wonder: Could I really be thinking about my daughter as either a *virgen* or puta? This is painful because I realize that the subconscious *machista*/patriarchal beliefs I have learned from my Latina mother have colonized my mothering.

15. Although the focus of this essay is on biological mothers it does not negate the ability of mothering that may occur with a mother figure that is important in the lives of Latina girls to have an equal positive effect on their self-agency

Before my daughter responds, I apologize for asking her about the shorts, explaining that I said this out of some culturally ingrained ideas about women either being good girls or bad girls. She looks at me and says, "Mom I know, but you can't shake the old school." I ask my daughter, "What do you mean by old school?" She says, "anything old like your way of thinking about clothing, girls, and life." She does not seem to be as affected by the dialogue that we just had. She is happy and bouncy. This is when I realize that this interaction was more about how I judged my own mothering than the impact my mothering has on her. In this instance, the interaction between my daughter and me can be seen as "feminist mothering theory" in which both mother and daughter are re-creating their relationship to traditionally held, deeply internalized beliefs and culture through this process of decolonial imaginary. It has also become a way for me to think about how my mothering continues to be re-negotiated.

In general mothers and daughters often have special moments throughout the day, which can be, during any small moments of time to informally discuss their daily lives through *pláticas*. Last year my daughter began high school and she is in a private all girls' Catholic school where the majority of the girls are not Latina. She is a bright, bubbly, and happy girl. Last year, as a freshman in an honors English class, she had to take the Proficiency of Writing Exam (POW). In California, all students must pass the POW in order to graduate from high school, but students do not necessarily need to take the exam during their first year of high school. During one of our morning *pláticas*, she talked about how nervous she was about the exam. She felt that she was not as smart as the other girls particularly some of the white girls that were in her class. The issue about being smart could possibly be an adolescent issue in general; however, the issue of comparing herself against her white classmates was clearly an issue of racial positioning. We talked on the twenty-minute drive to school I said "*mija* you know you are smart right?" She said, "yes" with a roll of the eyes and lots of attitude. Her body language said I heard this before and it is not working this time. I believe she does this oftentimes as her way of rebellion. This is her way of letting me know that this conversation is over and she no longer wants to talk about it. In her silence she is speaking volumes about her letting me know that she can handle the situation—it is a way of exercising her agency.

Two days later as I am picking her up from school she shouts with tears in her eyes "I did not pass the exam okay!" I tell her "you not passing the exam has nothing to do with your intelligence." She says frustrated with me, "Yes Mom. I get that. But, ten girls passed. And, they were all either white or Asian. It was mostly the brown girls that did not pass." She also says that if she does not pass the POW she will not be eligible for honors English next year. I think for a long while as she listens to her music as her way of tuning out the world when necessary. I return to the conversation by telling her "*mija* you are smart and you have to believe in yourself." I try to ignore the racial implications she has made, however, I understand that private school settings are often a site of racial inequality that many Latina girls are unable to tackle regardless of the nurturing they receive by their mothers. Despite my thoughts at that moment I wanted to just deal with her self-worth and psychological wellbeing because I need her to be strong so that school does not become a disempowering place. She returns to the racial issue by saying "I know the teacher is partial to white and Asian students and I know she graded my paper differently!" As a mother, how do I engage discourse about decolonial imaginary as Perez (1997) has suggested, so that my daughter can recreate her experience as a positive event that is a site of resistance and mobilization? Is this possible in the face of these happenings? I give my daughter *consejos* about my own experiences in taking standardized tests with fear because I have never told anyone this before. I share with her that I never did well in any test, not the SAT, GRE or any other standardized exam. I point out to her that the mere fact that she is in an honors class is an act of rebellion against white society that believes that Latinas are not smart enough. She looks at me and says "I know, I know I don't want to talk about this anymore."

She takes the test the following week, and she fails again. This time she is not as angry, and shares her test with me. We review it and strategize on how to pass. It just so happens that the book that she will be writing about is Bless Me Ultima by Rodolfo Anaya[16] . This is a book she knows well. The previous book was a standard book read in English class and she had no attachment to it. It is fortunate that she has come with me on

16. Rodolfo Anaya, Bless Me Ultima (New York: Warner Books, 1999).

several occasions to hear Rodolfo Anaya speak about his writings. All of a sudden, I see how history and culture can empower the next generation. I see her light up and build confidence by the mere fact that the reading is something she understands and can relate to even if the gender of the character is not female. I remember her reading the book late at night laughing and talking endlessly about the characters to her sister and me.

Her father and I help her write a practice essay, and she does well. She is able to fully express how the book captures the coming of age of a young boy. She takes the test the next day and passes. On the way home she tells me "Mom, I passed that test because I got what the book meant." I asked her what she meant by this and she says, "I got what it means to learn with examples of your own culture. It just makes learning easier." As Delgado Bernal argues my daughter is learning about being a Latina through her own experience of racism. It is important to note that she also has an advantage in that her father and I both Latinos with post-graduate degrees bring our educational capital and experiences to help her process her experiences. In terms of her psychological development she has used her own form of decolonial imaginary to construct her positive experiences with the exam. She determined that it was culture that allowed her to understand the assignment and she gained a sense of pride for being Latina. This is not to negate the idea that she fully understands that her private school setting continues to perpetuate a racist stance but she now has some tools and experience by which to resist the onslaught of the assaults that will continue to come her way in the next four years of her high school experience. Moving beyond mothering practices that use a decolonial imaginary there are also mothering practices that can be used in moments of everyday life in which social hierarchies can be suspended in safe spaces.

Mothering in Suspended Spaces

Gallegos-Castillo (2006) has described, suspended spaces as moments of everyday life in which individuals can simultaneously suspend the social hierarchies that constrain their persona and operate in a space where there is safety and room for dialogue. My daughters and I have moments throughout the day in which we participate in these suspended spaces in which I share *consejos* and *cuentos*. For example, in the morning while we complete our morning routine my daughters and I discuss topics that have come up in school or contemporary political/social issues that impact Latinas. These moments are usually short blips of time. It is through the day-to-day *pláticas* with my daughters that we gain strength and confidence to carry out our daily tasks. I also use these spaces as a way for my daughters to see how my thoughts translate into how I create myself daily as a Latina professional woman.

Latina scholars have argued that it is important for Latinas to know their collective history in order to better appreciate their culture (Anzaldúa, 1999; Hurtado, 2000). Teaching Latina history in the home also becomes crucial given that the political environment of the United States at the moment is hostile towards the teaching of ethnic history in school settings. As mentioned previously, bills like Arizona's H.B. 2281 have prohibited public school teachers in the state from teaching Chicana/o and Latina/o history for fear that the teaching of this history would promote the "overthrow of the U.S. government." Therefore, my practice of teaching history as a cuento in the home is a rebellious act. This evidences the notion of "La Cultura Cura" when knowing our cultural history heals the wounds of our oppressive experience and creates young Latina feminists with a *guerrera* spirit (Hurtado, 2000). In teaching Latina history to my daughters I may be at some advantage because I have been teaching an introductory Chicano/a Studies course that involves learning about historical Chicano/a and Latino/a events for several years. I often share the information I have learned with my daughters. We have lively conversations and all of us have benefitted from reading Chicana feminist theory. This knowledge informs our *pláticas* as we discuss the ways in which women are erased from historical accounts. We have also discussed the point that when men write history, women are usually in the background of the accounts given or they are passive at best and completely invisible at worst.

Just recently my eleven-year-old-daughter shared with me that her school is no longer going to celebrate Cinco de Mayo. I ask her why the school was no longer going to celebrate this holiday and she says, "Because the principal said that it is unfair to only celebrate Mexican holidays." I think to myself "aha!" some scholars have suggested that claiming unfairness is code for saying that the history and culture of certain ethnic groups is not "American" history (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Takaki, 2008). I am torn about how to respond. I do not want to tell her

something that in my mind makes me sound like a racist. Bonilla-Silva (2010) suggests that contemporary white Americans have learned to be racist without racism—the idea of a post-racial, President Obama colorblind society provides white America a passport to continue to be complicit with racist outcomes without the moral burden of overt racist intent. According to Bonilla-Silva, white Americans have learned to "Talk nasty about minorities without sounding racist" (2010, 2). He also points out that as the normative racial climate of the U.S. has changed dramatically the language of colorblindness is slippery, apparently contradictory and often subtle. It is in this context that the principal's comment and change in curriculum is an example of this type of colorblind behavior. Paradoxically, the principal justified her actions as not being racist in that she eliminated the history of all ethnic minorities. Apparently, it is not racism if all minority groups are discriminated against equally.

So instead of trying to explain this concept to my daughter I ask instead "what do you think about what Ms. Kirk said?" She says "I think that sometimes the principal is being fair because then we would need to celebrate too many holidays for all the other cultures." She goes on to say, "mommy I don't know why but even though Ms. Kirk's explanation makes sense it doesn't feel right." We discuss how it is important to listen to our feelings. I ask her why she thinks something does not feel right. She says, "Because it feels like we are leaving stuff out." We discuss how these feelings are good indicators that give us information about how individuals might really feel about an issue. I tell her "sometimes individuals are being racist and that it might be what they have been taught to do or say. These individuals have the wrong idea about individuals from other cultures and they might sometimes make us feel bad and we may not know why." She says "yeah" as she thinks about what I have said. "Mommy can a principal be racist?" I respond with "*mija* unfortunately anyone can be racist even your principal." She thinks about my response for a while and says "but Ms. Kirk is nice." I tell her "Yes Ms. Kirk is nice and it does not prevent her from being racist." I can sense that she is feeling confused. So I tell her "*Mija* sometimes I feel confused about what people say and the way they act." She says "Yeah me too but mom I still like Ms. Kirk." I tell her "*Mija* it is okay for you to like Ms. Kirk I just want you to think about how she may not always be right." She says, "Okay but I can't tell her that." I respond "You don't need to tell her anything else unless you want to." She says, "No I'm good." My hope is that she has learned that even people she admires can be racist and that we must always be vigilant about the reasons behind why people act the way they do. I also hope that what I teach her at home provides some buffering for what she experiences in school and she can continue to build positive self-agency despite the cognitive dissonance she experiences.

Conclusion and *Un Consejo*

Anzaldúa (1990) points out that we must create our own Latina feminist theories and scholarship to understand, embrace, and celebrate our mujerismo. Therefore, one of the goals of this essay was to demonstrate how Latina mothering is a feminist praxis that creates mujerismo through the cultivation of a *guerrera* spirit. Although there has been much written about Latina feminist theory, there is relatively little written about how mothering is a feminist practice. Therefore, pedagogical theories of mothering can teach the next generation of Latinas to disrupt the current systems of oppression in a way that ensures their daily survival and allows these young women to avoid being complicit in their own subordination. This essay is one of the first to explore the pedagogical implications that Latina mothers can teach their daughters how to resist racism and sexism through cultural tools like *cuentos*, *pláticas* and *consejos*.

As other scholars have done I have used the decolonial space coined by Emma Perez (1999) as a way to suggest that Latina mothers can use this tool as a way to provide nurturing spaces that allow daughters to develop counter-narratives that facilitate their agency and wellbeing. I have also discussed the use of suspended spaces or instances in time where mothers and daughters can safely examine how racist behaviors impact the psychological wellbeing of both mothers and daughters. I propose that examining motherhood and daughterhood in this manner allows for a holistic, decolonizing education that gives Latinas the power to thrive despite the endless degradation they face in their daily lives. Finally, un consejo: I challenge Latina mothers and daughters to look closely because somewhere in the dark shadows of a woman's psyche we might find that *guerrera* spirit waiting to be unleashed.

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Framework for a New Political Praxis: *Respeto, Dignidad y Conocimiento*

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Abstract

This article uses story as a process to highlight the work in a South Texas community that focuses on the education of youth and the development of community. The work is guided by a new consciousness of place, community engagement, and identity formation. The work is local, but breaking the isolation of youth, families, and ideas has been part of an emerging theory of change. The document takes us in and out of stories of place in an attempt to transfer the work to other communities. It presents the voices of witnesses to take the concepts used in this Mexican-American community into other spaces. The work is informed by place, theory, and practice.

Preface: Story of Circle at the Llano Grande Center

This article begins with a virtual circle that cuts across the life span of the work of the Llano Grande Center, an education nonprofit organization nestled inside Edcouch-Elsa High School, a rural school along the Texas-Mexican border. Llano Grande employs circle to teach classes at this high school, to conduct staff meetings, to structure community seminars, and to organize for advocacy campaigns. The virtual circle brings together stories from actual circles that transpired between 1996 and 2012. The stories are grounded in place, as "place" is a value that informs the teaching and learning process at Llano Grande. It includes stories from outside this Mexican-American community, because Llano Grande work is also characterized by a purposeful attempt to breaking the isolation of our own existence.

Carmen tells the first story, one that begins when she was 12 years old and swam with her mother and sister across the Rio Grande River in search of a better life in the United States. They fled oppressive conditions in their native Mexico and entered their new country undocumented. When she enrolled in the high school a few years later, Carmen began her work at Llano Grande, where she would develop as a youth leader and community-based researcher. Before she graduated from high school, she and other Llano Grande youth testified before the Texas Legislature in support of legislation allowing undocumented students to pursue higher education opportunities. They joined a state-wide youth effort to advocate for legislation that would become the basis for the Dream Act. The advocacy work persisted for Carmen and her peers past their high school days. Today, they advocate for issues such as federal rural broadband legislation, a more humane public school accountability system, and greater access to health care for immigrants and indigent people.

Carmen is a real person, but she is also a metaphor for the numerous students who have been part of the work of the Llano Grande Center since the organization began its work in the mid 1990s. Countless Mexican-American students have been part of a developmental process where they prepare themselves for college by exploring their personal narratives, learning how to be community-based researchers, and practicing

policy advocacy. But Llano Grande has also pushed the idea of breaking the isolation of our rural existence, and of our relative homogeneity, particularly as the student populations in schools where Llano Grande has a presence are comprised of largely Mexican-American students. In Edcouch-Elsa High, for example, Mexican-American students make up 97% of the student body. Llano Grande pursues this goal by forging relationships with a network of diverse schools, organizations, and communities. Through the years, it has developed deep relationships with African-American schools and organizations from both urban and rural parts of the country; with Native Americans from Laguna Pueblo, Lummi, Salish, and Seneca; and with Native Hawaiian communities.

As Carmen opens storytelling around this virtual circle, others similarly share stories about their own lives; some are Mexican American, some are not. Authorship of this article reflects the same reality. Each of us has been intimately involved in the Llano Grande work—some as founders and staff members, others as significant partners through what has become the Llano Grande network. Such is the Llano Grande way. It's about a way of life that pays attention to local realities, just as it listens to and learns from the stories of others. It is how we teach and learn through a micro-macro dynamic that celebrates our stories and the stories of others.

Setting: History, Geography, and Llano Grande Pedagogy

This document expands the discourse on teaching, learning, and leading by focusing on the academic and community work facilitated by an educational community in south Texas. It is the product of a sustained, collective conversation facilitated by the Llano Grande Center, focused on teaching, learning, and a call for community change. Llano Grande's mission is to revitalize the community through youth and community engagement initiatives born out of the local high school and situated in a community context. The organization creates access to higher education, engages students in community change initiatives, and develops leadership that respects local history and culture. Teachers and organizers who facilitate the Llano Grande work pay particular attention to identity formation of both youth and adults in this largely Mexican-American region.

The community lies in what economists and demographers count as the most economically distressed metropolitan statistical area in the country in the rural part of Hidalgo County, some 15 miles north of the Texas-Mexican border (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The region is a product of a political economy predicated on three old economic principles: 1) cheap land, 2) cheap labor, and 3) good weather. The political economy mirrors larger international border conditions, as well as other rural communities in Texas and across the United States. The historic political and leadership structures are a consequence of an ecology and political dynamic that benefits a small group of power-holders who have historically held onto political and economic power, and forcefully resisted change (Anders, 1982; Montejano, 1988). The results are characterized by communities and institutions marked by underinvestment and persistent marginalization.

Understanding micro and macro historical contexts is essential to the discourse on educational policy and the development of public schools (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004). Systemic issues of racism and poverty cannot be undone in an abbreviated period of time. It took years to build unjust and unequal communities and educational systems; deliberate and patient approaches are essential to reverse systemic trends through policies and practices (Alemán, 2006; Barrera, 1979; Montejano, 1988; Pizarro, 2005). The persistence of unequal structures creates a current situation with profound economic gaps and wide educational achievement gaps (Rothstein, et al, 2008). Unfortunately, this historical evidence has been omitted from the prevailing discursive process that informs educational policy and practice (Neil, 2004). The current culture of education informed by models of assessment and accountability (Padilla, 2005) has become an oppressive force that squashes creativity in schools and communities.

This force is based on numbers, incomplete data, and mandatory tests that have not proven to be valid, based on basic psychometric standards and practice (Koretz, 2008; Lasser, 2004). In short, a single test score is an incomplete measure to determine how much a student has achieved or grown academically, or in other ways that may be social, emotional, cultural—all basic areas of growth that good teaching would engender. Mounting evidence points to the flawed nature of current educational policy and practice; much of the emerging claims argue that No Child Left Behind ignores sound learning theory, while enforcing adverse practices such as

teaching to the test and other narrow ways of instruction (Meier & Wood, 2004; Ravitch, 2009; Rothstein, et al, 2008; Valenzuela, 2004). The educational and public policy we experience today has been largely constructed void of an authentic story of practice and absent of a serious cultural analysis (Spindler & Spindler, 2000).

In spite of this, there are places such as Llano Grande where local people find hope and work toward engaging youth, families, and schools to shape better communities. In this place we view youth as assets and families as pillars of support. Our commitment is to raise children with a different consciousness where parents and elders are teachers, local storytellers, and even heroes. We respond to traditional demographic statistics and the socio-historical and economic forces that shape the debilitating statistics, but those do not determine our future, or our ways of knowing. As teachers, learners, and local leaders, we accept the responsibility and challenge of changing the condition of our hometown and communities across the country that may look like ours. This article builds on the work we have done since the mid-1990s as public school educators; advocates for youth, family, and community; and university faculty. We invite partners from diverse communities who have learned, witnessed, and contributed to the development of the work, and who have carried Llano Grande practices to their own communities.

The practices and theories we have developed have begun to travel to other places where children of color live and learn (Fullan, 2008). We use story as a critical tool for identity formation, sound pedagogy, and effective advocacy. Stories are data and action. This approach can open up imagination and creativity in the development of a framework for a new political praxis that acknowledges and nurtures the respeto, dignidad y conocimiento (respect or consideration; dignity or self-respect; thorough understanding) of our elders within the existing cultural and political realities of our youth.

Methodology

Llano Grande's methodology is grounded in theory and informed by practice—a praxis congruent with and supportive of a dynamic, new political and pedagogical framework. Central to the methodology is a theory of change model guided by local conditions and contexts. We use stories of students, their families, and our partners as observables (data sets); we employ story as an organic and life-long tradition for capturing context, inquiry, and pedagogy. This process is encapsulated in a theory of change model that informs the research for this document.

Theory of Change

At the center of the practice, this theory of change is a circular process that situates the developm ent of self for both youth and adults in relationship with the local ecology. Story is simultaneously the data collection strategy and framework for analysis. We enlist the metaphor of story as "anatomy"—through which we describe the complex and organic process at the core of human activity (see below for a more detailed explanation).

Story as method is also an invitation to provoke the reader to imagine the possibilities of change. The power of reader generalizability is implied, and we the authors—practitioners ourselves as builders and leaders of the Llano Grande Center—hope readers can find these stories and possibilities of action in their own communities. We look at the components that mold the process, which in turn, filters data, organizes it, and puts it back out in a medium that makes sense. This process then informs the necessary action required to move the theory of change into action.

Observables

The observables collected for this document include stories, conversations, and testimonies to the work we have done and its local application. We use the Llano Grande archives, which include: student narratives; oral histories of parents and other local residents; community forums; student-led ethnographies; and sundry other measures, such as, field notes and video recordings from various Llano Grande community activities. The practice is grounded on the assets of the work, the places we live in, and the relationships cultivated therein.

This, too, frames the lens of data collection and analysis. Story informs the work and method. The nexus of this process is human agency and identity formation, informed by cultural dynamics, local ecology, history and action. In short, everything is data.

The Anatomy of Story as Meaning-making

We use the "anatomy of story" metaphor to allow the story to flow with a particular rhythm and balance through the presentation of the following components: navel, heart, mind, hands, and legs (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010). Carmen's story is a data source. It serves as an examination of culturally relevant theory and practice and as an analysis of the political economy that shapes our communities and schools. Carmen's story helps connect the reader to the abstract process of story-harvesting and meaning-making.

Navel. Just as the umbilical cord feeds human life during its embryonic stages, we see the navel representing the core of the human anatomy, and as the central component that feeds and balances the story. In storytelling a balance must be achieved between the message and the core values within the story. The core questions that emerge from the story are elements that spring from the navel and are essential for developing the core purpose of the story.

Heart. The human heart gives the body the ultimate meaning and is the source of human passion; in the same way, the heart of the story is typically its meaning and even its passionate quality. The passion is shaped by the values that guide the efforts that fuel action. These values include the emotional, moral, and relational ways of knowing the story.

Mind. The mind is the center of all analytical thinking, and at this stage of story development we bring critical analysis to its formation. The mind is what fuels the ideas, the imagination, and instructional action.

Hands. The hands massage and help mold the values, ideas, message, and rhythm of the story. This negotiation of the message is a complex and sophisticated process, and it accounts for environment and tone of the delivery. This is the stage where the story is told and retold until the choice of language, the nonverbal element, and the message are all coordinated and delivered.

Legs. If a story has longevity, if it impacts others beyond the storyteller, it probably has legs. A story with legs is one that lives and moves, could be passed down from generation to generation, and may just stand the test of time. The story with legs also begins to contribute to the identity of place, people, and organizations. The story with legs moves people to action, provokes new questions, and helps identify the work that is connected to the story. Stories with legs also help individuals and groups develop the necessary agency to push, resist and amalgamate the outside forces to allow for the creation of a new reality for the self, the group, and the community in which we live.

We offer this metaphor of the human anatomy as a concrete visual and as a framework of analysis for the abstract concept of story making and sharing. We firmly believe that everyone can become a storyteller, and we humbly offer this process as a tool for expanding the reader's imagination while also putting forth the ideas that stories are living constructs and are malleable constructions of humans and our environment. We invite the reader to use this as they read the stories below.

Theory in Action

Carmen's narrative at the beginning of this document embodies the dimensions of a theory of change model. Her work as a high school student dealt with multiple levels of engagement. She collected data locally to found a Spanish immersion institute and petitioned the State to pass DREAM Act-type legislation through the use of public and participatory methods. We believe schools can ground their practice and accountability system within a theory of change model that becomes a roadmap informed by three levels: micro/local, meso/organization, and macro/state and/or federal. The theory of change model should be accompanied by action research strategies (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004; Guajardo, Guajardo, & Casaperalta, 2008; Stringer, 2007) that allow educators to continuously assess the progress of children, schools, and communities. Action research as method creates the tools and space for local communities and institutions to engage in the data/story collection.

In this context, analysis and action are situated in the hands of the people that are the closest to the daily reality. When educational politics, policy, and practice of accountability are grounded in healthy relationships, continuous dialogue, and collective reflection, schools emerge as participatory spaces inclined to include parents, community partners, and students/ children in public and transparent research processes. The current accountability system is grounded in deficit thinking and is destructive to schools and communities; we propose an alternative framework for Mexican-American and other children and communities of color based on a new political praxis informed by *respeto, dignidad y conocimiento*.

New Political Praxis: Teaching, Learning, Leading & Change

We put forth a framework to respond to the education of Mexican families who are redefining the shifting demography in this country. We propose strategies that are researched-based, field-tested through our work as teachers, community organizers, researchers, and university professors. They respond primarily to the condition of Mexican-American families and communities, but we invite the reader to take what is relevant and to couch it within their own context. The strategies to *reculturalize*[17] our educational system are interdisciplinary and grounded in the notion that we cannot solve social issues by looking at them through a single lens; this cultural change requires multiple perspectives. We learn from our elders that intimidation and threats do not sustain change—though this is what educational policy seems to be based on. Educational policy in Texas for the last two decades has become an attack on children, parents, teachers, our cultures, and our schools.

We provide stories that highlight our framework and draw direct connection to our use of story as data and action as we elaborate on the process of harvesting and sharing stories. To engage the change process, we urge educators, policymakers, and communities to listen to the stories of children in order to humanize and reculturalize our schools (Fullan, 2001). With the following stories, we take the opportunity to put a face on theory, practice and method.

José's Story

> I would like to speak a little bit about my family. Although we are very poor monetarily and we lack the luxuries that other students my age may have, I have to stress that my family has had a great influence on me. Every time I speak at a conference, it is not I that speaks; rather, it is my father's wisdom and my mother's humility that speak. It is the laughter of my brothers and the sparks of friendship of my two sisters. It is the stories shared by my grandfather, and the struggle to live and laugh of my grandmother. Everything that I stand for, everything that I am is my family. Those are the roots of who I am and that is what I portray. It is the feelings and the sentimiento of my family that speak through me. I am just a vehicle through which their words are spoken…
>
> As we are placed in this system where competition and change are introduced, unfortunately the thing we learn most is to assimilate and feel ashamed of what we have. I had always been ashamed of what I was, of what my parents owed, of the food that I ate, and of speaking the language that I speak [Spanish]. I don't feel that way anymore. I have changed, and I believe I have also seen a change in the community in general. I credit much of my transformation to my work with the Llano Grande Center.

José's narrative teaches us that he experienced a transformation from being ashamed of who he was to feeling powerful because of his family and personal identity. Through a series of academic exercises at the Llano

17. This concept comes from multiple conversations we have had with educational anthropologists including Henry Trueba, George Spindler, and Doug Foley. Itsuggests that schools are living cultures. To create sustainable change, we must reimagine its social fabric, its social rules for engagement, values, relationships and celebrationsThis process is inherently social and dynamic in nature.

Grande Center, José learned the power of story, of words, and of responsibility. He did this as he also learned advanced reading and writing skills. As he studied in school, his culture became relevant, and he became important. Indeed, when he travels, he takes his whole family with him, as he described symbolically in his narrative: "it is not I that speaks; rather, it is my father's wisdom and my mother's humility that speak."

Jose's story intersects with what some scholars describe as grounding learning in the familiar (Spindler & Spindler, 2000). Making classroom instruction relevant to the socio-cultural and political reality of children is critical for engagement and lifelong learning. Our research and professional teaching experiences teach us that when the learner understands him/herself, the instruction becomes relevant, and the learning process much more engaging and transformational (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is true at all levels of instruction (K-life). We recommend schools listen to and learn from José's story and redirect the resources they have allocated to test-prep materials toward staff development to ensure that schools become culturally competent learning organizations.

Ikaika's Story

> I'm from Wai'anae, on the western coast of Oahu; it's one of the most impoverished parts of the island and the place where most Native Hawaiians live. It's also a place that is seen as the undesirable part of the island. We have a bad reputation, as people, and as a place. But my story is about how we're good people. My purpose today as a Hawaiian youth is to change the narrative of Wai'anae. I'm doing that as an organic farmer and as a producer of digital media who tells stories about the strengths of our community. I love my kupuna, my fellow youths, and my hometown. I am Wai'anae.

The youth from the Leeward coast of Oahu push back at the master narrative and privilege their parents, grandparents, and the land. This is where they find their life, feed their soul, and construct their identity. Like the Mexican-American youth in South Texas, they are always burdened by the perceptions of outsiders, but they are also committed to rewriting their narrative. Youth redefine the stories of their families for the purpose of building personal power, identity, and academic skills.

We must engage in conversation and explore the local values of our neighborhoods, families, and community and allow them to guide and inform educational policy and practice. These values then should inform where we go, what we do, how we do it, and how we pay for it. This process should be democratic in nature and inclusive (Pearl, 1997). We must be democratic as these conversations take shape in families and schools.

Delia's Story

> When I graduated from high school, I became the first in my family to leave my rural south Texas hometown to attend college. I attended an Ivy League school in the Northeast, and upon graduation decided to return to teach history at my alma mater. "Why are you here, after having gone to Yale? Aren't you supposed to be doing more important things?" asked one of my students upon my return. My response was, "Because you and this community are important to me." Interestingly, fewer students have asked the same question since my first year in the classroom. More frequently, one can hear students say, "I want to attend an Ivy League school and then come back home, just like Delia did."
>
> Beyond the symbolic value that my return to this community carries, especially for young Latinas, I also play an important role as an educator who teaches students to understand their community, their families, and themselves. I assess my students based on their ability to read, write, and think critically, but they're also measured by their ability to carry on a meaningful conversation, conduct a formal interview, and by their ability to collect data as researchers. Through this work, students

> understand the nature of building relationships with family members, just as they learn to build trust and care with others in the community. In short, my students become active citizens both in school and in the community outside the school

Delia's narrative points to a consciousness cultivated when she was a teenager, and it is an awareness she has sustained. The prototypical pathway for talented young Latinas/os is to leave their hometown—especially if they hail from rural areas—to become educated and never return home. Delia reverses the trend of this ubiquitous "brain drain" (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002) by coming back home, but she does it so she can participate in the development of her community. She represents the person working for the common good, rather than the educated youth who is expected to succeed by leaving the "barrio" in search of more lucrative opportunities.

Giovanni's Story

> I'm a 7th grader at Sankofa-Shule African-Centered charter school in Lansing, Michigan. I want to tell a story about something that happened recently at an assembly at my school. A candidate for mayor came to talk about his campaign, and after he finished his political speech, he asked if there were any questions. The problem was that after he asked, "Are there any questions?" he then added, "Well, I guess I don't have to take questions because you don't vote anyway." Many of my classmates kind of gasped, others rolled their eyes. Then, I raised my hand and said, "I don't think that it is right for you to discount what we have to say, simply because we can't vote now. We will vote one day, and we will remember that you did not care about what we had to say today."
>
> That day, everybody talked about what I said to the mayoral candidate. By the end of the week, the story made the community paper. I believe that as a result of his comments, he lost major support from the African-American community. Ultimately, the candidate lost the race by a very thin margin. Everybody at my school said it was because of what I said to him that day at the school assembly.

Giovanni's radical action directly impacted the outcome of an election, but just as importantly, it helped him develop his authentic public voice. The daily conversations in school on the role of citizens in our community gave him the strength and the skill to be public about his ideas and his commitment to this community. This space, similar to the one created at the Llano Grande Center, makes the daily life of youth tantamount to the curriculum of the school. There should be no difference between what we study in school and what we experience in the community. Life experiences become the curriculum in the life of a young African-American student, who also acts as citizen and community leader. The story demonstrates the transference of similar practices in different contexts and communities. The power of sharing similar struggles then moves us to a common space and struggle—at which point we become one in the struggle for creating stronger communities for youth of color in this country.

Reframing the Discourse

Stories in this article have been nurtured by exercises in self-reflection and identity formation. Greater ontological clarity emerges from storytellers—whether they are Mexican-American, African-American, or Native Hawaiian—when family, school, and community contextualize and support the identities of the storytellers. A cultural congruence exists when community/families and our schools are aligned in values, language, pedagogy, and forms of communication. However, presently incongruence exists between the home and the policies and practices that are pushed and passed by state and federal lawmakers (Valenzuela, 2007).

The politics of education are always in contention. We have historically seen values change from a focus on issues of access, quality, equity, and excellence to what we currently see as a focus on choice and efficiency.

Unfortunately, the value and culture of assessment (Padilla, 2005) has prevailed. These values are informed and aligned with market practices rather than democratic principles. Working for the common good must return to the public discourse and be front and center of this change process. These conversations should serve to inform the type of organizations we need in our communities. Organizations are created to meet the needs of people while schooling should meet the needs of children, teachers, and communities (Habermas, 1987; Sergionvanni, 2000). However, we have seen some unintended consequences of bad public policy. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its predecessor in the Texas accountability system have created a bureaucratic structure that has made the individual needs of children a priority below the organization's needs. This has also made the professional and personal lives of teachers and school leaders difficult to negotiate and many times survive (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). These culturally incompetent organizations also damage the communication with parents that is needed to forge a culture of engagement in schools (Padilla, 2005).

We must shift our policy framework from reactive to proactive. This country's history of discrimination and alienation for people of color, the poor, and women requires public policy to address seriously such historical ills. But we must begin to use policy as a method for informing practice that will be relevant to the lives of people. We recommend that people who are most affected by the issues be participants in the policy identification process and its formation. Participation is at the heart of a democratic society and we must be democratic in practice—not only in language.

Closing Discussion

Around circle, youth and adults raise broad-based issues that can inform an agenda to enhance human and living conditions. The conversation on education must include the lessons learned from the fields of political economy, community development, and stories of youth and families. Schools mirror society, and housing patterns impact who goes to what school. The achievement gap is a fallacy if we do not tend to the conditions that help create the gap (Rothstein, 2009), which has also been called the "achievement debt" (Ladson-Billings, 2006). We suggest that this harvesting and sharing of story is appropriate for closing gaps and paying debts. In this context, housing, health care, nutrition, jobs, after-school activities are all critical components that significantly influence the wellbeing of children. We must invest in creating a decent society, if we are to close the achievement gap. The political economy should be informed by the value and commitment to building sustainable communities. This political economy framework supports schools, should respect the ecology, and provide equity for all. Educational leaders must be in conversation with local, state, federal, private, and public leadership to inform their local development.

Schools should put relationship building front and center. Learning theory tells us that learning is first social and then cognitive (Vygotsky, 1978; Trueba, 1999); without the social dimensions of the human being, interaction and engagement are significantly diminished. The relationship process helps individuals understand and negotiate issues of power, courage, and hope.

Our recommendation for next steps is to engage in a public conversation that includes youth, families, and citizens at the local level. We must engage in a metaphorical circle and converse, where power is distributed and grounded in relationships, respect, dignity, and knowing (respeto, dignidad y conocimiento). The future of our policies must be broad-based and informed by the values of equity and radical participation. It should consider the assets of the local ecology, families, and youth. Assets such as language, culture, and identity should be nurtured, preserved and embedded into the climate and curriculum of schools. Youth in our communities are waiting for the invitation to engage in a sincere and proactive way, but the systems we build must be congruent with their values, practices, and interests.

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Teachers of Latinos on the Margins: Beginning at a Pedagogy from Within

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Abstract

This pedagogical reflection essay considers how teacher candidates can use their own lived experiences, biculturalism, and bilingualism as sources of pedagogy and empowerment for not only marginalized Latino students but for themselves, too. The learning of this pedagogy and ability to empower comes from the interactions they have with marginalized students and learning how to reveal what is making them silent and to create space for their voice. Much of this discovery of self and others comes in their preparation to become teachers, which must be facilitated by teacher educators beyond the classroom. As future teachers of the marginalized, in these lived encounters, they realize that they already have much to build on from their own experiences and that they have the ability to teach and create change in our schools and classrooms now.

Understanding Silence

We can no longer accept silence. When educators are working with marginalized Latino students, they must always be cognizant of the idea that "hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it" (Freire, 1970, p. 91). Although the marginalized may be physically present in our classrooms, their silence hints of a kind of void that for too long schools, teachers, parents, and the students themselves may struggle to comprehend. The silence of the marginalized may be an uncovered desire for an encounter to inspire; it may be a need to engage, but kept still for fear of rejection; it may be wanting to understand, but not knowing how to use the tools that the teacher has provided. The voice of the marginalized seeks someone, or something, to magnify the message(s) they have to tell the world. Their voice is one that "relates to the variety of ways by which students actively participate in dialogue and attempt to make themselves heard and understood, as well as the manner in which they define themselves as social beings" (Darder, 1991, p. 66). But this voice is often diluted by that which is keeping them marginalized—poverty, lack of English language proficiency, undocumented immigration status, violence, lack of opportunity to really learn, hopelessness. And, in the context of schools, voice is essential in the "student's ability to participate and enter into dialogue within the classroom, and as a result, participate in a democratic social process" (Darder, 1991, p. 66). As Darder (1991) explains, the student voice defines who they are. And this voice is also a projection of who and what that student can become.

But this voice of the marginalized is often difficult to find in the minutiae of everyday teaching and learning. Every good educator knows that it is there in every one of our students. Most of the time, it is found in student school work, such as that powerfully moving essay they wrote or the speech they gave in English, their second language, in front of the class. It is found in the change of attitude, radically different from the disengaged and violently resistant student they were before. It is found in the acceptance of a teacher's words of encouragement and mentorship. It is found when such a student attends tutoring to get the help that they need, no longer denying that just a little more help with their homework will lead to better understanding. It is found in more involvement in activities where the student can feel like they are part of a small community.

Yet, there are times when educators, all educators, struggle to find the voice of the marginalized that has been silent for so long, veiled by a façade of simple presence. And this is often no fault of their own. The voice of the marginalized may be found in spaces that may not be, upon first glance, fully comprehensible. But being able to recognize the peculiar spaces where this unprojected voice may appear is where teachers of the marginalized Latino student can become much more powerful, and impactful, than they are now.

I believe that my students attending college here on the Texas-Mexico Border—not yet certified teachers, but going through our education program, learning theory and methods—have this ability to recognize this voice

in the marginalized. And with this skill, they have the power to teach, and to make a difference now. I'm just not sure that they realize how powerful they already are.

Struggle and Sacrifice

I teach in a college of education. My students are future teachers. The college degrees and formal education received from our university have often come at an expense for many of my students. One came back to tell me how her husband divorced her because he did not support her educational and professional endeavors. He did not feel comfortable knowing that his wife was smarter than he. One experienced child custody battles. One has broken down in tears in the midst of a class session, dealing with a husband who wanted a divorce because he thought she needed to lose weight. One gave birth one week, only to return to class the next week because she was so dedicated to her studies—even with the option I gave her to take time off to be with her baby. And one had to put his dream of teaching on hold because the criminal background check halted his public school internship (due to a mistake he made in his adolescent years).

These life sacrifices and struggles make my students powerful as future teachers. Sometimes they know this. Sometimes they do not. But they all must be reminded that their stories, those sacrifices, are where they can begin their pedagogy. I often share my own experiences growing up of living both a privileged life during the school year and another life during summer visits with my alcoholic father, who was poor, unemployed, and knew little about being a good father. But I now know that he tried with what he had. Although I admit that I did not and do not have to sacrifice like many of them, I explain how the sacrifices, struggles, and stories of others, like my father, have become an important part of my own narrative, which grounds my life, and ultimately, my pedagogy.

For the marginalized students in our schools, this pedagogy often must be utilized first before the teaching of state-mandated content. This pedagogy from life and struggle is their voice that must be awakened, utilized, and taught in the midst of teaching math, science, or history. We have to recognize that for the marginalized student this pedagogy may be the signal that awakens their voice, and brings them out of silence. But even many of our future teachers live in some sort of silence that we teacher educators must recognize and be able to guide toward a place of empowerment. For future teachers of marginalized Latino students, their voices for empowerment must be awakened, and embraced, first.

Because many of my students are so much like the students they are currently learning about, and will soon teach, they have a great deal of power that not many other future and current teachers have in U.S. schools. My students are in a unique position to serve a growing, and very important, segment of the U.S. population: Latinos—but in particular, students of Mexican-descent, English learners, and immigrants. In this current climate of anti-Latino discourse, my students must be positioned to understand very clearly the unique indicators, those hints, of students living on the symbolic and real margins of life and schooling. And this begins with my students realizing that this type of pedagogy begins with them, and from within.

Realizing Power

So many of my students do not realize their power. So many of my students do not recognize that their lived experience is one that their future Latino students—those living and experiencing schools on the margins—yearn for. So many of my students—themselves being English learners, socioeconomically marginalized, first-generation college attendees—do not realize what they can already do as teachers.

As students living, working, and attending university in a bicultural and bilingual world, they possess what Trueba (2002) believes are forms of cultural and linguistic capital in multiple identities that will help them better adapt to the shifting social, cultural, and educational paradigms of the world. He saw such students as having evolving abilities to adapt and enact a new cultural capital and way(s) of being, surviving, and even thriving in multiple contexts. But, as I also have discovered, even my non-Latino, non-Mexican-descent students begin to develop a similar bicultural and bilingual sensibility within their pedagogical and philosophical framework. Almost by virtue of living on the US-Mexico border, attending a university on the border, interacting with students who

have lived a border existence, they themselves are also becoming bicultural and bilingual. Granted, their level of bilingualism varies, but, indeed they have come to know the power of their emerging bilingual and bicultural identities. Those non-Latinos are often surprised themselves to reach a certain level of linguistic and cultural understanding that they recognize gives them a great deal of power, and ability to empower, as future teachers. These students, non-Latino and Latino alike, are part of a special process of learning, understanding, discovering, and practicing a pedagogy that reaches sometimes the unreachable.

So in my teaching, I guide my students through a dizzying pedagogical maze that they must embrace to be empowering teachers of the marginalized. I facilitate individual and small group problem-solving exercises that closely examine schools, society, and themselves. I demand excellence in preparation, thinking, and learning. And as a result, most learn something. Most get passing grades. Most are prepared for their state certification exams. But do they understand? Do they carry with them that sense, that knowledge, that indeed they have the ability to empower the marginalized student? That they have within them the stories, the experience, the language, the lessons of life that will ultimately be the pedagogy of hope that will convince and entice students living on the margins to give math, science, social studies a chance? To give school a chance? To give themselves a chance to be great?

I believe so, but it is not always so apparent. Like many first-generation college students here on the border, my students will struggle academically. They may even have issues with the English language, juggle multiple life and school responsibilities, or struggle to make a tuition payment. In the end, they effectively deal with such issues and do well. But when it comes to feeling confident, to truly know, that they have what it takes to be a great teacher, even at that moment, I sometimes wonder.

During regular 15-week semesters, I also assign my students to field experiences tutoring and mentoring English learners, a type of service-learning project. This is where they begin to get a good dose of the struggles of English learners, as well as the overall complexities of school and classroom life today. In discussing these realities of teaching in today's classrooms, working with difficult, defiant, and complacent students, or knowing how to reach students who express no hope or confidence in the education system, I get the sense that my students are not quite sure of their abilities to reach and teach such students. They get discouraged. They passively accept that the schools are broken, and that is simply the world in which they will make their professional lives. They may do their best, but they feel their best won't change much. Of course, this is to be expected as beginning students in education. They believe that as "just college students" who are not yet teachers, they are still learning. They feel that they still need more methods or theory courses, or experience from their internship, to show that they know how to work effectively with students. They don't feel that they can be effective or useful to those marginalized students until the end of their program, when they graduate, and when they are certified as teachers.

Then the end of the semester comes. My students have written their journals and reflective essays, citing their methods textbooks and other literature studied in the course, all nicely connecting theory to practice. As a class, in small groups, and with me, we have dialogued, reflected on, and debated the theory, concepts, problems, solutions, and realities of today's schools and the students within them. And then, on the last day of class, they tell their stories of experience with the English learners they tutored and mentored. One student tells of her overwhelming sense of joy and empowerment that she felt when her mentee hugged her on the last day of tutoring/mentoring, and expressed how she helped them to learn to read. One student talks about the amazing generosity of the several third graders she tutored/mentored who collected some money from each other, a few coins, to purchase a candy bar from the vending machine for her as a departing gift and symbol of gratitude. Another student tells us how he cried on his last day of tutoring/mentoring when his mentee cried and pleaded with him to be his teacher forever. And another one of my students expressed their pride in knowing that they indeed made a difference in the life of a student because that student told them so.

In the "un-projected" student voice there is hope. Hope can be found in the most unusual spaces. This hope is sometimes within the concrete as well as in the imagined. But a fuller picture of hope is realized when the voice is revealed and the student is allowed to hear and better know their own hope within that voice. In my work as a teacher educator and researcher at a Texas-Mexico border university, many of my students often struggle to find that voice not only within the students that they work with in their field experiences,

or during the student-teaching semester, but also within themselves. At least in the beginning. Because they soon overcome the self-doubt in their pedagogy. They begin to know their students, their lives, their voices in the midst of learning to teach and to empower. Then they find their own voice of empowerment. And, it seems, when they know that their students have come away from this semester-long, albeit brief, encounter—expressing gratitude and a new understanding, my students begin to see that they already have what it takes to be great teachers.

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Red Scare in the Red State: The Attack on Mexican-American Studies in Arizona and Opportunities for Building National Solidarity

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Abstract

The attack on ethnic studies in Tucson is a local struggle with broad implications. This essay poses that Arizona is a testing ground for neoliberal laws, policies and practices, including HB2281, an anti-Latin@ law banning ethnic studies courses in public schools. Given that many such political "experiments" have been successfully exported from Arizona, we raise concerns about the implications of this legislation. HB2281 represents contradictions inherent to a wide ranging anti-Latino@ political strategy that deploys an ethic of color-blindness to legitimize attacks on anti-racist projects and produces a rhetoric of new and recycled "enemies" to garner public support for increasingly anti-democratic public policy. We examine some of the stakes of building transformative educational projects in local settings, and pose questions about possibilities for building national networks of likely allies with the capacity to defend and support rigorous, critical public education in the United States.

Introduction

This essay is written from the perspective of two social justice educators living in Arizona who have had the privilege to witness the growth, occasionally collaborate with, and draw inspiration from the successes of one of the nation's most exemplary and transformative public education projects.... and then recoil in shock and outrage as our legislature has attacked, sought to discredit, and finally dismantled the Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD) Mexican American Studies Program (MAS). Among much more important consequences of these events, we were forced to reckon with our own misguided, tragically uncritical assumption that the program was "safe" because it was producing the results the state demands -- high test scores, graduation rates, and college entry levels among mostly Latino@ graduates in a low income school district in a state that hovers at 50th in K-12 school funding (U.S. Census 2010). These successes, of course, were not the only reason we valued the program; they were what we assumed would be "insurance" against the ravages of No Child Left Behind policies that have devastated so-called "underperforming" schools in low income communities across the nation.

We also valued MAS because we were inspired by the innovative critically compassionate intellectualism (Cammarota & Romero, 2009), the ability of the teachers to set high expectations and facilitate each student's success, to embed curriculum in social justice struggles that are relevant to students' lives, to foster a profoundly just and radically inclusive learning community, and we were, and continue to be, most spectacularly inspired by the accomplishments and the commitment of the students themselves. Despite degrees in Multicultural Education and Cultural Studies, despite years of immersion in critical academic scholarship and lived experiences that should have inspired caution, we loved what we saw, and we were inspired to imagine this work expanding, and making a contribution to a more just future. Nobody from MAS is giving up on their vision, and neither are we. We do, however, see a need to step back from the lure of the local and consider some of the broader forces of neoliberalism that have contributed to the current crisis for MAS as well as possibilities for mobilizing resources beyond Tucson, Arizona to support a transformed future for public education.

Since the early 1980's, Arizona has been used as a testing ground for neoliberal policies, practices, and rhetoric that, when successful, are often exported. From the rampant spread of charter schools and the statewide elimination of bilingual education, to the use of unmanned drones on the border that now fly over Afghanistan and Iraq, to the passage of SB 1070, the draconian anti-immigrant legislation that has subsequently been introduced in over 24 states, Arizona has served as a laboratory for ramping up coercive state capacities,

limiting popular participation in governance, redistributing wealth upward, and scapegoating (im)migrants, the Latino@ community, and poor people of color. This analysis considers Arizona's recent ban on ethnic studies curricula in the contexts of larger neoliberal trends, explores the stakes of the decision to dismantle TUSD's Mexican American Studies Program, and poses questions about possibilities for building national networks of likely allies with the capacity to defend and support rigorous, critical public education in the United States.

While Arizona is what John Stewart refers to as the "meth lab of democracy" (*Daily Show, April 26, 2010*) and ranks as one of the lowest performing states in Education, it also offers one the most successful high school Mexican American Studies program in the country (Sleeter, 2011). The Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) is home to the only full-fledged Ethnic Studies program for high school students (Sleeter, 2011), which includes, among other areas, Mexican-American Studies. This program was developed specifically to address the need for TUSD to implement changes to increase the achievement of Latino@ students in the district, in response to a desegregation law.

TUSD's Mexican-American Studies program has not only been successful in ensuring that Latin@ students stay in school, it has surpassed the percentage of students not enrolled in the program with higher standardized test scores, higher graduation rates and a higher rate of students attending college after high school (Scott, 2011). Graduates of the Mexican-American Studies program not only excel in these standard measures of success, they also surpass their peers with attributes that colleges and universities look for when considering admission of students. These include: exceptional communication skills, both written and oral; diversity of thought and openness to multiple perspectives; and the ability to apply theoretical concepts to the analysis of every day issues. A core element of TUSD's program is teaching students to apply academic skills to make positive change in their communities. TUSD's program follows the model of teaching labeled "Critically Compassionate Intellectualism" (Cammarota & Romero, 2009) combining culturally relevant, social justice curriculum with critically conscious pedagogy and a focus on relationships – between teachers, students, and families. Alumni of the MAS program describe the impact of their education as life changing:

> Everything I did in those classes, it changed me, it changed how I look at things and the teachers told me they would hold me to high expectations and no one ever told me that before.
>
> Before MAS classes I didn't care about school. School was so boring I was unengaged and then the things they started to teach me were so interesting I never wanted to miss a class.

TUSD's demographics include 61% Latino@ students and while not all students in the MAS program are Latino@, these demographics and the focus on Latino@ history and literature, attract a majority of non-white students. Students engage deeply in the curriculum and its focus on Latino@ perspectives giving them the opportunity to critically investigate statistical research, literary works focused on the Southwest U.S., and histories often excluded from traditional textbooks and classes. Action research is taught as an effective way to learn about an issue and make suggestions or organize actions for direct change in one's community. Students choose projects for their action research that are situated in their own schools or neighborhoods, allowing them to recognize the often unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. One example involved students conducting in depth research of Arizona's anti-immigrant laws, producing films depicting their findings and organizing tours to educational institutions around the state to share their films and raise awareness of these issues.

The MAS program essentially encourages students to put grassroots democracy into action: by knowing their histories, learning to measure and analyze social inequality in their own communities, understanding the law, and analyzing political and social movements, students learn why they should and how they can participate in shaping the future. MAS students read widely from texts usually reserved for college courses – Freire, Giroux, Anzaldúa, Acuña etc. and use interdisciplinary frameworks to inform their actions and research – all resulting in a 90% graduation rate and 80% of those graduates moving on to college (Cambium Report, 2011). In comparison, Latino@ students not in the MAS program, drop out of high school at a rate of 41% with only 24% moving on to a higher education (Solarzano & Yosso, 2006). Hence, the combination of curriculum grounded in critically engaged practice and the educational outcomes of MAS link the project of multiculturalism with the project of

political transformation. This linkage of cultural and political projects, we argue, is precisely the project that HB2281 aims to destroy.

The political purpose of the law is explicit, yet cloaked in the popular understanding that individualism is inherently inclusive, and the related assumption that any form of thought that is not exclusively individualistic is inherently unjust. HB2281 (now ARS 15-111 & 15-112), passed by the Arizona state legislature in 2010, prohibits Arizona's public schools from offering courses that 'promote ethnic solidarity or resentment against a particular ethnic group, advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government, treat students as members of an ethnic group rather than as individuals, or are designed exclusively for a particular ethnic group.'

Neoliberal Racism

Widely framed in the media as the outcome of AZ state Attorney General Tom Horne's personal vendetta against TUSD's Mexican American Studies Program, passage of the law is more than an act of simple vengeance carried out by an ambitious and racially divisive elected official, (though it is certainly also that). The wording of the law itself is exemplary of what Henry Giroux (2004) calls "neoliberal racism," a strategy that rejects (and claims to be offended by) older forms of racism grounded in claims of white superiority. Horne, in fact, relentlessly quotes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in diatribes against the teaching of ethnic studies in public schools. Neoliberal racism instead favors an approach that claims to be "racially neutral" in its insistence on assessing failure and success exclusively in terms of "individual responsibility." Among other goals, neoliberal racism seeks to delegitimize assessments of systemic and institutional racial disparities on the grounds that they are "race-based," in short, insisting that any attempt to measure racism by recognizing the existence of socially differentiated groups of people is, in and of itself, both racist and morally reprehensible. Not only does this strategy moralize against the very recognition of systemic and institutional racism, ironically labeling such recognition "racist," neoliberal racism promotes entrenched racial hierarchies by demanding the use of the institutional capacities of an increasingly authoritarian state to surveil, criminalize, and crush anti-racist, reparational, and unequivocally democratic projects, such as the hugely successful TUSD MAS Program.

"Bad Feelings"

The racist and anti-intellectual public sentiments mobilized by the characterization of MAS in HB2281 go hand in hand. Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues (2009) that one of the problems in contemporary U.S. politics is the widespread tendency to think of racism as a problem of "bad feelings," while ignoring the deadly impacts of institutional and systemic racism (Bierra, 2009). The language of HB2281 combines this limited understanding of racism as a problematic set of "bad feelings" (especially "resentment" and "ethnic solidarity") with an argument that understands these "bad feelings" as the manipulative result of an education offering evidence-based understandings of systemic social inequality. This approach not only demands that racism be understood as a set of immoral feelings, it also insists that racism not be understood in terms of its measurable social impacts, such as uneven educational opportunities or racially disproportionate incarceration, poverty, and premature death rates.

Further, through a strategy that might be interpreted as an attempt to mobilize nostalgia for pre-Civil Rights movement school segregation and McCarthyism, the attack on Latin@ education and culture in Arizona is fueled, in part, by an anachronistic strategy of red-baiting. Despite the fact that no MAS teachers or administrators have ever described themselves as communist, Marxist, or socialist, the law's sponsors and public advocates have relentlessly used the words "communism," "Marxism," and "socialism" during media interviews and in public hearings to describe MAS teachers, the MAS curriculum, and the authors taught in MAS courses. Though BH2281's advocates repeatedly call for an educational approach that "includes all sides," it is notable that their implied demand for the curricular erasure of any intellectual work that references, debates or engages with worldwide traditions and widespread scholarly practices of socialist and Marxist thought cannot rationally claim to "include all sides." It seems possible that the relentless use of red-scare terminology in this setting links a tactic aimed predominantly at white people -- to link passionate emotions of moral outrage over

the "racism" of anti-racism (sometimes called "reverse racism") -- with a strategy aimed at Arizona's strong voting block of conservative retirees, to reanimate Cold War fears of foreign invasion and domestic labor militancy. Regardless of the level of political savvy that may or may not be driving this red-scare messaging, the "feeling" that a powerful anti-racist, working class social movement would pose significant challenges to entrenched race and class hierarchies is not baseless. Repeated references to "Marxist communists" in public appearances by HB2281's boosters may sound comical when mocked on The Daily Show, but they also reveal that the larger vision animating the law is the suppression of future possibilities for both ethnic and class solidarity and movements for social justice. In fact, the attack on MAS started with celebrated union organizer Dolores Huerta making the public statement, while speaking in Tucson, that "Republicans hate Latino@s," to which Arizona Republicans responded by dismantling the MAS program. (Apparently, their outrage in response Huerta's claim was not over its veracity.)

The conditions that made this contradictory response achievable have to do, in part, with the capacity of the state to produce common sense and public feelings. As Gramsci (1971) argues, the modern state functions as an "educator," both perpetuating (through the framing and circulation of state narratives) and enforcing (via law enforcement, public policy beaurocracy, and institutions) dominant forms of "common sense" that teach the public to understand themselves as subjects in ways that legitimize state power. In this sense, the framing, wording, implementation, and policy debates over HB2281 aim to "educate" the (imagined as white) public to understand itself as both anti-racist, and vulnerable to cultural displacement. The attack on MAS sends different messages to different audiences, seeking to mobilize different kinds of fear: to Latino@s, the message is, "we are willing and able to remove you and your culture from our state by any means necessary" and to the dominant demographic, the message conveyed is, "Latin@s have a Marxist plot to overthrow the government, reclaim the Southwest as Aztlan, and they are dangerously resentful toward white people." This narrative has been laid out to ensure that any group encouraging the analysis of unequal distribution of power be marked as racist, dangerous, and Communist.

Black Lists and Book Burning

HB2281 cruelly poses the MAS program's success as the rationale for its very demise. Teachers who have supported the remarkable educational success of MAS students have now been reassigned to non-MAS classes, to teach in areas outside of their expertise. The inspired director of MAS has been fired. In addition, many of the most effective books used by these teachers to engage students, have been banned from the classroom (literally boxed up and removed in front of weeping students) along with any discussions of racism and oppression, even if those discussions are instigated by students. Such drastic actions make it clear that this successful program has been dismantled due to its success in preparing students to be democratically engaged, activist citizens – all widely celebrated benefits of a privileged education, yet when made accessible to low-income, brown youth, laws are passed, hearings are held, the program is abolished and the opportunities eliminated.

Arizona politicians have fought hard to use the MAS program as evidence that anti-racist projects: should be equated with racism, that racism is a problem of "bad feelings," and that rigorous, intellectual analysis of racism is un-American. The neoliberal ideal of a color-blind society is being actively fought for (and against) as the end goal for the U.S., for education, and especially for public education projects serving students of color.

The Fight Is Not Finished

As stated earlier, no one from MAS is giving up on their vision and neither are we. There are a number of obstacles to the triumph of HB2281 that offer possibilities for different outcomes. The law as well as the neoliberal visions that animate it stand in direct contradiction to longtime federal mandates to desegregate Arizona schools, to Arizona state education standards in Social Studies, to national and state calls to improve educational equity in contexts of diminishing state budgets, and to the scholarly and institutional accomplishments of ethnic studies and social justice education and activism across the nation. Currently, a growing legal team of

attorneys (from as far away as the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equity at Seattle University School of Law) representing MAS teachers and students is building a case, including a Federal Justice Department investigation, arguing that HB2281 targets Latin@ students and will result in a chilling effect on educational equity. In addition to this legal vulnerability, the curricular mandates of HB2281 are destined to be challenged by the very state government that is tasked with enforcing them. The Arizona State standards in Social Studies require students to study the Civil Rights movement(s) in depth as well as "apply the skills of historical analysis to current social, political, geographic, and economic issues facing the world," a performance objective impossible to meet with this kind of censorship. Beyond these legal and policy contradictions that make HB2281 vulnerable to state intervention, the fight to save ethnic studies is taking a broader, grass-roots turn that exemplifies the MAS educational mission to link multicultural literacy and opportunity with transformative, democratic political empowerment.

Building Power

As we watch national solidarity building in response to the recent ban on Mexican American Studies in Tucson, those organizations speaking out give us hope that a network of allies can build power to counter the movement against critical pedagogy, critical theory and Ethnic Studies. National organizations have made official statements and staged demonstrations criticizing Arizona's racist agenda, which is both welcome, and also is only the first step toward building sustainable, national opposition in the form of organized, effective projects and campaigns. This summer of 2012 marked Tucson Freedom Summer, a call to educators, activists, organizers and artists to converge on Tucson and organize resistance to the elimination of MAS. Such work is necessary not only to counter Arizona's attack on rigorous, critical education and on education equity, but in preparation for the inevitable harassment to come from the neo-liberal, conservative groups pushing for more standardized, rote and ethnocentric education across the country.

Building national resources and networks to support anti-racist, social justice education that has critical pedagogy and critical theory at their core, must include support from teachers' unions, social justice organizations, faculty unions, parent organizations, labor organizations and political groups all united for the cause of protecting education. Our teachers' unions must move out of the business model to the organizing model and our future teachers must be trained to not only be critical educators but also activist organizers. In Arizona, the need for these coalitions to be put into place is immediate and essential as we watch Latino@ children be stripped of their education and the literal banning of Latin@ literature taking place in our public schools. From anti-immigrant legislation and the elimination of MAS, to the raiding of public education budgets to build more prisons, Arizona's anti Latin@ swell has swept so far over to the extreme that small groups of teachers, parents and faculty can no longer sustain this fight alone. The stakes are high and risk-filled when building power to counter the neo-liberal agenda and yet we can not stand by and allow our educational system, and most importantly our children, be the pawns of a political fight to erase the histories of oppressed groups and to eliminate programs that clearly offer success and empowerment to Latin@ students. A national call for solidarity to address these issues is an immediate necessity as well as a direct obligation of those of us in social justice fields.

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67 Sueños: Inspiring a Movement for Undocumented Voices to be Heard

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Abstract

This essay documents the work of 67 Sueños, a youth-led collective based in Oakland, California. The group is committed to bringing to light the stories of the 67 percent of undocumented youth and young adults who would not qualify for the DREAM Act and who are in many ways left out of the dominant narrative around immigration reform. The author examines the use of cultural storytelling, through video testimonio and murals, as an important source of healing and movement building. Through their process of reflection, art and action, 67 Sueños provides a powerful lesson on who has the right to be heard and a reminder that all youth have dreams worth pursing. The author pays special tribute to 67 Sueños by including the voices of its members throughout the essay

Introduction

In 2010, seven youth from Oakland, California, along with mentor and immigration activist Pablo Paredes came together to create a space for the sixty-seven percent of undocumented youth and families that are missing from the current discussion and activism around immigration reform. In order to honor these unheard voices and aspirations, the group named themselves "67 Sueños." As one youth member states, "To me the most important thing of 67 Sueños has been to lift the voices of those that are unheard in the immigration debate, we try to hear the unheard stories, specifically those of youth, because many times we are ignored" (J.Garcia, personal communication, August 15, 2012). For the past two years, 67 Sueños has become a powerful tool of youth driven social agency, creating a movement of empowerment and leadership for undocumented youth to speak out and examine how political actions continue to polarize Latinos at both ends of the spectrum. Although facilitated by mentor and activist Pablo Paredes, it is important to note that most of the project has been created and developed by the youth. 67 Sueños joins a larger youth movement aimed at challenging current immigration laws and pushing for immigration reform based on dignity and human rights.

Driven to provide space for healing as well as to create movement for change, the youth have identified four key areas in which to focus their collective work: 1) Cultural Storytelling, 2) Healing, 3) Advocacy for Human Rights Justice, and 4) Impacting the Immigrant Rights Movement through Advocacy and Organizing. In this essay, I will describe these four areas while providing voice to those at the core of the organization: the youth and Pablo Paredes.

Cultural Storytelling

> Undocumented immigrants have no way to tell you what they have experienced, or why, or who they are, or what they think. They are by the very nature of their experience, invisible. Most of us pass them by-some of us might say a prayer for them, some of us wish they would return to their countries of origin. But nobody asks them what they think. Nobody stops and simply asks (Urrea, 2008, p. 5).

67 Sueños uses video as a tool to bring to light these hidden stories in the hopes of impacting public discourse and attitudes, politics of immigration reform, and finally policy. They gather every week to listen, share, process and capture personal narratives on film. Paredes shared that the group hopes to "… tell our own stories through video interviews, stories of migrant youth who are not 4.0 students or hardened 'criminals.'

These videos will be the vehicle by which we inject the realities and perspectives of the missing 67 percent into the immigrant's rights movement and the national dialogue."

Through the use of video, many of the youth and others in their community are able to share their story of what life has been like living as undocumented individuals. Originally the goal was to gather 67 videos of undocumented youth. The interest and outpouring of support has surpassed the standard they had set. In all 67 Sueños was able to document the experiences of 67 individuals and have been able to present these stories at various venues, with audiences across California and by using social media outlets.

Many of the youth members were brought to the United States as young children. Although the choice to migrate was made for them, they are clear about not accepting the current dominant narrative that blames and vilifies their parents for bringing them here. According to the youth, their parents are the heroes that fight relentlessly for their survival. In an effort to change the dominant negative discourse about their lives' and that of their families, they use their personal stories captured through video to provide a counter narrative. Their video stories explore the daily fear of deportation, the painful consequences of shattered families due to forced immigration, separation, and the economic and emotional crisis this reality has had on their spirit and wellbeing. One youth member spoke on this collective pain in an interview, "When I speak I want people to feel the pain that I go through, see the reality of what we all have to struggle with and we need to raise our voices to speak."

Aside from videos, murals have become anoth er form of cultural story-telling. One of the largest projects the group worked on was a hundred foot long mural in San Francisco. Local artists, 67 Sueños youth, and community members collectively created the mural that stands as a source of power for the undocumented community. Painted across the mural are the words "No Human Being is Illegal." More recently, in August of 2012, the youth painted a forty foot long mural that visually represents the struggles of Latinas access to healthcare, entitled "Mujer mariposa, libre y poderosa." Along with the main theme of women and healthcare, the mural documents the experiences of several current youth members. For example, Yoxeli Romero is depicted as a little girl being carried by a mujer mariposa (woman with butterfly wings) to the United States. Romero shared, "I migrated…so the butterfly represents all of that. " The powerful visual reminder of her migration story, along with the others, captured in the mural highlights the role of women, community, and hope in creating a life with opportunity.

Paredes poignantly sums up the power behind cultural storytelling in the following way:

> There is a personal connection for all of our youth to the immigration debate and migrant justice movement. Youth in the group have had family members deported and held in detention centers. Many of our youth have vivid memories of their traumatic migration story. We have members who have faced deportation or the threat of deportation personally and of course all of my youth have faced various forms of discrimination due to theirs or a family member's migration status. All these experiences make the work we do at 67 Sueños a form of healing

Healing

Storytelling in the forms described above provide the youth of 67 Sueños and their families a liberating space to share their testimonio of struggle. Their hope is to create a healing space that begins with the permission to tell the story of who they are. "Once you tell your story you take power over it" shares Paredes. No longer do they have to hide in the shadows. "False hope would have us believe in individualized notions of success and suffering, but audacious hope demands that we reconnect to the collective by struggling alongside one another, sharing in the victims pain" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 190). In order for youth to heal, they must be heard, they must be mentored and they must have a solid place to trust and share their emotions around the daily traumas that they live with silently. According to Paredes:

> A way to come to terms with the trauma that these youth have experienced is to take charge of their narrative and what it is used for. This storytelling and advocacy process is deeply empowering.

> I have watched all the youth in 67 Sueños embark on a journey where feelings of shame and inadequacy slowly give way to a sense of empowerment and dignity. To quote Bayard Rustin, "When an individual is protesting society's refusal to acknowledge his dignity as a human being, his very act of protest confers dignity on him." I clearly see this dynamic in the youth at 67 Sueños. They go from rarely acknowledging their status publicly and seeing it as a liability, a shameful fact, a dangerous weakness to a space where it is this piece of their identity that makes them an authority on immigration issues. They suddenly become powerful and gain rather than risk access into a space based on what was once perceived as a liability. You see the transformation when they go to their first March. Suddenly the same person that tip toed around their status when we first met is screaming "we are people we are not Illegal" or Undocumented ! Unafraid!"

The strong collective the group provides offers a natural and safe space to heal. In their healing, the youth are driven to touch the lives of others by turning trauma into human rights advocacy and organizing. Carlos Madrilga, a youth activist of 67 Sueños reflected on the impact of the project on his life, "La cultura es grande, we come from a beautiful struggle and it's beautiful because cada dia estamos luchando for something better. It has helped me and made me more mature and understand where weare coming from." Paredes also discusses the power of transforming trauma into collective strength:

> I believe they are inspired by their experiences and the possibility of transforming their trauma into a source of strength. Also I hear my youth speak of the second family they have at 67 Sueños. This is no trite expression among our youth since many have lost portions if not most of their families through migration or deportation. So I think they crave that lost sense of family and community. All of our youth have mentioned and many we've interviewed talk about the connection to family and community they remember back home and how here in the states things are more segregated and alienated. Here in the US everyone goes into their apartment or home and keeps to themselves. At 67 Sueños we do a ton of "work" including organizing actions, editing video, creating art, organizing workshops... but we also take a great deal of time building a strong community. We spend 2 to 3 hours a week eating together, preparing the food together, and having a healing ceremony where we burn copal as our ancestors once did. We share our traumas and our success, we laugh we cry and check in often. These are the things I see and hear that are motivating to do more.

Advocacy for Human Rights Justice

The current movement of student led activism for immigration reform is raising consciousness around abusive human rights violations of the undocumented, forced separation of families and inequitable educational opportunities that Latinas/os are challenged with. New dialogues are also emerging that provide opportunities to share the stories that many have kept in silence due to their immigration status.

> Undocumented youth are tired of the vast inequities and limited opportunities afforded to them because of their citizenship status. We fight for the right to education for all, the right to have a job that helps our families get out of poverty, the right to live without fear of incarceration and deportation, the right to keep families together" (Suarez, 2010).

67 Sueños youth activists are committed to shining light on the inequities and human rights violations that many are challenged with every day as a result of living undocumented. The group feels that it is imperative that immigrant advocacy include narrating the chronic human rights violations that undocumented families experience and witness daily. The movement towards accountability of these violations must be questioned and responded to. 67 Sueños youth member, Carlos Madrigal states:

> Human rights should be addressed by getting the community together, making sure that you teach everybody, making sure the message gets out, making sure that gente keep pushing to want more, that they never stop, never give up. Mienteras que tengamos mas es major" (C. Madrigal, personal communication, August 11, 2012).

While often the emphasis of human rights advocacy is based on work with other populations outside the United States. Paredes shared the work they are doing to recognize the human rights that each individual should be afforded in this country:

> Our main mantra is that No Human Being Is Illegal. We did not originate this statement but we try to be true to it in all of our efforts. We advocate for the human and civil rights of all migrant people. We don't like to suggest one is more "deserving than another". In fact we believe that it is almost more important to lift the voices and struggles of the most affected within the migrant community. We think a movement is only as strong as its ability to stand with those who are most impacted.
>
> The examples are endless and heart wrenching. Quality Health care which includes mental health and primary care which should be a right not a privilege is simply out of reach for many migrant people. Victimization and vulnerability is another issue to highlight. Undocumented people are targets because they lack equal protection under the law. We have students who were victims of violence and the fear of deportation outweighs the fear of violence and abuse.
> The right to a quality education is so clearly out of reach for so many migrant youth. These youth get the shell of public education without key support structures. When people know you are vulnerable to threats of deportation you become a target. Many of the youth have stories of people in their own community taking advantage of them. Their parents are abused at work where pay is withheld, workload is increased and they do not have spaces for advocacy. Threats to call "la Migra" are part of our youth's lives. (Paredes, Personal Communication, April 20, 2012).

In the face of all that is happening, youth are no longer staying silent. They are coming to the forefront to take action. The determination of the youth leading 67 Sueños is evident in their energy and enthusiasm to impact change.

Impacting Immigrant Rights Movement through Advocacy and Organizing

> "Direct actions led by undocumented youth and youth of color are the only reasons that politicians have even discussed immigration reform and the DREAM act. Throughout history, youth have been at the forefront of revolutionary social transformations and our time is no exception. Undocumented youth and youth of color are at the forefront of hope we can truly believe in" (Alcarez Ochoa, 2011).

The youth of 67 Sueños see their work of capturing the hopes and dreams of the undocumented community as pivotal in countering the dominant narrative around immigrant rights. The work of 67 Sueños argues that as a country we can longer limit access to citizenship. The road for youth must be made wider to include thousands of others to find their way down the path to citizenship opportunities. The group firmly believes that all youth, regardless of citizenship status should have access to economic rights, educational rights, and finally the right to life of dignity.

The expectation that only the educated or those that meet conservative standards are "worthy" of a path to citizenship, leaves many out of the dialogue and strips their hopes for a future that will allow them a path to citizenship regardless of educational status. Duncan Andrade (2009) highlights the pervasive inequity in our educational system when he writes about his three tenants of hope in education as he acknowledges how students are left waiting for an opportunity for their future to improve. This hope is what many undocumented students live for that often never manifests itself:

> "When we are unwilling to confront these harsh realities of social inequality with our pedagogy to cultivate their "control of destiny" all we have to offer youth is hope deferred. This often comes when we ask our students to set their sights on some temporary distant (and highly unlikely) future wellbeing" (p.185).

The youth of 67 Sueños highlight these social inequities as they share their own narrative based on their intense hope and dispelling the notion that only certain stories are worthy of being heard. As Zimmerman (2011) points out "these narratives reveal that the vision for social change of the undocumented youth extends beyond legalization to a broader agenda that includes social and economic justice for immigrant worker and then families" (p. 17). As the youth rally to make a visible difference in the immigrant's rights movement, their advocacy and organizing are the main platform by which they contribute to both the local and national movement.

They organize local marches and have supported continuous efforts for larger immigration political change. Some of the recent work of the group includes supporting steel workers in Berkeley and campaigning against the construction of increased immigration detention facilities around the United States. 67 Sueños are being heard. In the following quote, Paredes shares the group's approach, and in particular the visions of the youth that have made their energy come alive:

> In terms of the methods we believe deeply in the power of storytelling and arts based advocacy. Too often activism is seen only as a legislative campaign. However the struggles for equality of the past have demonstrated that before a Civil Rights Act can pass we need black intellectual voices like MLK Jr. to become household names. The process of changing the culture of a society always precedes any meaningful political shift. MLK Jr.'s I have a dream speech was more important than anything written up for the congress to pursue during the Civil Rights era. This theory is well articulated by Jeff Chang. He argues, "Cultural change is often the dress-rehearsal for political change. Or put in another way, political change is the final manifestation of cultural shifts that have already occurred."
>
> So we have aimed our energy at cultural and narrative based work. Our interviews become Facebook posts, twitter feeds, and shorts that we play in community spaces and so forth. It's about engaging America in an intimate discussion about migrant people and their real lives, struggles, successes and challenges. We also believe firmly that change comes from the people not the politicians. We think that statement will become real when enough people agree to fight for it. So we engage young people in the fight. There have been over 160 anti-immigrant bills passed across the country in the last couple of years touching nearly every state and contributing to 1,000,000 plus deportations.

For greater impact and reform to be made around immigration, it is critcal for advocacy and organizing to begin at the grassroots level locally within communities. When there is a space for voice to be heard in communities then voices are amplified in one common struggle around the nation.

Moving the 67 Struggle Forward

The work of the youth and the impact they are having cannot be ignored. When we look locally at the Bay Area, the voice of 67 Sueños is is being heard nationally and is at the forefront of immigrant youth advocacy and activism. Paredes shared some of the most significant pieces of their work at both the local and national level:

> Two areas where we feel that we have really had an impact are in the DREAM Movement nationally and the local migrant justice movement. In both places we feel that we have played a part in expanding the debate. Our critique has been accepted and internalized by many groups doing the work locally and nationally. We have heard from folks involved in the NIYA National Immigrant Youth Alliance. IYJL in Chicago a similar migrant youth group has reached out to work with us and we see a broader critique

in their work since our first dialogues in October of 2010. Major DREAM movement artists like Julio Salgado and Yosimar Reyes have collaborated with us and lifted our perspective. So, we feel we have had an impact on the migrant youth movement locally and nationally and hope to keep building together.

It is an honor to witness the work of 67 Sueños. Their story is a testimony of the unified spirit of struggle. The group represents the voices of all of those who have marched before that brought about historic reform, their blood running through the veins of the next generation. They represent the idea that fear will no longer paralyze and that change is imperative and cannot be ignored. The youth of 67 Sueños have risen up to create space for the undocumented to be heard, to heal and to impact change. Their work creates a space where silence will no longer be an option. Clearly what they are doing is necessary and for the youth and their community, it has been a powerful force. We must use their movement as a model to create space for stories to be shared within each of our communities. Even as political attitudes or opportunities change and shift, the push for narratives to be told is critical. Human rights violations in the undocumented community and anti-immigrant sentiments can no longer take center stage. The youth of 67 Sueños have provided tools for those working with undocumented youth and families to empower the lives' of these families. They have specifically shown how advocacy and organizing can impact a broader agenda for immigration reform. Through them, a new movement has formed and hope is alive for many youth around our country as their voice is finally being heard.

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Silencing Resistance

Marisol Ruiz
New Mexico State University

The following poems contest the places that try to silence and prohibit Ethnic Studies.

I ask them:
What are you afraid of?
Are you afraid of a politicized Raza population?
Are you afraid of people who will no longer stay silent?
Are you afraid of brown bodies having the tools and voice to speak back to power?
Is it fear of the brown conscious bodies?
It seems to me that you only want to prohibit Ethnic Studies where there is a critical mass of students who will become concientizados and politicized. But I ask again: What are you afraid of?

Resisto	**I Resist**
Quieren	**They want**
y yo resisto.	**and I resist.**
Quieren	**They want**
prohibir	**to prohibit**
lo que	**what I**
veo, toco,	**see, touch,**
leo, oigo	**read, hear**
y siento.	**and feel.**
Quieren	**They want**
controlar	**to control**
lo que sé	**what I know**
lo que	**what I**
enseño.	**teach.**
Quieren	**They want to**
enjaular	**incarcerate**
mi risa	**my laugh**
mi sueño	**my dream**
mi pensar	**my thinking**
mi amor	**my love**
pero	**but**
mi alma	**my soul**
resiste.	**resists.**
Censura	***Censorship***
Me da risa	**I want to**
cuando	**laugh out loud**
piensan	**when**
que la censura	**they think**

pueda
encarcelar
mi pensar
que grita
libertad.

that censorship
can keep
my mind
caged up
locked up
silent
and lost
as it screams
freedom.

Mothers United: An Immigrant Struggle for Socially Just Education.

Andrea Dyrness, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,
2011, 264 pages

Cara Crandall
University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Andrea Dyrness, Associate Professor of Educational Studies at Trinity College, and author of *Mothers United: An Immigrant Struggle for Socially Just Education*, offers readers a seat at the table with five Latina immigrant women who come together in weekly meetings as *Madres Unidas*. This group, centered on conducting participatory research, comes into existence in response to the tensions that arise during the small schools reform movement in Oakland in 2000. These reforms aimed to engage committed educators with parents to create community-based schools as an alternative to over-crowded, poorly maintained traditional schools and to shift control for decision-making from centralized administrators to teachers and parents. But these alliances also laid bare the ways power and privilege led to the marginalizing of parents.

As these *madres* begin to debrief on their frustrating and frustrated participation in school reform, they find they have multiple questions and concerns about the new, purportedly community-based school, United Community School (UCS). Dyrness comes to the project as an ethnographer and doctoral student interested in the burgeoning school reform movement. She initially offers herself as a translator, and this position might best describe her role throughout the book. Through the relationships she develops with some of the women on the UCS design team, she raises the idea of a parents' research team to document their experiences in the design process. Participatory research offers the Latina women a methodology that engages their questions as the focus for research into the social change of which they were a part.

In conversations with one another and Dyrness, the moms come to realize they have the tools to pose critical questions about reform and to effect change that impacts themselves, the school, and their community. In telling their story, Dyrness's book explores two related arguments: the *madres* utilize personal and cultural resources in strategic ways, though the professionals involved in the reform movement often view them as deficient; the *madres* use their collaborative work in *Madres Unidas* to respond to these deficit perspectives and by doing so critique and resist such power relations. Dyrness successfully explores both of these arguments and demonstrates the inter-connected nature of social critique, reform, and solidarity. In fact, her arguments illustrate the intimate nature of social reform and the role of the heart in sustaining the intellect throughout such work. The kitchen table is both the literal place where they met and a transformative space where the women came to understand themselves and their work in new ways. This communal space offers the women what Dyrness refers to as "*confianza, convivencia,* and *testimonio*." These Latina women, immigrants into the United States who are well aware of the racial, class, gender, and linguistic boundaries placed on them, create with one another a sense of trust and community that encourages them to share their stories. In doing so, the mothers find ways to energize their ways of being and knowing, and to name the forces at work in their lives and their community.

Dyrness develops these strands of personal resources, marginalization, and transformation in chapters that begin with an overview of Oakland's school reform movement including its various stakeholders and continues with a more traditional ethnographic study of Whitman Elementary School as a way to contextualize the need for school reform. As the work on UCS continues, Dyrness shifts the narrative focus onto one particular mamá, Baudelia, who will come to represent the ways parents are being included in the reform effort but only in prescribed roles assigned them by other change agents in Oakland and at UCS. Because Baudelia takes on a leadership role within the group and at the school, her voice and story become an obvious focal point for Dyrness. Only in later sections of the book do readers get more comprehensive stories of the other *madres*. This later inclusion is one limitation of the book since readers might benefit from these deeper portraits of the moms as they engage with specific aspects of the work.

As the tensions become clearer, Dyrness utilizes the Latina immigrants' research and voices to highlight

key concerns about issues, including: the admissions process at UCS; questions of what constitutes a community and who decides; and the ways parents are seen as deficient or suspect. In later chapters, Dyrness allows readers to visit Ofelia's kitchen to further demonstrate the ways personal relationships sustained the research project of *las mamás*. Another chapter demonstrates the research acumen and personal vindication they develop as they share their data in a variety of forums. Dyrness ends the book by offering the work of the mothers as an exemplar of community development efforts possible through the combined threads of research and activism.

Throughout the book, Dyrness's own *testimonio* to the work of these *madres* and her work with them frames their activism through the lenses of critical race theory and U.S. third-world feminism. Reading the women's experiences through these theories, Dyrness shows how they use their stories, and the stories they collect from others, to understand and more fully participate in community development through UCS. The collective immigrant women of *Madras Unidas* develop a research agenda that allows them to use the tools of qualitative research—developing research questions, conducting interviews and focus groups, theorizing about and analyzing data—in order to understand the small school that they have been a part of founding and then to ensure that this school remains true to its original mission.

Through their participatory research process, the mothers found ways to resist and re-articulate a vision for the school and how best that vision could be nurtured and sustained. This recursive and collaborative research process is described by Dyrness and allows for her analysis of and larger argument about participatory research and its emphasis on the production and uses of knowledge. As Dyrness makes clear, she may have provided research tools to the moms in this collaborative, but they are the ones who ultimately determined how and for what purposes these tools might be used. This becomes a central part of her book's argument: participatory research creates the kind of "counterspace" that allows individuals to not only articulate a sense of critical consciousness but also allows them to advance social action.

Dyrness's work impacts readers because on many levels she remains in the role she originally had with the *madres*: she is their translator. She offers their words in both Spanish and English, and then contextualizes all of their words within the realms of theory and for a larger audience. But at its core, this book is authored by the five Latina mothers because Dyrness remains focused on allowing them to narrate their experiences and reflections as they participate in the work of building a school. The arguments Dyrness has offered never veer far from the voices of the immigrant women; we come to care about and follow their lives closely. Thus, this book decentralizes the role of ethnographer and casts our eyes, ears, and intellects toward the *madres* at the heart of the story. While many ethnographies include the heavy presence of the ethnographer, this one positions readers beside the women and by doing so demonstrates how research can bring personal stories to the forefront at the same time that it illustrates how power infiltrates and distorts even the best intended agendas.

This book ultimately offers a compelling example of ethnographic, participatory research that would interest readers in a variety of fields. Certainly, educators and others, including anthropologists, educational anthropologists, and those with an interest in urban education, immigrants in education, and/or parental involvement must read this book. For those who hope to do community development work including teachers, community organizers and others who work with low-income parents of color must read this book as a cautionary on the ways we position ourselves and others when we seek to do good. For doctoral students, the book provides a strong model for how ethnographic research can be combined with participatory research. At the same time, the book provides additional insights into the lives of women, particularly for Latinas/os, in the multiple and often conflicting roles they would assume as mother, community activist, and caretaker even as they seek to understand and articulate their own sense of identity outside of such labels. Those with an interest in women of color feminism will find the book provides an accessible treatment of these theories and how they can be used as an interpretive lens.

As readers follow the mothers of *Madres Unidas*, the love and respect they have for one another becomes clear as Dyrness shows us their work and the multiple ways they support one another. The sense of solidarity, which she describes throughout the book, provides the immigrant moms with the strength they need, in Ofelia's words, to "keep going" despite personal hardships and struggles to be recognized and respected as knowing and knowledgeable members of the school community. Ultimately, Dyrness and the *madres* help readers understand

that change efforts are endeavors best undertaken when heart, mind, and the desire for change are given equal seats at the table.

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Antonia Darder holds the Leavey Endowed Chair in Ethics and Moral Leadership at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and she is Professor Emerita at the University of Illinois. She is an internationally recognized Freirian scholar, whose work examines issues of schooling, culture, language, and racialized inequalities. She is the author of Culture and Power in the Classroom and Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love; and the editor of Latinos and Education, The Latino Studies Reader, and The Critical Pedagogy Reader.

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Anita Fernández is a faculty member of Prescott College. Her areas of teaching and research include social justice education, critical race theory, critical multicultural education and teacher education. As a former high school English teacher in Tucson, she is devoted to preparing activist teachers who are compassionate and critical and put their students' lives at the center of their curriculum. She is locally and nationally involved in community and professional organizations that focus on Latina/o rights, social justice activism, critical pedagogy and transformative teacher education.

Emma H. Fuentes is an assistant professor in the International and Multicultural Education Department at the University of San Francisco. Her research interests encompass the areas of urban education (specifically issues of equity and access and communities organizing for school change), Latino education, critical race praxis, human rights education, educational anthropology and participatory action research.

Ron Glass is an associate professor in Education at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is a philosopher of education who focuses on moral and political issues in the formation of a just, pluralistic democracy, and on collaborative school reform in low-income, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities.

Conrado Gómez honorably served as the chair of the committee that for a whole year reviewed the status of the Mexican American Studies program as it minimally existed in 1997 and set the foundations for a vibrant program that came into being in the spring of 1998. He teaches structure English immersion and multicultural education courses at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. His research focus is on providing teachers with practical strategies and techniques to teach ELLs.

Gustavo González is an assistant professor in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. His work focuses on preparing teachers to effectively educate students from diverse cultural, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds. His research encompasses examining the educational conditions that impact students' literacy/ biliteracy development, access to core content, cultural and linguistic identity, and parent engagement through a culturally relevant pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and social justice perspective.

Francisco Guajardo is an associate professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Texas Pan American. He is founding director of the Center for Bilingual Studies at UTPA and executive director of the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development at Edcouch Elsa High School in rural South Texas.

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Bianca Guzmán is an ecological community psychologist who received her doctoral degree from Michigan State University. She is an associate professor and the acting chair of Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. For over 20 years she has been working in the field of health promotion and is a leading authority in the study of teenage sexuality. She has written numerous articles that have been published in peer reviewed journals and she has also edited a book entitled "Latina Girls: Voices of Adolescent Health in the U.S." published by New York University Press. She is also a prominent scholar in the emerging field of Girlhood Studies. Dr. Guzmán has many more accolades that she is proud of, however what she is most proud of is being the mother of two teenage daughters.

Zoe Hammer is a faculty member of Prescott College. Her teaching and research centers on the political economy of globalization and the cultures of neoliberalism, contemporary theories of social inequality and social change, and Critical Cultural Studies, which emphasizes the role of culture in both challenging and reproducing social systems.

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2011) and "Invisible No More: Understanding and Responding to the Disenfranchisement of Latino Males" with A. Hurtado and E. Fergus (Routledge, 2011).

John Oliver is assistant professor of Educational Leadership at Texas State University–San Marcos. His research includes the intersection of adult-youth partnerships for community change, and effective partnerships between higher education, schools, and communities. John was a public school educator and Assistant Principal in Michigan for over 8 years.

Lia O'Neill M. A. Keawe is an assistant professor at Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies in Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her research interests include comparative politics, indigenous studies and body politics of Kanaka Maoli identity and culture. Her research locates and exposes the structures of colonialism that are often hidden in plain sight. This research has been presented in local, national and international arenas.

Pablo Ramírez is an assistant professor at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. His research and teaching interests focus on Latino parents, immigrant students, and critical pedagogy in the education system.

Reynaldo Reyes III is an associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education in the College of Education at the University of Texas at El Paso. He teaches courses in bilingual education, methods of teaching ESL, and multicultural education. He is the recipient of the University of Texas System Regents Outstanding Teaching. He will be in Santiago, Chile at Pontificia Universidad Católica for the fall 2012 semester on a Fulbright Scholar Award.

Marisol Ruiz is an assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, New Mexico State University. She teaches in the department of Bilingual/ TESOL. She specializes in youth organizing, self-determination and empowerment. In addition her research focuses on ELL/TESOL pedagogies for linguistically and culturally diverse students and on best literacy practices for linguistically and culturally diverse students which lead to youth's own self empowerment and concientizacion.

Patricia Sánchez is an associate professor in the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Her research utilizes a sociocultural lens to examine issues related to globalization, transnationalism, Latina/o immigrant students and families, teacher preparation, and critical research methodologies.

2013 CALL FOR PAPERS THEME ISSUE
Latin@ Students and the School-Prison-Pipeline

Guest Editors: **Lilia Bartolomé** – University of Massachusetts Boston; **Donaldo Macedo** – University of Massachusetts Boston; **Victor Rios** – University of California, Santa Barbara; and **Anthony Peguero** – Virginia Tech

It is evident that youth who are disciplined at school can begin a downward path toward academic and social exclusion, educational failure, and economic depression. The conceptualization of the school-to-prison pipeline has emerged from a number of research studies that focused on the effects of the disproportionate punishment of racial and ethnic minority students. Zero-tolerance school discipline policies rose to prominence in the early 1990s, due to the perception that crime in schools was an ever-increasing and unending problem. It is estimated that over three million students are suspended at some point during each school year. This rate is nearly twice the annual number of suspensions that occurred in the 1970s. Although literature on the school-to-prison pipeline has primarily focused on the effect of school discipline, fewer studies have broadened their research scope, especially for a rapidly growing Latina/o youth population.

The consequences of the school-to-prison pipeline are serious for a growing Latina/o youth population. It is argued that the school-to-prison pipeline is an institutionalized mechanism of discrimination that can perpetuate Latina/o inequalities the US. The school-to-prison pipeline is marginalizing schools, communities, and families by derailing the educational success and progress, restricting and excluding Latina/o youth from the labor market, and promoting the continuation of the historical sense of mistrust and resentment toward authority, the criminal justice system, and all forms of social control. As the United States becomes increasingly immersed in a global competitive market, addressing a school system fraught with inequities, such as the school-to-prison pipeline, becomes imperative. Insuring and improving educational achievement and attainment of this nation's Latina/o youth is vital for the United States' progress and growth.

We expect this call for papers to continue to build collective knowledge and highlight the various ways that the school-to-prison pipeline, in the broadest understanding, is related to and impacting Latina/o youth. It is also our hope for this issue to provide a forum for scholarship that addresses the urgency of addressing the school-to-prison pipeline for Latina/o youth, families, and the community. We welcome manuscripts that offer theoretical perspectives; research findings; innovative methodologies; pedagogical reflections; and implications associated with the school-to-prison pipeline for Latina/o youth. We propose and solicit more scholarly work on this topic for this theme issue that include but not limited to:

- Parental arrest and incarceration;
- Teacher and administration discrimination;
- Community segregation and marginalization;
- Immigration;
- School resource officers and securitization; and,
- Law enforcement and deportation policies.
- Drop out and/or graduation rates
- Juvenile incarceration

Submissions suitable for publication in this special issue include empirical papers, theoretical/conceptual papers, essays, book reviews, and poems. It is important to note that the special issue is interested in the broader Latina/o experience and not solely focused on the experiences of Mexican Americans (per the title of the journal).

The selection of manuscripts will be conducted as follows:

1. Manuscripts will be judged on strength and relevance to the theme of the special issue.

2. Manuscripts should not have been previously published in another journal, nor should they be under consideration by another journal at the time of submission.

3. Each manuscript will be subjected to a blind review by a panel of reviewers with expertise in the area reated by the manuscript. Those manuscripts recommended by the panel of experts will then be considered by the AMAE guest editors and editorial board, which will make the final selections.

Manuscripts should be submitted as follows:

1. Submit via email both a cover letter and copy of the manuscript in Microsoft Word to Victor Rios (vrios@soc.ucsb.edu).

2. Cover letter should include name, title, short author bio, and institutional affiliation; indicate the type of manuscript submitted and the number of words, including references. Also, please indicate how your manuscript addresses the call for papers.

3. Manuscripts should be no longer than 4,500 words (including references). The standard format of the American Psychological Association (APA) should be followed. All illustrations, charts, and graphs should be included within the text. Manuscripts may also be submitted in Spanish.

Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2013. Please address questions to Victor M. Rios (vrios@soc.ucsb.edu) and Anthony Peguero (anthony.peguero@vt.edu). This special issue is due to be published in December 2013. Consequently, authors will be asked to address revisions to their manuscripts during the summer months of 2013.

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REVIEWER FORM

The following is the rubric to be used for the evaluation of manuscripts considered for the AMAE Journal.

To the Reviewer/Evaluator: please feel free to make embedded changes to the article to improve the quality and/or the delivery of the message. Please do not change the message that the author intended, however. The edited piece will be forwarded to the original author for feedback. The name of the reviewer/evaluator will remain anonymous to the original author.

Reviewer/Evaluator_____ Date_____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Article Title:

Article addresses the general scope of the Association of Mexican-American Educators Journal

1 2 3 4 5

Timeliness and relevance to current Latino/Mexican-American scholarship and issues

1 2 3 4 5

Theoretical framework/review of the literature is well grounded, focused, and is aligned to the topic/methods of manuscript

1 2 3 4 5

Research methods are clearly articulated and supported with appropriate data to substantiate findings.

1 2 3 4 5

Article is accessible and valuable to researchers and practitioners.

1 2 3 4 5

Clarity, Style, organization and quality of writing

1 2 3 4 5

Overall Score on the Rubric: _____/30

Do you recommend inclusion of this article in the AMAE journal?

Yes, as submitted ☐

Yes, but with minor revisions ☐

Yes, but would need significant revisions and another review ☐

No ☐

Comments/ suggestions to improve the article (for the author):

Comments/ suggestions about the article (for the guest editors) (these comments will not be shared with the author):

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_____I'm too far from any existing chapter. I'm interested in starting a chapter in my area. Call me

- -

Date ____________ New Member _______ Renewal________

Name ____

Email Address ____

Address ____

City __________________________ State ________ Zip _____________

Home Phone ______________Work Phone ___________________ Cell Phone ______________

Place of Employment: District_____________________ School ______________ Position _____________

Dues cover a period of one year from the date of receipt. Local chapters have additional dues to support local activities (Check with the local leadership). For the moment, you may register with State AMAE, and your information will be forwarded to the AMAE Chapter closest to you.

Type of Membership	State Dues	Chapter Dues (if known)	Fill in Total
REGULAR: open to all certificated/Credentialed personnel (Teachers, Counselors, Principals, Vice- principals, Learning directors, etc.)	$50		
RETIRED: open to retired, "regular" AMAE members (See above).	$25		
PARAPROFESSIONAL/ASSOCIATE: open to non-certificated (classified) personnel and Community people, not in education, supporting our goals.	$10		
STUDENT: open to full time students in the field of education (18 yrs. +).	$5		
INSTITUTIONAL: open to institutions (businesses, schools, school districts).	$500		
Donation for AMAE's **Scholarship Fund.**			
Add up total due			$
AMOUNT OF CHECK ENCLOSED			$

Mail this form with your check or money order to the address listed above. Welcome to AMAE.
To expedite the registration process, you may register and pay online. Visit our web page: http://www.amae.org.

$5 of state dues shall be credited to AMAE-PAC unless you check no ____

AMAE is a 501c(3) organization

Notes:

AMAE

ASSOCIATION OF MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS

EL FUEGO NUEVO

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc. is to insure equal access to a quality education at all levels for the Mexican American/Latino students where cultural and linguistic diversity is recognized and respected. We advise state/local boards and legislators, administrators and faculty and work in partnership with the community and parents for the benefit of our students. We advocate the immediate recruitment, training, retention, support, and professional development of Mexican American/Latino educators and others committed to the education of our students.

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