

The Teaching/Learning Social Justice Series
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Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline
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Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships across Race
Frances E. Kendall

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the dominant society. Yosso's counterstories also invoke and develop the multiple possibilities for challenging these barriers, imagining alternative scenarios for success through schooling in Chicana/o communities and holding schools accountable to all young people in this country. In so doing, Yosso makes a powerful contribution to theory and practice aimed at opening up the educational pipeline to disenfranchised communities and to bringing the rhetorical promise of education as a path to equality and opportunity closer to reality.

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WHY USE CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND COUNTERSTORYTELLING TO ANALYZE THE CHICANA/O EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE?

*I shed tears of anguish
as I see my children disappear
behind the shroud of mediocrity
never to look back to remember me
I am Joaquin. ...*

*I have endured in the rugged mountains
of our country.
I have survived the toils and slavery
of the fields.*

*I have existed
in the barrios of the city,
in the suburbs of bigotry,
in the mines of social snobbery,
in the prisons of dejection,
in the muck of exploitation
and
in the fierce heat of racial hatred. ...*

*I am the masses of my people and
I refuse to be absorbed.*

*I am Joaquin
The odds are great
But my spirit is strong
My faith unbreakable¹*

The above excerpts of Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’ 1967 epic poem “I am Joaquin” are part of a Chicana/o² counterstory. A counterstory recounts experiences of racism and resistance from the perspectives of those on society’s margins.³ In the spirit of Gonzales—whose life’s work expressed the same defiance and hope of his poem—this book offers Chicana/o counterstories that challenge social and racial injustice along the educational pipeline.

Gonzales’ Joaquin endures a legacy of social and racial inequality. Likewise, Chicana/o communities struggle to survive a history of institutional neglect in U.S. public schools. Abysmal statistical realities pervade today’s Chicana/o educational pipeline. Fifty-six percent of Chicana/o students do not graduate high school and only 7% graduate from college. Chicanas/os suffer daunting schooling conditions throughout the educational pipeline. Most Chicana/o students attend overcrowded, racially segregated schools, which lack sufficient numbers of trained faculty, updated textbooks, and even desks.

Despite seemingly insurmountable odds, Gonzales’ Joaquin maintains his faith. In the same way, Chicana/o youth and their families continue to challenge an educational system that has consistently failed them. Indeed, their counterstories carry on Joaquin’s legacy and demonstrate hope and possibility all along the Chicana/o educational pipeline.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXTS OF THE CHICANA/O EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

Chicana/o communities have long experienced the explicit and implicit effects of racism through social institutions such as schools.⁴ To frame this discussion, I begin with a brief demographic overview of the Chicana/o, Latina/o community in the United States. Latinas/os⁵ comprise the largest and fastest growing racial/ethnic “minority” group in the United States. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, at least 35.3 million Latinas/os reside in the United States, and account for about 13% of the total U.S. population. Projections indicate Latinas/os will make up 18% of the U.S. population by 2025. People of Mexican descent—Chicanas/os—represent the youngest, the largest, and the fastest growing Latina/o population subgroup. Chicanas/os comprise an estimated 66% of the total Latina/o population. The remainder of the Latina/o population includes Central or South Americans (14%), Puerto Ricans (11%), Cubans (5%), and other Latinas/os (7%).⁶

Historically rooted and indigenous to the southwestern United States, Chicanas/os now represent the largest single “minority” group in almost every major metropolitan area west of the Mississippi River. In addition, Chicanas/os are moving in large numbers to major metropolitan areas in

the Pacific Northwest, the Midwest, the East Coast, and the South. The median age of the Chicana/o population is 24 years old, and one of every two Chicanas/os under the age of 18 lives in poverty. The educational opportunities made available to these young Chicanas/os will yield societal repercussions as major cities across the nation exhibit demographic patterns already evident in California and the Southwest. To address some of these contemporary contexts, I begin with a critical examination of the Chicana/o educational pipeline at the turn of the 21st century (figure 1.1).

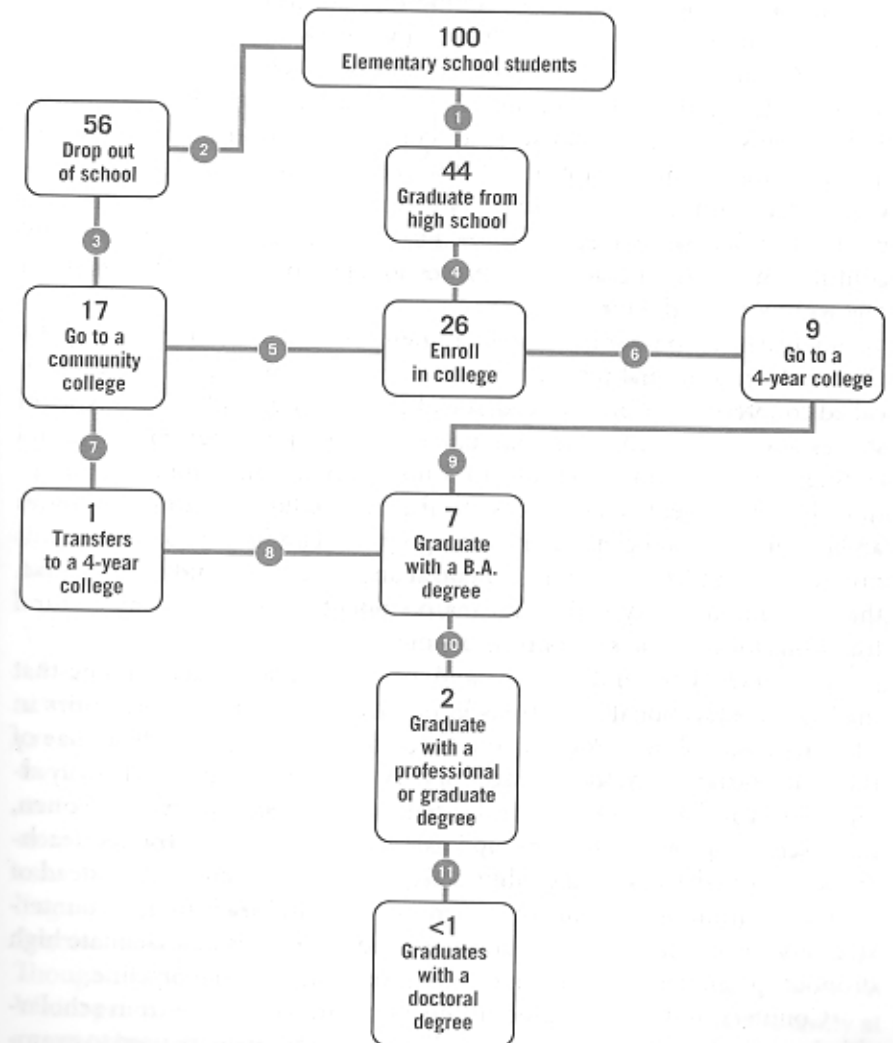


Figure 1.1. The Chicana/o Educational Pipeline⁷

The pipeline represents a system of connecting educational institutions. Schooling structures, practices, and discourses facilitate the flow of knowledge, skills, and students along the educational pipeline. However, at any given point in the pipeline—no matter how one measures educational outcomes—Chicanas/os do not perform as well as Whites and attain less than other racial or ethnic groups in the United States.⁸ Figure 1.1 demonstrates these very serious leaks in the Chicana/o educational pipeline.⁹ Utilizing 2000 U.S. Census data and information from the National Center for Educational Statistics, we begin with 100 Chicana and Chicano students at the elementary level, noting that 56 drop out of high school and 44 continue on to graduate. Of the 44 who graduate from high school, about 26 continue on toward some form of postsecondary education. Of those 26, approximately 17 enroll in community colleges and nine enroll at 4-year institutions. Of those 17 in community colleges, only one will transfer to a 4-year institution. Of the nine Chicanas/os attending a 4-year college and the one community college transfer student, seven will graduate with a baccalaureate degree. Finally, two Chicana/o students will continue on to earn a graduate or professional school degree and less than one will receive a doctorate.

In order to humanize some of these statistical realities along the Chicana/o educational pipeline, I utilize a method of presenting research called counterstorytelling. Indeed, social scientists offer at least two types of stories to explain unequal educational outcomes—majoritarian stories and counterstories.¹⁰ A majoritarian story implicitly begins from the assumption that all students enjoy access to the same educational opportunities and conditions from elementary through postsecondary school. From this premise, and utilizing seemingly neutral and objective standard formulae, the majoritarian story faults Chicana/o students and community cultural traditions for unequal schooling outcomes.

A counterstory, on the other hand, begins with an understanding that inadequate educational conditions limit equal access and opportunities in Chicana/o schooling.¹¹ Pointing out the biased and subjective formulae of the majoritarian story, the counterstory reveals that Chicanas/os usually attend overcrowded, run-down, and racially segregated schools.¹² Too often, these schools provide low per-pupil expenditures, few well-trained teachers, and limited access to a quality, college-bound curriculum.¹³ Instead of blaming Chicana/o students or community cultural traditions, a counterstory addresses the structures, practices, and discourses that facilitate high dropout (pushout)¹⁴ rates along the Chicana/o educational pipeline.

Counterstorytelling as used in this book draws directly from scholarship in critical race theory (CRT). CRT refers to a framework used to examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly shape

social structures, practices, and discourses.¹⁵ This book utilizes critical race counterstorytelling to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly effect Chicanas/os in the United States educational system.

Below, I briefly define the terms race, racism, and White privilege for this book, and further introduce readers to CRT as a conceptual, theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological framework in education. Next, I extend on the description of majoritarian storytelling. I then outline the methodology of counterstorytelling in CRT and for this book in particular. Finally, I address some of the critics of critical race counterstories, and propose four functions of counterstorytelling.

RACISM, WHITE PRIVILEGE, AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Race is a socially constructed category, created to differentiate groups based primarily on skin color, phenotype, ethnicity, and culture for the purpose of showing the superiority or dominance of one group over another.¹⁶ The social meanings applied to race find their justification in an ideology of racial superiority and White privilege—an ideology of racism. I draw on the work of Audre Lorde,¹⁷ Chester Pierce,¹⁸ and Manning Marable¹⁹ to define racism as (1) a false belief in White supremacy that handicaps society, (2) a system that upholds Whites as superior to all other groups, and (3) the structural subordination of multiple racial and ethnic groups. With its macro, micro, interpersonal, institutional, overt, and subtle forms, racism entails institutional power. Communities of Color²⁰ in the United States have never possessed this form of power.

Racism—the systemic oppression of People of Color—privileges Whites. Drawing on the work of Beverly Tatum,²¹ Zeus Leonardo,²² Peggy McIntosh,²³ and Devon Carbado,²⁴ I define White privilege as a system of advantage resulting from a legacy of racism and benefiting individuals and groups based on the notions of whiteness. Whiteness intersects with other forms of privilege, including gender, class, phenotype, accent, language, sexuality, immigrant status, and surname. As a very light-skinned Latina of mixed race, people either assume that I am White, refer to me as *Güera*,²⁵ or ask, “What are you?” Born in northern California to working-class, monolingual English-speaking parents, without a Spanish surname, I learned Spanish as a second language and have come to identify as a Chicana. Though I suffer various forms of oppression, I also enjoy multiple layers of White privilege, both in my daily activities (e.g., being served pleasantly at a restaurant, talking my way out of traffic citations, traveling internationally without border patrol harassment), and in my life-trajectory (e.g., being

tracked in college preparatory courses, having my offer to purchase a home accepted over other financially qualified potential buyers, receiving quality healthcare). For the most part, White privilege seems invisible. Those who experience everyday benefits and other unearned White privileges may not recognize that the systemic oppression of People of Color enables these institutionalized racial preferences.

In order to address the historical and contemporary realities of race, racism, and White privilege, I draw on a dynamic analytical framework called critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT) originated in schools of law in the late 1980s with a group of scholars seeking to examine and challenge race and racism in the United States legal system and society. Feeling limited by work that separated critical theory from conversations about race and racism, these legal scholars sought “both a critical space in which race was foregrounded and a race space where critical themes were central.”²⁶ Specifically, they argued that critical legal studies scholarship did not listen to the lived experiences and histories of People of Color. Scholars such as Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman asserted that without analyzing race and racism, critical legal scholarship could not offer strategies for social transformation.²⁷ This argument had also been taking place in social science and history circles, specifically in ethnic and women’s studies scholarship.

Rooted in the scholarly traditions of ethnic studies, U.S./third-world feminisms, Marxism/neo-Marxism, cultural nationalism, and internal colonialism, CRT scholarship initially focused its critique on the slow pace of civil rights legislation. Much of the early CRT literature pointed out the unrealized promise of civil rights legislative efforts for Black and White communities. Some CRT scholars challenged this tendency toward a Black/White binary,²⁸ explaining that oppression in the law and society could not be fully understood in terms of only Black and White. While acknowledging that African Americans endure a unique and horrendous history of racism and other forms of subordination in the United States,²⁹ these scholars noted that other People of Color inherit histories likewise shaped by the intersections of racism. As a result of these self-reflective discussions, CRT’s family tree expanded to recognize these histories and experiences.³⁰ Almost 20 years after its inception, CRT and its branches of FemCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit, AsianCrit,³¹ and WhiteCrit³² evidence an ongoing search by socially and racially marginalized communities for a framework “grounded in the particulars of their social reality and experience.”³³

Latina/o critical race (LatCrit) theory scholarship in particular brought a Chicana/o, Latina/o consciousness to CRT in examining racialized layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language,

phenotype, accent, and surname.³⁴ This LatCrit consciousness extended critical race discussions to address the layers of racialized subordination that comprise Chicana/o, Latina/o experiences within and beyond U.S. borders.³⁵ I engage CRT informed by this LatCrit consciousness.

CRT’s roots and branches inform the critical race movement in education.³⁶ Over the last 10 years, CRT scholars in education have theorized, examined, and challenged the ways race and racism shape on schooling structures, practices, and discourses. Education scholar Daniel Solórzano³⁷ identified at least five tenets of CRT.³⁸ Below I describe these tenets as they apply to education.

1. **The Intercentricity of Race and Racism.** CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic and permanent in U.S. society.³⁹ Discussions of race within CRT begin with an examination of how race has been socially constructed in U.S. history and how the system of racism functions to oppress People of Color while privileging Whites. A CRT in education centralizes race and racism, while also focusing on racism’s intersections with other forms of subordination, based on gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, immigrant status, phenotype, accent, and surname.⁴⁰
2. **The Challenge to Dominant Ideology.** Critical race scholars argue that traditional claims of race neutrality and objectivity act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society.⁴¹ A CRT in education challenges claims that the educational system offers objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.⁴² A critical race praxis (practice informed by CRT) questions approaches to schooling that pretend to be neutral or standardized while implicitly privileging White, U.S.-born, monolingual, English-speaking students.⁴³
3. **The Commitment to Social Justice.** CRT is dedicated to advancing a social justice agenda in schools and society.⁴⁴ Acknowledging schools as political places and teaching as a political act,⁴⁵ CRT views education as a tool to eliminate all forms of subordination and empower oppressed groups—to transform society.⁴⁶
4. **The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge.** CRT finds the experiential knowledge of People of Color legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination.⁴⁷ Critical race research in education views this knowledge as a strength and draws explicitly on the lived experiences of Students of Color by analyzing “data,” including oral traditions, *corridos*,⁴⁸ poetry, films, *actos*,⁴⁹ and humor. CRT scholars may also teach or present research findings in unconventional and creative

ways, through storytelling, chronicles, scenarios, narratives, and parables.⁵⁰

5. **The Interdisciplinary Perspective.** CRT analyzes racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia from a historical and interdisciplinary perspective.⁵¹ As Matsuda explains, "...the desire to know history from the bottom has forced [CRT] scholars to sources often ignored: journals, poems, oral histories, and stories from their own experiences of life in a hierarchically arranged world."⁵² A CRT in education works between and beyond disciplinary boundaries, drawing on multiple methods to listen to and learn from those knowledges otherwise silenced by popular discourse and academic research.⁵³

Individually, these five tenets are not "new." The scholarly and activist traditions of ethnic and women's studies found in the roots and branches of CRT embody aspects of these tenets, as do multicultural education and critical pedagogy.⁵⁴ CRT draws on the strengths these traditions bring to the study of race and racism in and out of schools. CRT also learns from blindspots exhibited by some of these academic traditions (e.g. the tendency to de-center race and racism in multicultural education and critical pedagogy).⁵⁵ With the power of historical hindsight and the strength of multiple intellectual and community traditions, CRT's five tenets comprise a unique framework that challenges existing modes of scholarship in education. CRT scholars and practitioners seek to understand how Communities of Color experience and respond to racism as it intersects with other forms of subordination in the United States educational system. They also search for ways CRT might inform research, curriculum, policy, the study of knowledge (epistemology), and teaching (pedagogy).⁵⁶ In short, they look to develop critical race praxis—practice informed by CRT. Guided by this CRT framework, the counterstories in this book ask at least four questions:

1. How do racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination shape the Chicana/o educational pipeline?
2. How do institutions of education and educational structures, practices, and discourses maintain race-, gender-, and class-based discrimination?
3. How do Chicanas/os respond to and resist racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in education?
4. How can education become a tool to help end racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination?

MAJORITARIAN STORYTELLING IN EDUCATION

Majoritarian storytelling is a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of those with racial and social privilege. Traditionally, mainstream storytelling through mass media and academia rely on "stock" stereotypes if and when they discuss issues of race. Gordon Allport defined a stereotype as "an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category."⁵⁷ The term "stock stereotype" emphasizes that these exaggerated beliefs associated with a category draw on a virtual stockroom of stereotypes developed through history and distributed through individuals, groups, and institutions such as schools and media.

Everyday majoritarian narratives—embedded with racialized omissions, distortions, and stereotypes—perpetuate myths that darker skin and poverty correlate with bad neighborhoods and bad schools.⁵⁸ This "good" versus "bad" narrative portrays working class people and People of Color as irresponsible and less intelligent while depicting White middle- and upper-class people as just the opposite.⁵⁹ Majoritarian narratives tend to silence or dismiss people who offer evidence contradicting these racially unbalanced portrayals.

Majoritarian stories along the Chicana/o educational pipeline often feature Chicana/o parents who supposedly do not care about educating their children, or Latina/o and Black students who ostensibly receive "racial preferences" in college admissions. The majoritarian story asserts: if Chicana/o students perform poorly in school, then their parents probably do not "value" education enough to inculcate academic excellence in their children. If White students are denied admission to a university, then an undeserving Black or Latina/o student likely "took" their rightful spot. Yet research shows that Chicana/o parents have higher aspirations for their children than White parents.⁶⁰ In addition, the dismally low numbers of Students of Color admitted to colleges and universities nationally, challenge the myth that universities regularly deny admission to qualified White students to make way for unqualified Students of Color.⁶¹

The legacy of racism and White privilege determine whose stories are recounted as historical and whose experiences are dismissed as merely anecdotal. Majoritarian stories center layers of race, gender, class, and other forms of privilege as the point of reference.⁶² This means, majoritarian stories exhibit the racialized assumptions and perspectives of White men and women—particularly those considered to be middle/upper class and heterosexual.

Although Whites most often tell majoritarian stories, People of Color often buy into and even recite majoritarian stories.⁶³ Often, "minority" majoritarian storytellers receive social benefits for recounting these stories.⁶⁴

Two examples of minority majoritarian storytellers include Linda Chavez, a Latina author and head of a conservative think tank who advocates for cultural and linguistic assimilation, and African American Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, whose judicial record demonstrates staunch opposition to the civil rights of People of Color and women.⁶⁵ Whether told by People of Color or Whites, people rarely question majoritarian stories. Like White privilege, majoritarian stories seem invisible. Instead of stories, they appear to be “natural” parts of everyday life.

CRITICAL RACE COUNTERSTORYTELLING

Critical race counterstorytelling is a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people. Counterstories reflect on the lived experiences of People of Color to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice.⁶⁶ Indeed, Communities of Color cultivate rich and continuing traditions of storytelling.⁶⁷ Recognizing these stories and knowledges as valid and valuable data, counterstorytellers challenge majoritarian stories that omit and distort the histories and realities of oppressed communities. Drawing also on academic research, social science and humanities literature, and judicial records, counterstories question racially stereotypical portrayals implicit in majoritarian stories.

Yet counterstories do not just respond to majoritarian stories. As Lisa Ikemoto and Gloria Anzaldúa explain, merely reacting to the stories of racial privilege actually re-centers those stories.⁶⁸ Likewise, counterstories do not focus on trying to convince people that racism exists. Instead, counterstories seek to document the persistence of racism from the perspectives of those injured and victimized by its legacy. Furthermore, counterstories bring attention to those who courageously resist racism and struggle toward a more socially and racially just society. So while counterstories challenge mainstream society’s denial of the ongoing significance of race and racism, they do so by offering a critical reflection on the lived experiences and histories of People of Color. In its multiple forms, counterstorytelling can strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance.

The CRT literature evidences at least three types of counterstories: autobiographical,⁶⁹ biographical,⁷⁰ and composite.⁷¹ For this book, I focus on composite stories. Composite counternarratives draw on multiple forms of data to recount the experiences of People of Color.

Through memorable characters such as Geneva Crenshaw⁷² and Rodrigo Crenshaw⁷³ Bell and Delgado introduced thousands to their composite counterstories. These characters engage in lively analyses of legal decisions, historical events, and current debates about racial realities in U.S.

society. Because they document these discussions with hundreds of footnotes, Bell and Delgado provide insights into how social scientists might create composite characters and counternarratives. Composite counterstories integrate at least four data sources: (1) empirical research data (e.g., findings from surveys, focus group interviews, etc.); (2) existing social science, humanities, legal, or other literature on the topic(s) evidenced in the research; (3) judicial records (court filings, rulings, oral arguments, etc.); and (4) authors’ professional and personal experiences.⁷⁴ Methodologically, authors may begin with these data sources and create composite characters who embody the patterns and themes evidenced in the research. Then, authors write these composite characters into social, historical, and political situations that allow the dialogue to speak to the research findings and creatively challenge racism and other forms of subordination.

COUNTERSTORYTELLING METHODOLOGY FOR THIS BOOK

To create the critical race counterstories for this book, I analyzed findings from multiple research projects and followed the composite counterstory methodology described above. I began by finding and unearthing sources of data. My first form of data came from primary sources, namely from Chicanas/os themselves, in the form of individual and group interviews and national survey data. My primary sources also included judicial records and court filings. I outline specific data sources within each chapter.

Next, I analyzed secondary data from social science, humanities, and legal studies scholarship, addressing the education of People of Color generally⁷⁵ and Chicana/o education specifically.⁷⁶ In sifting through this literature, I began to draw connections with the relevant primary data. This grounded theory approach starts with the data and, as its name insinuates, builds theory from the ground up.⁷⁷ Yet this systematic process of sifting through data to identify themes and patterns in social science research is neither neutral nor objective. Data cannot “speak” without interpretation, so I try to bring *theoretical sensitivity*⁷⁸ to this research process while I draw upon my *cultural intuition*⁷⁹ to interpret and analyze findings.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss assert, “The generation of theory requires that the analyst take apart the story within his [her] data.”⁸⁰ To recover and recount the story evidenced in the patterns and themes of the data, I also include my own experiences as a source of data.⁸¹ This data entails personal reflections and experiences of family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances, as well as Chicana/o oral traditions, cultural expressions, and collective history.⁸²

After compiling and analyzing these various sources of data, I created Chicana/o composite characters to engage the themes, patterns, and concepts that surfaced in the research process.⁸³ I set each counterstory in a location that would provide further social and historical context to the data. The composite characters personify the research in an effort to humanize the numbers along the Chicana/o educational pipeline.⁸⁴

Though each of the characters and counterstories in this book certainly exhibit fictional elements, counterstorytelling differs from fictional storytelling. Counterstories present academic research creatively, but serve the purpose of critically examining theoretical concepts and humanizing empirical data. Each of the following four chapters begins with a more standard academic narrative to overview the research at elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and graduate school levels of the pipeline, respectively. The counterstories then investigate how some Chicana/o students, parents, teachers, and faculty respond to the everyday forms of racism, sexism, and classism they face in and outside schools. Grounded in the statistical reality that Chicana/o communities are part of the largest and fastest growing population in the United States, the four counterstories take place in locations throughout the Southwest and Midwest regions of the United States now reflecting these demographic trends. In the tradition of Freire,⁸⁵ each chapter's counterstory speaks to the others thematically so that readers might engage in the dialogue about Chicana/o education through sharing, listening, challenging, and reflecting along with the characters.

CRITIQUES OF CRT AND COUNTERSTORYTELLING

To date, the education literature features only one critique of CRT. In *After Race: Racism After Multiculturalism*, education scholars Antonia Darder and Rodolfo Torres⁸⁶ interrogate CRT's use of "race" as an analytical concept, and assert that instead, class inequality and capitalism merit analytical focus.⁸⁷ They explain, "The empire is not built on 'race' but on an ideology of racism—this being one of the primary categories by which human beings are sorted, controlled, and made disposable at the point of production."⁸⁸ The authors do not suggest how we might address this ideology of racism without first understanding its roots in the socially constructed concept of race. Darder and Torres seem to ignore that race—even as a social construction—constitutes a very real part of the daily lives of People of Color. Downplaying the intercentricity of race also supports majoritarian stories that insist race and racism no longer matter.⁸⁹ This theoretical approach to challenging social inequality without listening to the lived experiences of People of Color is, in Cherrie Moraga's words, "dangerous."⁹⁰

Darder and Torres' critique is not particularly new. In fact, CRT's genealogy reveals that this theoretical blindspot—this tendency to dismiss race—led in part to scholars separating from critical legal studies and forming CRT 20 years ago. While acknowledging the inextricable links between race and class oppression, CRT scholars maintain that a theory based on one form of inequality cannot sufficiently address racism as it intersects with multiple forms of subordination and shapes the lives of People of Color in U.S. society.⁹¹ A CRT approach holds that both Marx *and* the lived experiences of People of Color can and should illuminate our understandings of savage social and racial inequalities.⁹²

Daniel Farber and Suzanna Sherry specifically critique CRT's methodology of counterstorytelling. In their 1997 book, *Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law*, Farber and Sherry argue that critical race counterstories (1) recount atypical and therefore unrepresentative experiences of People of Color; (2) overemphasize the unique perspective of the author and/or "the voice of color," and therefore reduce the generalizability of counterstories; (3) lack clarity, analysis, and academic rigor; and (4) distort the truth.

These critiques, however, reveal more about the paradigm of White privilege rather than provide substantive questions of critical race scholarship.⁹³ For example, counterstories do not aim to resurrect one Person of Color's experience as representative of all or to generalize about all Communities of Color.⁹⁴ Actually, majoritarian stories tend to essentialize, tokenize, and stereotype based on generalizations. Too often, these stories overemphasize one Person of Color as representative of all People of Color. Counterstories, on the other hand, illuminate patterns of racialized inequality by recounting experiences of racism both individual and shared. Furthermore, the argument that counterstories lack academic rigor and clear analysis suggests that critics either have not read the meticulously footnoted sources informing CRT counterstories, or purposefully dismiss critical race scholars' interpretations of these data.

Moreover, Farber and Sherry claim counterstories distort "truth." Here, critical race critics profess to know the "truth" and ostensibly judge when someone else distorts it. This argument affirms the power of counterstories as tools that reveal perspectives long silenced. Indeed, numbers, images, and events do not speak for themselves. People who have personal histories, experiences, and knowledges interpret numbers, images, and events. Farber and Sherry's arguments against counterstorytelling actually demonstrate that challenging racism from the perspectives of racism's victims threatens the status quo. Richard Delgado explains, "Majoritarians tell stories too. But the ones they tell—about merit, causation, blame, responsibility, and social justice—do not seem to them like stories at all, but the truth."⁹⁵ Counterstories challenge this facade of the

"truth" by showing the perspective of racialized power and privilege generating this "truth."⁹⁶

Derrick Bell argues that in listening to and recounting the stories of racially marginalized groups, critical race theorists "are attempting to sing a new scholarly song—even if to some listeners our style is strange, our lyrics unseemly."⁹⁷ Bell concedes, "We do not expect praise for our legal scholarship that departs from the traditional. We simply seek understanding and that tolerance without which no new songs will ever be heard."⁹⁸

Finally, some CRT critics believe the scholarship has not gone far enough in posing practical solutions to the problems it outlines.⁹⁹ Bell responds to this critique by affirming that CRT offers a tool to examine, better understand, and therefore more effectively challenge racism. He assures, "For us, this writing is not some idle vogue. Nor are we willfully confrontational. Rather we feel we must understand so as better to oppose the dire forces that are literally destroying the many people who share our racial heritage."¹⁰⁰ Bell's explanation resonates with Freire, whose legacy reminds that as each of us challenge racialized oppression through our daily work, we transform our world.¹⁰¹ Delgado also remarks that academics tend to look "for interesting problems to solve and theories to critique, rather than coming to grips with real-world problems of the community of color."¹⁰² He admonishes academics who seem to analyze racial discourse without an explicit critique of the structures of inequality shaped and rationalized by such discourse.¹⁰³ For educators, a parallel goal of CRT is critical race praxis.¹⁰⁴ Critical race praxis refers to our work toward the transformation of education inside and outside classrooms.

FUNCTIONS OF COUNTERSTORIES

Keeping these critiques in mind, this book joins the continuous struggle to ensure counterstories challenge and transform institutionalized racism. Framed by the tenets of CRT in education, the counterstories in the following chapters can serve at least four functions in the struggle for educational equality.

1. **Counterstories can build community among those at the margins of society.** Because they bring a human and familiar face to empirical research, counterstories remind us that as we navigate through the educational pipeline, we do not struggle alone. In addition, counterstories can serve as a tool of empathy among marginalized communities. A counterstory can open new windows into the realities of those "faces at the bottom of society's well"¹⁰⁵ and address society's margins as places of possibility and resistance.¹⁰⁶

2. **Counterstories can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center.** As they expose the White privilege upheld in majoritarian storytelling, counternarratives provide a context to understand and transform established belief systems. Delgado explains, "Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather we construct it with words, stories, and silence."¹⁰⁷ To challenge those who benefit from maintaining silence about the injuries inflicted by racism, counterstories listen to the voices and experiences of racism's victims.
3. **Counterstories can nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance.** Counterstories shatter oppressive silences created through the omission and distortion of Outsider histories.¹⁰⁸ Mari Matsuda explains, "...the stories of those who have experienced racism are of special value in defeating racism."¹⁰⁹ In affirming pedagogies and knowledges¹¹⁰ cultivated in Communities of Color, counterstories also preserve community memory of the history of resistance to oppression.
4. **Counterstories can facilitate transformation in education.** Because counterstories embed critical conceptual and theoretical content within an accessible story format, they can serve as pedagogical tools. Margaret Montoya asserts, "Stories must move us to action and inform our praxis... storytelling and other critical tools must refashion our curricula and pedagogies."¹¹¹ Through a combination of elements from both the story and the current reality, counterstories teach us that construction of another world—a socially and racially just world—is possible.

The counterstories in the following chapters correspond to each level of the Chicana/o educational pipeline. Chapter 2 analyzes Chicana/o community cultural knowledges in elementary schools. In chapter 3, the counterstory addresses the historical contexts of racialized inequality in high schools. Chapter 4 proposes a model describing how Chicana/o students navigate through college. The counterstory in chapter 5 reflects on the struggles of Chicana/o graduate students. Finally, a brief counterstory in the Epilogue looks toward the future of the Chicana/o educational pipeline.

NOTES

1. "I am Joaquin." © 1967 Rodolfo Gonzales, used with permission.
2. The term Chicana/o has been used synonymously with Mexican American, and I utilize it here to refer to women and men of Mexican descent residing in the United States regardless of immigration status. Chicana/o is a political term, referring to a people whose indigenous roots to

- North America and Mexico date back centuries. For more discussion of the origins of this term, see Acuña, 1972, 2004; Chapa & Valencia, 1993.
3. Gonzales passed away on April 12, 2005 but his legacy lives on. Gonzales grew up in Denver Colorado in the 1930s. Because he could not afford the cost of college, Gonzales began a career in boxing, and became one of the best featherweight boxers in the world (though he was never granted an opportunity for a title fight). In 1966, Gonzales founded the Crusade for Justice—an urban civil rights cultural movement. Throughout the late 1960s and 70s, Gonzales became nationally known as a political activist and leader in the Chicana/o Movement. For example, Gonzales led the Chicana/o contingent in the Poor People's March on Washington in 1968 and articulated the need for Chicana/o communities' political, economic, and educational self-determination. He collaborated with others to organize the National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference (1969, 1970) and develop *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* (1969). In 1970, he helped organize the Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War in East Los Angeles, and that year he also founded the Colorado Raza Unida Party (See Vigil, 1999). Gonzales also founded a Chicano-centric school in Denver Colorado—*Escuela Tlatelolco*. His obituary on the school's website concludes, "As long as there are injustices, double standards, racism, and apathy, Corky's dedication, loyalty, and love of struggle against these diseases of society will serve as an inspiration to for all people to act." See http://escuelatlatelolco.org/corky_bio.html (Retrieved April 17, 2005).
 4. Garcia, E. E., 2001; González, 1990, 1997; Menchaca, 1995, 1998; Moreno, 1999
 5. The term Latinas/os refers to women and men of Latin American origin or descent (e.g., Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Puerto Rican), residing in the United States, regardless of immigrant status. Latina/o is an umbrella term that includes women and men of Mexican origin or descent. When data refers to Hispanics, I replace that term with Latina/o. Whenever data are disaggregated by the Latina/o subgroup, I focus on and use the term Chicana/o.
 6. It should be noted that some Latinas/os identify as Chicanas/os to acknowledge the shared struggles they engage in as marginalized U.S. groups. Furthermore, socioeconomic diversity within Latina/o groups, resulting from different U.S. immigration policies and racialization processes, means that Central Americans and Puerto Ricans may experience the educational system in ways more similar to Chicanas/os than with other Latinas/os, such as Cubans or South Americans.
 7. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000
 8. See Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995
 9. See Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Rumberger, 1991; Solórzano, 1994, 1995; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000; Valencia, 1991, 2002a
 10. See Richard Delgado, 1989
 11. See Pizarro, 2005; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995
 12. See Valencia, 1991, 2002b; for environmental concerns see also <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/indoor/pcs/pcs.htm> and <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/ej/ej.htm?PF=Y>.
 13. See Oakes, 1985; Oakes & Lipton, 2004; *Williams v. State of California*, 2000
 14. See the 1971 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Mexican American Education Study Report I, p. 102. A push out refers to a student who is not retained during a given course of study and not graduated as a result of ineffective schooling structures and practices. In other words, the burden of retention and graduation lies with the school, rather than the student (see Solórzano, Ledesman, Pérez, Burciaga, & Ornelas, 2003).
 15. See Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1995a; Wing, 1997, 2000; Valdes, McCristal Culp, Harris, 2002
 16. Haney López, 1994
 17. Lorde (1992) defines racism as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (p. 496).
 18. Pierce (1975) defines racism as a "public health and mental health illness," based on the delusion or false belief, in spite of contrary evidence, that innate inferiority correlates with dark skin

- color. Pierce asserts that given this massive public and mental health crisis, "Everyone in the U.S. is handicapped by racism" (pp. 97–98).
19. Marable (1992) defines racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5). Marable's definition of racism shifts the discussion of race and racism from a discussion about Black and White to one that includes multiple faces, voices, and experiences.
 20. People of Color, Communities of Color, and Students of Color are all terms referring to African American, Native American, Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, and Asian Americans, also referred to as racial "minorities" or underrepresented groups.
 21. Tatum (1997) explains, "Despite the current rhetoric about affirmative action and 'reverse racism,' every social indicator, from salary to life expectancy, reveals the advantages of being White" (p. 8). She offers an example where a Person of Color is discriminated against and denied an equal opportunity to find housing, so the apartment ends up being rented to a White person. As a result of the racism that denied access to the Person of Color, this White person is "knowingly or unknowingly, the beneficiary of racism, a system of advantage based on race" (p. 9).
 22. Leonardo (2004) finds that White privilege is too often discussed without an analysis of those violent acts of colonization and conquest, which created those privileges enjoyed by Whites.
 23. McIntosh (1989) addresses multiple everyday instances wherein she as a White woman benefits from White privilege.
 24. Carbado (2002) begins to complicate the discussion of White privilege by addressing privileges that intersect with whiteness, such as sexuality and gender.
 25. Light-skinned girl, woman with a fair complexion. For example, when initially meeting me, I've had high school and college students comment on my skin color, saying: "*Estás blanca, blanca...you're Latina, no?*" (You're white, white...you're Latina right?).
 26. Crenshaw, 2002, p. 19
 27. A critical analysis of the CRT literature reveals that CRT scholars incorporate many of the strengths of each of these theoretical models, while learning from some of their blindspots (e.g. Marxisms' blindspots regarding race and gender, cultural nationalisms' blindspots in addressing gender, class, and sexuality) See Solórzano & Yosso, 2001 for more description of CRT's family tree. See also Delgado, 1995a; Ladson-Billings, 1998
 28. Perea, 1998, pp. 211–247
 29. Espinoza & Harris, 1998
 30. See Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wing, 1997, 2000; Valdes, McCristal Culp, Harris, 2002
 31. For FemCrit see Caldwell, 1995; Wing, 1997, 2000; For TribalCrit see Brayboy, 2001, 2002; Williams, R., 1997; For Asian Crit see Chang, 1993, 1998; Chon, 1995; Ikemoto, 1992; For WhiteCrit see Delgado, 1997.
 32. Delgado & Stefancic, 1997
 33. Matsuda, 1989, pp. 2323–2324
 34. See Espinoza, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Montoya, 1994; Valdes, 1997; See also Arriola, 1998; Stefancic, 1998; and the LatCrit organizational website: <http://personal.law.miami.edu/~fvaldes/latcrit/>
 35. Arriola, 1997; Valdes, 1998. October, 2005 marks the tenth annual LatCrit Symposium. The papers presented at each symposia become part of a special issue of a university law review. See for example symposium issues of the *Harvard Latino Law Review* (Cabrera, 1997); UCLA *Chicano-Latino Law Review* (Martínez & Reyna, 1998); and the joint symposium issue of UC Berkeley's *California Law Review* and *La Raza Law Journal* (Oakland & Valenzuela, 1998).
 36. See for example, Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez & Parker, 2003; Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002; Parker, Deyhle, Villenas, & Crossland, 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Tate, 1994, 1997, Taylor, 1998; for WhiteCrit in education, see Marx, 2003.
 37. Solórzano, 1997

38. See also Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Greshaw, 1993 for discussion of CRT tenets outlined in the legal field.
39. Bell, 1987
40. Arriola, 1997; Espinoza, 1998; Harris, 1994; Perea, Delgado, Harris, & Wildman, 2000; Valdes, 1997
41. Calmore, 1992
42. Ladson-Billings, 2000; Solórzano, 1997
43. Ladson-Billings, 1998; Oseguera, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a
44. Bell, L. A., 1997; Matsuda, 1991
45. Freire, 1970, 1973; see also hooks, 1994
46. Pizarro, 1998; Solórzano, 1989; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Lopez, 2003
47. Bell, 1987, 1992; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Olivas, 1990
48. A Mexican oral musical tradition that offers a narrative historical account of individual experiences and events, similar to a ballad (see Paredes, 1958).
49. A Chicana/o performance tradition created collectively to represent social reality, and performed as a one-act play (see Valdez, 1971).
50. Hurtado, 1996; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b
51. See Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia & Baker, 1995; Olivas, 1990; Valdes, McCristal Culp, & Harris, 2002
52. Matsuda, 1989, pp. 2323-2324
53. This is an interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary approach. See Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a, 2002a.
54. See Parker & Stovall, 2004
55. See Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004
56. See for example, DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Duncan 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Fernandez, 2002; Jay, 2003; Lynn, 1999, 2002; Revilla, 2001; Yosso, 2002b
57. Allport, 1979, p. 191
58. See Bell, L. A., 2003; Council for Interracial Books for Children 1977; Gutierrez-Jones, 2001
59. For example, California's Proposition 187 attempted to deny "suspected" undocumented persons access to public schools and health facilities. Governor Pete Wilson funded numerous commercials repeating false claims about undocumented immigrants supposedly draining California's economy and resources. California voters passed the initiative in Spring 1994. In 1997, California's Supreme Court declared Proposition 187 unconstitutional, but popular discourse (through both news and entertainment media) continues to perpetuate racially offensive and blatantly false stories about undocumented immigrants (see also Arriola, 1997; Garcia, R., 1995). In December 2003, Ron Prince (the principal author of Proposition 187) started to gather signatures to put a new Proposition 187 initiative on the California ballot, which would charge state-employees with a misdemeanor for offering services to persons without documents (see Hernandez, 2003).
60. See Espinosa, Fernández, & Dornbusch, 1977; See also Solórzano, 1992; Valencia & Black, 2002
61. Bowen & Bok, 1998
62. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (1993) assert that majoritarian stories include the "bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race" (p. 462).
63. Similarly, misogynistic stories are often told by men, but can also be told by women, and while these women may receive some individual benefits, the stories they tell reinforce patriarchy.
64. For an example of this within a counterstory, see the character of Professor Gleason Golightly in Derrick Bell's (1992) *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, chapter 9: The Space Traders (pp. 163-164).
65. Chavez, 1992; see Higginbotham, 1992
66. Freire, 1970, 1973
67. For example, see African American (DuBois, 1920/2003; Ellison, 1952/2002; Humez, 2003), Chicana/o (Paredes, 1958; Villaseñor, 1991), Native American (Deloria, 1969; Darby & Fitzgerald, 2003), and Asian American (Hong Kingston, 1976; Wakatsuki Houston & Houston, 1973).

68. Ikemoto (1997) writes, "By responding only to the standard story, we let it dominate the discourse," (p. 136). Anzaldúa (1987) asserts "it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions....the possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react" (pp. 78-79).
69. Espinoza, 1990; Lawrence, 1992; Montoya, 1994; Williams, 1991
70. Fernandez, 2002; Lawrence & Matsuda, 1997
71. Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001a, 2001c, 2002b; Delgado, 1989, 1995b, 1996, 1999; 2003; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998
72. See Bell, 1987, 1992
73. See Delgado, 1989, 1995b, 1996, 1999, 2003a, 2005
74. Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a
75. See for example Lewis, 2003; Lomotey, 1990; Nakanishi & Nishida, 1995; Parker, Dehlye, & Villenas, 1999
76. See Carter, 1970; Carter & Segura, 1979; Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997; Gandara, 1995; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995, Gonzalez, 1990; Menchaca, 1995; Moreno, 1999; Tejada, Martinez, & Leonardo, 2000; Valencia, 1991, 2002a
77. Glaser & Strauss, 1967
78. Strauss & Corbin (1990) assert "Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (pp. 41-42).
79. Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998) defines cultural intuition as "a complex [research] process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic" (pp. 567-568).
80. Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 108
81. Delgado Bernal (1998) explains that cultural intuition "extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the important of participants' engaging in the analysis of data" (pp. 563-564).
82. For example, collective experiences include union struggles such as the Justice for Janitors movement, student-initiated struggles such as Youth Organizing Communities, as well as countless community actions and vigils against war, racism, police brutality, and unjust deportations. While not usually documented by mass media, these experiences remain part of community memory. Oral traditions, music, art, and poetry nurture this community memory. Public expression of these traditions, through murals, performance, or puppets and signs held up during marches also becomes part of collective experience.
83. A few of the characters were initially developed as part of previously published counterstories (e.g., For "Professor Sanchez" and "Lupe" see Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; For "Claudia Vasquez" and Leticia Garcia" see Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001a, 2001c, 2002b, 2002c.
84. See Bernal, 1988; Cuádriz, 1992; Cuádriz & Pierce, 1994; Espin, 1993; Gandara, 1982, 1995; Montoya, 1994; Rendon, 1992; Solórzano, 1998
85. Freire, 1973
86. Darder & Torres, 2004; see also Darder & Torres, 2000
87. See Darder & Torres, 2004, Ch. 5, "What's so critical about critical race theory: A conceptual interrogation."
88. Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 100
89. Cornel West's (1993) work reminds that *Race Matters*.
90. Cherrie Moraga (1983) writes, "The danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression. The danger lies in attempting to deal with oppression purely from a theoretical base. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place (p. 29).
91. See Stovall, 2005
92. Kozol, 1991
93. See Delgado, 1993, pp. 665-666

94. See Delgado, 1990
95. Delgado, 1993, p. 666. Delgado also responds to Farber and Sherry and other CRT critics in his 1999 book, *When Equality Ends: Stories About Race and Resistance*.
96. In his 1992 book *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, Bell questions the "standards" by which CRT scholarship is deemed "nontraditional" and lacking the merit to grant employment or tenure in academia. He states, "The presentation of truth in new forms provokes resistance, confounding those committed to accepted measures for determining the quality and validity of statements made and conclusions reached, and making it difficult for them to respond and adjudge what is acceptable" (p. 144).
97. Bell, 1992, p. 144
98. Bell, 1992, p. 146
99. See Gee, 1997, 1999; Litowitz, 1997
100. Bell, 1992, p. 145
101. Freire, 1970, 1973; See also Malaquias Montoya's print series, "*Trabajo y así transformo el mundo*" (I work, and that's how I transform the world).
102. Delgado, 1999, p. 232
103. For example, in a critique of some of Charles Lawrence's work that addresses "unconscious racism," Delgado (2001) writes, "ideal factors—thoughts, discourse, stereotypes, feelings, and mental categories—only partially explain how race and racism work. Material factors—socio-economic competition, immigration pressures, the search for profits, changes in the labor pool, nativism—account for even more especially today" (p. 2280). See also Delgado, 2003b. For a response to Delgado's critique of the idealist v. the materialist, see Kevin Johnson, 2004.
104. See Parker & Stovall, 2004
105. See Bell, 1992, p. v
106. See hooks, 1990
107. Delgado, 1995a, p. xiv
108. See Collins, 1986
109. Matsuda, 1989, p. 2380
110. See Delgado Bernal, 1998
111. Montoya, 2002, p. 246

2

MADRES POR LA EDUCACIÓN

*Community Cultural Wealth at Southside Elementary*¹

INTRODUCTION

A recent report from the American Association of University Women found that Latinas represent the largest "minority" group of girls in the United States K–12 system.² In the 2003–2004 school year, Latinas comprised over 50% of California's public school kindergarten, first-, and second-grade classes.³ Latinos did not lag too far behind, making up over 50% of the kindergarten and first grades. Because people of Mexican descent account for the majority of Latinas/os, these numbers reflect the growth pattern of Chicana/o populations. While evidently present at the primary school level, numerous structural barriers continue to hinder Chicana/o access to the ensuing levels of the educational pipeline.

Chicanas/os usually attend underfinanced, racially segregated, overcrowded elementary schools that lack basic human and material resources.⁴ The least experienced teachers tend to be placed in the most low-income, overcrowded schools.⁵ Indeed, schools comprised predominately of low-income Students of Color evidence a higher proportion of uncertified and less-experienced teachers, more unfilled teacher vacancies, and a high teacher turnover rate.⁶ Few Chicanas/os have access to a well-trained teacher who appropriately implements bilingual/multicultural education by drawing on the cultural and linguistic knowledge students bring from their homes and communities to the classroom.⁷

Because elementary school serves as an important prerequisite to later educational attainment, one would expect to find a high-quality academic curriculum available to all students.⁸ This is not the case. Compared to White schools, elementary schools comprised of low-income Students

of Color rarely offer high-quality programs.⁹ Most often, the elementary schools Chicanas/os attend stress academic remediation and a slowing down of instruction, rather than academic enrichment or an acceleration of the curriculum.¹⁰ The common practice of rigid ability grouping in these early grades also leads to lower academic achievement for Chicana/o students.¹¹ Moreover, English Language Learners (ELLs) tend to find a shortage of quality programs.¹²

Well before high school, most schools do not nurture a college-going culture for Chicanas/os. Low per-pupil expenditures exacerbate the lack of a quality, academically enriched curriculum in Chicana/o elementary schools.¹³ For instance, Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) and magnet programs severely under-enroll Chicanas/os.¹⁴ This disproportionate access corresponds with discriminatory school-based structures and practices as opposed to a lack of student or parent interest in academic enrichment. For example, teachers tend to hold low educational expectations for Chicana/o students, school staff may assume less responsibility for educating Chicana/o students, and school boards usually place quality academic enrichment programs outside Chicana/o neighborhoods.¹⁵ Too often, educators perceive Chicana/o students' culture and language as deficits to overcome instead of strengths to cultivate.¹⁶ Furthermore, primary curricula often exclude or minimize Chicana/o social and historical experiences and reinforce negative stereotypes.¹⁷

To explain unequal conditions or discriminatory practices, social science researchers most often use deficit models. Deficit models blame Chicana/o students and communities for lacking certain attributes and therefore causing low academic outcomes. Little empirical evidence exists to support deficit models.¹⁸

Even so, researchers rely on at least two main deficit models—genetic and cultural.¹⁹ The genetic determinist models traces the low educational attainment of Chicana/o students to deficiencies in their genetic structure.²⁰ This scenario features few social policy options—lacking genetic transformation or total neglect—to raise the educational attainment of Chicana/o students. The works of Lloyd Dunn,²¹ the Minnesota Twin Studies,²² Frederick Goodwin,²³ and Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray²⁴ evidence a renewed interest in the genetic model. Meanwhile, in everyday classroom situations, this genetic deficit thinking continues to inform an over-reliance on aptitude tests and other inappropriate standardized assessments.²⁵

The culture deficit model is the most widely used in the deficit tradition. The cultural deficit model finds dysfunction in Chicana/o cultural values and insists such values cause low educational and occupational attainment.²⁶ These supposedly deficient cultural values include a present versus future time orientation, immediate instead of deferred gratification, an

emphasis on cooperation rather than competition, and a tendency to minimize the importance of education and upward social mobility.²⁷ Cultural deficit models assert that Chicana/o families also exhibit problematic internal social structures. They claim these social structures—large, disorganized, female-headed families; Spanish or nonstandard English spoken in the home; and patriarchal or matriarchal family hierarchies—cause and perpetuate a culture of poverty.²⁸ Cultural deficiency models also argue that since Chicana/o parents fail to assimilate and embrace the educational values of the dominant group, they continue to socialize their children with values that inhibit educational mobility.²⁹

Informed by racial stereotypes, the cultural deficit model enjoyed widespread popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, but remains the theory of choice (hidden and overt) at many elementary schools,³⁰ teacher education departments,³¹ professional meetings, and settings where people discuss the topic of Chicana/o educational inequality.³² Indeed, the revival of the cultural deficit model over the last 20 years features a rubric of the cultural “underclass” and terms such as “at risk” and “disadvantaged.”³³ Joseph Kretovics and Edward Nussel explain, “At the highest levels of educational policy, we have moved from deficiency theory to theories of difference, back to deficiency theory.”³⁴

Schools driven by deficit models most often default to methods of banking education critiqued by Paulo Freire.³⁵ As a result, schooling practices usually aim to fill up supposedly passive students with forms of cultural knowledge deemed valuable by dominant society. Scholars Shernaz García and Patricia Guerra find that such deficit practices overgeneralize family background and fail to acknowledge the ways personal views of educational success shape “sociocultural and linguistic experiences and assumptions about appropriate cultural outcomes.”³⁶ Ironically, while schools may perceive numerous cultural deficiencies originating in Chicana/o homes, they increasingly claim to want more parental involvement in education. Of course, Chicanas/os again face the blame in this scenario because educators insist low educational outcomes result from parents' supposed, “lack of involvement.” Educators most often assume that schools work and that students, parents, and communities need to change to conform to this already effective and equitable system.

Indeed, deficit thinking permeates U.S. society, and both schools and those who work in schools mirror these beliefs. García and Guerra argue that this reality necessitates a challenge of personal and individual race, gender, and class prejudices expressed by educators, as well as a “critical examination of systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from nondominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds.”³⁷ The counterstory in this chapter attempts to

offer such a challenge to specifically address the elementary school level of the Chicana/o educational pipeline.

The counterstory below recounts perspectives of some of the most marginalized yet important voices in Chicana/o elementary education—Chicana/o parents. Drawing on national, state, and district level data from the Office of Civil Rights, social science scholarship presenting ethnographic accounts of Chicana/o communities, and the work of actual parent organizations, this counterstory offers a conceptual discussion of community assets. A Chicana graduate student, Paula Guevara, serves as our narrator during three meetings with a parent group from Southside Elementary School. She and the parents meet in the downtown district of a city in the southwestern United States.

MEETING LAS MADRES

I felt a little anxious walking into the parents' meeting that first night, but a warm welcome from a woman named Guillermina calmed my nerves right away. I apologized for being late, telling her my graduate seminar ran longer than I had expected, so I got stuck in a lot of traffic. Guillermina reminded me to call her Mina, saying, "*así me llaman todos*."³⁸ She introduced me to the childcare volunteers and to her own kids, who were already engaged in an arts and crafts activity. Mina reminded her youngest child that the paste was for sticking things to her paper, not for eating, and proceeded to guide me into the room where about 20 parents had gathered their folding chairs into a discussion circle.

As I learned, the woman who organized most of the meetings, Barbara Johns,³⁹ made sure to schedule around parents' work responsibilities and she also coordinated transportation and childcare activities. Ms. B, as she preferred to be called, had worked as a grassroots organizer for almost 30 years, and had been mobilizing with this Southside group since its inception about 2 years prior. An African American woman who grew up in the segregated South, Ms. B. moved to our southwestern city in the 1980s with her husband and they opened a café/art gallery dedicated to artwork by and about Black Native Americans. She regularly offered the gallery space to host progressive events such as the parent group.

I had met Mina the month before, while doing some participant observation research at Southside Elementary. The front office secretary called me over from my post, supervising children on the playground at recess. She asked me to facilitate a conversation between her and Mina. Although Mina understood a lot of English, she was a relatively recent immigrant and felt much more comfortable expressing herself in Spanish. Mina had dark skin, long hair that she wore in a beautiful braid, and a very quick wit

accompanied by an infectious laugh. She volunteered in the Head Start program and her third grader, Jazmin, attended Southside Elementary.

After finishing with the secretary, Mina walked with me back out to the playground and began to tell me the story about how she and other parents came together to challenge the ongoing inequalities occurring at Southside Elementary. Demographically, Southside Elementary's student population includes about 70% Chicanas/os, 20% Whites, 5% African Americans, and 5% Native Americans. Southside offers a magnet school and the regular school on the same campus. Designed to attract students through academic enrichment, the magnet program specifically caters to students designated "Gifted and Talented Education" (GATE). White students from the Northside of the city account for 75% of the magnet/GATE program's enrollment. Chicanas/os comprise less than 20% of the magnet/GATE program, and African Americans or Native Americans represent less than 5% of the magnet/GATE students. Approximately 95% of the students in the "regular" program at Southside Elementary qualify for free lunch.

Mina explained that 2 years ago, while picking up her kindergartener from school, she saw some Chicana/o students stomping on boxes in the trash dumpster. Shocked to see them physically in the dumpster, Mina asked the students why they were not in class. Apparently, their teacher had asked for volunteers and they had been working in the cafeteria serving lunch and cleaning up since the beginning of the school year. Upon further investigation, Mina learned that this practice of having Chicana/o students "volunteer" for cafeteria duty was not new. In fact, 30 minutes before lunch everyday, the fifth grade teacher excused his Chicana/o fifth graders from math so they could report for work in the cafeteria while their White peers remained in class, learning fractions. The school did not inform any of the parents about their children working in the cafeteria during class time.

Mina spoke with her neighbor, Ms. B., and together they informed the Chicana/o parents about what had been happening. They delivered a petition with parents' signatures to the principal, insisting that their children did *not* have permission to leave the classroom to work in the cafeteria. When Mina told me initially, I thought, "If those children volunteered for having a 2-hour recess, would the teacher have allowed that and never told their parents?"

Mina said this was not an isolated incident and it exemplified the complete lack of *respeto*⁴⁰ the school shows Chicana/o parents and students. She explained that the school did not provide a translator or transportation for Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and did not send home notices to students in Spanish outlining PTA proposals. Chicana/o parents who had attended PTA meetings reported feeling very intimidated. PTA members tended to speak condescendingly to Chicana/o parents and regularly

dismissed their concerns. Mina and the other parents felt frustrated that the PTA depended on Chicanas/os to make food for the school fundraisers, but that money usually went to the magnet program. Beyond bake sales and tamale fundraisers, the PTA did not seek out Chicana/o parents' input when organizing events or proposing school activities.

As she recounted the other parents' concerns and her own experiences, it struck me that Mina did not use victim language to describe their situation. Historically, the city's Southside communities suffered from lack of access to quality education, healthcare, and housing. But in response, these survivors worked to mobilize and change ongoing inequalities. They named their group "*Madres Por la Educación*," usually abbreviated as *Las Madres*. Listening to Mina, I began to wonder if this group might allow me to observe and participate as a graduate student researcher. When I asked Mina if I could volunteer and learn from *Las Madres*, she seemed surprised, but also a little skeptical. She said she would have to ask the other parents.

A few weeks later, I received a phone call from Ms. B., who asked if I would be available for translation at one of the meetings. It took a few months of volunteering and being a good listener at the meetings for the women to begin to trust me. Ms. B. explained that the Southside community was all too familiar with the tendency for academics to conduct "drive-by" research. She remarked, "They barely slow down the car, let alone park, look around, and listen to what's really going on." I thought about a few scholarly readings I had done about other grassroots organizations such as the *Comité de Padres Latinos*⁴¹ in Carpinteria, California and the *Mothers of East Los Angeles*.⁴² In addition, I looked at some of the methods other Chicanas used in their work to ensure a respectful and reciprocal research process.⁴³ Through my actions, I tried to assure the women of my commitment to be there and to learn.

Over the first year of monthly meetings, I noted that *Las Madres* began their evening sessions with an update on the list of ongoing grievances and actions pending or in progress. They conducted all of the meetings bilingually in Spanish and English, providing all materials in both Spanish and English, and designating at least one translator as needed.⁴⁴ Some of the major concerns parents expressed focused on issues of language and culture in the classroom.⁴⁵ They wanted to know whether their children needed to take the "mandatory" standardized tests in English if they had not yet transitioned into English. On one occasion, a teacher gave out a practice exam, and one of the parents made copies for the group. The women realized none of the exam questions addressed the cultural experiences of their children. Many parents wanted to know why their students could not gain access to any extra academic enrichment activities like those in the GATE/magnet program. Some parents suggested that the whole concept seemed a little backward. They

remarked that it makes more sense to offer enrichment activities to 'regular' students as opposed to those already identified as gifted. Diane, a young woman who usually wore tailored suits with her hair slickly pulled into a bun, repeatedly asked: "Why not label the whole school *gifted*?"⁴⁶

EDUCACIÓN CON CORAZÓN:⁴⁷ FREIRE FOR PARENTS

That first night at our meeting in the Art Gallery, Mina gave me a few of the bilingual handouts and I proceeded to read through them while listening to the discussion already underway. One of the pamphlets offered a mission statement, which read:

We are concerned parents and community members working to change our school system so students have equal educational opportunities. We are inspired by the work of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire,⁴⁸ and we believe all education is political. Since schools are not neutral institutions, we will not be neutral parents or community members. We will be advocates for change.

The lower half of the paper had two sketches: one showing "knowledge" deposited from the teacher down to the student, and titled "Banking Approach" (figure 2.1). I read a list of main points evident in the banking approach to education noted along with the sketch.

Parallel to this sketch, another drawing, titled "Problem-Posing Approach" (see figure 2.2), indicated "knowledge" flowing from the student

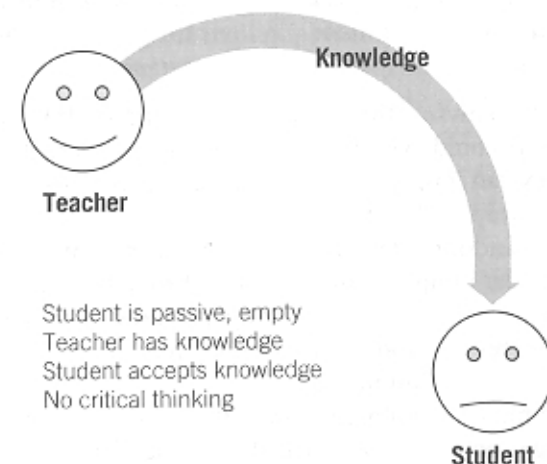


Figure 2.1. Banking Approach

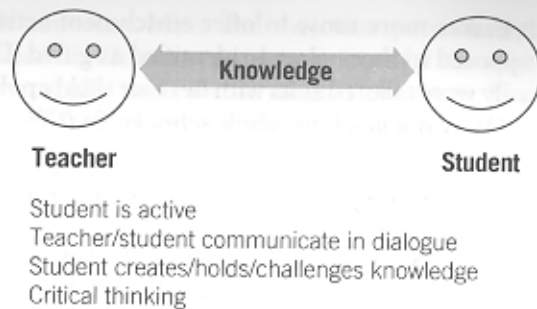


Figure 2.2. Problem-Posing Approach

to the teacher and from the teacher to the student. Again, I read the main points featured in the problem-posing approach to education listed underneath this sketch.

The back of the handout (figure 2.3) showed “problem-posing” as a cyclical method with four phases: (1) naming/identifying the problem, (2) analyzing causes of the problem, (3) finding solutions to the problem, and (4) reflecting on the process.⁴⁹

A short description of the process also accompanied the sketch. It read:

In the naming phase, we dialogue with our community to identify and name the problems we face. In the analysis phase, we engage with the community to describe and analyze the causes of the problem. In the solution phase, we collaborate with community members to find and carry out solutions to the problem. We then reflect on the process, and begin to ask more questions to again start the naming phase. This is the process of liberatory education.

WOW! I thought to myself, this group is...wow! I don't think anyone in my graduate seminars could ever imagine working-class Parents of Color—let alone recent Mexican immigrant and Chicana/o parents—engaging critical pedagogy in this way.

The second handout entailed a packet of information, stapled together, including a calendar of upcoming meetings, the contact numbers for some of the parent coordinators, minutes from the previous meeting, and the current meeting agenda. I looked up from my reading and listened in more carefully to the conversation in progress.

Diane, a woman in a tailored navy suit, was explaining, “Through the problem-posing process, we found that Southside Elementary seems to expect failure from our children.” I soon learned that Diane worked downtown as a legal secretary and had a son in the third grade. Some parents’

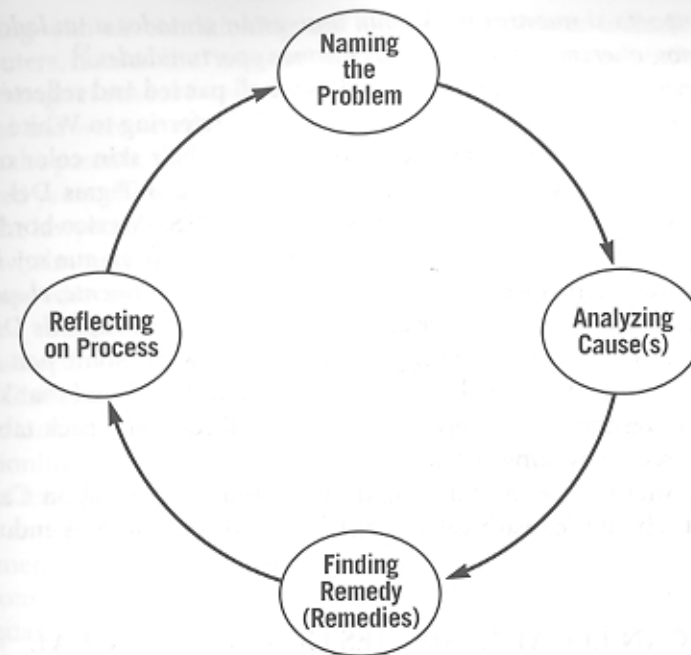


Figure 2.3. Problem-Posing Methodology

side comments revealed a strong sentiment that schools did not really prioritize education for youth on the predominately Mexican Southside of the city because of racial discrimination.⁵⁰ A woman named Carmen, who had light skin and medium brown straight hair, spoke as she gave a bottle to her 6-month-old son. Rocking back and forth, Carmen explained that *Las Madres* shared a connection to a history of struggles against racism in Chicana/o communities. She offered an example of this history with the *Committee de Los Vecinos de Lemon Grove*, who successfully challenged an all-White school board's decision to racially segregate schools in California in 1931.⁵¹ She also noted that multiple organizations (including Black, Jewish, Japanese, and Latino groups) joined the *familia Mendez*, who successfully sued the California Westminster School District in 1946 for racial segregation. She suggested that the group think about what they can learn from this history to inform their current struggle against racially segregated schools.⁵²

In response, Sylvia, an older woman with medium brown skin and short black and gray hair who worked as an administrative assistant at the university across town, remarked, “*Si Carmen, gracias por sus palabras y esa breve historia. Podemos aprender mucho de esas luchas. Por ejemplo,*

*no nos importa si nuestros hijos están o no están sentados a un lado de los Americanos, queremos que tengan las mismas oportunidades.*⁵³

Carmen nodded in agreement and as we all paused and reflected for a moment, I thought to myself about the irony of referring to White people as Americans while identifying everyone else by their skin color or their ancestors' national origin. I recalled the song by Los Tigres Del Norte, *America*, which lists all the countries south of the U.S.–Mexico border and asserts with a soft cumbia rhythm that “*los del norte dicen que soy Latino, no me quieren decir Americano ... America es todo el continente, el que nace aquí es Americano. El color podrá ser diferente, más como hijos de Dios, somos humanos.*”⁵⁴ Mina tapped my shoulder to show me some *pan dulce*⁵⁵ and *champurado*⁵⁶ that I hadn't seen at the back of the room. I thanked her and humming the song to myself quietly, I walked to the back table and served myself an evening snack.

Long after the meeting that night, I continued to reflect on Carmen's comments about the historical racism Chicana/o communities endure and challenge.

CAN LEGAL REMEDIES CHANGE UNEQUAL SCHOOLING?

I took a break in July to visit with family, travel, and try to renew my energies after what had been another tough year of graduate school. Ms. B. left me a phone message in mid-August, asking if I could assist with one of the night courses *Las Madres* offered. Later that month, a legal team comprised of various civil rights and advocacy organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), asked *Las Madres* to speak about some of their experiences with inadequate facilities and lack of basic educational needs. These organizations had recently put together a case against another state and wondered if *Las Madres* could help them to document the short- and long-term impacts of such overt educational neglect here.

Diane, the young legal secretary, worked for the ACLU and had mentioned her involvement with *Las Madres* to her boss. She believed Southside Elementary offered a clear example of uneven distribution of resources between the regular and magnet school, both housed on the same campus. A series of portable classrooms without air conditioning housed the “regular” school and its predominately labeled English Language Learners (ELLs). Most of the teachers for the regular school had not yet earned their credentials or were in their first years of teaching. On the other hand, the new

building with air-conditioning and a technology center including 40 new computers, housed the “magnet” school's GATE-designated students. Most of the magnet school faculty had earned advanced degrees beyond the credential and were veteran teachers. Although these issues seemed quite unfair to the parents, they also knew that a number of other Southside schools suffered years of institutional neglect under even worse conditions.

The lawyers explained that across the state and here in our city, schools “overwhelmingly populated by low-income and nonwhite students and students who are still learning the English language” are “being deprived of basic educational opportunities available to more privileged children.”⁵⁷ They shared with us some of their statewide documentation, showing that most Chicana/o students “go to school without trained teachers, necessary educational supplies, classrooms, or seats in classrooms...schools that lack functioning heating or air conditioning systems, that lack sufficient numbers of functioning toilets, and that are infested with vermin, including rats, mice, and cockroaches.”⁵⁸ They thanked us for helping add depth to their documentation.

Some of the parents expressed doubt that a court mandate would create equal opportunities for their students. They gave an example from the parent-initiated “create a garden” day for Southside Elementary. While volunteering, Mina's husband Armando learned that the city had a parks ordinance mandating a certain number of parks per square foot of the city. The mandate did not stop developers from putting most of those parks on the Northside of the city. And the parks' programs on the Southside were not maintained at the same level as programs in other parts of the city. Ms. B. added that the scarcity of sports and other extracurricular activities available to Southside communities reflected a pattern evident in many urban communities. She pointed out that the slow pace of civil rights legislation made her more cynical that legal reforms could effectively change schools, but she always maintained hope because folks continued to fight for change.

Others mentioned that the lawsuit failed to discuss issues of air pollution. They noted that their children suffered from asthma, likely exacerbated or even caused by breathing in the toxins in the Southside portable classrooms.⁵⁹ In addition, parents believed that when the state finally settled the suit, the pressure would remain on parents and communities to make sure the agreements on paper converted into actual change in the schools. In general, the lawsuit seemed like an important step, but most parents felt something lacking. I think this feeling became more obvious at the following month's meeting, when *Las Madres* challenged deficit thinking with a discussion about community cultural wealth. A bit of mystery still surrounds that night, but it was truly an unforgettable, inspiring meeting.

A SPIRITED DISCUSSION: A FREIREAN CHALLENGE TO CULTURAL DEFICIT SCHOOLING

I arrived late to the gallery for that evening's meeting because my roommate Eva felt sick. Because of her high fever, I took her to the student health center, where we waited for hours until a nurse practitioner finally sent us home with some medication. Embarrassed about my tardiness, I sat down quietly in the circle of folding chairs and silently waved to a few of the parents on the other side of the room. One of the mothers, Debbie, who was already raising her hand, waved to me as the coordinator acknowledged her. Debbie said, "Last month we were talking about how Freire developed the problem-posing method to teach educational skills, while also helping develop critical consciousness. But we didn't get a chance to finish our discussion in terms of connecting it to the list of school-based problems we've encountered. I see it here on the agenda, but am hoping we can get to it sooner rather than later because my daughter is sick and I need to get home early tonight. Can we move it up on the agenda?" The meeting coordinator, Nancy, smiled and replied, "Well, I think we were heading right in that direction. Does everyone think this is OK?" Most folks nodded in agreement and Carmen leaned over to Debbie to share some *consejos*⁶⁰ about easing the coughing of her sick child. I made a mental note to myself to take some extra zinc before going to bed tonight.

"OK, thank you. And I'm sure Debbie thanks you too," said Nancy. While jotting down a soup recipe, Debbie looked up and nodded with a big smile of appreciation. Debbie had long brown hair pulled loosely back in a ponytail with dangling, brightly painted *calavera*⁶¹ earrings. We considered her the artist of the group and some of us teasingly nicknamed her Frida.⁶²

Nancy continued, "So, according to Freire, students may move through different stages of consciousness⁶³ including magical, naive, and critical consciousness. In our initial discussions, we discussed these stages and we came up with working definitions as well as examples from our own experiences, *verdad?*⁶⁴ So tonight we printed out these definitions on your handout to refresh our memory briefly, especially for a few of us who are new to the group."

I looked around the circle, nodding slightly to acknowledge the new faces, and surprisingly saw an elderly man sitting next to Nancy with his hands folded neatly on his lap. Although fathers and uncles supported our efforts in different ways, men rarely participated in the monthly meetings. I had not slept much the night before with my roommate being ill, so I felt kind of dazed and caught myself staring at this elderly man for a minute. He looked so familiar. He returned my gaze with a nod and a smile. Startled and a little embarrassed, I smiled briefly and looked away.

Nancy paused as we each read over the three short definitions on the handout. I marveled at how Nancy kept up her energies and seemed to not have any white hairs. She must be in her late 40s, I thought to myself, how does she do it? Nancy was from a working-class Irish family, but she grew up on the Southside so she knew a lot of Spanish. She and her husband Carlos had been foster parents for many years and she was very committed to Southside Elementary and the parent group. She had short brown hair and wore stylish reading glasses. Nancy reminded everyone where to find the Spanish version on the bottom of the page, as she put her glasses on and read in English out loud:

"Magical: At the magical stage, we may blame inequality on luck, fate, or God. Whatever causes the inequality seems to be out of our control, so we may decide to not do anything."

"Naive: At the naive stage, we may blame ourselves, our culture, or our community for inequality. A naive response to experiencing inequality may be to try changing ourselves, assimilating to the mainstream culture, or distancing ourselves from our community."

"Critical: At the critical stage, we look beyond fatalistic or cultural reasons for inequality to focus on structural, systemic explanations. A critically conscious response to experiencing inequality would be working to change the system."

Nancy reminded the group that transitioning from the magical stage to the naive stage and then to the critical consciousness stage corresponds with the literacy process and provides the foundation for the adult literacy classes *Las Madres* sponsors twice a week there at the gallery. She also discouraged us from judging or belittling anyone regardless of which stage we might feel they are in. Nancy admitted that for many years she tended to blame fate or luck for most problems. She said her own process of shifting away from the magical stage might look different from someone else's process.

Sylvia asserted that sometimes people seem very critical about class issues but respond naively when confronted with racial inequality and even respond almost from a magical consciousness regarding sexism. I made myself a mental note to ask her more about that later. I wondered if she was also drawing on her experiences interacting with university faculty and administrators. I recalled reading in the paper that just last month, some university employees had gone on strike for a living wage and yet some of the supposedly progressive professors did not support the workers' demands. In my graduate program, I had certainly come across a few professors who seem very critical of the way schools reproduce socioeconomic inequality,

but express great discomfort in addressing racism. They can talk about poverty in theory, using big three-syllable words, but feel uneasy dealing with the reality that class intersects with race.⁶⁵ While they write about Freire and empowerment, in their classes and hallway interactions, these professors silence Chicanas/os in general and Women of Color in particular. Maybe Sylvia had some insights about the uneven development of critical consciousness.

Mina took a sip of her coffee and explained, "In this process we have been discussing that our schools tend to work from a naive consciousness. At Southside, *casi siempre los maestros culpan a los estudiantes o a las familias*⁶⁶—they blame Mexican or Chicana/o culture, and the Southside community when our students' scores are low. Maybe they should ask why the teachers have such low expectations of students, or what's wrong with those tests, or why the teachers don't have much training."

Debbie then added that her concern came from a visit to the local library. She explained, "My daughters go every other week to the storybook hour, where a volunteer reads a book and then the children act out the book using puppets." I nodded as she spoke, remembering that though she remained quite humble about her contributions, Debbie facilitated the creation of the puppet theater a few years back. She continued, "Well, I was looking in the education section and I came across a book titled, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. The author, E. D. Hirsch, has been in the news lately because a local elementary school just adopted his 'Core Curriculum' in their effort to raise the standardized test scores of 'disadvantaged children.'⁶⁷ Have any of you seen this book?" Debbie answered her own question. "Hirsch's curriculum is dedicated to having students memorize a list of 'essential names, phrases, dates, and concepts' so they can be culturally literate, and then have social and economic success."

Diane commented that the anti-bilingual education initiative⁶⁸ used the same argument a few years back—that since Latina/o parents want economic stability and success for their children, they should vote for English-only.⁶⁹ Debbie nodded and continued, "*Sí, sí, es horrible!*⁷⁰ As I looked closer at Hirsch's book, I found that in his list of '5,000 essential names, phrases, dates, and concepts that every American needs to know,' students might only have access to 27 terms that relate with Chicanas/os.⁷¹ Debbie began listing the terms for us and Nancy wrote them with a brightly colored marker on a large piece of poster paper (figure 2.4).

Ms. B. added, "Wow, thank you for sharing this with us, Debbie. I didn't realize Hirsch and company were still advocating that schools organize their curriculum around these 'essential' phrases and concepts.⁷² In the 1970s, as part of the research team supporting the Council for Interracial Books for Children,⁷³ I worked to uncover and challenge similar racial and gender

1492	Conquistadores	Maestro	Señor
Adiós	Diego Rivera	Mañana	Señora
Alamo	Fiesta	Mayan Civilization	Señorita
Alto	Gracias	Mexican War	Siesta
Aztecs	Gringo	Mexico	Wetback
Basta	Hector	Mexico City	Zapata
Chicanos	Macho	Rio Grande	

Figure 2.4. E. D. Hirsch's 27 Chicana/o-related terms

stereotyping in school curriculum. We focused more on U.S. History high school textbooks, and we found an elitist emphasis on Europe. These nationally used texts either ignored or distorted Black, Chicana/o, Native American, and Asian American experiences."

Carmen remarked, "I guess racism changes forms, but the message is still the same. Mexicans were seen as biologically inferior and then culturally deprived.⁷⁴ So instead of calling us the uncivilized savages or genetically unintelligent, now they're calling us culturally illiterate?" Debbie nodded and sarcastically noted, "Supposedly, we're at a cultural disadvantage because we don't know all these phrases, dates, and names!" She continued in a more seriously concerned tone, "Looking at the books on the shelf, I saw that Hirsch also published grade-by-grade lists of what students should know."

Nancy pointed at the words on the poster paper as she asked the group almost rhetorically, "Looking at this list, what do Chicana/o elementary students learn about who they are and what their history means in the context of the United States? What do White students learn about Chicanas/os in the United States?" Diane made a guttural noise, showing her annoyance as she pointed to the terms on the poster paper and responded, "Hirsch sees Chicanas/os as a conquered people who have parties (*fiestas*), take naps (*siestas*), and put off work for tomorrow (*mañana*)." Debbie added flatly, "I didn't find any other racially derogatory words besides *wetback* in the over 5,000 terms. Apparently, Hirsch feels that all Americans need to be familiar with the word *wetback* in order to be culturally literate."

MOVING FROM DEFICITS TO ASSETS

The elderly man's gentle voice interrupted the silence in the gallery. He said, "Hirsch's idea of literacy domesticates and socializes students to accept the status quo and accept their subordinate position. It doesn't help students

critically understand the power relationships of their world in order to challenge inequality.”

Perhaps surprised that no one else responded to this insightful observation, Mina asserted, “This discussion is helping me process a meeting I had last week with one of my daughter’s teachers. First of all, the teacher scheduled the meeting at 10:00 AM last Monday, during the in-service day, but didn’t ask if that was a good time for me!” Mina added this comment because the group had repeatedly asked the school to schedule parent-teacher conferences at times when parents were not working and when there was a translator available. The district provides a translator for parent-teacher meetings scheduled from 3:00–7:00 PM and only with plenty of advanced notice. Mina told the group that she felt privileged to at least understand English and to have a flexible job, but the teacher should not have assumed anything without making an effort to communicate with her in advance.

“Last year, my daughter Jazmin read on grade level,” she continued, “But this year, the teacher placed her in the slow reading group. Right away in our conference it became clear to me that this teacher hadn’t noticed *todo lo que sabe mi hija y todo lo que ella puede hacer*.”⁷⁵ Mina told the group that at the laundromat, her daughter recites impromptu poems as a way to study for her vocabulary tests. Sometimes, she even creates melodies to sing the poems. Mina added, “But the school ‘sees’ my daughter as lacking in language skills! Well, if the *maestra*⁷⁶ can’t see these types of abilities in Jazmin, she’s probably not seeing the abilities in the other students either. I think this follows up on some of the comments made earlier.” Debbie nodded in agreement.

At this point, the elderly man offered, “Perhaps the naive consciousness of our schools is based on the banking method. Since the school does not see that our students bring any knowledge with them to the classroom, they see our communities as empty places too. So instead of ‘seeing’ the cultural assets and wealth we have in our communities, they ‘see’ deprivation.”

I almost thought it seemed odd that no one responded directly to this comment, but the discussion kept flowing, obviously informed by the elderly man’s words. Consuelo, who worked as a seamstress in the garment district downtown, raised her hand and shared that her son had been recently labeled Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) after scoring poorly on the standardized test.⁷⁷ On the verge of tears, she asked how this could be possible if at home, her son helped translate the bills and write out checks. An older woman with a cane shared that her granddaughter was very quick when it came to thinking on her feet and negotiating prices for fruit and vegetables at the farmer’s market, but at school she did not excel in math and the teacher said she was “slow.” Why couldn’t the school see her granddaughter’s abilities? Soon, each of the parents began offering examples of

their own children’s skills and strengths that the school either did not see or saw as weaknesses.

The elderly man said, “Listening to you share about the multiple talents and skills of your children brings me great joy.” Many of us must have looked confused at such an optimistic comment. I know I probably looked puzzled, but then again, I had a slight headache from lack of sleep. The elderly man continued, “The school is really just telling you whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted in an already unequal U.S. society.”⁷⁸

This comment reminded me of French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu,⁷⁹ so I shared this idea with the group, describing Bourdieu’s assertion that our hierarchical society considers the knowledges of the upper and middle classes valuable capital. I said, “His work explains that if we are not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable, we need formal schooling to help us access the knowledges—the cultural capital—of the middle and upper class.” I then described to the group the way Bourdieu’s theoretical insight about how a hierarchical society reproduces itself has been repeatedly used to rationalize the deficit model we were discussing earlier. I summed up, “The assumption follows that People of Color ‘lack’ the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. So, schools often structure ways to help ‘disadvantaged’ students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities, and cultural capital.” The elderly man asked the group: “Are there other forms of capital that racially marginalized groups bring to the table that are not recognized or are not acknowledged by this interpretation of social capital theory?”

Sylvia asked for clarification. She turned to me, saying: “OK, so it sounds like in that argument, some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor? Hmmm, so does that mean we are all compared to some sort of White, middle-class culture? They don’t recognize our forms and expressions of culture, so they say we’re culturally poor?” She paused and then motioned to one of the women who spoke earlier, saying, “Doesn’t that sound familiar? It’s like the standardized tests they give our students. Whose standard? Which group do they build the standard around?”⁸⁰ Carmen added, “So cultural capital includes knowledge and skills that the White middle class already has. And White middle-class kids inherit those specific forms of cultural knowledge and skills that schools turn around and say are valuable.”

Mina offered, “A middle- or upper-class student may have access to a computer at home and can learn computer vocabulary or skills before arriving at school. This student may have what you called, what? Cultural capital?” I nodded in agreement, wondering why she didn’t direct her

question to the elderly man who sat patiently listening to the ensuing discussion.

Debbie continued, "Yes, computer-related vocabulary and technological skills are valued in the school setting, so that would be cultural capital. And, on the other hand, a working-class Chicano student whose mother works in the garment industry, like Consuelo, may bring a different vocabulary, probably in two languages (English and Spanish), to school, along with skills of conducting errands on the city bus and translating phone calls, reading mail and bills for his mother."⁸¹ Consuelo blushed as she heard her name and her child's experiences described for the group. Mina put her arm around Consuelo to ease her embarrassment and added, "This cultural knowledge is very valuable to Consuelo, to her son Jaime, and to the whole *familia*,⁸² but it isn't necessarily considered valuable, or a form of capital in the school context."

Ms. B. remarked, "This seems to connect with some of our questions about the long-term effectiveness of that lawsuit." Debbie added, "You're right, it's easy to just say, 'Oh those Chicana/o students lack cultural capital,' or what E.D. Hirsch⁸³ terms 'cultural literacy,' because that's the popular thing to do, right? Even that lawsuit focused on all the things we're lacking. It's important to focus on how schools are structured so that we are not given access to equal conditions or what the lawyers were calling opportunities to learn, *verdad?* But then what? We have new textbooks and new buildings but no *corazón*⁸⁴ inside those buildings that listens to and appreciates our kids?"

The elderly man remarked, "If, like you've noted, schools are working with a naive lens and they don't 'see' our communities as bringing resources to the classroom, then they would likely continue to teach from that deficit perspective in a new building. New textbooks continue to distort the histories and lives of Chicana/o communities. So now students will have an extra book to take home with them, but whose knowledge does that book value? Whose history does that book dismiss?"⁸⁵

Finally, it seemed like some of the other women responded more directly to this elderly man who had made some very insightful comments. In reference to the lawsuit, Diane admitted that the law appeared limited in its ability to "see" community resources.

We took a 15-minute break so we could visit the restroom, check in on the children, and grab a snack from the cafe. I called the apartment to check on Eva's status and was relieved to find out she felt better. She thanked me for making her some *fideo*⁸⁶ before I left. I tried to splash some water on my face in the bathroom and swallowed a couple pain relievers I had in my purse, hoping that my headache would ease up soon. I grabbed an *oreja*⁸⁷ and cup of chamomile tea before taking my seat again. The elderly man

dunked some bread into what looked like a cup of *café con leche*.⁸⁸ He smiled at me and I lifted my teacup slightly, acknowledging him with a silent toast. I wondered if anyone had greeted him during the break and I hoped he felt welcome. I was about to walk over and introduce myself to him and thank him for his comments, but Nancy called us back to order and the discussion rapidly picked up where we had left off before the break.

REVEALING CULTURAL WEALTH IN CHICANA/O COMMUNITIES

Nancy put her reading glasses back on and referred to the poster paper, "OK, how do we get the school and teachers to 'see' our community resources?" The elderly man remarked, "Maybe the teachers can conduct community case studies with their students?"⁸⁹ I nodded in agreement and added, "A community case study could connect this back to Freire⁹⁰ and engage students in the problem-posing approach to education.⁹¹ With this approach, students actively discover and develop their own knowledge. Students could create knowledge with their teacher and others."

Mina added, "And students would not just be talked down to, but they would be more in *una plática*⁹² with their teacher. A community case study would encourage students to feel that their thoughts and ideas are important enough to engage the teacher in a dialogue. And then teachers would be more like facilitators as opposed to the know-it-all, *verdad?* So students can challenge the teacher? Not in a disrespectful way, of course, but you know what I mean, like questioning the ideas and values of the dominant group—asking why *los Americanos*, the White students, are seen as the norm and Chicanas/os have to always try to fit that standard. *Porque nunca van a ser como ellos, aun con 'hooked-on-phonics,' con su ingles bien pronunciado. Siempre van a ser Mexicanos. Y como dicen, hablando se entiende la gente. Asi es que, ojalá ya no se vayan a sentir tan despreciados siendo de herencia Mexicana, no?*"⁹³ Debbie took advantage of the natural pause in the discussion to say goodnight. She commented that this dialogue about the Southside as a place with valuable cultural resources offered an exciting start to bringing a Freirean approach into the school.

I waved good-bye to Debbie and thought about Mina's code-switching hooked-on-phonics remark. It seems so ridiculous the way mass media and too many educators misunderstand literacy reform efforts that seek to help students acquire high levels of comprehension across subjects and real-world analytical skills, while learning to speak English.⁹⁴ Instead of empowering students with Freirean literacy, reactionary policies trashed "whole language" in order to "get back to basics" with phonics, and then threw out bilingual education altogether. I also thought about the arguments

that Richard Rodriguez made in his book *Hunger for Memory*.⁹⁵ His embarrassment of his parents' Spanish-accented English connected to his feeling humiliated, defenseless, and without options in a society that did not value what his *familia* offered. I wonder how dramatically different Rodriguez' schooling experiences may have altered if his teachers had been trained to value his community's assets. Anti-bilingual education folks and mass media probably would not cite him so frequently if his writings did not support the deficit view of Chicana/o communities as places of cultural poverty and disadvantage. Ironically, a real scoop for the media would be stories featuring cultural assets in Communities of Color.⁹⁶

The elderly man interrupted my thoughts by asking, "This connects to some of your undergraduate sociology readings, no?" I paused briefly, confused as to how this man may have had a casual conversation during the break where my sociology major came up as a topic. I must have looked like a light bulb went on over my head though, because Nancy looked at me expectantly. I wiped my mouth of the remaining pastry crumbs and decided to ignore the awkwardness of the man's interjection. I said, "Yes, maybe some of my work from college can help us here with the concept of community resources. Sociologists Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro⁹⁷ argue that *income* includes our wages or salary over a typical year. So income is one single source of *capital*, right? On the other hand, they argue that *wealth* includes the total extent of an individual's accumulated assets and resources, like ownership of stocks, money in the bank, owning a home or business, etc. A broad range of resources and diverse forms of capital account for part of wealth."⁹⁸

Nancy wondered out loud, "So maybe cultural capital can be seen like income? It's one source of capital, which White, middle-class students have, and that's the form of capital schools value."⁹⁹ Then maybe wealth could include our community's cultural assets and resources added together over time? And different forms of capital would add together to create cultural wealth, *verdad?*" She drew some circles on the poster paper to help create a visual aid for the dialogue (see figure 2.5). The room began to buzz with excitement. Our late-night sugary treats probably helped raise our energies, but in any case, the group began a fast-paced discussion of various forms of capital that might comprise cultural wealth.

Aspirational Capital

Carmen, balanced her baby on her lap and started the dialogue, asking, "What would we call the dreams I have for *mis hijos*, the hopes I have that my children will go to college and do all the things I never had the chance to do? I don't have a college degree, yet. I've been at the community college

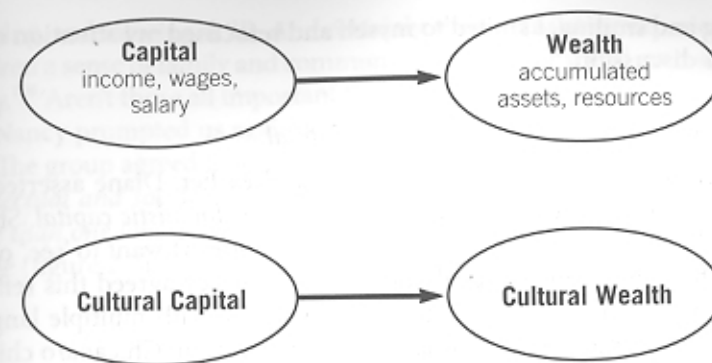


Figure 2.5. Cultural Capital versus Cultural Wealth

for 2 years, taking the classes I should have had in high school. I might not have a lot to give my kids in terms of money, but I always talk with them about my dreams for them. My mom had a lot of dreams for me too. She worked in a *maquila* and came to the U.S. alone, raising her own *hijos* and working as a nanny, raising other people's children at the same time. My mom held onto her hopes for a better future and always encouraged me to dream. And now I have dreams for my kids."¹⁰⁰

Sylvia responded, "That is so beautiful, Carmen. I think those hopes and dreams are also like aspirations. Even without the personal experience of going to college, or even finishing high school, we can still hold high aspirations for our children and we can support them to reach those dreams."¹⁰¹ Nancy nodded excitedly, "Should I write *aspirational capital* as we continue to talk about this?" She drew a circle on the poster paper (figure 2.6).

Most of the group nodded and Ms. B. commented that maybe the working definition could read: "*Aspirational capital: the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers.*"¹⁰² I thought to myself about farm worker union activist and human rights organizer Dolores Huerta, who is also a mother. Huerta has held onto hope for her own *familia* and works tirelessly to make dreams of social justice for thousands of *familias* a reality. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the elderly man



Figure 2.6. Aspirational Capital

nodding and smiling. I smiled to myself and refocused my attention on the women's discussion.

Linguistic Capital

In reflecting on the experiences Mina shared earlier, Diane asserted that maybe we could have a category for language or *linguistic capital*. She explained, "Even though our state doesn't 'see' or doesn't want to 'see,' or recognize the benefits of bilingual education."¹⁰³ Nancy agreed this reflected the idea that Chicana/o students arrive to school with multiple language and communication skills. She said, "By kindergarten, Chicana/o children have usually already experienced community traditions of storytelling. So they have listened to and probably retold some *cuentos*,¹⁰⁴ *dichos*,¹⁰⁵ and oral histories of their family.

Mina added, "And in storytelling, they learn memorization, how to pay attention to details, how to take dramatic pauses." Sylvia chimed in, "They learn how to tell jokes, and that making faces when you speak can change the meaning of the words. Or changing your tone or the volume of your voice." Mina nodded, made a funny face, and went on, "And if they are anything like my daughter, who tries to play drums on everything she comes across, they also learn rhythm with their words." I laughed at Mina's facial expression and thought about her daughter's poems at the laundromat. That reminded me of my niece, who made up little rhymes and she twirled around like a dancer at the end of each phrase. I said, "Yes, and they learn how to rhyme." Mina continued, "And as we sit here in this art gallery, isn't visual art also a form of communication?" Diane remarked, "Even graffiti is a form of language, right?" Ms. B. admitted, "And I might not understand it or even like it too much, but the hip hop my grandkids listen to does speak through music and, well, poetry."¹⁰⁶ Nancy added, "And just like we learn to whisper, whistle, or sing, our children often develop and draw on various language styles to communicate with different audiences."

Diane said, "The school should 'see' that because bilingual children often translate for their parents or other adults, they actually gain all kinds of vocabulary. They start becoming more aware of how to communicate with different audiences and across cultures."¹⁰⁷ They may also have developed math,



Figure 2.7. Linguistic Capital

teaching, and tutoring skills. And certainly, these translating experiences give children a sense of family and community responsibility, and even social maturity.¹⁰⁸ Aren't those all important tools for school success?"

Nancy prompted us again for what she should write on the poster paper. The group agreed to a working definition for linguistic capital as those *intellectual and social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style*. She again drew a circle with the term inside (figure 2.7).

Navigational Capital

Mina reminded the group of what Consuelo shared earlier about her son helping run errands on the city bus. She said, "*Navegando por la ciudad es difícil, pero también navegando por el sistema de educación!*"¹⁰⁹ Diane exclaimed, "Yes, that's it—*navigational capital*." Nancy began writing it on the poster paper (figure 2.8) as Diane continued, "Maybe it's like what we talked about earlier in terms of the limits of the legal system. Navigational capital is the ability to make our way through social institutions not created with Chicanas/os in mind."

Sylvia added, "Of course, that makes so much sense, like Consuelo was saying too, our students can achieve even while they struggle through really stressful conditions and events."¹¹⁰ She went on, "So they're very vulnerable to all these forms of oppression and barriers, but at the same time, some are making it through and they are very—." Sylvia seemed to be at a loss for words, so Nancy interjected, "Resilient!" Nancy added, "Oh yes, with foster kids I've been amazed how resilient¹¹¹ children can be, even in extremely stressful environments."¹¹² She had shared with us on a couple of occasions her own experiences as a foster parent and the amazing resilience of children stuck in a system offering poor odds for their survival, let alone successful navigation. Thinking about this, I commented to the group that researchers call resilient students "academically invulnerable."¹¹³ But I also noted that for students to navigate through school successfully—to be academically invulnerable or resilient—they needed individual, family, and community support. I added, "And schools could help nurture these students' social and psychological 'critical navigational skills.'¹¹⁴ No?"



Figure 2.8. Navigational Capital

Ms. B. nodded in agreement, and remarked, “Academic invulnerability and resilience do not take place in a social vacuum, though.” She reminded the group that working-class Women of Color experience layers of racialized privilege, so one’s social location¹¹⁵ influences one’s navigational strategies. “For example,” she said, “as a Black woman I experience layers of race and gender oppression, but I experience some privileges because I speak English and am relatively middle class.” Nancy added that as a White woman raising Chicano foster kids, she sometimes felt limited in how many strategies she could teach them because her own experiences had been so layered with privilege. “They are still vulnerable even when they’re invulnerable,” she remarked. Through teary eyes she said, “They’re resilient, and they find a way through the situation—through the racism—but the wounds of that stress stay with them.”

Carmen reached over and rubbed Nancy’s back soothingly and we all paused for a moment of reflection. Nancy took a deep breath and reworded the working definition she had already written on the poster paper, “*Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions.*” She took off her glasses again, wiped her eyes, and commented that she really liked this form of capital because it acknowledges that individuals have agency even though their decisions and actions take place within constraints. She said, “And it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools, the job market, and the healthcare and judicial systems.”¹¹⁶

Social Capital

Mina brought up the fact that many in the group had met through other community social activities outside of the school. She offered, for example, that she and Sylvia met because their daughters played on the same soccer team. Carmen added that she had met Diane at a church function. Many of the women nodded when she gave this example. Apparently, a lot of Southside families interacted at church. Carmen continued, again helping provide some historical context for the discussion.

She explained, “In my *Introduction to Chicana/o Studies* class last semester, the professor talked about the history of Mexican immigrant social networks—*mutualistas*, or mutual aid societies.¹¹⁷ Thinking about how we each get and give information, we could probably draw out a whole social network for ourselves that we might not even realize we are part of.” Many of the women nodded and a few remarked that *mutualistas* still play an important role for the neighborhoods on the Southside. They offered examples of holding fundraisers to assist families in need, helping recent arrivals find

housing and employment, and organizing *tandas*¹¹⁸ to save money without depending on a bank.

Sylvia added, “And from the brief examples we’ve just seen here, many of our social networks probably overlap! I’m thinking also about how our kids have their own social networks. And we are usually concerned about who is part of their peer group because of the types of information and resources they may share, *verdad?*¹¹⁹ So Carmen, would you say it’s *social capital?*” Carmen nodded in agreement and for a minute or two, many of the women talked to one another about social networks they and their children shared in common.

Nancy brought us back to the group discussion while drawing on the poster paper (figure 2.9), saying, “OK *mujeres*, so *social capital* can be understood as *networks of people and community resources?*”

Carmen asserted, “Yes, and historically Chicanas/os utilize their social capital to maneuver through the system, but they also turn around and give the information and resources they gained through the navigation process back to their social networks.” Nancy remarked, “OK, so social capital can help us navigate through society’s institutions. That’s important because Sylvia mentioned that our social networks overlap, and it seems like these forms of capital, these types of community cultural wealth also overlap?” I nodded in agreement and said, “Yes, because social capital addresses the peer and other social networks developed to assist in the movement through social institutions, like schools.”¹²⁰ I added, “And social capital speaks to the fact that we are not alone in our struggles. We develop social spaces rich in resources. Without social spaces to share information, our ability to help each other navigate would weaken. So these forms of cultural wealth do seem interdependent.”

Ms. B. commented that this tradition of offering emotional support while sharing information and resources as part of a community reminded her that her aunt participated in one of the oldest African American women’s organizations in the country, the National Colored Women’s Association, and their motto is “lifting as we climb.”¹²¹ Carmen took a moment to thank the group for being a supportive social network for her family, especially in light of some difficult personal circumstances that she had shared with us in recent months.¹²² I shared with the women that this reminded me



Figure 2.9. Social Capital

again of how they are conceptualizing cultural wealth very differently than cultural capital. I said, "Cultural capital is accumulated, like a deposit in the bank, but cultural wealth is meant to be shared."¹²³

Familial Capital

Nancy asked, "Speaking of sharing, what about how our families model lessons of caring, coping, and providing? Family lessons help shape us emotionally and give us moral guidance."¹²⁴ Can there be *familial capital*? At this point the room seemed to sigh collectively. So often, schools insist Chicana/o parents hinder their children's progress, and *Las Madres* were recognizing family as a source of community cultural wealth!

Consuelo explained that the lessons Nancy mentioned are taught not just within families, but also between families, and through church, sports, school, and other social community settings. She said, "*y nos demuestran la diferencia entre una persona con educación universitaria e una persona bien educada. Porque a veces tienen la escuela, pero no tienen la educación no tienen la educación para ser una persona con principios.*"¹²⁵

Nancy interjected that traditional understandings of "family" tend to carry race, class, and heterosexual assumptions, so if we agree to call it familial capital, we should expand the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship. Diane thanked Nancy for reminding the group about the power of words and the power to choose words.¹²⁶ Other women also nodded and commented supportively about this expanded notion of family. They remarked that immediate family as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends—living or long passed on—might all be considered part of our *familia*.¹²⁷ Nancy drew a circle indicating familial capital on the poster paper (figure 2.10).

Sylvia commented, "It seems that familial capital connects with a commitment to community well-being. We learn the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to our community and its resources. So we don't feel so isolated. Like with the social capital, families 'become connected with others around common issues' and realize they are 'not alone in dealing with their problems.'"¹²⁸ Mina nudged a woman sitting next to her, Elena. Mina exclaimed, "Yes! And helping each other find solutions. Like



Figure 2.10. Familial Capital

when Elena's oldest son wanted to drop out of school, she told him, '*está bien!*'" The women paused, looking at Elena expectantly. Elena had medium brown skin and light brown wavy hair. She had been listening intently but had not spoken. She said in a matter-of-fact tone, "*Pues sí. Plactiqué eso con Mina porque me daba tanta tristesa. Y luego, le dije a mi hijo, 'andale, si no quieres ir a la escuela, está bien mijo.'*" She paused and then remarked, "*Puedes trabajar conmigo en la K-Mar. Y así agarras todos los blue light specials.*" Most of the woman laughed out loud as others shook their heads, smiling at Elena's response. Mina added, "He's in his second year of college now?" Elena nodded and smiled.

Diane continued, "It sounds almost like familial capital includes some of the language we use in the law. On the one hand, families can give emotional support like what we've talked about. But then we can also give instrumental support."¹²⁹ Like when my son is trying to study, I have my husband turn off the TV, even if it's in the middle of his favorite program, and I make sure the house is totally quiet. And Sylvia also gives this support by buying enough detergent so her daughter can do her laundry when she's home from college." Sylvia smiled and said, "And buying her groceries she can take back to school when she leaves!"

Consuelo also noted that parents use multiple teaching strategies with their children that the school does not seem to notice. "*Dicen que no nos importa, que no estamos involucrados en la educación de nuestros hijas e hijos.*"¹³⁰ She told the group that like many of them, she had also tried to get involved with the PTA, but that the women did not welcome her, did not make Spanish translation available, and they set up a pretty intimidating environment where she felt almost invisible. Nancy suggested that perhaps the group could think about developing a list of ways they do engage their children's education. She gave an example of a family she knew. She said that on summer break and sometimes on weekends, the parents brought their children with them to work picking fruit in the fields. Apparently, four of their children now attend or already graduated from top universities and their youngest is set to graduate as the valedictorian from Southside High School this year. Knowing they could not help with algebra or reading in English, these parents taught about hard work and integrity while working alongside their children in the fields.¹³¹ Nancy offered that maybe we could present these types of examples to the school at a later date. She explained this might help challenge the false and historically inaccurate idea that Chicanas/os are not "involved" in their children's schooling and therefore don't value education.¹³²

I thought to myself that familial capital connected to aspirational capital, and I smiled, imagining the parents Nancy mentioned sharing their dreams with their children of a life with options, a life without back-breaking work.

Consuelo also shared with us that her husband—a carpenter—was in the process of making a desk for her son, Jaime. She believed the desk would give Jaime a consistent place to study and help him better organize his homework and develop good study skills. In addition, Consuelo saw the desk as a way to show her son that his education is important to his parents. Nancy jotted down a few more notes on the poster paper and read aloud the working definition of *familial capital* as those “*cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.*”¹³³ She said, “Chicana/o students bring these teachings from home¹³⁴ with them to the classroom, but the schools ignore or can’t ‘see’ these funds of knowledge.”¹³⁵

Resistant Capital

Sylvia said she hoped her daughters would carry some of those teachings even beyond high school. Through verbal and nonverbal lessons, Sylvia tried to teach her daughters to assert themselves as intelligent, beautiful, strong, and worthy of respect.¹³⁶ She emphasized her efforts to teach her girls to question society’s distorted messages about beauty, success, love, and integrity. She explained, “I have been consciously ‘raising resisters.’”¹³⁷ Another older woman agreed and added that it was very difficult to teach her daughter to *darse valor*¹³⁸ or *valerse por si misma*¹³⁹ within a racist, materialistic, and sexist society and perhaps even more difficult to raise a son who would resist the pressures of perpetuating patriarchy through stereotypical *macho*¹⁴⁰ attitudes.

As Carmen reminded us in a past meeting, Ms. B. noted that Communities of Color have historically resisted racial and social injustice. She spoke about her own children’s involvement supporting various community efforts for equity. Ms. B. remarked, “Students’ efforts to transform unequal conditions show us that this continuity of community resistance includes many forms of expressing opposition.¹⁴¹ But of course, not all behavior that seems to go against the norm is motivated by a critical consciousness or a desire for social justice. Many of our young people today participate in what seem to be self-defeating or conformist strategies of resistance, like dropping out of school or trying to challenge racial and gender stereotypes through their individual actions to ‘fit in.’ Those forms of resistance feed back into the system and don’t challenge the more structural causes of inequality. But, when students recognize and name the structures of oppression, and then are motivated to work toward social and racial justice—resistance takes on a transformative form.”¹⁴² Ms. B. pointed to the handout section on Freirean critical consciousness.

Nancy drew another circle on the almost filled-up piece of poster paper (figure 2.11), as she asked, “So should we say that *resistant capital* draws on

Resistant Capital

Figure 2.11. Resistant Capital

this legacy of resistance to oppression in Communities of Color and refers to those *knowledges and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality?*¹⁴³

Women nodded and some applauded in agreement, feeling the excitement in the air about resistance initiated by communities to transform society. Diane remarked, “Through this group, we are learning to recognize the structures of racism and we are definitely motivated to transform them. But how do we use transformative resistant capital to challenge what’s happening at Southside Elementary?”

A Model of Community Cultural Wealth

Before anyone could answer her question, we paused to admire the fresh piece of poster paper where Nancy busily finished connecting the circles to reflect the discussion (see figure 2.12). She stepped back to reveal a visual model of cultural wealth! I sketched out the model on my own notepad and again smiled, thinking of how surprised most of my colleagues would be when I shared the ways these parents engage with theory. In all my graduate school reading, social theories seem too obtuse and difficult to apply in “real life.” Yet here, I witnessed these working-class Parents of Color applying Freire¹⁴⁴ and Bourdieu¹⁴⁵ to their everyday experiences. I felt so humbled to listen and learn from these women. From their position at the margins of society, these women challenge the inequalities of the educational system. They develop and demonstrate *pedagogies of the oppressed*.¹⁴⁶ These women hold on to the belief that as bell hooks writes, the margin can be “more than a site of deprivation ... it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.”¹⁴⁷ As they question the forms of racism that shape their children’s educational opportunities, they also offer a model that can transform the prevalent cultural deficit approach to elementary schooling.

Nancy noted that Diane asked a good question we had not addressed. Mina agreed and said, “I like the idea Nancy had, to make a list of the ways Chicanas/os are involved in education. Maybe we can show the principal this chart when we do that, so he can ‘see’ what our community brings to Southside Elementary.” Carmen lit up and said, “I think the PTA and the teachers should be hearing this too, no? We could have a forum or something.

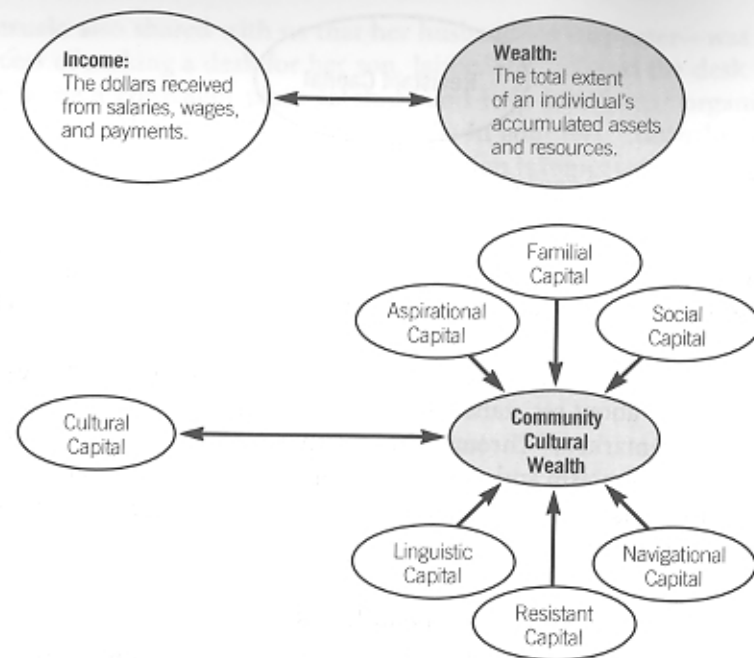


Figure 2.12. A Model of Community Cultural Wealth

Maybe before that, though, we should ask ourselves, what would Southside Elementary look like if it centered the curriculum on the community cultural wealth of Chicana/o students?"¹⁴⁸

Though it had been a long night, the women exuded a clear feeling of excitement about the possibility of presenting the cultural wealth model to the principal, teachers, and the PTA. Mina took a deep breath and remarked, "*Sería una transformación completa.*"¹⁴⁹ Most of the women nodded in agreement, while some shook their heads with doubt that such a transformation could occur. Diane commented that to start, they could advocate for making the whole school a magnet school and designating all the students GATE. Pointing to the model on the poster paper, she exclaimed, "Look at all the ways our students are gifted and talented!" Diane's suggestion offered an example of school transformation that seemed to resonate with the group.

Putting community cultural wealth into practice required much more discussion, which would have to wait for another night. Ms. B. announced that the childcare volunteers were scheduled to leave at 9:00 PM and it was already 9:15. Nancy thanked the women for their patience through what had been a pretty long, but productive meeting. The women again ap-

plauded each other before saying goodnight, collecting their children and heading home in their own cars or in the vans that Ms. B. had arranged for transportation.

I stood to stretch and throw away my tea bag and napkin of *pan dulce* crumbs. I wanted to introduce myself to the elderly man who had offered such insightful comments earlier. In the fast-paced excitement of the discussion, I realized that my headache had eased up. I walked back over to the circle of chairs and began to help the women clear out the space for the cafe customers the next morning. As I picked up and stacked the folding chair where the elderly man sat, I asked Mina if she had seen him leave. She looked at me bewildered, "An elderly man was here tonight? *Ay mujer*,¹⁵⁰ I hope your *compañera*¹⁵¹ gets over the flu soon, sounds like you need some rest." Sylvia asked if my headache was better or if I needed a ride home. She gave me a hug and said she would check on me later in the week because I looked a little pale, "Like you've seen a ghost."

Suddenly, I got chills realizing why the elderly man looked so familiar. Could it be? *Mi tocayo*¹⁵² Paulo Freire? Instead of being pale by the time I got home, I felt flushed with excitement. I found Eva awake and enjoying leftovers from the refrigerator. Her fever had finally broken and she had not eaten much for a few days. I shared with her the details of the spirited discussion at the meeting and she laughed and said, "Paula, I hope Freire comes by again sometime soon. Our schools need him now more than ever. His legacy should never be forgotten." She paused and then jokingly chided me, "Should I leave some of this chicken for him in case he comes over for a late-night snack? Or maybe we can play Ozomatli's song, *Cumbia de los Muertos*¹⁵³ and he'll come dance with us?" I laughed as she began dancing with me in the kitchen. She obviously felt much better. I headed to bed, thinking about dancing with my loved ones who had passed on. I too hoped humbly that Freire's spirit would not be a distant memory.

NOTES

1. Mothers for Education. Southside is a composite elementary school located in an unidentified city in the Southwest region of the United States.
2. Ginorio & Huston, 2001
3. Office of Civil Rights, see <http://205.207.175.84/ocr2000r/>
4. Valencia, 2002b
5. Donato, Menchaca, & Valencia, 1991; Orfield & Monfort, 1992; Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2002
6. Darling-Hammond, 1988
7. There is also a general shortage of teachers servicing minority communities, with the most severe involving Latina/o teachers, and specifically teachers in bilingual and special education fields (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1994; Tomas Rivera Center, 1993).
8. Orfield, 1996

9. Lockheed, Thorpe, Brooks-Gunn, Casserly, & McAloon, 1985
10. Levin, 1987; See also Solórzano, Ledesma, Pérez, Burciaga, & Ornelas, 2003
11. Oakes, 1985, 1990
12. García, E. E., 1987/88, 1999; Willig, 1985
13. See García, E. E., 1999
14. See Solórzano, Burciaga, Calderón, Ledesma, Ochoa, Rivas, Sanchez, Velez, Watford, Ortega, & Pineda, 2004
15. Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Persell, 1977; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1973
16. Delgado-Gaitan, 1992
17. Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1977; Loewen, 1995; Pearl, 1991, 2002
18. Kretovics & Nussel, 1994; Persell, 1977; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997
19. See Valencia, 1997
20. Jensen, 1969; Kamin, 1974; Terman, 1916
21. Dunn, 1987; See Fernandez, 1988
22. Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990
23. See Breggin & Breggin, 1993
24. Herrnstein & Murray, 1994
25. For example, Louis Terman (1916) was a eugenicist and one of the main importers of the Stanford Binet Intelligence test, now called the SAT. See Valencia, 1999; Valencia & Aburto, 1991; Valencia, Villareal, & Salinas, 2002
26. For examples of cultural deficit writings, see Bernstein, 1977; Chavez, 1992; McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1990
27. For further description and critique of cultural deficit models, see Barrera, 1979, 1997; Carter & Segura, 1979; Valencia, 1997
28. For culture of poverty argument, see Lewis, O., 1968; Sowell, 1981
29. See Banfield, 1970; Heller, 1966
30. Persell, 1977; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001b
31. See Lewis, A., 2003
32. See Kretovics & Nussel, 1994; Spring, 2001
33. Baca Zinn, 1989; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997
34. Kretovics & Nussel, 1994, p. x
35. Freire, 1973
36. García, S. B., & Guerra, 2004, p. 163
37. García, S. B., & Guerra, 2004, p. 155
38. That's what everyone calls me.
39. This character is inspired by Barbara Johns, the teenager who organized a student strike against Moton High School in Farmville, Virginia, and led 450 students to a walkout on April 23, 1951, to demand a new, updated, and quality school. Fearing for her safety, her parents sent Barbara to live in another city. Her leadership led to the *Davis v. the School Board of Prince Edward County* lawsuit, which was one of the five suits brought before the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Ms. B.'s gallery also draws inspiration from the John Sayles film *Lone Star*, where an African American man living in Texas has a picture collection dedicated to the history of Black Native Americans (see Foster, Miller, & Renzi, prds., 1996).
40. Respect.
41. See Delgado-Gaitan, 2001
42. See Pardo, 1990, 1991, 1998
43. See Delgado Bernal, 1997
44. This format does not lend itself to fully translating the entire meeting bilingually. To remind readers of this and to emphasize certain points, I code-switch throughout.
45. See Donato, 1997
46. See Hopfenberg, Levin, Meister, & Rodgers, 1990
47. Education with Heart.
48. Freire, 1970, 1973
49. Alschuler 1980; Freire 1970, 1973; Smith & Alschuler, 1976
50. Edward Buendia, Nancy Ares, Brenda Juarez, and Megan Peercy (2004) detail the ways that notions such as "southside" or "westside" in cities across the U.S. take on racially coded, classed significance that are constructed and reconstructed by schools.
51. *Álvarez v. Lemon Grove School District*, Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Diego, 1931, Petition for Writ of Mandate, No. 66625. See also Espinosa, 1986; Montoya, 2001
52. *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, 64 F. Supp 544 (S.D. Cal 1946), affirmed 161 F. 2d 774 (9th Cir. 1947). See also Perea, 2004; Valencia, 2005
53. Yes Carmen, thank you for your words and that brief history. We can learn a lot from those struggles. For example, it's not important that our children sit next to the White students, we want them to have equal opportunities. See DuBois, 1935
54. People from the north say that I'm Latino, they don't want to call me American. America is the whole continent, whoever was born here is American. Skin color might differ, but just like we're all children of God, we are all human. See Los Tigres Del Norte, 1988
55. Sweet bread.
56. A hot drink with chocolate, cinnamon, flour, and milk.
57. *Williams v. State of California*, Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Francisco, 2000. No. 890221 (plaintiff complaint, p. 5).
58. *Williams v. State of California*, Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Francisco, 2000. No. 890221 (plaintiff complaint, p. 5). See also settlement conditions *Williams v. State of California*, Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Francisco, 2004, No. 312236 (settlement agreement).
59. See Donoso & Reyes (2002), p. 20, Table 5: Environmental Working Group: Air Pollution Inside California's Portable Classrooms, May 1999.
60. Advice.
61. Skeleton.
62. Frida Kahlo, Mexican artist and socialist.
63. See Freire, 1970
64. Right?
65. CRT and LatCrit scholars continue to work toward better understanding and articulating the intersection of race and class. See for example, Hutchinson, 2004; Revilla, 2001
66. The teachers tend to blame the students or the families.
67. See Hirsch, 1988, p. xiv
68. See Proposition 227 in California (1998), Proposition 203 in Arizona (2001).
69. The majority of Latinas/os voted against the "English-only" initiatives in both California (Prop 227) and Arizona (Prop 203).
70. Yes, yes, it's horrible.
71. See Hirsch, 1988, pp. 152-215
72. Ragland, 2002
73. See Council for Interracial Books for Children, 1977
74. See Solórzano & Valencia, 1997
75. Everything that my daughter knows and everything that she can do.
76. Teacher.
77. See Donato, 1997
78. See Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000
79. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977
80. See Rosner, 2001
81. See Faulstich Orellana, 2003
82. Family.
83. Hirsch, 1988, 1996
84. Heart.
85. See Loewen, 1995

86. Similar to angel hair pasta, but prepared like chicken noodle soup with a spicy tomato base.
87. A type of *pan dulce*, pastry shaped like two *orejas* (ears) stuck together.
88. Coffee with milk.
89. Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen, 1994
90. Freire, 1970, 1973
91. See Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano, 1989
92. A casual conversation.
93. Because they're never going to be like them, even with "hooked-on-phonics," with their well-pronounced English. They will always be Mexican. And like the saying goes, in dialogue, people develop a better understanding of one another. And that way hopefully they won't feel too humiliated because of their Mexican heritage, right?
94. Martinez, C., 2000
95. Rodriguez, 1982
96. Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005
97. Oliver and Shapiro (1995) differentiate between income and wealth to document ongoing racial inequality between Black and White communities. They explain that while the income of Blacks may be climbing and the Black/White income gap may be narrowing, their overall wealth, compared to Whites, is declining and the gap—the inequality between the two groups—is increasing.
98. In his 2004 book, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American*, Thomas Shapiro extends this discussion of wealth to address the role of schools in exacerbating racial inequalities.
99. After conducting and analyzing 44 interviews with African American youth ages 13–20 in Yonkers, New York, Prudence Carter (2003) found that "Blacks develop their own forms of cultural capital" (p. 150). The forms of "black" cultural capital these students exhibit "yield social benefits and rewards within their community, but within the school walls, students find that officials devalue precisely these cultural attributes" (p. 149). Carter asks, "Are there other forms of non-dominant cultural capital or even other forms of 'black cultural capital' (p. 151)? She calls for "a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted processes affecting academic achievement," and for schools to acknowledge and value the "cultural capital portfolio" of Students of Color (p. 151).
100. See Espinosa, Fernández, Dornbusch, 1977; Solórzano, 1992
101. These stories nurture a culture of possibility as they represent "the creation of a history that would break the links between parents' current occupational status and their children's future academic attainment" (Gándara, 1995, p. 55). See also Gándara, 1982
102. These barriers may be real or perceived.
103. See anti-bilingual education Proposition 227 in California, 203 in Arizona. For benefits of bilingual education, see Cummins, 1986; Darder, 1991; García, O. & Baker, 1995; Gutierrez, 2002; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999
104. Stories.
105. Proverbs.
106. Thanks to UCSB undergraduate students, Pablo Gallegos, Moises Garcia, Noel Gomez, and Ray Hernandez, whose research conceptualizing graffiti and hip hop poetry as unacknowledged sources of community cultural wealth expanded the concept of linguistic capital.
107. See Carter, 2003; Castañeda, A., 1998
108. In her research, Marjorie Faulstich Orellana (2003) found that since they are regularly called upon to translate, bilingual children develop knowledge and skills, including "vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, 'real-world' literacy skills, math skills, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility, [and] social maturity" (p. 6).
109. Navigating through the city is difficult, but also navigating through the educational system!
110. Sylvia Alva (1991) found that invulnerable, resilient Chicana/o students are able to "sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and, ultimately, dropping out of school," (p. 19). See also Auerbach, 2001; Laosa, 1990
111. Resilience has been recognized as "a set of inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning" (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000, p. 229).
112. See Carroll, 1998
113. Alva, 1995; Arrellano & Padilla, 1996
114. Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998
115. Zavella, 1991
116. Williams, P., 1997
117. Gómez-Quintones, 1973, 1994; Sanchez, 1993
118. *Tandas* function like savings accounts. For example, a group of five people each contribute \$100 per week and on a rotating basis one person receives the entire \$500. Each week, one person receives the *tanda*. This would play an important role especially because formal banking practices may require photo identification such as a driver's license, or may be otherwise discriminatory. Undocumented immigrants may not have access to opening a bank account.
119. Right?
120. Stanton-Salazar, 2001
121. See Guinier, Fine, & Balin, 1997, p. 167
122. Concha Delgado-Gaitan's (2001) ethnographic research with the Mexican immigrant community of Carpinteria, California, found that "Families transcend the adversity in their daily lives by uniting with supportive social networks" (p. 105). Similarly, Myrna Jean Gilbert's (1980a, 1980b) ethnographic research with second generation Mexican American families in Santa Barbara and Fillmore, California, found that social networks offer forms of emotional and instrumental support, and cultivate a sense of *confianza* (trust). See also Vélez-Ibáñez, 1980
123. In the 2005 HBO film, *Lackawanna Blues*, this point is clear. Set during the preintegration 1950s and 1960s, this coming-of-age autobiographical tale of Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Jr. explains that "Jr.'s" parents are unable to care for him, so Nanny, a proprietor of a rooming house and mentor to countless down-on-their-luck Blacks, unofficially adopts him. Nanny's place recreates a sense of community and family for these boarders and, in turn, each of the characters shares their cultural wealth—their knowledge of Black history, skills of navigation through a racist society, and lessons of love, trust, and hope—with young Ruben Jr. (See Nugiel, prd., 2005).
124. See Auerbach, 2004; See also Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (2001), who finds, "Through the bestowing of *consejos* and through exhortations, parents tried to morally obligate and thus motivate their children to forge ahead in their schooling" (p. 105).
125. And they demonstrate the difference between a person who has an education from school and a kind person with integrity. Because sometimes they have schooling, but they don't have any sense of being a person with principles. See Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal, & Villenas, 2001 for more discussion on the layered meaning of being *una persona bien educada*.
126. bell hooks (1994) also notes the power of language as she quotes a poem by Adrienne Rich that acknowledges, "This is the oppressor's language, but I need it to talk to you" (p. 167).
127. Family.
128. Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, p. 54
129. See Gilbert, 1980a, 1980b
130. They say that we don't care. That we're not involved in the schooling of our children.
131. See Lopez, 2003
132. Black parents endure similar accusations of not caring about their students' education. For further discussion of this history of Black parent "involvement" in schools and the role of desegregation in disrupting communal bonds nurtured within African American school communities, see Foley, 1997; Morris, 1999.
133. See cultural intuition, Delgado Bernal, 1998
134. See "pedagogies of the home," Delgado Bernal, 2002
135. See Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Olmedo, 1997; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992

136. See Robinson & Ward, 1991; See also hooks, 2002
137. Ward, 1996
138. Value herself.
139. Be self-reliant, See Villenas & Moreno, 2001
140. Chauvinist.
141. See Solórzano & Delgado Bernal 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1997
142. See Solórzano & Yosso, 2002c
143. Giroux, 1983; Freire, 1970, 1973; McLaren, 1994
144. Freire, 1970, 1973
145. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977
146. Freire, 1973
147. hooks, 1990 p. 149
148. See Pizarro, 1998; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999
149. It would be a complete transformation.
150. Oh woman.
151. Roommate.
152. My namesake.
153. Cumbia of the Dead. Ozomatli sings, "*Cierta gente solo puede ver espíritus bailando entre la gente*" (Only certain people can see spirits dancing among us). See Ozomatli Music, 1998

3

STUDENTS ON THE MOVE

Desegregation at Bandini High School¹

INTRODUCTION

Out of every 100 Chicana and Chicano elementary school students, only 44 graduate high school. What happens at the secondary levels of the educational pipeline so that 56 of every 100 Chicana/o elementary school students do not earn a high school diploma? This chapter examines some of the educational structures, practices, and discourses that shape these outcomes.

High schools tend to reflect patterns of structural inequality evidenced at the primary levels of the pipeline. In urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States, Chicana/o students usually attend racially segregated, overcrowded high schools in dilapidated buildings with an insufficient number of functioning bathrooms.² Within these poorly maintained schooling facilities, Chicanas/os are too often enrolled in classes where undertrained, uncredentialed faculty attempt to teach with a shortage of updated textbooks, library materials, and desks.³

It is not news that so many Chicana/o high school students attend schools with poor conditions.⁴ Nor is it a novel idea to restrict, Chicana/o students to remedial and vocational courses of study within high schools. Historically, Chicana/o communities endured many such forms of racism, such as physical segregation into "Mexican schools" and exposure to differentiated curriculum within racially "integrated" schools.⁵ Mainstream schooling practices for at least the first half of the 20th century presented knowledge to Chicana/o students with little regard for their language, culture, or potential to think critically. For example, schools insisted Chicanas/os needed lessons on "proper" hygiene, "standard" English, manual arts, and menial labor.⁶