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The physics of school culture: Unleashing student voice in the quest for school improvement

Henry Elizarraraz Yzaguirre

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THE PHYSICS OF SCHOOL CULTURE: UNLEASHING STUDENT VOICE IN THE QUEST FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Henry Elizarraraz Yzaguirre
March 2012
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ABSTRACT

Utilizing a critical race theory framework, I examined how students experienced school life in a large public high school. In this age of high stakes testing, students are held accountable for their academic performance, though their voices are usually dismissed. Furthermore, poor students of color are usually the first to be blamed for dropping out of school. This deficit lens of students of color assumes that schools and educational policies are perfect systems. I employed a grounded theory approach in analyzing student voice and perspectives that illuminated processes in school culture and structure that affected student engagement. Specifically, I focused on how students experienced power, pedagogy, and relationships while in school. In this study, I interviewed twelve low, middle, and high achieving students. In addition, focus groups and student observations were conducted to provide greater depth of analysis. I argue that critical race theory scholarship plays a vital role in understanding the dropout crisis particularly for poor Latino youth. As such, a large-scale ethnographic study of this fertile research site would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how schools and school adults contribute to student's disengagement from school. This study contributes to education practice and research by providing a glimpse of the processes in a large urban school that engage or disengage students from school.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge by grandfathers Vicente Yzaguirre and Hilario Elizarraraz who endured injustices as they paved the road for their sons and daughters to realize Los Sueños Americanos. To their wives, Pascuala and Antonia, whose love still lives in the heart of their great-grandson!

I acknowledge my parents, Henry Nieto Yzaguirre and Margaret Elizarraraz Yzaguirre, whose love and encouragement instilled in me a passion for learning, pride in being Mexican-American, and respect for the oppressed. I was blessed to have been raised by parents as kind and loving as them. To you I am forever grateful.

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I would like to thank those who served on my committee. I acknowledge Dr. Enrique Murillo “tocayo” who I respect as a scholar and as a friend. Thank you for the opportunity to experience work as a scholar at Utah, Georgia, Cuba, and through LEAD. I acknowledge Dr. Louie Rodriguez whose scholarly work, friendship and PRAXIS in the community served as an inspiration for my own research. Finally, I acknowledge Dr. Thelma Moore-Steward whose class was
one of my favorites. You are one of the professors whose humanizing pedagogy allowed for a practice of freedom.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work of love to honor the memory of my mother Margaret Elizarraraz Yzaguirre, who was spiritually in my heart during this arduous journey and to my beloved son, Henry Valdez Yzaguirre. The future is yours mio!
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart and allow us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries to transgress. This is education as a practice of freedom.

— Bell Hooks, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom

Statement of the Problem

The American educational system's ability to produce graduates is the ultimate barometer of our nation's future economic prosperity and security. Our contemporary global economy fosters intense competition for acquiring well paying jobs (Giroux, 2009). A high school diploma is the absolute minimum for one to have opportunity to earn a living wage (Stuit & Springer, 2010). Unfortunately, the failure of our schools to provide and sustain equitable outcomes for all students has reached a national crisis and threatens the economies of many communities and the nation (Fine, 1991).
A high school diploma represents the gateway to higher education and social mobility. However, our schools are doing a poor job in moving students through the educational pipeline (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). This is especially true for Latino students where only 46 out of every 100 continue on to graduate high school (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Every year thousands of youths consciously make the decision to exit the educational pipeline. In fact, for many who leave school early, leaving is a sane option. It is a sane option considering the institutional and cultural barriers that they encounter throughout their educational journey (Smyth & Hattam, 2004). Latino males are especially affected by the hostile cultural landscape of urban high schools and are more likely than any other group to be pushed out of school (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). These students go on and join society to “become somebody” without a high school education.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been criticized for reporting inflated graduation rates (V. E. Lee & Burkam, 2003). These misleading statistics similarly obscure the dropout crisis at large. It also does not do justice to those students of color that are impacted the most by continuing to hide the racial dimensions of the crisis. In fact, only about a third of students who attend socioeconomically segregated districts, which are generally attended by communities of color, graduate with a regular high school diploma (V. E. Lee & Burkam, 2003). This revised high school graduation statistic realistically depicts the silent epidemic that threatens the loss of human potential. Furthermore, this
silent epidemic will have severe economic consequences, particularly in California, where the Latino population is projected to grow.

It has been estimated that in 2002-2003 that high school dropouts will cost the state of California $14 billion in lost wages (Stuit & Springer, 2010). The economic blow to our national, state, and local communities from this invisible epidemic is staggering. Beyond lost personal income and state tax revenue, the dropout crisis will negatively affect health costs. According to Stuit et al. (2010), high school dropouts report poorer personal health and rely on Medicaid at twice the rate of a high school graduate. In addition, dropping out of high school is highly correlated with crime activity and incarceration. It has been estimated that $1.4 billion could be saved in criminal justice costs by increasing merely 1% of the male high school graduation rate (Stuit & Springer, 2010). Furthermore, if California were to cut its dropout rate by 50%, each new high school cohort would yield $1.4 billion in direct gross economic benefits to the state (Stuit & Springer, 2010).

The educational pipeline for Latinos is hemorrhaging in California, where about 50% of students fail to graduate (Stuit & Springer, 2010). By not responding in crisis mode, we risk condemning a large segment of the Latino community into a generational underclass. Rodriguez (2010) states, "We need to treat the dropout crisis like the real crisis it is, and come to terms with the role of schools in promoting student engagement" (p. 1). Otherwise, all the pathologies (lost pride and hope) associated with dropping out of school will manifest in the
community. This is in stark contrast to the traditional value system of the Latino community who value education, family, and hard work.

Background

American public schools are under assault. Over the past two decades, the dismantling of our countries public schools through a system of rewards and punishments has occurred. Historically, schools have served as the great equalizer for American citizens wishing to pursue the American dream of economic prosperity. Our public school institution is an American resource and a national symbol of our democratic ideals.

Ironically, these reactive reforms to improve our schools have dire consequences for poor communities of color through an overemphasis on testing, standards and choice (Noguera, 1994). As a result, public schools have been reduced to choices of last resort for those who cannot afford to transport their child to better schools or pay for private schooling. We empower parents as consumers of education by the use of vouchers instead of situating them in decision-making positions in school governance. As a result, free-market fundamentalism has invaded an American Democratic institution and has undermined the importance of addressing inequities in a racially stratified society.

Interestingly, privatization of schools began to surface around the same time the civil rights movement was focusing on public education as a vehicle for social change. More demands were being placed on public schools to ameliorate the social problems created by racism and classism. For populations that have
been historically marginalized, public schools have represented their hope for a better life. Unfortunately, reforms under the deceptive label of No Child Left Behind began to emerge that would be dislodged from any socio-cultural reality that shapes the equities encountered by communities of color.

“Factory model” schools with their impersonal structures, as well as emphasis on methods and standards are unable to respond effectively to the needs of their students and therefore help contribute to the dropout crisis (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Ort, 2002). Colorblind reforms that emphasize socially constructed methods do little more than reproduce asymmetrical power relations already found in society. What is needed is for teachers, administrators and policymakers to make a bold move forward in implementing reform that begins to address the unconscious or conscious acceptance of a racist-nativist hierarchy that renders students of color as non-native and in need of being saved from themselves (Perez Huber, 2010).

Historically, structural inequalities have existed in schools attended by minority students (Donato & Onis, 1994; Flores & Murillo, 2001). Examples of structural inequalities are academic tracking practices, unqualified teachers, and inadequate resources (Kozol, 1991). Racist policies that criminalize youth of color also serve to co-construct dropouts (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Giroux, 2009; Hurstfield, 1975; Noguera, 2003). Also, American schools have had a legacy to Americanize and Otherize students of color. In the process, Latino students have experienced the eradication of their language and culture (Flores & Murillo, 2001; Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valdez, 2001). Brayboy (2007) asserts,
Although there have certainly been structural changes to schools throughout the past 100 years, inequality has remained, with students of color consistently provided a lower quality education in a system that purports to provide equal educational opportunities (pg. 165). Evidence for present day inequality exists in the disparities found between racial groups in high school graduation rates.

Ensuring the academic success of Latino youth is everyone's responsibility. Research is replete with studies that examine the risk factors of youth and their families, which are thought to contribute to dropping out of school. However, this approach is too simplistic in its analysis of a complex social phenomenon. It is also a very arrogant and a hegemonic response that blames the victim rather than to seek and understand the oppression many student of color encounter in school. There is a need to utilize research methods that capture the voices of students that can provide greater depth of understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of the crisis.

Not all dropouts are the same. Each student exerts their own agency when navigating the complexities of school culture. Certain student and familial characteristics only influence, but do not cause student disengagement from school. Many of the strategies that have been proposed ignore the complexities of school culture that continues to sustain white privilege and a deficit view of students of color. Research and reform policies also disregard the agency and voice of the students that are experiencing the oppression (Cammarota, 2008b; L. F. Rodriguez, 2010; L. F. Rodríguez, 2008a). Dropping out of school is usually
a long process of students interacting and making sense of his or her schooling experience (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Conchas & Vigil, 2010). Dropping out of school becomes a long term process of disengagement and is more complex than just risk factors.

Research and reform efforts usually address “at-risk” factors that influence student disengagement. As such, efforts usually offer alternative methods for earning a diploma or offer extra support services for students and their families. Many of the dropout factors considered by researchers are the characteristics of students, communities, and their families. Some of the risk factors are student mobility, immigration status, socioeconomic status, families, schools, and the communities students come from. Consequently, a deficit lens is applied in creating reform strategies that help curb the dropout crisis and focus on a “one size fits all” approach. There is too much focus on the characteristics of “at-risk” attributes of students and less emphasis on the high-risk settings that are co-constructing the dropout (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Valencia, 2010a; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Policies that focus solely on the deficits of communities of color exonerate schools from any responsibility in creating conditions that may contribute to pushing out students from school (Moreno, 1999; Valencia, 2010a). This assumes that schools are places free from racism, classism, and sexism. Historically, American schools have had a turbulent legacy of segregation, xenophobia, and practices that sustain white privilege (Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Courageous efforts to better understand the dropout phenomenon need to
examine the systematic processes that “push out” so called “troublemakers” from school (Fine, 1991). Valenzuela (1999) notes that schools provide access to academic opportunities to Latinos at the expense of eradicating their language and home culture in what she coins as “subtractive schooling.” Valenzuela (1999) advocates for an additive schooling process that builds upon a student’s heritage and life experiences. It is imperative that we consider carefully how we frame the problem of Latino dropouts if we are to arrive at effective solutions (Valencia, 2010a).

Unfortunately, methods for teaching impoverished populations do little to address the deficit ideologies that many teachers may possess. America has had a long legacy of applied deficit thinking in its schools. According to Valencia (2010b), contemporary deficit thinking is still prevalent in contemporary schools. Most disturbingly, deficit theories such as the culture of poverty, environmental model, and the genetic pathology all have gained currency among the public toward communities of color. As Brayboy (2007) states,

We wonder if access is indeed equal and if equality of education opportunity exists or if it is simply an imagined ideal that allows those who have real opportunities to claim that those who do not are either inferior or simply need to work harder. (p. 181)

Either we accept the deficit models as truths that conveniently create a scapegoat, or we search for a solution among the interplay of school culture, structure, and student agency. It is a duty of anti-deficit theorists to conduct research that supports a humanizing pedagogy. Solutions are needed that
advocate for democratic school cultures that are guided by the guiding principles of shared power, relationships, shared decision-making and youth as intellectuals and holders of cultural capital.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, I intend to move beyond the deficit lens when investigating the engagement and disengagement of students of color in high school by examining how school cultures and structures facilitate student agency. This analysis employs a humanizing research approach in that it uses the voices of students to capture and evaluate how they make sense of their world at school. Such an examination will help to identify aspects of school culture that shape and promote student engagement and disengagement from school. Findings from this ethnographic study also provide an in depth view of school culture using a critical race theory lens. In sum, the purpose of this ethnographic study is to examine the lived experiences of students attending a predominately Latino urban high school in the southwest region of the United States, using interviews, focus groups, and observations to gain an insight on student engagement and disengagement from school.

Research Question

In this study, I capture the voices of students in describing their interactions with school structures and cultures that either encourage or discourage school engagement. In addition, I make use of a critical race lens that
validates experiential knowledge of those being studied and informs analysis on race and oppressive structures.

The following research question is posed: Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, how do the voices, experiences, and perspectives of students help us understand the ways school culture, including power, pedagogy and relationships, contribute to the engagement and disengagement of students from school?

Significance of Study

This study makes a vital contribution in filling a void that exists in understanding the dropout crisis in one of the largest school districts in California that is predominately attended by one of the fastest growing minority groups in the nation. It is also significant in that it courageously utilizes a lens that incorporates the tenets found in Critical Race Theory, which foregrounds race and racism in its analysis. Critical Race Theory creates a space in which to unveil the injustices that Latino students encounter at school. As such, the voices of students are used to illuminate oppressive elements of school culture that may contribute to the dropout crisis in a district where over 40% of Latinos fail to earn a regular high school diploma (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009).

Schools have played a role in a system of control and coercion. As such, students are confronted with schooling experiences and ideologies that serve the needs of the dominant class. Indeed, schools are social institutions that reflect the larger society that value Eurocentric cultural capital and devalue the funds of
knowledge marginalize students already possess (Davila & De Bradley, 2010). Most educational discourse is limited by concepts such as "decorum" and "niceness." This prevents a challenge to the dominant ideology that schools are socially just. It also prevents an analysis of the role of racism has on relationships, policies, and pedagogies (Aleman, 2009b; Sólorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). This study is significant in that it uses critical race theory to unveil so-called objective structures, processes, and discourses that hide racial inequality (Yosso, 2002).

By privileging the voices of students, this research project emphasizes the notion that students of color are creators and holders of knowledge. As such, my intention is to legitimize student knowledge to better understand the social arrangements of relationships, power, and normative practices that serve to engage or disengage them from school. This research approach moves beyond the meritocratic notion that disengagement from school is due to the accumulation of risk factors and that school is a fair and neutral space. Instead, this study begins to create a portal for those being marginalized to inform scholarship, whose aim is to transform oppressive educational sites. As Brown and Rodriguez (2009) state, "understanding student realities is essential to our understanding of their actions" (p.221).

Summary of Methods

Murillo (1999) states, "ethnographic inquiry is most appropriate when it places events and people in the social, cultural, and political history and contexts
in which they are constituted" (p.1). This research project examines how power, relationships, and pedagogy are connected to school culture in a high school attended by poor Latino youth. Latino youth have political history that is constituted by marginalization through segregation, assimilation and stereotyping by social institutions. As such, a qualitative methodology is best suited for the investigation of social and cultural factors that mitigate student engagement.

An ethnographic research design was chosen because I wanted to privilege the voices of students. In addition, the emic perspective is central to most ethnographic research. The emic perspective is the insider’s perspective of their own lived experiences (Fetterman, 1993). Fetterman (1993) states, “the insider's perception of reality is instrumental to understanding and accurately describing situations and behaviors” (p.20). This perspective allows me to understand why students do what they do.

The application of qualitative methodology allowed me to acquire direct experience of the phenomenon of school culture and student engagement. It also allowed me to acquire detailed information from a variety of focal points such as what students do, what students say, what students need, as well as what the cultural forces are that inform systems of meaning. Qualitative research also was appropriate because it allowed me to empirically study and collect data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) affirm that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). As such, I conducted research in a large urban high school using a variety of collection methods associated with
qualitative methodology which included interviews with students, focus groups, and classroom observations. These data collection methods allowed for me to assume a research stance that provided an “inquiry into meaning” and an “inquiry from the inside” (Shank, 2002).

The research site that I selected was a high school situated among the 10 largest districts in state located in southwestern region of the United States. The school serves a student body of approximately 2,400 students who are predominately from low income families of Latino origin (School Accountability Report Card). The school principal assisted me in identifying teachers that would in turn identify key student informants. Key student informants were provided with informed consent forms and the school was informed about my presence at the school and about the focus of my study.

Several ethnographic methods and strategies were used to assist in guiding me through the wilderness of school culture. Fetterman (1998) states,

The ethnographer is a human instrument. With a research problem, a theory of social interaction or behavior, and a variety of conceptual guidelines in mind, the ethnographer strides into a culture or social situation to explore its terrain and to collect and analyze data (p. 31).

As such, fieldwork and participant observation of a group of ten students was conducted. This allowed me to become immersed in school culture and see patterns of behavior and other experiences and events as they unfolded during the school day. Students were observed for approximately five to six hours each
while in class. It was important for me to remember the delicate role that I straddled between that of researcher and participant.

Field notes were used to record classroom observations and to transcribe later that same day. This process begins the trek of becoming immersed in the setting by making note of the how's, where's, and when's of the phenomena being observed. Emerson, Fertz, and Shaw (1995) state, “it is a defining moment in field relations when an ethnographer takes out a pad and begins to write down what people are saying and doing in the presence of those very people” (p. 25). The final goal of the researcher is to turn his or her technical notes into a document intended for a general audience.

The use of three types of data gathering strategies provided the triangulation needed to add rigor to this qualitative study. Interviews, observations, and focus groups were all used to study the phenomena of student engagement. Triangulation provides clarity of understanding. It also reduced systematic biases and limitations of using only one method of data collection (Maxwell, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

There is an educational crisis affecting the Latino community in America. Latino students are dropping out of the educational pipeline at a high rate. In order to understand the phenomenon, researchers have developed theories that usually blame the student. The explanations given for the dropout phenomena usually point to risk factors found within a student's family, community and
culture. What is problematic is that these studies employ a deficit lens by which to examine students of color and thus perpetuate and produce racism. A great injustice is being committed to students of color when we frame the dropout crisis through deficit thinking.

Understanding the dropout problem through an educational discourse of individual characteristics is both myopic and racist. However, when one considers the contemporary Latino dropout crisis in the historical context of colonization, stereotyping, segregation, and other racist policies, it makes complete sense. Latinos in the Southwest have a historical legacy of domination and oppression rooted in ideology, language and in the social construction of Latinos as the “Other.” History has proven that schools are far from being neutral institutions. Instead, students of color must contend with the process of socialization to accept the values and ideology of the dominant class. As such, teachers act as an important relay between curriculum and the student. Teachers also have an important role in constructing the kinds of experiences that shape student identity. Consequently, sustaining inspiring school cultures becomes crucial in sustaining student engagement.

Schools are people intensive places. As such, students are expected to move from one social context to another in school. A system of practices, assumptions and myths creates the social milieus that students encounter at school. Schein (1992) referred to this ideological and political system as school culture. Another layer of school culture operates in the background which is known as the hidden curriculum (Dei, 1997). This is the unwritten code sustained
by the attitudes and behaviors of school agents. These attitudes that school agents (teachers, security guards, administrators and counselors) have convey specific messages to students. There is evidence to suggest that these messages, when conveyed to students of color, are fueled by stereotypes and the perceived pathologies of the typical urban family of color. This negatively affects interpersonal relationships between students and staff. A repercussion of poor relationships with teachers is that students decide to leave school. Consequently, studying school culture is pivotal in understanding how it influences a student's attitudes and participation toward schooling.

Recently, the dropout crisis has been studied as socially mediated phenomena. The normative practices, hierarchies of power, and relationships that students experience in school all factor in on student agency. This lens considers the dialectic nature of school structures, cultures and student agency in examining the co-construction of the dropout. Students are seen as having the potential to contribute to their own engagement when they interact with supportive structure and cultures of success. School structures and student risk factors alone are not enough to explain the dropout crisis affecting Latinos. School cultures are instrumental in cultivating student engagement or disengagement. Conchas (2001) asserts, "this simultaneous interplay of structure, culture and agency was the proximate source of engagement and school success" (p. 501). It is imperative that we define these cultures of success and apply more importance to acknowledging student agency in resisting or constructing their own academic success.
Theories need to be developed to help us understand those Latino students who continue to be at the margins of society. In response, I chose to ground my research using critical race theory. Critical race theory places importance to the experiential knowledge of people of color in understanding racial subordination like the Latino dropout crisis. By giving credibility to the voices of those being studied, CRT challenges the deficit informed research that serves to silence students and preserve the status quo. Furthermore, critical race researchers acknowledge that schools have the capacity to oppress or to empower students. Critical race theory challenges the dominant notions of meritocracy, white privilege, and the so-called neutral structures, processes and discourse that mask racial inequalities in the highly political landscape of schooling.

To summarize, CRT's tenets encapsulated this study (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Hence, this study saw it important to privilege the voices of students of color to heightened my understanding of school culture (L. F. Rodríguez, 2008). In addition, Smyth and Hattam (2004) have shown how teachers and school cultures co-construct early school leaving. Instead of simply looking at the "risk factors" inherent to students of color, I examine student engagement through the interaction of structure, culture, and agency (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009).

Smyth and Hattam (2004) assert that school culture is a dynamic construct that sustains a constellation of tendencies. They have created a cultural topology of school cultures that they refer to as a "cultural geography" of
schools. In their research, they identify and examine how schools are organized and scripted to include or exclude certain groups of students. Three archetypes of school culture are described as (a) the aggressive school, (b) the passive school, and (c) the active school. It is believed that the dimensions of school culture that include power, pedagogy, and relationships mediate school structures and student engagement (cognitive, behavioral, and emotion).
This literature review will discuss rise of neoliberalism as a hegemonic policy that influences what and how things are done in schools. I believe that it is crucial to understand how globalization has produced the reform policies and practices of the 21st century through the proliferation of high stakes testing, school vouchers, competition, and budget cuts. Secondly, I review the literature related to contemporary high school dropout crisis through the lens of exclusionary practices, deficit theories, and ideologies that perpetuate the permanence of racism in schools. In similar fashion, I continue the discussion of oppression in a historical context. Specifically, I look at the hegemonic use of culture to acquire the uncritical consent of the Other through language.

Next, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is reviewed in the literature. CRT provides the pillars in which this study is hoisted by valuing the experiences of the oppressed as legitimate knowledge. Secondly, CRT interrogates the dropout crisis toward institutional structures and organizational cultures by acknowledging that racism is normally ingrained in the fabric of American institutions. Hence, CRT is a potent tool in uncovering, naming, and transforming oppressive institutional structures.

Further, this literature review situates the definition of school culture within the literature on cultural anthropology. My intent for doing this was to provide foundation for appreciating the power culture has in understanding and shaping
humanity through a socialization process of schooling. Also, the study of cultural anthropology proposes an alternative point of view of culture by investigating who we are and why we do the things we do through the study of institutions and those different from ourselves. This section accentuates the school's interest in maintaining ethnocentrism. It also shows how minority groups interact with the dominant culture of schooling. Indeed, this section forges a definition of culture from one that is simply ornamental to one that worthy of capturing its complexities and potential to understanding why minority students disproportionally fail in school.

Finally, I address the literature on school culture that attempts to identify the constituent components of organizational culture and their functions within the context of organizational behavior. I review the literature that addresses how the dynamic nature of school culture informs student agency. I end the by briefly discussing influence that school culture has on student engagement. Altogether, this literature review relates to my research question in that it (a) considers macro-level influences on school culture; (b) situates the dropout crisis in a historical context, (c) posits CRT as a framework for valuing the experiential knowledge of people of color, (d) establishes school culture as an orienting theory in explaining student agency.

Figure 1 is a diagram that illustrates the components of this literature review. I chose to build a foundation using two macro-level schemas: Neoliberalism and CRT.
Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Society plays an influential role in the formation of culture within schools that it must be considered (L. Bell & Kent, 2010). Additionally, CRT counters a color-blind analysis of school culture and privileges the voices of youth (Ullucci & Battey, 2011). CRT heightens my theoretical sensitivity to confront normative beliefs that determine who is left behind in school (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In addition, I look at the dropout phenomena through a conceptual lens that uses a structure-culture-agency framework (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). I believe that using this perspective of analysis moves away from the deficit-oriented views of students of color and considers how culture is a powerful mediating force between school practices and student engagement (Valencia, 2010b). Next, I chose to take a closer look at school culture through the relational model (Smyth,
Down, & McInerney, 2010). Finally, student agency is reviewed in the literature by considering its cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Alison, 2004).

Neoliberalism and Educational Policy

The 21st century brings new challenges to public schools in their quest of closing the opportunity gap between students of color and white middle-class students (Klaf & Kwan, 2010). Political forces are assaulting the one social institution, which for many from marginalized groups with any hope still view as the great equalizer (Rodríguez & Conchas, 2009). Public education is vulnerable because it does not exist in a vacuum but is shaped by hegemonic economic, political, and sometimes religious forces that create and institute educational policy and reform (Aleman, 2009a). Education is political from the macro-level to the micro-level. Teaching is a political endeavor when curriculum and instruction that favors social justice does not converge with the interest of teachers who resist considering it (Milner, 2011). Teaching is political when educational leaders and teachers act as if race and racism does not exists in education. However, race does matter (Brayboy, et al., 2007; West, 1993).

In addition to a historical legacy of marginalization by cultural and linguistic annihilation due to conquest and colonization, Latino students will need to contend with Neoliberalism. Cornel West (2004) refers to Neoliberalism as a dangerous dogma that diverts attention from schools to prisons. It redefines social issues, like the high school dropout crisis, as a technical challenge that
requires market forces to generate solutions (Harvey, 2005). The collective good is forsaken in order to make space for competition, privatization, deregulation, and reduction of government spending for schools (Giroux, 2009). The problem is that where there is competition, there are usually winners and losers. This sets the stage for school cultures that are exclusionary (Smyth & Hattam, 2004). What is disturbing is that this hidden political agenda has already made its way to creating educational reforms in America (Apple, 2006).

The last several decades has spawned a political movement that blends traditional liberal concerns for social justice with an emphasis on economic growth (West, 2004). This blending of economics and social justice is an oxymoron. Market-forces emphasize competition. Addressing an equitable playing field is not a goal of capitalism. Closing the achievement gap of students from lower socioeconomic groups is not the goal of capitalism. Nevertheless, Americans have allowed a shift in the educational policy that has favored the erosion of educational equity for our youth (Apple, 2006; Giroux, 2005).

Neoliberalism is a type of virus that infects our nation with antidemocratic policies that render the lives of our youth and other marginalized groups as disposable (Giroux, 2009). The focus on accountability is valid but ignorant. Neoliberal politics has spawned educational policies that ignore issues of poverty, race and equity. Accordingly, Americans suffer from myopia with the passage of state and federal educational policy that favors student outcomes without considering school inputs (Kohn, 2004). Unfortunately, market fundamentalism, like a Trojan horse, has made its way to social institutions like
public schools in this new age of testing, accountability, zero-tolerance, race to the top, and school vouchers.

Over twenty-five years ago, *A Nation at Risk* was published (NCEE, 1983). This document ignited a standards-based education reform movement across America. It also changed the orientation of educational reform to focus on student outcomes. High-stakes testing became the gold standard to improve the quality of public education. Accountability became the linchpin for educational discourse into the 21st century. If something could not be measured, it was not important for improving public schools.

According to Apple (2006), Neoliberalism has implicitly guided the formation of educational policy that gives credence to privatization, fragmentation of school control, and recasting teacher training as technical support to raise test scores (Lahann & Reagan, 2011). Case in point is Torres’ (2005) critique of NCLB (No Child Left Behind) as a brainchild of Neoliberalism. Because of national reform policies like NCLB, schools operate in an arena of fear, punishment, and rewards. Noguera (1994) argues that we need more democracy and not less. According to Noguera (1994) educational reform should increase community control of the educational process. Currently, we view parents as consumers of education by issuing vouchers instead of empowering them by allowing for their participation in educational planning and reform.

According to Lahann and Reagan (2011), Neoliberalism has snowballed into a worldwide political model whose existence is rarely noted. It has received well deserved criticism for its application to education. It is common knowledge
that obtaining a higher level of education in America opens the doors to greater opportunity. However, Neoliberal values create a culture that cultivates class and race disparities by creating competition for the best educational resources and having schools compete for the best students (Apple, 2001). Operating in a theater of competition usually privileges those already empowered. As such, competition requires poor disadvantaged students and their families to participate in the educational process under hegemonic terms and conditions (Apple, 2001).

In addition to reproducing the status quo, Neoliberal educational policies weaken our democratic system (West, 2004). The underprivileged are politically at a disadvantaged. The democratic ideal shifts from being communal to promulgating self-interest (Apple, 2006). Democracy is redefined as capital gain rather than political empowerment of parents, students, and educators (West, 2004). There is an essential struggle for equality if we expect more Latinos and other marginalized students of color to enter the educational pipeline. Effective teaching of Latino students depends on caring relationships (Valenzuela, 1999). As such, Neoliberal policies like NCLB utilizes market instruments that are considered apolitical and objective (Apple, 2006). Thus, educational policy with a social justice agenda is rendered null by ignoring the moral and political dimensions of schooling that is required for poor students of color.

I believe an understanding of the politics behind the creation of educational reform is needed in order for leaders to develop counter-narratives and resistance to policies that perpetuate inequities among marginalized students. Policies that are overly technocratic and rely on color-blind and
objective instruments will not help us level the playing field for all students.

Because education is not an apolitical arena, scholars have studied the politics of education by centering it on race and racism (Aleman, 2009a; Bartolomé, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1999; L. F. Rodriguez, 2008). This kind of scholarship helps educational leaders move toward a clearer understanding of the interplay between democracy, power, and the political process. Without this kind of political clarity, we will continue to create policies that are ineffective and inequitable (López, 2003).

Landscape of Exclusion: The High School Dropout Crisis

The educational opportunities for upward social mobility have improved for all students in the United States. Case in point, the high school completion rates for all youth ages 16-24 has increased from 82.8% in the 1970s to 89% in the first decade of the 21st century (Cataldi, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2009). In spite of this substantial improvement, Latinos continue to lag behind other ethnic groups in educational attainment (Valencia, 2010a)

Covarrubias (2011) concisely capture the educational crisis facing America in his description of an educational pipeline for Latino youth. Leaks in the pipeline allow for the loss of 44 out of 100 Latino students that go on to complete a high school diploma. It also shows the very low number of students who actually matriculate from a community college to a 4-year college. In fact, for every 27 Latinos who attend college, only 10 earn a B.A. degree. Worse yet, only two out of 100 Latino students go on to complete a graduate degree. Instead of
Figure 2. Chicana/o educational pipeline.

addressing structural inequities along the K-12 pipeline, schools focus on practices of exclusion. Figure 2 shows the downward slide of Latino students that progress through the educational pipeline (Covarrubias, 2011).

Leaks in the K-12 educational pipeline are caused by many exclusionary practices and conditions (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Educational policy makers and leaders continue to focus on high-stakes testing and standardized curriculum that may prevent and further discourage students from pursuing a college career. Low numbers of Chicano students are enrolled in academically rigorous and enriching programs that lessen their chances of college readiness. Educational practices rarely capitalize on the linguistic and cultural assets of students resulting in an exclusionary practice known as “subtractive schooling” (Valenzuela, 1999). Further, there is evidence that shows that Chicano students have less access to academic counselors who can provide the social capital needed to plan their college careers (Oakes, 2005).

Other factors that puncture the K-12 educational pipeline include low numbers of Latino teachers and teachers trained in multicultural education (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). In addition, the transfer rates from community college to a university are dismal. Yosso and Solorzano (2006) cite poor student support services, hostile campus racial climates, and educational isolation and alienation in higher education as other obstacles that hinder the educational advancement of Chicano students.

Critical race scholars have used the concept of intersectionality to provide further dimensions to the educational pipeline. Intersectionality considers a
variety of social construction like class, gender, race, and sexuality and how they impact the lives of people (Valdes, 1997). Instead of treating Latinos as a monolithic entity, Covarrubias (2011) provides an educational pipeline for Latinos of Mexican origin from the lowest income quartile. This reveals that an alarming 60% of poor Latinos of Mexican origins are pushed-out of the school system. Further analysis shows that even at the highest quartile of income, 16% of Chicanos compared to 3% of Blacks and Whites are pushed-out of school.

California will be faced with many social and economic costs because of the high school dropout problem. There will be much to gain economically from an improved labor market, lower incarceration costs, and improved public health by eliminating the high school dropouts, especially among Latinos. Because high school dropouts are inclined to have difficulty in the labor market, they are twice as likely to be living in poverty (Stuit & Springer, 2010). Furthermore, high school dropouts earn nearly $20,000 less per year than those with some college education (Stuit & Springer, 2010). This translates to lost personal income and state tax revenue. It is estimated that an adult with a high school diploma in California has the potential to contribute $13,328 more in state tax revenue over a lifetime than a dropout (Stuit & Springer, 2010).

In addition to lost tax revenue, California high school dropouts report poorer health and a higher reliance on Medicaid. The fiscal impact of California's dropouts in state Medicaid expenses is more than $1 billion per year (Stuit & Springer, 2010). The dropout crisis also contributes to the high costs incurred by California due to criminal behavior. The association between low educational
attainment and criminal behavior has been well documented (Lochner & Moretti, 2001). It is estimated that California’s 3.8 million dropouts have a $1.4 billion impact on the state’s economy annually (Stuit & Springer, 2010). California’s economic future is at stake. Californians can no longer ignore the missed economic opportunities afforded to us by eliminating the dropout crisis for all students.

Because Latinos have one of the lowest high school completion rates and are the fastest growing ethnic population in America, the total number of dropouts could possibly continue to increase into the next decade (Valencia, 2010a). Furthermore, Chicanos have the lowest socioeconomic status of all Latino sub-groups (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2009, Table 6). We are at a turning point in making sure that our Latino youth are provided a quality education and the support they need to stay in school and contribute to the local, state and national economy. Moreover, our youth deserve a quality education because it is the humane thing to do.

Particularly vulnerable to being excluded from school are Latino and African American students (Noguera, 2003). These struggling students of color tend to be disproportionately poor and male. The schools these students attend are usually operating in a culture of exclusion where these students are alienated, experience academic difficulties and have excessive absences (Brown, 2007). According to Brown (2007), society’s perception of students with histories of academic failure is simply that they “do not want to learn.” This
perception may partially explain why society fails to respond to the dropout crisis with the urgency it deserves.

The learning conditions for our youth have declined substantially in the 21st century. This is especially true for California, where a weak educational infrastructure continues to sustain disparities across California's communities (Rogers, Bertrand, Freelon, & Fanelli, 2011). In 2011, California is amidst an economic crisis and deep cuts to education spending are making matters worse for struggling students. California ranks as one of the worst states per pupil spending and has the near worst ratios of teachers and counselors to students (Rogers, et al., 2011). Furthermore, instructional days in nearly half of California high schools have been reduced and two in three California high school principals report having to cut back or eliminate summer school (Rogers, et al., 2011).

Many states, including California, have established "zero tolerance" policies that disproportionately exclude students of color from school. For example, Latino students make up 18% of the national public school enrollment but 20% of the expulsions in 2002. Far worse, African American students represent 17% of the public school enrollment but 32% of the expulsions in the same year. During the school year 2002-2003, a total of 396,000 students were suspended and another 18,682 were expelled from school in California. When students are removed from school it severely disrupts their learning. Moreover, there is little scientific evidence that suspension or expulsions do much in improving the learning outcomes of students. Brady (2002) states,
Some of the more troubling information regarding the disparate suspensions and expulsions of students of color, as well as students classified with disabilities, is evidence that many of these children are disciplined unfairly and are arbitrarily suspended and expelled for incidents that otherwise could have been handled using alternative methods. (p.180)

Ironically, the highly publicized school shootings that ignited these harsh policies occurred by White students at predominantly White schools (Brady, 2002).

Smyth and Hattam (2004) describe how society engages in ideological diversion that functions to distract our attention from the real issues of the dropout crisis. Instead of focusing on increasing student voice, the affects of globalization, the lack of meaningful teacher and student relations and ‘boring’ curriculum, society is intent in stigmatizing students and families of color as “at risk.” This offers a deceptive image of dropouts as an easily identifiable group, who by virtue of some personal characteristic will leave school. Fine (1990) describes how, “no field surpasses public education as the space into which public anxieties, terrors, and “pathologies” are so routinely showered, only to be transformed into public policies of what must be done to save us from them” (p.55).

There have been many theories to explain school failure among students of color, especially those who are from low-SES (socioeconomic status). Valencia (2010) notes that these contrasting explanations are best considered as
"families" of explanatory paradigms. The paradigms documented by Valencia are communication process, caste theory, social reproduction and resistance, as well as deficit theory. I will briefly discuss each theoretical cluster.

One of the theoretical explanations given for the low academic achievement among Latino students is the cultural difference model. Scholars of this framework redefine student deficits as differences between the behaviors and skills of the home and those hegemonic behaviors expected from the school. For example, a student’s cultural way of taking meaning from a text and the world may produce misunderstanding between the teacher and student (Delpit, 1995). This may lead educators to perceive and label culturally diverse students as unmotivated to learn (Erikson, 1987). The criticism of this cultural mismatch theory is that groups are regarded as a monolithic entity (Irvine & York, 1995). Essentially, culturally diverse students are stereotyped and generalizations are made about them. This process of “othering” can be a concern (Perez Huber, 2010). Scholars have posited other deterministic theories for the oppression of minorities by examining structural inequalities.

Case in point, researchers have advanced a theoretical family that considers structural inequality for the explanation of educational oppression (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985; Pearl, 2002). This systemic inequality model considers macrolevel contexts of organizational culture, economics, and politics. These social-political elements encompass factors that shape school policy and practice, the national economy, and the inherent authoritarian nature
of schooling. Some scholars situate the explanation for educational inequities of minorities in a historical context.

Pear (2002) documents how historical values and traditions either empower or exclude people from influential positions. In other words, Chicanos’ historical legacy of emerging as a conquered people, whose culture and language have been denied, manifests itself in exclusionary practices in school. Schools are viewed as sites of social reproduction that sorts students into hierarchical divisions of labor already found in the wider society (De Jesus, 2005). Pursuing this further, scholars have differentiated minorities based on their migratory legacies using caste theory.

Caste theory has been advanced by anthropologist John Ogbu (1978) in which he dichotomizes minorities as either “voluntary” or “involuntary.” Minority groups perceive their existence in American in terms of oppression from either a history of slavery or conquest. Other “voluntary” groups immigrate with the expectations of opportunity and the American dream. This theory for school failure has been criticized for being deterministic and insufficient for explaining the variability in Latino academic achievement (Foley, 1991; Conchas, 2002). I will expand on caste theory later by using Gilberto Conchas’ (2002) work on Latino achievement variability.

Another paradigm for explaining school failure among students of color is that they lack the cultural capital to succeed in school. This theory is known as deficit thinking. Valencia; (2010) describes how students are represented as coming from a culture of poverty and are “at-risk” for school failure. This model is
pernicious in that it represents poor White students and students of color as inferior and blames them for their own academic failure. It fails to take into account the intangible and tangible structural features of school culture, which may contribute to student disengagement from school. In contrast, the experiential knowledge of students of color has been viewed as valid as illustrated by the scholars discussed below.

Scholars have captured the voices of urban students of color that shows how the school helps to construct the “dropout” (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Cammarota, 2008; Smyth & Hattam, 2004). Cammarota (2008) documented the environment of neglect for Latino students who were attending school in a California barrio. In addition to overcrowded schools, outdated equipment, and dilapidated buildings, school personnel were also a major obstacle for students in acquiring a descent education. Students cited feeling ignored by staff that was indifferent to their academic progress. An ethos of individualism pervaded the practices and attitudes of teachers. Students perceived that some students were more deserving than others. Many students internalized this school practice as evidence of their own racial inferiority and engaged in “self blame” and “embarrassed regrets.” This notion of inferiority insidiously snowballs into a self fulfilling prophecy of academic failure for many of these youths.

Whatever the theory used to explain Chicano student disengagement, it is fact that our schools poorly serve the largest minority group in America—Latinos (Cammarota, 2008; Covarrubias, 2011). It is also a fact that students of color are expected to adapt the hegemonic norms and values of the school (Hemmings,
2000). Furthermore, they must contend with racism as well as are taught by the least experienced teachers in schools who lack the necessary resources (Dessel, 2010; Kozol, 1994; Valenica, 2002). Although the civil rights era brought about small incremental changes in the name of social justice, problems like school segregation continue as illustrated below.

Although it has been over 50 years since the passage of Brown vs. Board of Education, Orfield (1996) points out that Latinos attend segregated schools at higher rates than any other racial group. Segregated schools have been documented for offering culturally irrelevant curriculum and tracking of students (Olsen, 1997). We have the facts and the know-how to engage our youth of color; we just need to have the will to apply it in our schools. The future democracy and the economic health of our country depend on it.

Language and Colonization

It is ironic that people of Mexican descent encounter symbolic violence by being represented as “alien” or “illegal” by the dominant discourse in America (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Our cultural capital is devalued even though we are the sons and daughters of people indigenous to the Southwest (Yosso, 2005). Case in point, the remains of Chicanos’ ancient ancestors have been uncovered in what is now Texas and dates as far back as 35,000 BC (Chávez, 1984). The roots of Mexican Americans run deep in the Southwest. Chicanos arise from a conquered people whose representation is altered as “foreigners” residing in the very land their ancestors occupied. Acuna (1988) contends that presents day
Mexican Americans live in a colonial state under the imperialist control of the United States. As such, like other colonized peoples, Chicanos suffer from having to live in a world divided in two (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Scholars who underscore how the colonial state of Chicanos relegates them to a submerged caste do so not to condemn Anglo Americans or to replace one form of power for another. The emergence of Chicano or Black power is not the answer because the danger exists to continue the pattern of oppression (Freire, 2000). Instead, the colonized has the power to reclaim their humanity and the humanity of their oppressor through process of decolonization. This entails courageous discussions of race and racism (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Scholars of color use a colonial lens to raise a consciousness among those being oppressed, so they can liberate themselves and those that have corrupted themselves by oppressing others (Freire, 2000). This raising of awareness of the political, economic, psychological, and cultural oppression is necessary for Chicanos to understand their master-servant relationship with hegemony, so they can began their journey toward liberation (Acuña, 1988). Paulo Freire (2002) referred to this dialectic interplay of reflection and action as praxis.

There is a long history of European imperial use of power and language in the Southwest to subdue the Other (Anzaldúa, 1987). The conquest of the Americas by the Spanish colonizers includes the use of language and power as an instrument for expansion (Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The European Imperialists deemed the American natives as bestial and incapable of communicating and governing. This was so because the system of governance
that the natives possessed did not fit the hegemonic form of government or linguistics (Flores & Murillo, 2001). Hence, this marked the beginning of linguistic colonialism.

During pre-colonial times, the American continent was a land with the voices of over 1,000 indigenous languages and dialects (Molesky, 1988). Therefore, it is no wonder that the expansion of the “New World” concerned itself with issues of language and ideology (Flores & Murillo, 2001). For example, the Spaniards believed that the Empires' power over the colonized was derived from Christ. This ideology of divine right was exemplified in a pivotal document known as the Requerimiento (Moreno, 1999). The Spanish invaders used the Requiremento as a tool to enslave and control the indigenous. The Spanish conquistadores quickly discovered how language and ideology served as a mechanism to integrate, split, and control the indigenous population (Flores & Murillo, 2001).

The cycle colonialism is repeated once again when the United States embarked on a mission to conquer Mexican occupied territory from 1846 to 1848, which was justified in terms of the ideology of Manifest Destiny (Hennessy, 1984). As a result, Mexicans who occupied the Southwest were forced to give up their social position and endure the conditions that came with being an involuntary immigrant. According to Blauner (1969), four conditions make the colonial complex: forced occupation of land; cultural impact for the colonized; constrain or destruction of indigenous ways of life; social domination by racism.
Chicanos continue to suffer from all forms of the colonial complex even today (Velez-Ibanez, 1996).

Scholars have posited that the internal colonies that exist in present day America are the barrios and ghettos (Savitch, 1978). These urban areas usually suffer from poor living and educational conditions (Kozol, 1991). The barrios and hoods are centers of cheap labor that is exploited by those that can afford to live in wealthier territories (Savitch, 1978). Youth of color, particularly males, who live in these areas are students who have the most emotional, social, and academic needs (Conchas & Vigil, 2010). However, these are the students whose lives are being manipulated by zero tolerance policies and school exclusion (Noguera, 2003; Zirkel et al., 2011).

The Chicano and Black experiences have been very different from that of other European immigrants. Unlike European immigrant groups, Chicanos have diverged in social mobility and efforts toward preserving their culture and language (Hurstfield, 1975). Chicano adolescents in many Southern California barrios suffer the internal colonial conditions of ethnic isolation, racism, and poor educational opportunities (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1996). Street-socialized-youth are exposed to a social ecology of poverty. They are more prone to eventually becoming gang members and have difficulty in the maturation process (Conchas & Vigil, 2010). The Chicano and Black experience in America can best be interpreted through a internal colonial framework that includes a multifaceted construct of oppression (Blauner, 2001).
The colonial relationship between Chicanos and Anglos can be seen in the present day American educational system (Hurstfield, 1975). Using Blauner's (2001) colonial framework as a lens, we can unveil Anglo domination of educational discourse, practice, and policy; the use of assessments to sort students; impose limitations to linguistic and cultural preservation of the Other. California is well known for its Nativist politics aimed at linguistically and culturally restricting Latinos (Gendzel, 2009). Also, the classroom usually transmits the dominant national culture to students rather than the local community's culture (Johnson, 1980). In addition, there has been an over emphasis on assessment rather than focusing on the socioeconomic and racial disparities found school resources (J. Lee & Wong, 2004). Finally, Mexican Americans have historically been left out from agencies which govern the educational system (Hurstfield, 1975). This hegemonic use of culture to acquire the uncritical consent of the Other is exemplified through language as illustrated below.

For example, the power inherent in language manifests itself in symbolic violence toward the Other (Anzaldúa, 1987). Those who speak another language quickly feel the hegemonic bond of language (Fanon, 2004). This is a product of colonization (Blauner, 1969). According to Minh-ha (1989) language is one of the most intricate forms of subjugation. In addition, Minh-ha (1989) posits that language is a source of power and unconscious servility.

The crippling affect of the devaluation of linguistic capital is a form of violence that the colonized endure and are rendered foreign (Fanon, 2008). The colonizer wields power over ideology and language to oppress and subjugate the
Other (Fanon, 2004). Fanon (2008) states, “To speak means being able to use a certain syntax and possessing the morphology of such and such a language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (p.1-2). In other words, being colonized by language has larger implications for one’s consciousness. Speaking English means that one accepts the complete consciousness of the colonizer which identifies brown as “alien” and “illegal” (Murguia & Telles, 1996). Today, the violence of the colonizer is represented differently. The contemporary American political landscape, especially in California, has been fertile with propositions that abdicate the social-political promise of true equity for poor Latino and Black families (Cline, Necochea, & Rios, 2004). The representation of these racist propositions is deceptive. They are given names like “English for the Children” and “Equal Rights Initiative.” These propositions do nothing more than sustain the conditions for internal colonialism.

The parents of Mexican American students believe in the importance of sustaining cultural and linguistic heritage (Farruggio, 2010). This is also true of parents who choose to place their children in English Only programs. Farruggio (2010) argues that all parents of Latino students need to be educated on the heritage potential in additive bilingual programs. The passage of Proposition 227 on June 2, 1998 by the majority of California voters ended 30 years bilingual education (Cline, et al., 2004). This occurred despite bilingual education’s potential to sustain culture and enhance a variety of cognitive performance measures. So why did Proposition 227 pass in California? Valdez (2001)
suggests that as the economy worsens, so does the level of intolerance for anyone foreign.

The contradiction in the English-only movement is that the learning of English is seen as the sum of all learning (Macedo, 2000). Education entails critical thinking, history, math, and science. More importantly, it entails problem posing education and dialogical discourse (Donnell, 2007; Freire, 2000). The teaching of English semantics and syntax is not enough for students of other languages to become fully competitive in the world. Furthermore, a review of experimental studies comparing bilingual education to English-only reading programs favored bilingual approaches (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). There was also evidence to suggest that reading instruction in a familiar language served as a bridge to eventually acquiring English (Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Flores and Murillo (2001) give their personal accounts of linguistic devaluation and the social-psychological consequences that they encountered as youths. These counter narratives from the lived experiences of Mexican Americans exemplify the shame, stunted academic growth and the resistance to the hegemony of the English language by valuing their own linguistic and cultural capital (Anzaldúa, 1987). It also broadens and deepens the representation of the struggle that Latino students from low socioeconomic centers, barrios or “internal colonies” face as they strive for a better life. The youth development of low-income Mexican-American students is affected by sociopsychological, ecological, sociocultural, and socioeconomic factors (Conchas & Vigil, 2010). It is imperative that educators consider a holistic approach that addresses this multiple
marginality rather than focus on generic intervention strategies for “at-risk” students.

Critical Race Theory

CRT began from critical legal scholarship. It arose from the discontent of scholars regarding the failed materialization of civil rights litigation from the 50s and 60s that hoped to permanently dismantle discrimination in American institutions (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Among the legal scholars of this radical movement were: Kimberle Crenshaw; Lani Guinier; Patricia Williams; Mari Matsuda; Richard Delgado; Derrick Bell; Charles Lawerence (Taylor, 1998; Taylor, et al., 2009). These architects of Critical Legal Studies were able to ignite a political scholarly movement.

CRT was initially applied to law issues such as affirmative action and the disproportionate sentencing of Browns and Blacks in the criminal justice system. Gradually, CRT caught the attention of researchers in the fields of Women’s Studies, Sociology, and Education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As a result, CRT has grown to be cross-disciplinary. Taylor (1998) describes CRT, “As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of Whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color.” (p. 122).

In Madison, Wisconsin, CRT left the confines of legal circles and was unveiled in 1989 at a workshop (Taylor, et al., 2009). The genesis of CRT created a new discourse that challenged the notion that the experiences of
whites were the normative. This newly conceived oppositional scholarship aimed to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power. As a result, it has matured into a credible movement that continues to celebrate its success into the 21st century (Valdes, Culp, & Harris, 2002). CRT is needed more than ever to identify the issues of curricula discrimination that comes in the wake of No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and its fascination with assessment. This age of accountability has created conditions that suppress educators from libratory education that cultivates critical thinking among oppressed students of color. McLaren (2003) clearly articulates this point when he declares,

> From the perspective of critical educational theorist, the curriculum represents much more than a program of study, a classroom text, or a course syllabus. Rather, it represents the introduction part to prepare students for dominant or subordinate positions in the existing society. (p.86)

McLaren refers to the hidden curriculum that creates and sustains inequitable opportunities for marginalized groups (Anyon, 1980; Hemmings, 1999).

A prolific writer on Critical Race Theory (CRT), Richard Delgado (1991) asserts the following:

As marginalized people we should strive to increase our power, cohesiveness, and representation in all significant areas of society. We should do this, though, because we are entitled to these things and because fundamental fairness requires this reallocation of power. (p.1225)
This bold statement is as true today as it was a century ago for people of color. This call for action is especially true for poor Chicanos, whose avenue of hope is the formal educational system. However, there is much evidence that educational settings also systematically exclude and damage students of color (Acuña, 1988; Aleman, 2009a; Dessel, 2010; Kozol, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). Many educational practices and political discourse silences the experiences of students which limit critique and potential change (Aleman, 2009b). Eurocentric epistemologies inform educational research, curriculum and practice thereby masking and devaluing other forms of knowledge and experiences (Perez Huber, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Dominant ideologies are considered “legitimate” even if they portray people of color as deficient or in need of repair (Delgado & Villapando, 2002). For example, in the field of K-12 public education, I have observed administrators assigned to positions that deal with “urban” issues of schooling like discipline. Zirkel (2011) describes how the master narrative requires street credibility for good leadership of urban students. What is alarming is that this “tough love” persona that serves students who are “out-of-control” represents an authentic person of color (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007).

CRT continues where Critical Theory (CT) ends. CT is a form of scholarship that examines the oppressive aspects of society (Tierney, 1993). CRT is a theoretical framework that offers a lens for scholars to examine how multiple forms of oppression, including race, mediates the educational experiences of people of color (Perez Huber, 2010). Latino scholars have further refined CRT by also considering the oppressive realities of culture, language,
immigration, phenotype, sexuality, and ethnicity (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).
Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) captures the communal issues of a Latino
pan-ethnicity. LatCrit gives a voice to those who suffer from multiple layers of
subordination who would otherwise go unnoticed. Furthermore, LatCrit develops
a sense of critical consciousness about systematic injustices and foregrounds the
actions required for social transformation (Cammarota, 2011).

Students of color are usually seen through a deficit lens (Yosso, 2005).
Being a Latino or Black educator is no exception to the rule. Educators of color
are by no means immune from possessing dominant ideologies that are
damaging to students of color (Bartolome, 2004; Macedo, 1994). Unless an
educator of color possesses both a cultural/political identity and a critical
perspective, they risk becoming tokens who only assist in maintaining the status
quo (Berta-Avila, 2004). Educators of color can become powerful change agents
when they think, analyze, talk, and take action (Freire, 2000). Conversely,
educators of color can also perpetuate dysconcious racism by their unreflective
actions (Jackson, 1999). For example, in informal interviews with two district
administrators, one being African American and the other Latino, they both
expressed their rationale for hiring White females as front line curriculum and
instruction experts. Both administrators were in charge of critical areas that dealt
with sensitive topics that related to students of color. Surprisingly, their rationale
for hiring White females was similar. They both were concerned that district
teaching staff would be more receptive to White women presenting issues
relating to students of color.
I surmise two explanations for their rationale that are rooted in Fanon’s Theory of Violence (Fanon, 2004). Whites perceive conversations of race as acts of violence toward them (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Consequently, the administrators recognize white privilege by choosing to have representatives from the mainstream staff deliver the sensitive curriculum to the teaching workforce instead of people of color. The political discourse around issues of race is shaped by the need to cultivate a sense of “niceness” and “decorum” (Aleman, 2009b). The logic is that being white and female, which represents the majority of teachers, carries with it the privilege to be heard by others. The action of these educational leaders coincides with the theory that racial privilege gives white people the power of voice (Lucal, 1996). Secondly, the permanence of racism exists within the local educational system that educational leaders of color, in this example, recognize it and feel the need to create safe spaces for issues concerning race (D. A. Bell, 1992; Henry & Sears, 2002). However, they are doing nothing more than reproducing the social hierarchy.

CRT scholars implore society and especially, educators, to create equitable educational experiences of all children and especially those that continue to be marginalized by society through the intersectionality of classism, race, sexual orientation and gender (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). They make no apologies about declaring that radical actions are necessary at the macro and micro levels of education to improve the educational milieu for Brown and Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CRT scholars unmask the hidden curriculums that serve to sustain a hegemonic stratification of opportunity and power among
students (Hemmings, 1999; Jay, 2003). Since its inception in the 1980s, this legal movement was a response to the shortcomings of critical legal studies in offering strategies to ameliorate oppressive social structures (Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004).

CRT is constructed by five major ideological pillars: (a) the idea that racism is normal; (b) the notion of an interest convergence; (c) race as a socially constructed idea; (d) the tenet that whites have benefited from civil right legislation; and (e) the use of storytelling and counter-storytelling to describe and challenge unjust conditions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT is based on the belief that racism has become so ingrained into the social fabric of American institutions, policies, and law that it assumes stealth-like features (D. A. Bell, 1992; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Historically, racism implied overt forms of individual instances of violence towards marginalized groups. However, racism is alive and well in the 21st century where it takes on a more subtle form that is almost unrecognizable.

Although CRT has its roots in critical legal studies as a response by scholars of color to the negation of race in its analysis of law, CRT has begun to make its way into the field of education (Akom, 2009; Aleman, 2009a; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Solorzano, et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). CRT offers a set of analytical tools that foregrounds race in its critique of educational cultures. According to Smith-Maddox and Solorzano (2002), CRT is applied to the field of education in a way that (a) foregrounds race in the curriculum; (b) counters normative methods, texts, paradigms; (c) considers how the social
constructs of race, class, and gender intersect to harm students of color; (d) acknowledges the gendered and racialized experiences of students of color; (e) offers a transformative methodology when examining subordination; and (f) borrows from a variety of epistemologies from History, Law, Sociology, Women’s Studies, and Ethnic Studies. Furthermore, educational scholars have also applied CRT in educational leadership. This application is refreshing in light of the current over emphasis on technical expertise and methods that obscure the more important reasons for the low academic performance of Latino students (Bartolomé, 1994). Lopez (2003) describes the potential of CRT in leadership by stating,

Issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other areas of difference- including their intersections- must take a central role in our knowledge base and practices, so that the "important stuff" in educational leadership is not solely rooted in technical knowledge of leadership and organizational theory but rests in the nuances of creating schools that truly work for all children, families, and members of the school community.

(p.86)

CRT is a form of resistance whose aim is to eliminate racial and all other forms social oppression. America’s traditional educational culture is based on claims of objectivity, colorblindness, and neutrality (López, 2003). These claims serve to obscure the power and privilege of the dominant groups in American schools (Jay, 2003). Likewise, traditional educational research usually disregards the experiential epistemologies of communities of color and adheres to these
same claims (Fernández, 2002). What results is a deficit way of thinking about communities of color. As a result, deficit thinking about urban students of color imbues American culture and school cultures mirror these beliefs (García & Guerra, 2004). Historically, there has been a greater emphasis on a positivist approach to research on communities of color that points to their needs and deficiencies (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Mainstream research uses methodologies that tend to utilize deficit notions of racialized students under the visage of colorblindness and neutrality (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This majoritarian approach to educational research informs practice that disregards the experiential and funds of knowledge that communities of color possess. The paradox is that the traditional approach to educational theory and practice that boasts to liberate racialized students does nothing more to silence their voices and marginalize them even further.

Deficit-informed approaches to improving education only oppress students rather than exercise its potential to empower and emancipate students of color. In a hierarchical society like America, knowledge from White middle and upper class has currency and is necessary for upward mobility (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Implicit in this notion is that communities of color lack the cultural and social capital necessary to succeed in society. Valenzuela (1999) underscores how this deficit thinking informs the ways in which schools structure practices from the perspective that students of color lack the necessary abilities to prosper.

Rather than focusing on deficiencies, Kretzman and McKnight (1993) argue that asset mapping is a strategy that counters deficit-informed approaches
to theory and practice. Asset mapping is an approach that locates community assets in the following areas: (a) community individuals; (b) community associations; (d) community institutions; (e) knowledge native to the community (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). This community-strengths approach emphasizes the design of policies and practices based on the capacities of people and their community. Recognizing the skills and voice of racialized communities allows researchers and practitioners to consider the contextual reality of students and reflect on the ethical aspects of education rather than the technical aspects (L. F. Rodríguez, 2008a).

Racism has morphed from individual acts of symbolic and physical violence towards members of oppressed groups into a less obvious systemic force that maintains all social constructs that continue to oppress members from oppressed groups (Aleman & Aleman, 2010). CRT offers a set of tools to help uncover, name and transform oppressive institutional structures in the search for social justice for all human beings. These analytical tools include: (a) critique of liberalism; (b) critique of colorblindness; (c) counter-storytelling; (d) Whiteness; and (e) interest convergence (Aleman & Aleman, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Iv, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Yosso, et al., 2004). CRT serves as a framework that aids educators to identify institutional racism in discipline policies, assessments, curriculum, and school hierarchy (Akom, 2009; Alemán, 2007; Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ortiz & Jani, 2010).
CRT scholars remain skeptical of liberalism's potential to liberate and empower those at the bottom of the social strata (Castagno, 2009). As a result, CRT has been applied by scholars to explain the shortcomings of liberalism to address subtle racism in education (Castagno, 2008, 2009; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Liberalism purports to sustain a level playing field while sustaining a system of Whiteness that grants privilege disproportionately (Gillborn, 2008).

There are at least three elements of liberalism that serve to maintain the status quo of middle class, White, male supremacy. The first element is that liberalism is content with slow incremental social change (D. A. Bell, 1992). Secondly, liberalism stresses equality of opportunity instead of equality of outcome (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thirdly, liberalism maintains the notion that discussing race and racism serves only to create discomfort and social division (Castagno, 2008).

**Cultural Anthropology**

The purpose for reviewing the literature in cultural anthropology was to examine the diverse conceptual tools offered by the field in understanding the sociocultural dynamics that form the educational experiences of students. According to Levinson, we can gain knowledge of how society functions through culture. Above all, culture is formulated through educational processes that interact with student agency and school structures that forge student identity. Understanding the unique social and cultural analysis posited by cultural anthropologists allowed me “to make the familiar strange” Levinson. Having used
a CRT framework, it became imperative to change common educational forms into something strange in order to interrogate racism in my analysis and to recognize the unique perspectives of youth. In order to interrupt the status quo we must see things in different ways so that discoveries can be located and education be transformed into a vehicle for emancipation.

Indeed, anthropologists offer a unique dimension to understanding school culture by examining the social and cultural forces that help shape education. For example, anthropologists have referred to men and women as symbolic animals (Levinson, 2000). Homo sapiens are natural symbol makers who learn to use symbols to make sense and act upon the world. School is where the young learn the methods through the educative process of schooling to make use of symbolism in order to adapt and reproduce the society in which they are expected to navigate (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). It is through the educational process that children learn the adaptive traits of language and culture that are both essential for humans to transmit symbolic rules to succeeding generations (Levinson, 2000).

So then, symbols act as guideposts that are assigned meaning and project meaning so that humans can organize and make sense of lived experiences (Levinson, 2000). As such, culture can be thought of a shared network of symbols from which humans acquire, produce, and transmit knowledge used for interpreting the world. From this communal system of symbols, individuals begin to develop their own ways of learning from the cultural resources at their disposal. Mankind is both enabled and restricted by the
structures found in social life. However, mankind's intrinsic drive for creativity and self-expression allows for human agency that has the potential to alter the patterns of social reproduction (Geertz, 2000). This conceptualization of culture provides insight into perceiving how rules may create boundaries for where meaning is negotiated by students. Moreover, school reform that is driven simply by restructuring falls short of considering how culture informs agency and vice versa. Students are products of their wider social culture as well as their school cultures. For this reason, it would be myopic to view disengaged students merely as students "at-risk." Below, I discuss how culture weighs in heavily in informing behavior.

Culture has also been described as a set of programs or control mechanisms for directing human behavior (Geertz, 2000). Mankind is highly dependent upon symbolic programs for ordering his behavior. Unlike lower life forms which rely on genetic controls and instinct, mankind is provided with a wider range of possible responses. The potential for human agency is tremendous because cognition can be viewed as being internal and social. Human thought is public in the sense that humans are bombarded by symbolic traffic in society to impose meaning upon experience. Geertz (2000) points out that humans are extraordinary in that they are born with the capacity to have lived a thousand kinds of lives but in the end only live one.

Culture provides the framework constructed of significant symbols that serve to regulate behavior and illuminate human experience. In this sense, culture is not merely ornamental but an essential condition for human existence.
Without culture, mankind's behavior would be ungovernable (Geertz, 2000). Symbols assist man in orientation, communication, and self control so that his evolution can continue in the world.

The biological evolution of man did not produce culture. Instead, man is considered an unfinished animal whose agency assisted in the production of his own evolution. Geertz (2000) asserts that a positive feedback system between body, brain, and cultural patterns that contributed to man's evolutionary process. In other words, human nature and culture can be considered interdependent. Consequently, culture is a condition for human existence.

Humans have an extraordinary capacity for learning. Mankind's dependence on learning particular forms of cultural symbols like art, language, myths, and rituals is essential for the completion of the organism. As Geertz (2000) points out, baboons form social groups under the guidance of genetic coded instructions, but mankind uses conceptual structures and aesthetic judgments to guide his actions. There is an information gap between the signals our body tells us and the actions necessary for survival. In other words, complex human behavior is the outcome of the interaction between intrinsic and cultural mechanisms. Humans fill this gap with information and misinformation from culture. In the end, our emotions, values, actions, and even our nervous system, are cultural products. We are all cultural artifacts.

Cultural anthropologists have given attention to studying the nature of education. It is through social institutions like schools that younger generations of people are exposed and taught to use the various symbolic systems they will
need to interpret and transform the world through their life journey (Geertz, 2000). It is difficult to capture the exact nature of education because it varies in time and place. Religion, war, Science, and Economics all have influenced the nature of education throughout history. Throughout each period of history, man has organized education to realize a determined outcome. As a result, history has left traces in the maxims that guide contemporary education (Durkheim, 2000).

According to Emile Durkheim (2000), in order to arrive at a definition of education, we must consider past and present educational systems. The characteristics common to both systems will constitute the definition we seek. What we find is that there is usually an adult generation exerting influence on the young through an educative process. Each society sets up the ideal citizen. Education processes are set up to realize this homogeneous ideal in order to sustain the society from which it comes from. Society then develops in its youth the intellectual and moral state that prepares them for the special milieu for which they are destined in order to sustain a social hierarchy and cooperation among the groups (Durkheim, 2000).

The ideas and goals relevant to contemporary society is what constitutes the construct of education at any point in time (Durkheim, 2000). Each generation supplements, deletes, or modifies the bedrock of notions, values, ethics, and objectives held in esteem by man. As a result, the social circumstances present in that point of time constructs the definition of what education will be like for that generation of youth to reach a predefined end.
A static definition of education is impossible because education is socially constructed. Hence, the processes that constitute education are dynamic and recursive. In other words, education is a product of a culture. It is a cultural animal that exists in symbiosis with a larger organism: humanity (Geertz, 2000). Hence, education is at the mercy of what society needs at that point in time as well as by the myths that are being used to construct a system of education (Durkheim, 2000). The status of what constitutes education may also reflect where man is in his evolutionary process.

Education is both temporal and spatial. For this reason, Man has not established a universal definition of education that has stood the test of time (Durkheim, 2000). Because education is a myth giver of society, education is built on truths and falsehoods. One may ask, what is the ideal education? History has shown that the nature of education has been shaped by the needs of a localized culture. The survival of the culture is dependent upon a certain homogeneity cultivated in future generations of citizens (Durkheim, 2000).

According to Foster (2000), throughout the world one sees a pattern of certain groups of students doing well in school, while others do poorly. Cultural anthropologists have examined this phenomenon by considering the relations between ethnic communities and school (Levinson, 2000). The community is where students receive their primary socialization. The community exposes students to the ways of speaking, learning, and relating.

Studies have been conducted that have considered cultural conflict and discontinuity between the home and the school (Levinson, 2000).
ethnographic studies have revealed how, in some cases, community practices are recognized, and at other times, are discredited and devalued (Heath, 2000). Some of these studies reveal how linguistic and cultural differences can exacerbate conflict between teachers and students and result in pupils becoming disengaged from school.

Cultural anthropologists who ground their inquiry in cultural conflict, congruence, and discontinuity do so in response to positivists’ work, whose hypothesis is that students of color and poor Whites failed in school because they were culturally deprived (Foster, 2000). This cultural of poverty hypothesis was advanced by cultural deficit theorists that placed the blame on those communities who were failing in school (Valencia, 1997).

Like cultural anthropologists, critical theorists value an insider’s perspective, but also expose the hidden power relations between dominant and subordinate groups. In addition to structural oppression, Critical theorists like Fine, Willis, and Macleod examine human agency to resist. Critical theorists believe that dominant groups exert power over others by their privilege to create oppressive structures and impose meanings that render oppression as normal. Critical theorists like Willis have shown how students resist domination that causes them to maintain a connection to their local culture. Sometimes resistance is paradoxical in that it provides hope for liberation but at time serves to reinforce the status quo (Foster, 2000).

Cultural anthropologists have examined how different communities transmit to their young the ways of taking meaning from the environment (Heath,
In some communities these literacy events and interactions between parents and children mirror the practices found in school and other social institutions. While in other communities, the cultural ways that they learn to make sense of literature is in conflict with expectations encountered in school. This mismatch demands that the child make substantial adaptation or be in conflict with the dominant ways of learning and socializing. In other words, the school culture ways of learning may just be an overlay of the practices taught at home. Unfortunately, children who do not exhibit mainstream ways of talking, communicating and applying knowledge are considered not to be from the literary tradition.

Deficit theorists fail to recognize the funds of knowledge that racialized communities possess. Worse, the American educational system as a whole still continues to devalue this rich social, cultural, and linguistic capital as seen in the low retention rates for Latinos. Cultural anthropologists have studied the creation and transformation of funds of knowledge from US-Mexican households (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2000). Many of these children become cultural products of both Mexican and American countries by living in the borderland communities. Ibanez identifies the historical funds of knowledge acquired by Mexican-Americans and their struggle against various historical constraints that help shape their identity and way of life.

The ancestors of many of these Mexican-American children survived in rural areas as either craftsmen, ranchers or farmers. In the process they learned to be generalists and developed highly specialized knowledge of ecosystems and
weather. As ranchers, they developed veterinary medicine, blacksmithing, masonry, and mechanics. In addition, US-American communities relied on a dense social network as a resource. There were many more areas of knowledge that were required from the habitat and the need to survive that these people created.

Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (2000) posits that these historical funds of knowledge are impacted by a variety of economic and political structures. American imperialistic capitalism was a major mechanism that changed the way of life for those U.S.-Mexicans who resided in the borderlands. As new industries were introduce along the four US states which border Mexico, cross-border families were more common and labor markets were wide open to Mexican born laborers up to the early 20th century. American repatriation policies begin to differentiate between undocumented and documented entrants. Ethnic identity was now defined by citizenship rather than by culture. Americanization practices subordinated Spanish in the schools and denigrated its use. The self-denial and internalize self-hatred process began to set in (R. Rodriguez, 1982). Deportation policies such as “Operation Wetback” in 1954 and several other systematic repatriation policies have only served to emphasize the “foreignness” of Mexicans and divided them from their US born Mexican families (Gendzel, 2009). Such political splitting between US born and Mexican born people creates an ethnic US Mexican and cultural discontinuity between these populations (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2000).
The Mexican child emerges from social density. Consequently, children are exposed to different versions of funds. They also have the opportunity to experiment with funds of knowledge in a variety of domains. Parents allow a zone of comfort for trial and error as they apply new skills within a variety of contexts. Mexican parents also give wide latitude to their children in directing their own learning. The process of learning for their child is buffered from criticism. In the process, children learn early to avoid adults who use punitive measures or deal with error (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2000).

Ironically, American schools stress competition, individualism and are highly punitive especially to racialized and poor urban students (Cammarota, 2008b). Mexican adults whose identity is forged from both American and Mexican processes experience a cultural tension. This conflict manifests itself in the breakdown of adult-child relations when families contend with a bicultural positionality (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2000). The formal educational system can cause self-doubt and cultural resistance for Latino students (R. Rodriguez, 1982). Mexican children must confront educational models that attempt to mold them socially and culturally according to dominant ideologies (R. Rodriguez, 1982).

Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (2000) propose an application of the funds of knowledge concept to educational policy. They stress policies that focus on the nature of relations between parents, students and the schools that serve them. Because of the thick social web that US-Mexican children emerge from, policies that encourage parent involvement need to move beyond the traditional
parent/teacher meeting, which becomes increasingly rare as the student progresses through the grades. Likewise, instructional strategies that are structured for cooperation and social interaction among students are recommended. The use of heterogeneous student groupings is favored. In addition, instruction should be dialogic and provide space for student voice and critical thinking. Moreover, student assessments should be designed to incorporate the measurement of the child’s learning potential. This entails the use of assessments that make use of mediated learning moments. Finally, cultural anthropologists underscore the use of literary skills learned from the home and incorporate the funds of knowledge into the instruction. Just as important, is educational policy that requires training for teachers in organizing lessons that make use of the cultural capital that students already bring from their community and homes (Cammarota, 2008b, 2011; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2000).

School Culture: A Constellation of Tendencies

Culture is a term borrowed from anthropology that is used as a metaphor to harness the concept of organizational structure found in schools (Morgan, 2007). Schools have developed into complex microcosms of American society. Macro level policies, economic forces, and political demands all converge into shaping the educational experiences of adolescents who attend secondary schools. National and state educational policies have increased the demands of these institutions and broadened their missions. In addition, local communities each bring with them their own unique challenges that impose upon the school
culture such as race, crime and economics. Moreover, culture is also cultivated at the micro level when a student experiences events in the classroom. The teacher's ability to connect and engage youth set the conditions for the quality of classroom culture to which a student experiences. Barth (2002) posits that a school's organizational culture may have more influence over the life of the school than the administrators, teachers or parents can ever have.

School culture has always been an elusive concept (Morgan, 2007). The culture of an institution is a force one experiences and feels but sometimes cannot identify. It has been referred to as a "black box" because the internal organizational functions are not readily apparent. Deal and Peterson (1999) describe school cultures as intricate networks of rituals that have collected over time as people successfully work together and handle challenges. According to Deal and Peterson (1999), cultural habits and traditions emerge and influence the ways people act, think, and feel.

Brady (2008) has developed a model of secondary school culture that attempts to identify the constituent components of organizational culture and their functions within the context of organizational behavior. This model delineates the affect that organizational structures have on human behavior among teaching staff, administration, and students. The actions or inactions of organizational actors contribute to the general school culture. For example, administration sustains and shapes the hidden curriculum. Likewise, students assign peers to group members adding to a sense of group cohesion and social status to the overall school culture. Finally, instructors reinforce the fundamental assumptions
and expectations within their ideologies regarding students of color and schooling.

School cultures emerge from a framework constituted by a variety of intangible and tangible organizational structures. Schein (1992) points out that systems of beliefs and values provide the cornerstone for an organization's social behavior. Organizational artifacts, assumptions, and practices give rise to a collective group conscious. The artifacts that help frame school culture like school size and codes of conduct are easily observable, while espoused ideologies and assumptions may go unnoticed. Thus, unraveling the "black box" and exposing the elements, relationships, and functions of organizational culture is crucial to critical analysis and praxis. The collective consciousness of schools obscures the implicit expectations of behavior that go untaught to students. Nevertheless, this “hidden curriculum” plays a role in regulating the degree of success a student experiences (Hemmings, 2000).

Macedo (1994) asserts that many teachers regardless of their ethnicity unconsciously hold beliefs and attitudes that mirror hegemonic ideologies. These dominant ways of thinking maintain that Latinos and Blacks create and sustain their own marginalization in society. Secondly, it assumes that our capitalist and democratic system provides for a level playing field. Finally, opportunity is viewed as being afforded to all who are willing to seize it. Ideology grounded along these master narratives sustains dysconscious racism and overlooks systemic oppression. It also manifests in the opposition to policies that focuses on increasing minority opportunities.
According to Bartolome (1994), teaching is not an apolitical endeavor. Educators bring with them predispositions that emerge from social and historical sources (Shkedi & Nisan, 2006). Teachers use their own epistemologies to direct their actions or inactions and to express organizational, social and personal values in the classroom (Shkedi & Nisan, 2006). Historically, a deficit lens has been used to represent racialized students as inferior, suspect and undeserving (Giroux, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). A hegemonic system of beliefs or ideology serves to distort reality by ignoring the cultural wealth of Latino and Black students. A hidden curriculum that socially reproduces inequity through what is taught, and how it is taught is the end result (Apple, 2001). However, as explained below, hegemonic forces can be countered by the raising of becoming aware of oppression in order to inspire hope and vision.

Ideological clarity emerges when an educator examines how their own beliefs reflect the dominant society’s explanations for the existing socioeconomic and political hierarchy (Bartolomé, 1994). Likewise, Bartolome (1994) defines political clarity as a rising of consciousness regarding nexus between macro-level political, economic, and social influences on student achievement in the classroom. Possessing political and ideological clarity sets the foundation for contesting and transforming exclusionary practices instead of blindly accepting the status quo as natural.

Increase use of assessments and a fetish with methods have been the prevalent approaches used by reform minded educational practitioners in attempting to improve student achievement (Bartolomé, 1994). Although
technical expertise is necessary, it is by no means the silver bullet to closing the opportunity gap. Schools are sophisticated worlds in which students are required to negotiate their existence by adapting to implicit and explicit aspects of communal life (Phelan, et al., 1991). How successful students are in navigating these cultural oceans of predispositions, expectations, and as Dei (1996) points out, “deep curriculum”, determines the degree of student engagement in the schooling process (Phelan, et al., 1991).

Smyth and Hattam (2004) used the voices, aspirations, and experiences of students to construct a cultural geography of school. Student voice was used to show how the dynamic nature of school culture encouraged or discouraged early school leaving. School culture is described as a constellation of tendencies which encompassed: school climate, inclusionary or exclusionary practices, curriculum construction, students’ lives and emotions, behavior management, flexibility, pedagogy, and pastoral care. It was found that the students revealed themes that pointed to three school culture archetypes: aggressive, passive, and active. Each archetype was the result of the ongoing struggle between groups for the representation of the school’s culture.

Smyth and Hattam (2004) found that schools can represent fragments of each archetype of school culture simultaneously. The “aggressive school” has a climate of silence and fear. There is usually a strong discipline policy and an absence of respect and trust for youth. This type of school usually frames student success in terms of middle-class norms. Students who resist unfair practices are labeled as “troublemakers.” It was found that many of these so-called
“troublemakers” were students who exhibited a robust sense of justice and whose cultural capital was not recognized by the school.

Secondly, students described a “passive culture” in which the school appeared to be a “nice place” on the surface but was struggling with limited success. The curriculum delivered in this type of school culture failed to connect with the lives of the students. Instead, it only satisfied the needs of college bound students. The “passive” school culture cultivated a deficit view of students and missed opportunities to transform social and systemic pathologies (Smyth & Hattam, 2004).

Lastly, Smyth and Hattam (2004) identified a culture which was active in reaching out to the lives of students rather than reacting to them. This “active culture” promoted a reciprocal working relationship of mutual trust between adults and youth. Student voice was used to construct a rigorous and authentic curriculum around the experiences of students. As a result, students were afforded rich learning experiences. Students develop a sense of independence by creating and owning their learning. Student behavior problems were seen as instances of disengagement with the curriculum.

Understanding that the dimensions of culture are powerful mediating forces between school structures and student engagement begins to capture how leaving school is a socially mediated phenomenon (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Conchas, 2001; Dei, 1997; Elmore, 1995; Fine, 1991; Shkedi & Nisan, 2006; Smyth & Hattam, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Under this paradigm, the dropout crisis begins to be reframed not through a deficit lens of “risk factors” but
through viewing the school as co-constructing the dropout. This alternate view of naming the dropout crisis through a "meditational system" of structure-culture-agency moves us from a determinist perspective to one of hope. In other words, the structure-culture framework allows for researchers to interrogate how institutional biases are sustained by school structures in informing the perceptions and actions of students. Next, I will explore the influence school culture has on student engagement.

Student Engagement

Beyond the technocratic methods fetish, school culture matters in increasing academic achievement (Bartolomé, 1994). Scholars have established a link between student engagement and school culture (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; J. Lee & Wong, 2004; Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2007; L. F. Rodríguez, 2008). Student engagement can be described as a student’s academic involvement as well as the student’s attitudes and beliefs towards schooling (Marks, 2000). Marks (2000) calls attention to the influence that school culture has on student engagement and academic achievement. Given that high school is a fundamental experience of adolescents and the impact that cultural determinants have on student engagement, the study of school culture is essential ingredient in the school improvement process. Conversely, the study of student engagement us vital to understanding the dropout phenomena (Finn & Rock, 1997)
Student engagement appears to diminish starting in the fifth grade and continues its downward trend through the tenth grade (Lopez, 2011). In a Gallup student poll that captures the voices of students from fifth through 12th grade, 37% of students report not being engaged in school (Lopez, 2011). Many of these students are often going through the motions of attending school but are not maximizing their true potential. Students state reasons for disengagement as "teachers don’t get to know you" and "things seem harder" (Lopez, 2011). Lopez (2011) suggests four strategies that were developed from the findings to increase student engagement. First, students demand and need individualized praise and recognition especially by teachers. Second, schools need to focus on developing student strengths. Third, elementary schools need to commit to adequately preparing students for the rigors of middle school and beyond. Lastly, teachers should provide more personalized interactions with their students. These strategies work in concert to offset a student's feeling of anonymity as they advance through the grades.

Engagement is believed to be pliable and responsive to environmental change in the school and classroom (Finn & Rock, 1997). As such, the construct of student engagement can be a powerful remedy to the dropout crisis because it creates multiple targets for interventions. It is a construct with a multifaceted nature. However, many studies on student engagement simply discuss the construct by using a single dimension of the construct (Fredricks, et al., 2004). Instead, the study of student engagement is more potent when studied as a multidimensional construct. Fredericks et al, (2004) have deconstructed student
engagement into three dimensions: behavior, emotions, and cognition. This provides for a richer portrayal of how students, act, think, and experience learning.

One aspect of engagement can be measured through the properties of behavior (Finn & Rock, 1997). Behavioral engagement may be defined in several ways. It can encompass positive conduct, involvement in academic tasks, and membership in extracurricular activities. For example, adhering to classroom expectations and the absence of disruptive behaviors are two forms of behavioral engagement. Properties of involvement behaviors might include determination, concentration, perseverance, effort, and asking questions. There are also qualitative differences of behavioral engagement. To illustrate, a student may passively follow directions but fail to participate. Even more, a student may exhibit autonomous behavior, or self-directed effort which can be considered a more intense form of engagement. In other words, behavioral engagement can range along a continuum of depth from responding to directives to tasks that require student initiative (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

Another facet of engagement is emotional engagement. Some of the properties of this aspect of engagement are curiosity, boredom, happiness, security, apprehension and sadness (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). These properties are usually affective responses by students to instruction, teacher, or school. Emotional engagement can also be defined as the level of identification a student has with school (Finn, 1989). As such, a student can have a sense of alienation or a sense of belonging in which they feel that they are and important
member of the school community. Equally important, emotional engagement can
be defined based on the value a student places on school activities (Fredricks, et
al., 2004). A student may gauge the cost in terms of time and energy to acquire
the value as measured through interest, utility, and confirming personal goals. A
fascinating element of behavioral engagement is flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
This a level of emotional engagement that is so concentrated that an individual
loses mindfulness of time and space (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This represents a
conceptualization of engagement that represents a high level of emotional
immersion in an activity.

A third facet of engagement is cognitive. It has been described as the
psychological investment in learning (Wehlage, 1989). In other words, cognitive
engagement may combine determination, enthusiasm and mental strategies
used for interacting with assignments. An example of cognitive engagement is
when a student goes beyond the normal requirements to master a new subject. It
also includes a student’s use of coping skills when struggling with new learning.
Cognitive engagement can also be measured by a student’s inclination to be
challenged (Wehlage, 1989). Another definition of cognitive engagement is in
regards to a student’s use of learning strategies such as meta-cognition,
planning, self-monitoring, and rehearsal (Corno & Mandinach, 1983). In short,
these cognitive processes involve the management and control of effort on tasks.
A captivating element of cognitive engagement is known as volition. This is a
student’s ability to stay focused on learning. Corno (1993) explains the concept
of volition as “control processes that protect concentration and directed effort in
the face of personal and/or environmental distractions, and so aid learning and performance” (p.16).

We expect students to move from one social context to another. In other words, adolescence move from one arena to another that may include their peer groups, classrooms, school, and families. Students are generally expected to navigate transitions between arenas on their own (Smyth & Hattam, 2004). A student's competence in adapting to the behaviors and cultural knowledge of each arena has implications for academic engagement and achievement (Phelan, et al., 1991). In this instance, a teacher can be instrumental in serving as a cultural broker for their students (Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999). Whether a teacher assumes this role or not can be determined by their ideological and political clarity (Bartolomé & Macedo, 1997).

Why do some students of color do well while others fail in school? Dessel (2010) asserts that students of color encounter symbolic violence through institutionalized neglect, segregation and a racially stratified society. Additionally, students of color encounter curriculum that is void of life experiences and cultural awareness (MacQuillan, 1998). Ogbu (1987) posits a cultural ecological explanation. According to Ogbu (1987), students are characterized as voluntary or involuntary minorities. Mexican-Americans are considered involuntary minorities who by colonization have been subject to social and economic subordination. Likewise, African-Americans were incorporated into American society through enslavement. The promises of the American dream are not the same for these caste-like groups. This deterministic theory treats Latinos as a
monolithic entity without considering the variability of academic success that is found among Mexican-American students (Conchas, 2001).

Conchas (2001) expands on John Ogbu’s cultural ecological model to explain the variability in Latino school engagement. Suarez-Orozco’s (1996) findings of Latino academic achievement shows that students’ performance declines with successive generations as they are acculturated. This is disturbing because one would think that with each generation living in America one would see Latinos increasingly benefitting from education. Other researchers have underscored the variability of Latino achievement (Foley, 1991; Gibson 1997; Mehan et al., 1994). Ogbu’s explanation for minority school engagement is problematic in that it fails to consider school culture and student agency.

Popular educational reform usually entails restructuring and a fetish with method (Bartolomé, 1994). This type of technocratic reform usually fails to produce meaningful or long lasting change that increases student engagement. Reform that rearranges school learning and teaching structures is a symbolic gesture that has political currency (Elmore, 1995). Rodriguez (2008b) shows that restructuring does not guarantee reculturing in his examination of smaller school settings. Rodriguez concludes that restructuring alone is not the silver bullet but that forging deliberate cultures of success for low-income Latino and Black students is needed. Other researchers have also encouraged an examination of school culture to better understand how to increase Latino and Black school engagement (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Noguera, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999).
Educational reform that aims to increase student engagement needs to challenge the practices, values and policies that appear to be natural but may be mediating the effectiveness of structural reform (Lipman, 1998). Understanding the interplay between culture, structure, and agency is better suited to creating reform that circumvents student academic failure, rather than replicate the existing social inequities among students of color (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Conchas, 2001). Student’s peer networks, institutional support structures, and teacher relations all contribute to student engagement and the existing dropout crisis (Conchas, 2001; Ream et al., 2008; Valenzuela 1999). Also, how well the student is able to navigate a variety of social worlds and the hidden curriculum of the school and classroom (Hemmings, 1999; Phelan, et al., 1991; Wren, 1999). Rodriguez (2008b) succinctly describes school culture as “what schools do and how they do them” (p. 761). Until we are courageous enough to look beyond perception and critically examine the “what” and “how” of schools we will continue to reproduce the social inequities among poor Latinos and black student.

There are many settings in which student engagement is influenced. For example, engagement can be shaped by the contexts of community, culture, and the family (Fredricks, et al., 2004). Likewise, school-level factors have been shown to impact emotional and behavioral engagement. School restructuring that emphasizes communal organization increases student integration in school (Smyth, et al., 2010). A communal structure allows for a lateral application of power by school staff. In addition, a communal school culture cultivates student
participation in decision making in the creation of policies and promotes shared responsibility in cooperative projects with adults. Other school factors that may mold student engagement are school size and disciplinary practices. Clear and consistent goals coupled with fair and flexible disciplinary practices appear to moderate the risk of disengagement. These school level factors seem to have leverage on specifically reducing student alienation. Hence, school level factors provide multiple spaces for interventions to increase both behavioral and emotional engagement. Next, I will review the literature on classroom context and engagement.

The classroom teacher is pivotal in providing the interpersonal and academic support that promotes engagement. Students are more inclined to leave school when they perceive that they lack supportive relationships with important institutional figures (Fine, 1991). Healthy and caring relationships with teachers have shown to increase behavioral engagement in the form of on-task behavior and greater participation. Also, cognitive engagement appears to intensify when teachers presented thought-provoking subject matter and pressed for understanding. In these cases, the use of learning strategies by students was fostered by challenging work. Students also report that being encouraged or "pushed" by teachers proved to be an important factor in being engaged in school (Rodriguez, 2008b). This "push factor" was also critical in forging personalized student-adult relationships and contributed to a sense of high expectations from the wider school culture (Rodriguez, 2008b).
In addition to teachers, peers play an important role in the socialization of engagement. To illustrate, students tend to socialize with other students with comparable levels of engagement. It has been shown that those students who associate with peer groups that exhibit high engagement increased their own level of behavioral engagement in the long term. Besides peer groups, peer acceptance or rejection may contribute to a greater possibility of dropping out of school. Students who encounter rejection from peers as early as in elementary school were prone to lower levels of participation and greater probability of poor behavior. In contrast, peer acceptance was associated with both increased emotional and behavioral engagement. In other words, a student accepted by his peers tends to exert more academic effort and sense a higher satisfaction with school.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), find that classroom structures play an essential part in fostering cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Yet, studies of structure and engagement are scant. It appears that behavioral engagement manifested in increased time on task and improved social behaviors are the result of efficient classroom procedures and clearly communicated classroom norms. Too, teacher expectations for behavior and academics coupled with consistent consequence for noncompliance increased behavioral engagement. Indeed, there is a need for further research on the effects of classroom structures on student engagement.

The attributes of classroom activities have been linked to student engagement. It is believed that challenging and stimulating assignments have the
potential to positively affect all three types of engagement (cognitive, behavioral, and emotional). Assignments that use the “banking” method of instruction usually require rote memorization. These types of classroom tasks only require superficial learning strategies like repetition and recall and do little to increase cognitive engagement. The most that these rote tasks nurture is to keep students on-task. Deeper level cognitive engagement occurs when tasks inspire students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. These classroom tasks usually provide opportunities for collaboration, have an element of novelty, and allow space for various types of student aptitudes. Yet, another antecedent for engagement is found in the context of students' needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence in which I will now further discuss.

The concepts of belonging, relatedness and personalization all point to classroom contexts in which teachers and peers all contribute to a nurturing a caring and supportive classroom atmosphere. Emotional engagement is receptive to the perceived relatedness to peers and adults by the student. Similarly, the concept of belonging signifies a students’ sense of being valued and included by others. This theory has been associated with a positive link to effort which is a type of behavioral engagement. When schools become communities, students feel more secure when interacting with their teachers and are more inclined to seek their help when confronted with personal problems.

Rodriguez (2008a) showed how personalized relationships with various school adults were important especially for urban students of color. Personalized relationships are adult-student exchanges that are respectful and encouraging. It

77
meant students having access to inspiring and positive adults during the school day. In research that captured the voices of students, student relationships with teachers regulated academic engagement (Rodríguez, 2005). This is particularly significant in large urban high schools where nurturing student-adult interactions are not as frequent.

 Teachers can contribute to establishing healthy relationships by creating spaces in their agendas to get to know their students. As well, teachers humanize themselves with students when they share experiences about their personal lives. These strategies open up channels of communication in which teacher and student can cultivate mutual trust and respect for each other. In fact, affirmative relationships made it easier for students to seek help from school adults when experiencing personal challenges (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Having access to supportive institutional figures can be a foundation of social capital that can increase all forms of student engagement and increase academic success.

 Many urban students of color may be conditioned to having experienced antagonistic relationships with instructors throughout their educational careers. Consequently, students learn that respect transmits a certain component of power. For many of these students, respect is the one aspect of their lives that they can still exert some form of control over. As such, urban youth attach "street codes" to their definition of respect. In other words, students may believe that in order to get respect you must first give it. In the final analysis, respect precedes engagement for many poor urban students of color.
Smyth, Down, and McInerney (2010), bring together the qualities of pedagogy, power, and relationships for enhancing student engagement. Each one of these variables of school culture offers hope in cultivating democratic practices in schools. A model of school culture known as the “relational school” depicts the lateral application of power across school agents (teachers, students, administrators, counselors, parents) for creating democratic spaces to engage students (Smyth, et al., 2010). Too often, the dropout is blamed for their failure instead of placing the school system under analysis (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Smyth, et al., 2010; Smyth & Hattam, 2004). In effect, the “relational model” takes into account the conceptual nuances involving “not learning” and “failure” by regarding learning as a political act. Failure results in a lack of confidence for the learner. It usually is caused by a mismatch of student’s capability and requirements of the task at hand (Kohl, 1994). In contrast, “not learning” reinforces a student's will through resisting authority by refusing to become socialized by authority (Kohl, 1994; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Student resistance is usually seen by authority as defiance and is usually systematically silenced (Dei, 1997; Fine, 1991). Students are continuously reading their worlds and deciding whether to trust the system to make the social and emotional investments required of them by school.

The “relational school” is built on the premise that there can be no learning without healthy relationships. As such, the various facets of relational school foster a sense of community. Relational power permeates the school's culture in that by working together no one is left behind. Students are trusted to contribute
to their own learning by sharing in the decision making in what and how they
learn. Teachers are trusted to embrace the community cultural wealth of
students, to take risks and be creative. Teaching is unleashed by utilizing
humanizing pedagogies that are both improvisational and dialogic. Below is a
diagram that systematically summarizes the characteristics of the relational
school as defined by Smyth, Down, and McInerney (2010).

Lilia Bartolome (1994) states, “The solution to the problem of academic
underachievement tends to be constructed in primarily methodological and
mechanistic terms dislodged from sociocultural realities that shapes it” (p.174).
The dropout crisis will not be solved by more assessments, a new leadership
technique, a special teaching method or a “one size fit all” packaged plan to
increase student engagement. Rather, a school’s culture needs to be able to
sustain a belief system that students of color are capable learners who bring with
them knowledge and experiences that are no less important than white
mainstream society. Students of color do not need special instruction. Instead,
they need a humanizing type of pedagogy that negates the cultural and linguistic
eradication that students encounter at school. Student centered teaching
strategies like process writing and reciprocal teaching that make for a dialogic
learning experience are helpful. However, unless educators discard deficit
notions of their students and reject uncritical appropriations of educational
methods, we are doing nothing more that reproducing the inequities found in the
wider society where racism is still alive and well. For too long have we failed poor
students of color. We need not to fail those Black and Brown faces at the bottom of society's well once again (Bell, 1992).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology

I will discuss in the chapter the basic research design, logic and methods used for this study of school culture. I also describe the school under analysis using the school accountability report card (SARC) from 2009-2010. Moreover, I discuss the selection of participants and provide some background information for each. Next, I describe the process of data collection and analysis. Finally, I provide a positionality statement that articulates and explores my role as a qualitative researcher and discuss other validity and limitation issues of the research project.

An advantage of having used a qualitative approach is that it allowed me to make use of grounded theory. Theory is generated directly from data derived from the phenomena being studied (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Hence, it is genuine to the realities of those being studied. Further, I wanted to illuminate the voices of youth in spite of other school agents who also contribute to school culture but whose adult voices are already privileged. This places data collection and analysis in a different dimension that is often neglected or devalued in the literature (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; L. F. Rodríguez, 2008). Therefore, data was collected through shadowing, observing, interviewing, home visits, and group discussions with students.
Initially, I entered the research setting through an 11th grade U.S. History classroom taught by a young African American male. The students had respect and liked their teacher. At times, though, the teacher would verbally express his frustrations as a new teacher. He cared for his class but was at times discouraged by the demands of the profession and the needs of his students. This class was lead through a series of group discussions that highlighted the high school dropout crisis. Students were asked to participate in a focus group discussion regarding student engagement. Students who volunteered were allowed to participate and were divided up into three focus groups. Video from these group discussions was used as data to provide triangulation during data analysis.

My intent was to privilege the voices of students and to illuminate their lived experiences as a means to understanding how school culture regulates student engagement. In fact, there is a need in the existing research literature to highlight the voices of students to better understand student engagement (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005). As such, I digitally recorded interviews with students and reported them verbatim to be coded and analyzed using a grounded theory approach.

Additionally, my use of a critical race theory framework provides an opportunity for me to advance social justice studies, which grounded theory, is well suited for making sense of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It has also been argued in the literature that the patterns of school culture is not best studied using a positivist approach that relies on inputs and outputs (Richer, 1975). The
use of grounded theory generates theories and interpretations closer to the “gestalt” of the school (Richer, 1975) Furthermore, a qualitative study may be considered more scientific with how well it is linked with theory (LaRossa, 2005). As such, using a grounded theory methodology gives me a set of tools for theoretical interpretation about textual data (LaRossa, 2005). Next, I offer my research question, which guided my discovery into the ways students experienced school culture.

Research Question

The research question was, using a CRT lens, how do the voices, experiences, and perspectives of students help us understand the ways school culture, including power, pedagogy and relationships, contributes to the engagement and disengagement of students from school?

Research Design

Critical race theory has been used as an analytical framework for education research. It provides a space to implement research that is grounded in the lived experiences of those marginalized by society. Critical race theory in education is informed by five core elements:

- the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination
- poses a challenge to the dominant ideology
- a commitment to social justice
- the centrality of experiential knowledge
• a transdisciplinary perspective that situates research in both historical and contemporary contexts

A goal of this research is to capture the voices and experiences of Latino students who attend a high school situated in one of the lowest performing school districts in California. Using an analytical framework that incorporates critical race theory aligns with my research goals. The five tenets of critical race theory collectively construct a lens to allow me to examine how students experience and respond to schools.

I found that the selection of a qualitative research approach to be compatible with my research question and goals. Because the study examined school processes and their interactions with student agency, a qualitative approach was the most compatible with the research environment I would encounter. I needed a method to allow for both considerable flexibility and scientific rigor. In addition, qualitative research allowed for a certain degree of creativity in that it does not begin with a predetermined theory or starting point. Instead, theory is generated from the acquired data. In contrast, quantitative inquiry posed the restrictions and inflexibility of a linear model.

Qualitative methods are best suited to explore substantive areas like student engagement. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe qualitative research in this way: “It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations” (p.11). For instance, a goal of this study is to understand how school processes
may contribute to student disengagement from school. As such, a qualitative research method situates the researcher out in the field to discover what people are doing and thinking. Consequently, qualitative research provides the best lens for capturing the interaction between school structure and culture by the fact that the researcher is placed in the field of study.

Maxwell (2005) offers a research design that he refers to as an “interactive” model. This model has five components: (a) goals, (b) conceptual framework, (c) research questions, (d) methods, (e) validity. These components interact and are influenced by each other throughout the research process. They also offer a certain amount of flexibility to be able to adapt to the research environment. Maxwell stresses that goals, conceptual framework, and research questions be a closely integrated unit. Therefore, my goals carefully shaped my conceptual framework. In the same way, both my conceptual framework and research goals formulated my research question. Critical race theory provided the guiding principles and focus for all the components in my research design.

Hence, the components of my research design have been identified with each other in mind. Maxwell (2005) advises that the goals, conceptual framework, and research question comprise a coherent unit. I believe that the five components of my research design are well integrated and compatible with one another. Moreover, this study relied on methods used in ethnography, like observations and interviews. Without doubt, using an ethnographic approach has the benefit of maintaining the individual stories of students (Dei, 1997).
Participants

I benefitted from having known the principal professionally, so there was no need to develop rapport. Interestingly, she is a young Latina female, who is a graduate of the same school district. The staff was alerted via email that a research student would be on site working with students. I was given access to work with an 11th grade class twice a week. A young male African American teacher taught the class. The teacher (Mr. West) was well liked by his students. Initially, the class of about thirty-three students was guided through several classroom discussions that centered on the dropout crisis. It became necessary due to scheduling conflicts to work with a small focus group. Three focus groups were identified of about 6 students each for a total of eighteen 11th grade students. Each focus group was digitally recorded using video.

I wanted to identify at least six students from each grade level diverse in achievement (low, middle, and high), using teacher anecdotal records. Mr. West identified for me three teachers that taught in the remainder three grade levels. I asked these teachers to identify students for the study. I had twenty-four students identified by each grade level teacher. I met with each of the potential student participants and explained the research project to them. Before data collection began, parent permission was arranged upon explaining the nature of the study (see Appendix A). Table 1 shows the participants who were granted permission by their parents to participate in the study.
### Table 1

**Student Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School Selection

Riverview High School is a large urban school that is being subject to the same reform and policy requirements of other similar schools nationwide. These policies include NCLB accountability requirements, budget cuts, and a host of other issues. Riverview High School was selected because it offered a conveniently located research site. Furthermore, the school is predominantly
comprised of low-income Latino youth. The school has been experiencing a low retention rate as well as a very high suspension rate making it a prime site for exploring student engagement.

Riverview High School is part of a very large school district of over 50,000 students (SARC, 2010). It is located in a high poverty neighborhood. The school has a student body of approximately 2,400 students of which 30% are English Learners and 73% are Latino (SARC, 2010). This is primarily a school of color with over 17% of the students being African American (SARC, 2010). Consequently, the rationale for the selection of this site was based mainly on the poor student population of color, low school retention rate, and high suspension rate (SARC, 2010).

Data Collection Techniques

Triangulation of data collection allowed me to achieve greater breadth and a more assured understanding of the phenomena that I was studying. Therefore, I made use of three data collection strategies: interviewing, focus groups, and observations. A goal of triangulation is to reduce systematic limitations of only using one specific source to arrive at my conclusions. I elaborate on each data collection strategy below.

Participant Observations

Students were observed for 5 to 6 hours each. They were observed primarily in their classrooms and during transition time between classes. An observation protocol was used as a guide (see Appendix B). Observations of
students were captured using jottings and promptly transferred into fieldnotes. Particular attention was given to relationships, student voice, expectations and social networks. My observations provided a rich data source that was used to corroborate student experiences providing for a more secure triangulation of data.

**Semi-Structured Student Interviews**

An open-ended format was used when interviewing students for this study (see Appendix C). Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews lasted for one to two hours for each student. The interview format centered on the ways students experienced school culture. In addition, the interview illuminated student voice and student agency by exploring plans after high school and their opinions regarding school improvement. Follow-up interviews were conducted as needed to clarify meaning.

**Focus Groups**

In order to complete my triangulation of data, I employed the use of three focus groups. Besides triangulation, my goal for using this method was to generate data that was closer to the emic perspective. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) state, “phenomenon that are not understood well often are studied first with tools that yield more emic data” (p.13). Focus groups were digitally recorded using video. I started each group discussion by simply asking students, “Why do some students become disengaged from school?” I allowed student responses to guide the rest of the discussion. As such, I was able to acquire data that came from the students own words and that students were comfortable revealing.
Data Analysis

Because data analysis is part of my research design, decisions regarding data analysis were informed by the other components of my research structure. A significant goal underlying my decisions for data analysis was theory construction from my data. I was careful to initiate analysis immediately and simultaneously with data collection. Data analysis continued throughout the research study. I employed an analytical procedure of constant questioning and comparison for the purpose of generating theoretical ideas embedded in the wilderness of data. I will provide a short overview of the conceptual tools that were considered for my plan regarding data analysis.

Maxwell (2007) suggests that analytical decisions need to be planned carefully to effectively answer the research questions and to address potential validity threats. I considered the following analytical options: (a) memos, (b) categorizing or coding, (c) connecting strategies. The use of memos during the analysis phase became a crucial element for recording reflections regarding the data and for stimulating analytic insight. Maxwell (2007) describes memos as recordings that capture what one sees and hears in data. Memos permit one to generate exploratory ideas about relationships and categories.

It is advisable to preview and listen to interview recordings before transcribing (Emerson, et al., 1995). The rationale for this is that it provides the researcher an entry point to begin analysis. Additionally, Emerson et al. (1995) recommends an initial reading of observation notes and other data documents to begin data analysis to provide an opportunity for rewriting and organizing textual
data as it is collected and throughout the research study. Memos were used in this initial interaction with data to anchor important ideas.

Maxwell (2007) makes a distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches to the coding of data. Quantitative research uses precise rules for the categorizing of data to produce frequency counts of categorical terms. In contrast, the qualitative approach that I utilize for coding was to break down data and reshuffle it into categories to smooth the progress of making comparisons and developing theoretical concepts. It also permitted me to arrange data into broader themes and questions. I will briefly describe the conceptual distinctions in my categorizing analysis using (a) organizational categories, (b) substantive categories, (c) theoretical categories.

I utilized a three-tiered organizational scheme whose purpose was to assist me in organizing, coding, and retrieving data. Coding denotes the process by which data are fractured, conceptualized, and reconstructed to develop new grounded theories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) assert, "a grounded theory is one that is inductively derived the study of the phenomenon it represents" (p. 23). I anticipate of several general topics that functioned as conceptual boxes for data to be sorted and analyze it later time. Maxwell (2005) referred to this process as formulating "organizational categories." These labels serve only as descriptors for subject matter. I am not yet probing the data nor attempting to make sense of what is going on.

Next, I began to interact with the data. Maxwell (2005) refers to this type of categorical analysis as creating "substantive categories." Data are organized
according to "emic" categories that are authentic to the data and the subjects under study. The "emic" perspective refers to the use of participants' words and concepts for naming phenomena (Maxwell, 2005). Substantive categorical analysis allowed me to begin making provisional claims and to develop general theories of what was going on. Furthermore, Strauss & Corbin (1998) refer to "open coding" as a process in which substantive categories or inductively created. I will expand on this a little later.

Lastly, data analysis also involved organizing data into theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2005). During this process of analysis, I inserted coded data into a more abstract structure. Data was conceptualized from ideas found in a prior theory or from theory derived from the coded data itself. At times, I also named phenomena using "etic" categories. The use of prior analytic dimensions for classification became crucial during this stage.

The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are the asking of questions about data; and the making of comparisons for similarities and differences between each incident, event, and other instances of phenomena. Similar events and incidents are labeled and grouped to form categories.

Similarly, I reference Strauss and Corbin's (1998) methodology of data analysis using (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. First, I categorized phenomena discovered in my field notes, transcribed interviews, and other documents. I went through a grounded theory approach by reading and rereading my data. Theoretical sensitivity allowed me to detect variables,
processes, relationships, and name them. By naming the event I was able to group concepts into categories. Hence, I was better situated to further refine my analysis by examining the properties of each category and to fragment properties into its dimensions. I found that maintaining and inventory of codes and their descriptors was useful during this process. Secondly, the process of axial coding allowed me to reconstruct the fractured data acquired from open coding. I accomplished this through a process of making connections between a category and its subcategories. My focus was to refine the definition of a category in terms of the conditions that sustain it and the context in which it is situated. In the end, I had a set of categories that were coded by their properties, dimensions, and relationships. Next, I chose one category to be the essential idea to develop a storyline around. Strauss and Corbin refer to this process as selective coding. ATLASi, a qualitative software package, was utilized to allow for a systematic approach to my data analysis.

Memoing

In my study, I made use of memos to capture insights that provided the thrust for in-depth analysis later. Memos include reflections on a variety of data sources including fieldwork and readings. Maxwell (2005) recommends thinking of memos as a decentralized field Journal. In addition, Maxwell recommends that good use of this technique is contingent upon serious reflection, analysis, and self-critique by the researcher. Memos allowed me to think theoretically without the demands of having to write the research paper itself.
Validity

Noblit, Flores, and Murillo (2004) refer to postcritical ethnography in which they emphasize the importance of positionality when they state, "critical ethnographers must explicitly consider how their own acts of studying and representing people and situations are acts of domination even as critical ethnographers reveal the same in what they study" (p. 3). This "reflexive ethnography" or "turning back" on oneself makes one responsible for one's interpretation and representation of what is studied (Noblit, et al., 2004). Without doubt, as an ethnographer, I am the primary research instrument in this quest for understanding school culture and student engagement. As a living research tool, data collection and analysis is filtered through my own mental models, which have been shaped by my own life experiences. Therefore, it is essential that I describe myself and my relation to the Others and the educational institution.

I have an intimate connection with the research site. My mother graduated from Riverview high school in the 1960s. She came from a Mexican immigrant family who worked in the fruit fields of California. I distinctly remember her telling me about the struggles she had to overcome to stay in school. Although, her two other siblings did not graduate, she managed to graduate with a high school diploma. I remember she would comment that at times she felt no one ever cared whether she graduated, with the exception of one adult cousin. Also, with some irony, she would comment that she had a diploma but sometimes felt that she was illiterate.
My father also came from a Mexican immigrant family who worked under oppressive conditions, harvesting and packaging fruit in Southern California. My father completed eighth grade and then began to work with his dad at an orange packinghouse until he was 18. Similarly, his other seven siblings did not complete their high school diploma. Nonetheless, I have uncles who served in three major U.S. wars. My dad would have attended high school in a school district nearby Riverview high school. My father did not have many stories to tell about his educational experience except for one that continues to resonate with me until today.

My father would tell traditional consejos (stories with moral implications) about doing what was right. He spoke of hard work and of obedience to authority. Yet, he would periodically tell a story that alluded to the recognition of oppression and acts of student agency and resistance by him as a fourth-grade English learner. He told of a time when his teacher grabbed him by his hair and walked him to the principal’s office for talking too much. My father pleaded with his teacher to let go but he did not. As a result, my father kicked his teacher hard enough that it caused him to let go. This act, I am certain, went against my father’s value system. In fact, I am certain my father felt vindicated when his school principal felt it unnecessary to discipline him for kicking the teacher. I believe this story is told repeatedly by my father because it is an example of the powerless resisting his oppressor. An act that is foreign for someone who was taught at early age to accept his lot in life, no matter how difficult. Indeed, this event must have created a state of liminality for him.
I was fortunate that my father was able to gain full-time employment as a landscaper with the local city government. This job allowed my father to raise a family of four and provided basic medical and dental insurance. It also allowed my mother to stay at home and raise my sister and me. As a result, we both graduated college with the help of grants, loans, and scholarships that targeted low-income students of color. Now, my sister and I are both taxpaying citizens who are contributing back society in many ways. It saddens me to see those blue-collar jobs that provided a decent wage and living conditions slowly disappear. Private companies are slowly replacing the kinds of jobs that the local city government provided for my father. These new jobs provide little stability for employees and their families.

My mother instilled the value of education early in me. For that reason, I continued to do well in school. My mother was very involved in school activities. For example, near the holidays, she would volunteer to bring cupcakes to my elementary class. She found a way to participate in my learning even though she lacked the academic skills to assist me in schoolwork. As for my father, as long as I was an obedient student who stayed out of trouble, he was content.

I distinctly remember the first time I saw my mother advocate for me at school. It was my first day in middle school when I brought my schedule of classes to her. The first thing I noticed was that my mother was not content with my class assignments. She called my aunt to consult with her about my schedule. Surely, my mother viewed my aunt as an authority figure in education for having raised three exceptional children: the electrical engineer, the medical
doctor, and the daughter who was accepted into the Air Force Academy. Having three cousins who were overcoming social, economic, and cultural barriers in excelling academically was a good example of social capital.

To explain, the classes that were assigned to me were considered remedial classes. Immediately, my mother questioned the school on who made the assignments and on what basis. Again, questioning authority did not come easily to either one of my parents. However, my mother found enough courage to advocate for me when she took notice of a problem with my classes. It turned out that a counselor was not assigning classes to students. An office manager assigned classes because the counselor was out ill. I remember my parents calling a local Latino school board member informing him of the injustice that might have been committed to other students. The school board member took our concerns seriously. As a result, I was prepared to take algebra in eighth grade, decades before it was considered a standard.

Consequently, I excelled in math during my high school career. As a freshman, I was taking geometry next to students who were in the 11th and 12th grade. My high school geometry teacher provided me with the rigor and encouragement to continue on pursuing math. As a senior, I exhausted the math courses offered at my high school. In retrospect, it appalls me that my school failed to offer a basic calculus course on the basis that there were not enough students qualify to take it. I remember eight students being ready for calculus that year. Even worse, I was not counseled on taking calculus at the local community college. Instead, I found it logical not to take courses in math during that year.
Furthermore, I was allowed to leave her early home on the basis that I was ahead of the credit requirements to graduate. In the end, less education became the reward for excelling in school, which is the same reward I see reproduced today with my own son who is in the fifth grade.

Even though it seemed that I went through my senior year on a part-time basis, I decided to major in computer science. I learned that computer science is a math intensive course of study. Not having had taken calculus during my senior year coupled with going home early everyday did not place me on the correct trajectory for what was waiting for me in college.

At the time, software engineering was an exotic field that demanded rigorous coursework and laboratory time. Even though I have the requirements to be accepted into UCLA, I chose to attend a local university to stay near family. In retrospect, it was a good decision because most of my social capital was local. My intuition told me that excelling in college and later in a career had to do more than mere academics. When times got tough, I could rely on my family structure for support.

I graduated with a computer science degree following the lead of my cousin who graduated from Stanford in electrical engineering. My cousin, having been raised in the same small town as me, would tell me about the racist comments he would get from fellow students who attended his elite school. I remember students resenting the fact that he gained entry into Stanford by way of affirmative action. Although he only graduated with only 2.7 GPA, he went on to become a successful engineer and works for a major corporation. Again, I
witnessed affirmative-action help develop the aspirations and skills of a poor Latino who is now contributing back to society.

While in college, I learned that an internship and social capital was very important for employment even in a hot field like computer science. The degree alone did not guarantee employment. However, this piece of information or cultural capital, I was able to pass on to my sister who was seven years younger. With my advice, my sister was able to obtain an internship with a major company before graduating college. Consequently, a major organization immediately employed her upon her graduation from college. As for me, I struggled to find employment in my field. However, I acquired a level of insight into how learning how to navigate the hidden curriculum was essential for success both while in school and when one begins a career.

I was able to gain employment in the education through social capital that I had developed with community leaders. I became an elementary bilingual school teacher. I went on to teach middle school math. Next, I taught 10th grade in a continuation school setting. I started to gain a reputation for effectively working with so-called "at risk" youth. Afterwards, I gained employment as a middle school vice principal. Subsequently, I became coordinator for a community day school and supervised three small schools for "at-risk" youth. I continue working with students who are experiencing academic and discipline problems as an Administrative Hearing Panel Member.

I must therefore wrestle to identify and describe my perspectives and recognize the biases that I bring to my research. I see the world through
someone who is bicultural and who was straddled between two languages. I also have experienced the marginalization of having lived in a racially stratified society whose home language has historically been rendered second class. This has influenced my research emphasis on giving voice to those who go unheard. My professional experience has sensitized me to how colorblind policies and reforms do little for students of color. Instead, I see urban youth of color criminalized and labeled through a deficit lens in my professional practice. Furthermore, I see how NCLB requirements of accountability have created a theater of rewards and punishments that do little more than to adversely affect teacher morale and poor students of color chances for a rich education. I see education as a “practice of freedom” where the possibility of hope exists but is not possible unless there is action (Hooks, 1994).

Limitations

This study explored how student experienced school cultures by spotlighting the voices and perspectives of students. A major limitation of this study is regarding generalizability. It should be noted that the students' experiences from this study are not reflective of all low-income urban students attending high school. Instead, the conclusions can provide a clearer realization of the processes of school life within a large urban high school predominately attended by low-income Latino youth.

Time constraints did not allow me to continue observation of students over several years and within different settings. I am certain that a larger ethnographic
study of this school would reveal important findings that would help researchers and policy makers understand the processes in school life that contribute to the dropout crisis, especially for Latino youth.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND ANALYSES

I have organized this chapter into a discussion of the primary concepts that emerged from the data: (a) student assets, (b) student sensemaking, (c) student Othering. The use of CRT as a research tool allowed for me to uncover the positive assets that students held. These assets manifested in aspirations, critical consciousness of oppressive practices, value for education, and knowledges of positive school practices. Secondly, I captured how students were engaged in making sense of their schooling experiences. In other words, they 'read' the teacher before engaging in the subject matter. Lastly, I theorized how students may be internalizing their schooling experiences. This manifested itself in students Othering themselves and their community.

Identified Themes

I entered the research site through an 11th grade classroom that was taught by a young African American teacher, Mr. West. He was well liked by many of his students for being able to “relate” to them and for being fair, flexible and “giving second chances” (Participant 13, personal communication, January 12, 2011). My observations of Mr. West’s teaching captured many of the qualities of the relational classroom. The teacher had an improvisational view of teaching. He also provided spaces for dialogical teaching and humanizing relationships through opportunities for sharing. Participant 5 describes how power was negotiated in the classroom in such a way that allowed Mr. West to
“get to know” his students and bring himself down to the student's “playing field” so that students could be “understood” (personal communication, January 7, 2011). Also, students were observed as being astute observers of their teachers' level of “authentic caring” (Valenzuela, 1999). In other words, they were perceptive when teachers embraced them as individuals and were genuinely concerned about their welfare. In contrast, “aesthetic caring” was when a teacher cared only about standards, testing, and academic performance over relationships (Valenzuela, 1999).

Initially, my plan was to embark on this study using participatory action research utilizing Mr. West's class. However, it became necessary to employ other means of data collections due to time constraints and student assessment schedules. Students volunteered from West's class to participate in a series of focus groups that discussed why the dropout crisis exists. Three focus groups were video recorded, each one lasting approximately 45 minutes. It was fascinating to see the polarity of explanations given by students for the dropout crisis. I began to notice that some students appear to characterize the problem of student disengagement by Othering. They also pointed to the criminalization of youth by stating that a solution to the dropout program would be to have more “security that is on it” (Participant 14, personal communication, March 4, 2011). This is an example of a portraying student engagement through a deficit lens because I met many students who were failing despite obeying the rules. Participant 14 responded to a fellow student who attributed the dropout crisis to oppressive conditions in the city and in the school by stating “you should be
smart enough to know what you want out of life” and “you can’t blame your city or school; it’s how you act” (personal communication, March 4, 2011). Participant 14 held a deficit view of her peers and rationalized that a solution to keeping students in school was through policing. Participant 15 explained that “it’s like a virus....bad influences...I know this one girl...she is ok but when she hangs out with her friends...they do stupid stuff...then they both dropout together” (personal communication, March 4, 2011). This student entertained the thought that peer pressure can negatively influence a student. He attempted to situate the problem to conditions with school culture rather than individual risk factors. As the discussion unfolded, I began to notice a tension between students regarding their interpretations of the dropout crisis. One dimension of the debate appeared to hover around meritocracy and the need for more policing, while the other dimension hovered around critical consciousness. For example, Participant 16 stated “some of the teachers don’t even care” (personal communication, March 4, 2011).

In addition to the interviews mentioned above, more interviews were conducted with twelve students representing 9th through 12th grade. Students from a variety of academic performance levels (low, middle, high) were selected using teacher anecdotal records. A student interview protocol was used to capture the schooling experiences of each student (see Appendix C). Also, to provide triangulation and further depth of analysis each student was observed in their classroom, between classroom bells, and during lunch. An observational protocol was used during each observation (see Appendix B). Students were
observed for approximately 5 to 6 hours each. In addition, extra observational
time was spent in Mr. West’s class.

I first approached data analysis by categorizing data under the portals of
student engagement and disengagement with school. It became clear to me that
every student valued education and possess an inherent psychic switch to
becoming engaged with school. There was no denying the natural human
propensity for learning that has been oppressed by years of racial battle fatigue.
Furthermore, each student held the keys to unlocking the aspirational capital and
the drive to become successful and productive young adults in society. It became
apparent that the problem was not them but us. Adults need only to listen to the
voices of those we are quick to label as "knuckleheads" and "lowlifes."

I began to record memos as I transcribed interviews. The student
interviews revealed a wealth of information on how power, pedagogy and
relationships were powerful relays in tripping the engagement switch within
students. The data began to reveal how adults held the lever to tripping the
engagement switches in students by what they choose to do or not do. The data
began to show how students contained the seeds of critical consciousness by
being able to be astute observers of how school culture contributed to the
dropout crisis--especially, those students who are struggling the most socially
and academically. They possessed a kind of silent lucidity about oppressive
conditions in the classroom, school, community and the global economy. In other
words, students internalize inferiority but are on the threshold of being able to
name oppressive structures that contribute to their oppression. Yet, they remain
silent and unable to take action. I began to see this silent lucidity as a precursor to Paulo Freire's critical consciousness. The seeds of critical consciousness needed to be sowed in order for students to exert their own form of transformational resistance in response to the oppressive conditions they were experiencing. What was missing was the space to ignite Praxis and true critical consciousness needed for these students to go beyond reading the word and take action in the name of social justice.

In analyzing the data, it is clear how Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a powerful lens in capturing the lived experiences of students and understanding how their daily experiences mediated their education. The interviews and personal communications created a space to draw on the strengths of the experiential knowledge of poor students color. Normally, the experiential knowledge of youth is silenced by the dominant educational discourse. As such, by privileging the voices of urban youth, I am creating a platform to challenge the dominant ideology whose claims of objectivity and meritocracy functions only to sustain the self-interest of the dominant group. In addition, CRT challenges the ahistoricism of traditional research. This CRT tenet becomes valuable when I begin to see a pattern of deficit terms used by some students to describe their peer's disengagement from school. More importantly, CRT shifts the deficit view of students of color to highlighting the cultural knowledge of students that come from socially marginalized communities.

Indeed, a CRT lens allows me to see the cultural wealth of students by allowing them to have a voice. Students revealed a wealth of the aspirational and
familial capital. In addition, students had a gap of perception that allowed them to 'read' their teachers level of caring before making a conscious effort of becoming engaged with the subject matter. Furthermore, the personal communications were instrumental in unveiling the manifestations of the microaggression that students have experienced throughout their schooling career. Moreover, I observed students with contradictory explanations for the dropout crisis. Some students described the crisis through a deficit lens of themselves, peers, and community. Conversely, other students appeared to have a critical consciousness and maintain an ideal rooted in social justice. As such, I identified three themes that suggest how school cultures may be contributing to student disengagement: (a) the seeds of hope and critical consciousness, (b) sense making via microaggression, (c) looking in the mirror and seeing the "Other."

The Seeds of Hope and Critical Consciousness

As I continued my data analysis, the cultural assets of students became apparent. Students showed acts of navigational, social, aspirational, familial, and resistant capital as I combed through my observations, interviews and personal notes. Students also continued to display a kind of "knowing" or "silent lucidity" regarding their teachers' willingness to help. The cultural capital (aspirations, critical consciousness, and resiliency) evident in the data functions to counter the deficit lens in which dominant ideology usually casts over urban youth by criminalizing them and labeling them as suspect (Giroux, 2009).
It was a very apparent that the students that I interviewed displayed a wealth of cultural capital. Aspirational capital was found on all 12 students that I interviewed. Also, familial capital was evident with eight of the students. Furthermore, eleven of the twelve students indicated a strong personal or familial capital for education. Interestingly enough, the student with the weakest value for education displayed the strongest level of Internalized Racist Nativism as seen in their “Othering” of fellow students and their personal denial of racial identity. The participant had previously attended high school at a neighboring school district that had a higher social economic status and was predominantly white. Furthermore, students possessed a kind of lucidity (critical consciousness) of the oppressive characteristics regarding their teachers. I coined this awareness as a state of 'silent lucidity' which I saw as a precursor to Paulo Freire’s critical consciousness (Freire, 2000). For example, Victoria exhibited an awareness of the qualities of good teaching. She identified examples of student alienation and educational neglect. However, she reverts to a culture of silence in class and at the end fails some of her courses. In other words, students have the ability to read their teachers level of caring but are unable to take action against the oppressive situation in a display of transformational resistance. Instead, students react in a state of silent lucidity or worse commit an act of self-defeating resistance and are quickly labeled and ostracize as “troublemakers.”

Participant 9, a high school junior stated,

I believe everybody has the intelligence to get an education and do what they ask of you if they really want it, they can do it, so, I would advise just
to get used to or try to understand where we are coming from (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

Participant 9, like many of the students interviewed, possessed a kind of critical consciousness that pointed to aspects of the relational school and personalized relationships. When asked what teachers could do to help students, Participant 9 states,

Well, probably just maybe do some one-on-one with them and talk about it and see if—what is the problem, what they are not getting from the material and help them out with that part of the material—just talk more to them one-on-one and basically just do it face-to-face—that's the best way to do it pretty much—just get straight to the point (personal communication, November, 4, 2011).

When Participant 9 was asked if a personalized approach to teaching was frequently used by teachers, he responded,

Maybe when the teacher cares enough about a student—they teach this way to students— they want to see graduate and pass their class—then yeah (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

Many students responded in ways that indicated a type of awareness of the teacher's willingness for helping students. Participant 9 response was indicative of a perception of teachers' biased response to students. Other student responses indicated a perception of favoritism among teachers for helping only certain students.
Students also described a personal and familial value for education. Participant 1 is a first generation Mexican-American student who has been attending schools in the same school district since the second grade. She enjoys and excels in science. Her discipline record is excellent, except for one incident where she left campus in an act of resistance because she felt she was being treated unfairly by a teacher. She received a two day suspension for leaving campus without permission. I had the opportunity to visit her parents and younger brother at their home. Her parents were very welcoming and eager to talk to me when they learned I was educator. Participant 1 states,

My parents—they keep on telling me to do good and like not to be one of those people on the streets searching for money. I don’t want to be like them! (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

My interactions with Participant 1’s family showed a strong presence of familial capital. In other words, it was apparent that family lessons of caring, coping and respect informed her moral and educational consciousness. In other words, Participant 1 possessed an authentic sense of caring that embraces the humanity in others. She cared about friends and family holistically. This is in contrast to some of her teachers that displayed aesthetic forms of caring that care only about academic tasks and psychometrics.

Participant 1 was one of the five students who possessed a higher sense of social justice. Students described how it would help for school adults to find out the details of a problem before sending a student out of class for trivial reasons. When asked to describe students who are excluded from school via
zero tolerance policies, she did not perceive the problem through a deficit lens. Participant 1 responded,

1. Students who are suspended from school are the ones who most likely need help in something (personal communication, November 4, 2011).
2. Students who are expelled from school are the ones that usually need a lot of help because there is always something wrong (personal communication, November 4, 2011).
3. Students that drop out of school are the ones who didn’t get enough of help (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

I began to interpret Participant 1’s lucidity regarding oppressive structures and unwillingness to “Other” her fellow peers as a type of capital, approximating a form of critical consciousness and social justice.

Participant 11 was an 11th grade student who is a first generation Mexican-American whose parents are both unemployed (personal communication, November 12, 2011). Participant 11 struggled academically but thrived socially with his peers. Although he was struggling academically, he displayed a high level of resiliency. He also showed that he valued education and regretted the mistakes that he has made. Participant 11 stated,

My success— I think it is actually when I started going to class and not messing up. My failure is not going to class and being tardy and just being out of school all the time. I think what I would like to change is just messing up and making sure I get an education— I think I will regret it. (personal communication, November 12, 2011)
He exhibited a high sense of critical consciousness that usually is exhibited through self-defeating resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). However, like Participant 1, Participant 11 possessed an ability to recognize oppressive structures within his school. When I asked Participant 11 what advice he would give to school adults regarding discipline, he stated,

I think that the only thing that they shouldn’t do is really like suspend them because it is only going to make them seem like they are really cool people. Oh yeah! They do this and people are going to know me and I am going and I am just going to just make them look dumb, especially if you only get suspended for something like they are trying to make you do.

(personal communication, November 12, 2011)

I began to see the depth of perception that Participant 11 had regarding the psychology of a student being forced to become engaged through a policy of exclusion. He explained how students use being suspended as a form of recognition and a manifestation of self-defeating resistance. I asked Participant 11, So you are saying that suspensions don’t work?” He responded:

No, they do not work. They do not work because one suspension leads to another suspension and all the suspension does is just like make the student look like Oh Yeah! They are above them all —like they are really in, but actually, they are really below them all. (personal communication, November 12, 2011)
He was aware of how the self-defeating student resistance feeds back into the system of subordination. More importantly, he made the observation that there must be a better way to provide the recognition students need and that students need to reconnect to school. I asked if he thought students gained power when suspended. Participant 11 replied,

Yeah, but, it really does not give them power. It just makes them think it gives them power—like troublemakers or bad people would actually go with them because —oh yeah! Like that is my friend! I be like that’s my right or die friend—like he does this, I do that, we do it together —like that is my friend, but that is not my type of friend. (personal communication, November 12, 2011)

Although Participant 11 struggles academically, he has exhibited a level of resiliency that could be attributed to form of navigational capital that has kept him from dropping out of school. He made the observation that students who get suspended sometimes earn a badge of honor from peers. However, he quickly recognized how this kind of peer status was self-defeating and not for him. This form of navigational capital that has kept him in school despite poor grades is again shown when he explained, “Students succeed in school because they don’t give up on themselves and they keep on trying and catch up on their grades and credits” (Participant 11, personal communication, November 12, 2011).

Participant 11 has dreams of owning his own company (aspirational capital). My observations of Participant 11 show that he is not a disruptive student but is hardly called on by his teachers. He, at times, became quietly
engaged with his school work. Mostly, though he was left by most of his teachers to sit quietly and listen to his iPod. He existed (in school) in a state of “silent lucidity,” where he displayed navigational and aspirational capital and had a sense of social justice, but who has not been given the space to exert transformational resistance.

Finally, Participant 11’s analysis of how students form an identity out of being suspended is worth commenting on. It reveals a lucidity of school culture that he possessed. Participant 11 pointed out how youth “become somebody” by being suspended because of their desire for recognition. He expanded on the act of being suspended by describing how it becomes a kind of badge of honor for the student being suspended. The student being suspended is seen a “right or die friend” (Participant 11, personal communication, November 12). This I interpreted as a friend that would risk getting in trouble than to jeopardize his friendship with others. It is almost as if the student being discipline is seen as a hero for resisting an oppressive disciplining system. The suspended student is seen as a savior for having the courage to stand up against authority in an act of self-defeating resistance. Indeed, Participant 11 had a keen perception of how young people negotiate their own meanings when confronted by exclusionary school practices.

Participant 8 was a freshman that displayed a high sense of critical consciousness and exhibited a rich repertoire of community cultural wealth. Yet, the transition from middle school to high school had been academically challenging for her. Participant 8 described her favorite school subject:
World geography is my favorite subject—I guess—I like the whole thing about the world like there are so many things that you don't know, like right now there must be some kid in Egypt—you don't know what's happening in the world—it's a big mystery. I really enjoy learning in this Class. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Ironically, she failed her favorite class during her first semester and managed only to get a 'D' second semester. My observations of her in this class show that she arrived regularly and on time. She was prepared, well behaved, took notes but was very quiet during class. There was very little opportunity for student participation in class. The teacher utilized a banking model of teaching, where facts are deposited into passive students. She appeared to passively receive, memorize, and repeat facts while in class.

Participant 8 had done very well in the seventh and eighth grade. However, her GPA was 1.4. Her attendance and discipline records had been excellent. Moreover, Participant 8 displayed a high level of navigational capital:

I think I am good at listening, like taking notes. I am good in class. I am not a talker or someone who distracts the class and when the teacher says you don't have to take notes, I still take notes. I like to look over my stuff once in a while—my folder is not all that organize but like I know where everything is I get it straight, when it comes to class I take it seriously. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Moreover, I learned that Participant 8 had attended Chavez prep school designed for students who are academically excelling in the seventh and eighth
grade. Participant 8 went on to explain her current academic failure in high school:

Well, my failure—I didn't put my best effort forward so last semester I failed two or three classes and then, like, I was in shock because I never had an F before in my classes, like at Chavez Prep, it was always good. What I would have done differently is maybe—like if I could go back and tell myself, like, you might think teachers don't notice you because you are quiet and you do your work but not your homework or nothing. They will notice it. Like all teachers, they all pay attention to you even when they see that you don't raise your hand, they all notice you. So, if you tried to get by and pretend like you don't have to answer any questions—that will not work. The way to get into a good college is to get good grades. You have to be out there. You have to start raising your hand and answer questions in class and all that, you need to participate. I think that is what I would have done differently. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

She observed that the way to getting good grades is "to be out there." In other words, she came to a realization that success is goes beyond just showing up and taking notes. Being successful also requires that a student makes sure the instructor recognizes them.

Participant 8 has an older sister that is in the 11th grade and attends the same high school. Margarita mentioned the "consejos" (advice) that both her older sister and single mother gave her regarding respecting others and staying
focused on her education (personal communication, December 5, 2011). In my conversations with Participant 8, familial capital was evident. She has received "una educacion" where her mother and sister have passed down lessons about resiliency, caring, and coping that has cultivated a moral and educational consciousness within her (Valenzuela, 1999). Participant 8 stated,

I am a good worker—if I put my mind to it—I know I could do anything. If there is a project we have to do and I know that it is worth three-fourths of my grade, I would work on it night and day, like I got some work from my English teacher that I had a bad grade on—she gave me some work on Thursday and I am already finished. It was a 20 page project! (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Like the other 11 students that I interviewed, Participant 8 displayed a sense of personal responsibility and value for education when she stated,

Yeah, if I mess up no one is going to do it for me. I have to do it myself. My mom is not going to do it for me and no one is going to do it except for myself. Education will always be there in their life—you can't get away from it. Everything in the world deals with language and deals with math, deals with science. The whole world was built on math, science and language. It will always be there, so if you drop out, it's just ruining any opportunity you have to get an education. It's like a golden ticket—take it! (personal communication November 14, 2011)
She also possessed aspirational capital in that she holds dreams of future success and attending a prominent university despite the academic and economic challenges she is already facing as a freshman:

I am thinking about Stanford because I have heard about it a lot—in middle school they would talk about the top colleges. Stanford just stood out for me and I remember I just saw a picture, like, we did projects. I remember when my project was about Stanford. Their campus is so neat, nice and proper. It's beautiful. (participant 8, personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Participant 8 displayed aspirational capital. She spoke about her passion for social studies, a class that she failed, and her natural curiosity to learn about the world. A sense of irony overcame me when I juxtaposed Margarita's passion and determination with her poor academic performance. It was hard for me to explain why she failed in class. She said,

I am going to major in history, maybe. I wonder about things, and I like my history teacher a lot. I would also like to be a traveler. Like in world geography, we have been watching a movie—scientists ask simple questions but they come out with big things. Have you heard of New Guinea? Like, they live in the wild and I remember one of the men asking the travelers why you have good clothes and we don't? It was so simple asking why?...It was because the Europeans had so much more, like, a larger land mass and better animals. In New Guinea they never saw horses before. It's just so crazy. They never have seen a horse before. I
would like to travel and see and meet new people like find out what their ordinary life styles are like. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Again, I wonder why she ever failed this class. Participant 8's own assessment of why she failed was that she has the onus to make herself visible to the teacher and to be recognized. I began to see how school adults rendered students invisible. Moreover, adults were failing to recognize the existence of some of their best students like Participant 8.

Participant 12 was the highest performing student that I observed and interviewed with a GPA of 3.2. He was the only Caucasian student in this study. Participant 12 lives with both of his parents and comes from a low social economic background. Neither of his parents pursued higher education. Despite this fact, he displayed a high sense of critical consciousness and value for education. Participant 12 described his passion for school:

There are a lot of things about school that I enjoy. It kind of gives you the idea that it is a kind of insurance policy. You don't have to rely on other people and nobody can take your education away. So, if you were to go somewhere else—they can look at you and it would be like hey you got an education. Other people that don't have one, it's kind of like, what do you have to offer? They would have to take your idea for it. But, I mean school you have certificates you have different things to show them. It kind of like an insurance policy and it's kind of nice. I have always enjoyed to learn because it's kind of cool knowing something that others may not have the
Participant 12 referred to education as an “insurance policy” or as a kind of passport to the world of work. He saw utility in acquiring an education as well as the intrinsic value it has personally for him. Participant 12 describes how education makes him a more “rounded person”:

It definitely makes you a well rounded person. It definitely lets you touch base on a lot different things. There are people that just sit around. They just see one thing. School kind of gives you that aspect to be able to—like be able to talk to other people and being able to communicate with other people with a little bit more of depth. You know it’s kind of a communication thing. I think that’s where school does come into because when people talk to you, you can say, oh yeah, I’ve heard about that!

Participant 12 also possessed a critical consciousness regarding student engagement from school when he stated that students who are suspended from school are not connected to people maybe they are confused about something. . . . Students who are expelled from school are maybe frustrated about life maybe something in particular whether it be home, family or friends. . . . Students who drop out of school are—they are not at a point in life where they realize that maybe school is not important to them—maybe they need something to bring light to the
fact that, hey, education is what is going to give me a life later on.

(personal communication, November 16, 2011)

Participant 12 pointed to the value of teacher-student relationships or social capital in "connecting" disengaged students to school. Secondly, he avoided criminalizing expelled students and instead entertained the possibility that a student may be experiencing a personal crisis. Again, Participant 12 avoided using a deficit lens in his description of students who dropout from school by pointing to the idea that they may need something to bring light to the fact that school is important.

Participant 6 was an 11th grade student who is a first generation Mexican American. Her home language is Spanish. In addition, she scored within the proficiency range for both mathematics and language as indicated in the state's standardized testing for 2010. She has an excellent attendance and discipline record, and her current G.P.A. is 2.5. Participant 6 has a value for education that stems from "consejos" her parents have passed on to her. Participant 6 said: Well, I'm trying to do well for myself, actually, and my parents are, you know, telling me, oh, you do this so you can be successful and not be like us, like how they're struggling, so that kind of made me want to do good in school and become successful (personal communication, November 19, 2011).

Participant 6 exemplifies how her family values education and encourages her to strive for a better life. This is in contrast to the stereotypes that are usually used to explain the dropout phenomena among Latino students (Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2010b; Valencia & Black, 2002).
It became readily apparent that each of the students that participated in this study presents a repertoire of knowledge and abilities. Students communicated a passion for learning. For example, ten out of the twelve students interviewed strongly voiced their inherent drive to learn. They also maintained a critical consciousness regarding power, pedagogy and relationships found in their school's culture. Manifestations of navigational, familial, social, and aspirational capital were encountered in the data. This finding stands in opposition to the deficit interpretation found in Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) Cultural Capital Theory that dismisses forms of cultural knowledge that differ from those found in a white middle-class culture. I posit that the key to engaging students is found within our own political and ideological clarity. When school adults see students through new eyes for the capital they already possess, we began to become present and active in our role as educators. In other words, teachers need to develop and maintain the capacity to make sense of and respond to the needs, strengths and experiences of their students.

Sensemaking via Microaggression

The second theme that I identified was sensemaking via microaggression. In other words, I began to see how students were astute observers of their teacher's actions or inactions. They had the uncanny ability to "read" their teachers level of caring before deciding whether to commit to learning. In many cases, students had to navigate through a sea of pervasive messages of rejection or criminalization. Their teachers' kinetic or verbal messages that render
students “unworthy” or “invisible” are called microaggression (Solorzano, et al., 2000). I saw that a students' level of (dis)engagement is determined by their level of sensemaking derived from teacher behaviors. Participant 6 described how she got "a sense that she cares" from her teacher: “She’s very helpful. Like, she’ll — if you raise your hand, she’ll go and help you because some teachers don’t. They ignore you or something, you know, they don’t get to help each student” (personal communication, November 19, 2011).

I asked her to expand on her observation. Participant 6 continued,

    I don’t know, actually. Maybe they don’t care much and stuff, so. But like, she’s very nice and you get a sense that she cares. Yeah, she does care.

    She always tells us her stories and we get to tell her ours. That’s how our class was with her. Well, the way she, like, presented herself with people.

    She was very kind and she listened to everybody— I don’t know. Yeah, she actually paid attention. Other teachers, they don’t seem like they care much (personal communication, November 19, 2011).

Participant 6 is an exceptional student based on my interactions and classroom observations of her. Her attendance, discipline and standardized test scores indicate a student with high academic potential. Participant 6 went on to describe a teacher who “failed to make the first move”:

    Miss—well, I don’t want to say her name, but she’s my English teacher this year, but I don’t think she cares much about the class. Like, she doesn’t really talk. She’ll just go up there and tell you what to do and that’s pretty much it. Then, she’ll go back and sit down and do who knows
what. The only time—well, actually, I talk to her if we go up to her and ask her for something. Like, she's not very helpful or anything. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

Participant 6 continued to describe how her perception of her teacher's level of caring determined her own level of engagement:

She seems like she don't really care about how the students do in class. I do not know—well, she does not show as if she cares, pretty much, so that just tells it all! It makes me feel like if she does not care, how are we supposed to care and do well in her class, you know. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

Next, Participant 6 told how a teacher rendered students “invisible” when students were delivering presentations to the class:

She don't show much. She just makes us, like—she'll maybe write the stuff down and you just have to look at that and just do as it says on the board and that's it. Then, she goes back to her desk. Sometimes she will have us do notes and she will go through it with us, but it is not much. She is not very helpful. When we do presentations, like, she seems to just walk off and just come back, and we are still presenting pretty much just to the class. She is the one who is supposed to be grading and stuff, so it does not seem like she is there for us. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

Participant 6's interpretation of teacher behavior is best summarized when she stated, “they don't want to be here.” Participant 6 continued,
Well, I think that they should get actual teachers that want to teach and are willing to help each student and stuff because right now I'm not seeing much help from them. That's one thing we need in our school, good teachers that they like to teach and they show it. Because some—I mean, they don't even look like they want to be there. Like, they really don't. Like, some even complain, so it's like, well! (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

I asked her if students heard the complaints from teachers. Participant 6 responded, “Yes, we do—so it's like, okay, why are you teaching?” (personal communication, November 19, 2011). Participant 6 displayed a high level of aspirational capital. For example, other students saw her as a peer counselor, and she desired to one day be a veterinarian or a psychologist. Participant 6 said,

Well, I want to attend college. I'm not sure which one yet. I want to become either a veterinarian or a psychologist. One of those because my mom says I could be a psychologist, like, I should do that, and since I like animals I want to be a veterinarian, so that's two things in mind right now. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

I asked Participant 6 if she applied to college. In addition, I asked who helped her with the application process. Participant 6 replied,

I applied to the one in New Mexico, I think—they said I got accepted there, but I, like, he told me just to apply. I didn't want to go there and I
told him. I was like, well, I’m pretty sure I’m not going there. He’s like just apply (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

I got the sense that her voice was silenced regarding which college she applied to. I asked her who selected the college. Participant 6 replied, “One of the counselors he told me, oh, just sign it because he asked me, he’s like, have you applied? I was just like, no, not yet, so he’s like, oh, come with me and we’ll apply to one” (personal communication, November 19, 2011).

I asked Participant 6 if the counselor attempted to discuss her future career goals or inform her why this college was best suited for her. Participant 6 replied,

No, actually he didn’t. No, he just told me, like, oh, you know, apply to here, and I was like, well, I’m not gonna go there most likely. He’s like, just sign it anyway. Just sign it and apply. Then, they announced that I got accepted. They sent me some mail saying to, you know, but I’m not planning to go there so there’s pretty much no point. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

It became clear to me that Participant 6 was aware of the interpersonal microaggressions that she experienced with an adult who is in charge of advising her on academic matters. She applied to a college not of her choosing. She had little information or voice regarding the college she applied to. Worse, she was made to apply to a college that she has no plans to attend in the future.

Moreover, she was not counseled to apply to more than one college or given
information about other choices. Despite being marginalized, she maintains high career ambitions to become either a veterinarian or a psychologist.

Participant 12 has done well academically with the exception of one class that he failed. Participant 12 describes how a teacher's style of teaching contributed to him failing the class:

I had a teacher and the way she grades is not as easy as other classes because she just walks around and stamps our work if you did it—that is all she does. It's easy as far as that grade but when it comes to the test it's kind of difficult. There is no feedback. It's no particular information— did I do this wrong? Did I do this right? Oh, you should have done this! Oh, maybe you would have gotten that answer if you had done this! It's not like that. The teacher is kind of, just puts something on the board and says Oh, here, just figure it out! It's like wait hold on what is going on? I do not even understand this! And, it's this kind of teaching that made it difficult for me to follow everything. I ended up failing that class and now it is hurting my GPA tremendously! And, it's kind of frustrating but other classes have helped me pick it up. (personal communication, November 17, 2011)

Participant 12 questioned his teacher's apathy and disinterest toward his academic success, which he values. Participant 12 responded to this Othering by preserving his GPA by having done well in his other classes (personal communication, November 17, 2011). Next, he illustrated how he was able to "read" a teacher's tone of voice and their body language to determine the instructor's passion for the subject matter. Participant 12 stated,
I think it really depends on the teacher on how they present the information because if it's somebody that just stands up there who is mono-toned it's kind of like, Oh no! I want to sleep —what is going on? But if they show that they are moving around and they change their voice a little bit, it definitely draws you in a lot better because I had a teacher my freshman year he would just bounce off the walls. He kept it interesting. He made the math, like dang, I want to learn! I like going to this class because he is excited about doing what he is doing. I mean when you’ve got teachers who hate the subject — I hate this school... I don’t want to be here, you know, you can tell just by their body language and just if they drag their feet. But there is really no subject that I don’t like just as long as the person acts interested. (personal communication, November 17, 2011)

Five of the students mention how some school adults display acts of "favoritism" among students. Participant 12 described how he perceived a teacher withholding help for some students. In addition, he referred to aesthetic caring, which is a type of interpersonal microaggression. Participant 12 stated,

Wow! That lady can make your head spin. She comes off very rude. She acts like she is kind of your friend and then she turns out not to be. She doesn’t seem to be there for your best interest. She is kind of, again, just here it is bam! Just do it! It's kind of wait hold on! I have never seen this information how do you want me to try to do that I don’t understand and she kind of has her little favorites and just helps them. I have tried to stay after class. I have tried to figure it out and she is not really helping me and
she is kind of — I am trying to think of the word — she is not really open minded to everything that is going on. (personal communication, November 17, 2011)

Participant 12 showed how he made a connection between his sensemaking via a sea of microaggression and his own conscious decision to become engaged with school work. What was powerful was how he described a student’s choice to become “somebody” with or without school. Participant 12 said,

Adults definitely play a key role to build them up don’t be like oh! you can’t do that you can’t do this! The negative idea being drilled into their head through adults here. There are some adults here that just don’t uphold that. They just look at you like you’re a dog — you’re nothing — you are never going to do nothing with your life — you kind of — you feel it from adults here. It kind feels that like you are not going to do nothing with your life but yet again it’s like this doesn’t make sense because some people will take that into their idea and will be like, wait what’s the point — what’s the point of coming here. They are just going to put be down. I might as well go with my friends and they are going to like, oh yeah! you can be somebody, sometimes that’s not the right road and I think when adults were to put that into your idea, into you head, like wait you can do something with your life! You can do something! Don’t let people tell you this is the road that you need to go down. It is your choice and try to help guide them. I think a lot of kids would try to understand that — understand
the path they need to follow. (personal communication, November 17, 2011)

Participant 12 depicted a students’ stressful confrontation with institutional microaggressions and the educational systems ability to instill feelings of alienation and discouragement.

Participant 8 is another student who displayed her ability to “read” the teacher. She speaks of how certain teachers stand out as those that care by their mere presence in the classroom. Participant stated,

A quality teacher is usually relaxed because too many teachers are stressed out. He would need to chill and be someone who can talk about anything, like, Mr. J. He jumps around the room. He tries to keep us focused. Those are the kinds of teachers that would always stand out to you, like the ones that think about their kids even before themselves. Like I have to be home by 5 but I can stay until 4:30 to help them. Teachers that don’t mind to stay to help. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Participant 8 has had an excellent discipline record throughout her educational career. Nevertheless, she told of her own act of resistance to confront a teacher who she thought was being unreasonable and uncaring. Moreover, she made a connection between her teacher’s level of caring and her own level of academic engagement. Participant 8 said,

I had a language arts teacher and she was a horrible teacher. Like, she didn’t even know what she was talking about. Students would raise their
hands and she would just walk right past us. She seem like all she wanted to do was get her paycheck and leave. She didn't care. If she didn't care why should I care? We would get mad at each other. She would always yell at me and she was always mad and I asked her why are you always mad? I didn't ever do anything to you! She was the only teacher I really ever had problems with because I am very respectful of my teachers.

(personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Participant 8 described how a student can perceive if a teacher has a passion for teaching. She made a distinction between a teacher knowing the subject matter and having a passion for teaching it. We see that it is not enough to be proficient at what one teaches but have a love for the subject as well as a desire to teach it. Participant 8 stated,

In her (Participant 8's current English teacher) class we would have a warm up. She would show us some slides and she would give us the homework. She would ask us four or five questions before the bell rang and then we went, just leave, just, like some teachers are passionate about their work. My old English teacher did not like what she taught. She just took it because she was good at it but does not like to teach it and that is something you should do if you're going to work at something and major in it and especially teach. It should be something that you love and want to teach it to others. That's what makes a good teacher. Like Mr. J, he loves math you can tell. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)
Again, I saw how a student gauges their own level of commitment based on the teacher's behaviors. Participant 11 described the "internal engagement switch" that student's possess when confronted by a blatant micro-aggression. Participant 11 states,

I don't know — it just they would always say you don't really have to go to school and then teachers would always tell the students, you don't have to come to school. You come to school to just sit down — what's the point of coming? The students actually take it offended because they will actually stop going to school because of the teacher or they will start going to class because of the teacher. Students actually get tired of hearing the same thing "what's the point of going to school if you're not going to do nothing."

(personal communication, November 7, 2011)

Nine of the students indicated that they have felt that teachers have allowed students to fail by not "taking a stand" or "just giving up." When I asked Participant 11 if he ever got the feeling that he was left to sit and fail, he replied,

Yes! If you don't want to do your work I don't care! Kind of like that! There are teachers like they will try but at one point they just give up, well, I think what teachers ought to do is never give up if you're trying to do your work.

(personal communication, November 7, 2011)

Participant 11 described how students experience institutional microaggression by being ignored and excluded. Participant 11 stated,

My freshman teacher Ms. Z, I didn't like her because she actually, she really wouldn't care about you or what you do. Like, she would teach us,
then she went, go and just sit down and let everybody do what they wanted to do and not really paying any attention to what they we were doing. She would actually scream at the students for no reason or she would kick them out only because they didn't have a pencil or asked for paper or something. (personal communication, November 7, 2011)

Four of the students alluded to zero tolerance policies that exclude students.

Participant 11 described how adults contribute to students failing from school.

Participant 11 said,

I think it's actually kicking them out from class because I think they should keep them and give them another chance because teachers would get mad at them for one little thing and not give them a warning or a chance and just kick them out or send them to F-1. F-1 is like OCS, on campus suspension, but they just call it F-1. It's a room where all the students go when they are getting in trouble or suspended or expelled. I think that what they should do is just actually let students bring their I-pods and all that because that is what students want to basically do listen to music and do their work. Teacher's really won't let them listen to their I-pods. There are actually teachers who would actually cut their headphones off or take them away. When they take them away, all that would do is make the student mad and that will only make them do nothing. (personal communication, November 7, 2011)

Participant 1 contrasted those teachers who displayed a balance between being flexible but exhibited a "push factor" that kept students engaged. Eight of the
students in this study pointed to this balance of teaching. Participant 1 described her “cool” teacher’s discipline:

She is cool. Like, if there is a problem she would like give time to explain it and she is not like the strictest teacher but she knows when to have fun and when it is time to get serious. They are really understanding like if we didn’t understand something she would go over it and wait until you knew how to do the stuff that she was teaching. Like, she didn’t like hurry you up and anything. She helped out a lot. She was not rushed. She was like a friend to students. She is not like those mean teachers or like those ones that don’t care. She is really there. (personal communication, November 4, 2011)

Participant 1 described her perception of a teacher’s balance of knowing “when to have fun and when it is time to get serious.” In addition, she voiced her sense of social justice when she witnessed a blatant microaggression toward a fellow student. Participant 1 said,

There was a student who kept on popping her gum in class and she was told to throw it away and she didn’t and the teacher called her house and made up a lie that she cussed him out or something like that and she was suspended for two days and the whole class was like why would you lie and all that stuff. The teacher was like disorganized and he would say like did we do this project already? We would like say no we didn’t and say like you should know what you are doing you are the teacher. We should not
Participant 1 continued to question the professionalism of some of her teachers. She told of how teachers “scream at them” and were “acting like they were the student’s age.” Participant 1 said,

I would advise teachers not to start screaming at them and saying that you are going to call their parents—give them a reason why you are upset with them and just like try to talk to them calmly at first instead of screaming at them saying that you are calling security on them. If you scream at them you are basically like acting like you are their age and like you are another teenager telling them or to order them around. You are there to teach them not to scream at them or fight with them. Even if they are not doing anything right, you should at least explain why you are mad. (personal communication, November 4, 2011)

Participant 1 described how it is important that teachers make the “first move.” I saw that teachers who failed to make “the first move” as a microaggression in that it rendered the student as invisible. Seven of the students in the study indicated how important it was for teachers to engage students that were “shy.” Participant 1 states,

Well teachers should put a little more effort on teaching students how to do stuff. If they have an issue and you notice that, then ask them if they need help instead of waiting for them to come to you. I mean you are there for them and help them learn stuff and like you should be there for
them even though they are not following the rules. There are teachers who also don’t know that you are even in class if you are too quiet and leave you alone. (personal communication, November 4, 2011)

Participant 1 also portrayed how microaggressions were delivered through a “banking method” of teaching. Here we see her call for a dialogic method of teaching. Participant 1 states,

I would change the teachers that don’t really put in the effort into teaching. I mean, they are there for a reason not just to sit there and give assignments you are there to help and help students understand what to do (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

Participant 1 underscored how it is vital that teachers “make the first move” and not abandon their students. Participant 1 said,

There are teachers that are just there and but they are not there to help you through high school. I just want all my teachers to just actually help students because they say that the dropout rate is pretty high for Hispanic people maybe it is not the students, maybe it’s the teachers that are not helping them. You know! Because, maybe they do need help but they are not standing up and saying that they do. If you notice that their grades are low, you should help out instead of just saying, Oh well! Your grades are low and you are going to fail—that would be really cool if they pull you aside just for a moment and say hey I am here for you! I can help in this subject that you are doing instead of just saying oh well you are failing you
are going to drop out you are going to be like one of those students.

(personal communication, November 4, 2011)

I am intrigued by her choice to view the dropout crisis not through a deficit lens of her peers but through a critique of the institution.

The data shows how students are confronted by a bombardment of messages embedded in pedagogy, zero tolerance policies, curriculum, and teacher behaviors and interactions with students. These messages render poor students and students of color as inferior. They do nothing more than to sustain the hierarchical status-quo still present in American society. It is apparent that students' sensemaking of these racial microaggression is occurring at the expense of their negative self or racial group perceptions. What is worth noting is that the data reveals how academic engagement may be a function of a student's perceived levels of teacher caring.

Looking in the Mirror and Seeing the Other

Solórzano and Yosso state (2001), “...schools operate in contradicting ways with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower” (p. 3). Society continues to sustain the racial stereotyping of Latino students in the media and through educational discourse and practice (Valencia, 2010b). Educators at times may use terminology such as "unmotivated", "lazy" or make use of fear and humiliation tactics in order to domesticate “troublemakers” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). It is important to note how teacher behaviors can communicate to students an intense opposition to the
Other as a burden or failure. As such, schools become powerful socializing institutions that perpetuate a racial hierarchy that places poor urban students of color at the bottom of society’s well (D. A. Bell, 1992).

It is important for me to acknowledge the racialized experiences of students through the microaggression that they encounter at school in order to show how students are pushed out of school. The data begins to reveal how students begin to blame themselves and their community for their academic and economic failures. Students begin to label themselves using the stereotypes, usually perpetuated in society. For example, Participant 9 is a student who values education but describes himself as “lazy.” Participant 9 said,

I think school is important, but, it is just that I am a lazy person so I don’t do that good in school but I think it’s important to have an education. I would have gone to class more and done all my work so that I can keep my grades up so I can graduate but I feel that I just get lazy toward the end of the year. I won’t do any of the work and I will try to catch up. I get the material but I won’t just do the work (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

Participant 9 had earlier described how he would rather avoid the possibility of getting in trouble by not showing up to a class where he had perceived certain social injustices and microaggression. However, he continues to internalize the blame for his perceived academic failures by Othering himself by describing himself as “down there with those students.” Participant 9 said,
I started smoking my junior year. I was going to try it my freshman year but I just didn’t do it but junior year I did and I felt it got to me a little. Like, I am a little slower because like in 8th grade, I could read at college level but now as a senior I could only read at 8th grade level. I think it hit me with like my vocabulary and just trying to — I think as a student, well, I am not that good of a student. Like during class, I am not destructive or anything but just like grade wise I am pretty much low, just down there with those students. (personal communication, November 4, 2011)

Participant 9 acknowledged that he once had the potential to read at “college level” but attributed his disengagement from school with being mentally impaired from experimenting with marijuana. Next, we get a glimpse of the insidious consequences of the contemporary forms of racist acts that are unconsciously perpetuated by school adults and society, when he begins to question his own culture for academic disengagement. Participant 9 said,

Maybe, sometimes, its where we come from or where we were raised too, if we were raised differently we have different ways of thinking because I have a different way of thinking—to me it's like—to me it is just like—I think it's all a mentality, all in their head (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

When I asked him what he thought other people say about his school, Participant 9 replied, “They probably think that they are more misbehaved, maybe more, uh, less—I can't think of the word—maybe like less civil” (personal communication, November 4, 2011). He believes that his community is seen as less “civil” than
their own. This depiction of his community implies a line drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them’ imbued with racial stereotyping.

Seven of the twelve students made reference to the word “lazy” to describe themselves as students. They used this label in spite of their value for education, career aspirations, and histories of academic potential. They have exhibited resiliency in their ability to navigate the harsh sociopolitical and economic terrains they encounter throughout their educational careers. However, many of the students continue to portray themselves as lacking. Here, Participant 1 described herself as a student. Participant 1 stated, “Well I am good at paying attention but sometimes I get distracted when I am doing my work—sometimes I get lazy” (personal communication, November 4, 2011).

Participant 1 began by describing herself in a positive way but quickly labeled herself as “lazy.” Once again, she labeled herself as “lazy” but maintained her self-image of being a cooperative student. Participant 1 said, My failure would be that I didn’t put enough effort into my work. Like, I could have done better and I could have put more time into it because I get lazy. I am an alright student. I am not like the best ever, like who tries the hardest but I am not like the ones who are always saying like I don’t want to do this! Or I am going to ditch this class! I am just like the average student. (personal communication, November 4, 2011)

Participant 11 described himself as a student who is willing to learn. However, he struggled in defining his self-image as a student. He continued by
situating the blame of academic failure away from the institution and on the students by using a deficit lens to describe his peers. Participant 11 stated,

I think for me my point of view is that they see me as a student who goes to class and just sits down and listens and not do any work. Me, I actually agree with them at some point but not always but there are times when I actually go and actually do my work! Yes, there are students who don't do anything. It's not their job to help us graduate. It's our job to help us graduate and do our work it's not their fault we're failing. It's our fault. We are just actually talking and laughing and ignoring the teacher. (personal communication, November 7, 2011)

All students interviewed made referenced to the word “ghetto” to describe their school and community. Participant 1 told how “other people think that students who go to this school are ....ghetto and drug users” (personal communication, November 4, 2011). Participant 12 described his school as still having “rough times...where you got to deal with crazy children who just come here to goof off” (personal communication, November 17, 2011). Participant 11 felt that other people think that his school is “ghetto and lame” and that the students are “dumb, retarded and weird” (personal communication, November 7, 2011). I believe that this representation of their community as “ghetto” exemplifies the internalization of stereotypes that is socially reproduced in the school, community and society. In contrast, my experience has been that the majority of students attending this school come from families who work hard and
value education. Moreover, students raised in this community demonstrate a high level of aspirational capital.

Participant 8 informed me that the image of her school affected her chances of being accepted into college. Moreover, she said that her teachers communicate this message to her. The message being that a student graduating from her high school need to be twice as good as other students to get into the top colleges. Participant 8 complained that

People get into too many fights. I could see why people would say that our school is like dangerous because like there is a fight almost every day. Some people are just making us have that record like that hurts our senior year when it is time to get out of this school and go to college. Like top colleges, our teachers tell us all the time that if we are coming from this school — so they are going to be telling you — Oh! just because she is a good student— she went to that ghetto school that doesn't mean much. So, like you have to be the best student. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Participant 8 demonstrated how she had internalized her school's image in a way that will determine her future academic trajectory. She described the high level of security present at her school. She rationalized that it was inadequate to curb students from "violating." She began to interpret her solution to student disengagement as a need for greater policing on school grounds. Disturbingly, she felt the need for high security to keep her own niece from being truant. She
envisioned a "good" school as having the ability to “keep an eye” on her niece so that she behaves. Participant 8 said,

Well there are a lot of kids getting in trouble. Like, there are a lot of security guards around school but still —like people violate. They do stuff in the bathrooms and get high and sell stuff around the school. Like you hear this stuff all the time and then like when she (niece) is in high school I want her to be like watched—like stop her from doing something she would regret later in life because the kids that are doing stuff now when they get older and they realize that they are old and start to ask “what am I going to do for myself?” That is what my mom realized. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

Another student, Participant 12, has internalized that the way to get students to be engaged with school is to use coercion. His view that urban students of color are in need of more control is reflective of the view that society sustains in which schools are turned into prisons: Participant 12 stated,

Because if you build somebody up, if you hold people at that expectation they will grow to that expectation and I don't think that students are taught enough that they feel, “I can do that!” But, if someone puts the fire under you, yes! you are going to do it. That's the same motto they showed me in the Marines, too, because that's what I want to do after high school to help me pay for college is that they say if somebody has a gun to your head oh! I can't do this! But if somebody had a gun to your head you just might do it! (personal communication, November 17, 2011)
All of the students interviewed depicted their community and school through a deficit lens at least once. Participant 12 blamed the family structure and their value system for relying on government welfare programs to sustain them. He generalized this portrayal of urban families as the cause for not valuing an education. Participant 12 stated,

I think it's because of their parents—I think their parents really don't hold them to that aspect of where education is key. They think that like welfare, it pays for this and that and they are kind of looking at it like why should I go to school? I can stay home and drink beer and smoke cigarettes and all this stuff. I have a friend that is just like that. I met him and we were friends since we were kids and he used to say oh yeah I dropped out of school and what's the point of getting a diploma? It's just a piece of paper! (personal communication, November 17, 2011)

Participant 12’s response mirrors the mythmaking that occurs in American history that Mexican Americans do not hold education high in their value hierarchy (Valencia & Black, 2002). He continues to echo this image of his school. Participant 12 said,

Students who attend my school are different. They have a different thinking process but they are the same. They are similar. I think that other people think that my school is dumb. They think it is immature and ghetto—other people think that students who go to this school are like ghetto and immature and not educated. (personal communication, November 17, 2011)
Participant 12 tends to struggle with how he describes his fellow peers. He contends that students are different but are the same. The students who attend his school have a different way of thinking. He then defaults to describing the students who attend his school as “ghetto”, “immature”, and “uneducated.”

Participant 6 was asked to tell about her struggle in school. She revealed how she has internalized the subjugation that comes from living in her community. Participant 6 said,

Failures — maybe the way that I am. Like, I'm very—I have very low self-esteem, so I feel like that’s bringing me down a lot. I should be more, like, you know—I don’t know—What’s that word? What do you call it? More confidence in myself. I should have more confidence in myself, so that’s one thing I need to work on. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)

Participant 6, I believe, has suffered the most from internalizing the microaggression she has experienced in her home life and in school. She, too, had a difficult time in defining her self-concept. She had internalized self-doubt. Participant 6 described herself as

A nice person and I'm outgoing, you know, to get along with and stuff and like, I guess, I could just say that like, to other people, they say that I'm really positive to them. So, I give positive advice and stuff, but to me like, I could give that to people, but I can't give that to myself. I can’t give positive advice to myself—just to people so that’s one thing I can say. (personal communication, November 19, 2011)
Like her peers, Participant 6 casts doubt on her own self worth. She is able help her friends by giving them advice but portrays herself as unworthy of receiving her own advice. She self-diagnoses herself as having low self-esteem despite having an excellent academic and discipline record.

Conclusions

CRT offers a powerful tool to bring about some clarity in better understanding the dropout crisis. We find ourselves in an era that sustains the notion that if it cannot be measured it is not important. This notion of statistical interpretation of student (dis)engagement leaves little room to consider teacher “political clarity” and “ideological clarity” and their role in sustaining a culture of success for Students of Color (Bartolome, 2004). So called “objective research” does little more that to perpetuate deficit perceptions about Communities of Color. Moreover, researchers using statistical methods and hypothetical guessing games to analyze student (dis)engagement marginalize students further by rendering their voices silent. A more humanizing approach to research treats those being studied, not as objects, but as real people. CRT accomplishes this by simply privileging the voices of students. Subsequently, students are humanized by being represented as having agency and the potential read their world and recreate it (Freire, 2000). A CRT approach to educational research shifts the analysis from a deficit lens that portrays Communities of Color as “at-risk,” to one of hope for empowering and emancipating. In this study, CRT
provided me with the guiding principles so that the oppressed could be heard and inform educational research.

Secondly, the CRT framework provided me with a portal to examine how students are required to navigate through a school culture that refutes portions of their humanity in order for them to achieve academically. A tenet of CRT is the notion of the permanence of racism in American life. Racism may occur unconsciously or consciously by school adults. In this study, I found ample number of blatant examples of microaggression by school adults during my classroom observations. Participant 2 captures how, although he does not like a certain teacher, he tries to make the first move in establishing a relationship with her. Participant 2 said,

I just didn’t like her. I didn’t like her. She hated me. Like for the littlest stuff she would send me out, littlest stuff! I would talk and she would send me out, send me out! She just didn’t like me and she still doesn’t. I will say hi to her and I’ll just try to look at her in her eye and she’ll just walk away and I’ll be like forget her! (personal communication, October 5, 2011)

My classroom observations of Participant 2 show that he is a well behaved student. He, like many of the other students in this study, is a keen observer of his teachers' behaviors. I contend that students are always engaged. Namely, they engage in a type of sensemaking of teacher behaviors that functions to evoke student agency. Unfortunately, the response to perceived microaggression towards themselves or their peers usually manifests in self-defeating resistance and emotional disengagement from school. Worse, students who continue to be
exposed to alienation and educational neglect may begin to internalize racism. Hence, students begin to formulate an inferiority complex about themselves and a deficit view of their own community. Unless this social reproduction cycle is broken, the permanence of racism in school, the community, and in society will continue.

Lastly, CRT offers a portal to challenge dominate views of what constitutes intelligence and capability. In this study, I captured the aspirational capital of students, who in spite of the social, political, and economic challenges, continue to hope and endure. They hold on to dreams of a better future and see education as a way to get there. Furthermore, they maintain a sense of respect and empathy of for their teachers that emerge from my conversations with them. Conversely, they maintained a sense for social justice and critical consciousness. The students were holders of knowledge in that they were keen observers of what quality teachers do and say.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project was guided by the following research question: using a CRT lens, how does the voices, experiences, and perspectives of students help us understand the ways school culture, including power, pedagogy and relationships contribute to student (dis) engagement? I utilized student interviews and personal communications to create a forum for student voices to be captured. In addition, I interacted with students and conducted classroom observations that provided for the triangulation of data. The tenets of CRT construct a powerful lens for interpreting the statements made by students. A CRT framework positions the perspectives of students of color as legitimate knowledge. More importantly, CRT knowledges the sociopolitical terrains in which students of color are required to navigate for social and academic success. A landscape in which Eurocentric ideology is privileged and other epistemologies are marginalized.

In addition to CRT, my conceptual framework included an analysis of the hegemonic policies inspired by Neoliberalism that influences contemporary school culture. For example, high stakes testing, accountability, and privatization of schools are affecting school culture in ways that stifle morale and creativity among educators. Secondly, CRT recognize the legacy of exclusion for people of color in American society. As such, student disengagement from school is situated within a historical context of white privilege.
In addition, I employed anthropological theories to account for the tremendous influence and power that culture has in shaping a person’s worldview. Finally, I utilized a structure-agency-culture paradigm to comprehend the complexities of student (dis)engagement.

School culture is best understood as the “what” and “how” schools do (L. F. Rodríguez, 2008). It is common to represent educational institutions as unbiased perfect systems and to define academic success for children using meritocracy. Essentially, using the structure-agency-culture paradigm, allowed me to see how schools may be producing dropouts (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). Culture was seen as a mediator between policies and student actions. I further broke down school culture through examining its properties of pedagogy, power, and relationships. It is vital to acknowledge the power school adults have in driving these components of school culture that informs student agency. In other words, students made sense of their learning environments to assess if it was authentic, aesthetic or a microaggression before deciding to become (dis)engaged cognitively, emotionally, or behaviorally.

The application of a CRT lens unveiled three underlying themes that emerged from the data analysis acquired from student interviews, observations and personal communications. These themes were categorized as: (a) the seeds of hope and critical consciousness, (b) sensemaking via microaggressions, (c) looking in the mirror and seeing the Other.

The initial data that emerged from this study was the obvious community cultural wealth that students held. Students acquired these skills from family,
culture and life's struggles and tribulations. These students were able to navigate in a bicultural and bilingual world. Unfortunately, theses knowledges and abilities too often go unrecognized by school adults. Eleven of the twelve students interviewed possessed a strong value for education. This value for education was instilled by family and personal drive to become successful adults. Ironically, school adults are quick to label through a process of mythmaking that urban students of color do not care about school. It became apparent to me that even those students with a history of discipline problems wanted to learn.

Students also communicated an overall respect for their teachers. All the students interviewed assume ultimate responsibility for their own academic success or failure. Although, some of the students pointed to oppressive practices by adults, they usually blamed themselves or their peers more severely before they did their teachers. Moreover, six of the twelve students empathize with the challenges their teachers faced. For example, I observed a core curriculum class that was in disarray (Participant 8, Observation, February 7, 2010). Immediately the teacher upon noticing me asked me, “are you here to spy on me?” (Participant 8, Observation, February 7, 2010). Later, I asked Participant 8 about this class:

Like that teacher—the day the students got too rough—he is a good teacher. He explains things really good. He is a really good teacher, maybe, it's because he has a lot of kids that's what makes teachers think well I don't care about those kids—whatever. These kids are good so I am going to pay more attention to them. That's when I think he starts to separate them. We don't just try
to put the bad kids back with the good kids. Like in that class—like most of the kids who are making noise—he just lets them do what they want. He goes on with his lesson. He needs to tell them like, “shut up, come on!, This is school! This is not a place where you hang out just because you are out of the house!” (personal communication, November 14, 2011).

Implicit in the Participant's defense of her teacher that day are examples of several microaggressions toward students by the teacher. Participant 8 rationalized how her teacher decided not to care. Secondly, she noticed how the teacher segregates the class. Lastly, the teacher ignored disruptive behavior and "just lets them do what they want." What I observed that day was sarcasm used by the instructor toward students that did little more than fan the flames of disruption and resentment among students (participant 8, Observation, February 7, 2010). I saw no teaching going on that day despite a group of students sitting quietly watching the chaos (participant 8, Observation, February 7, 2010). Like Margarita, students respected and defended their teachers in spite of some teachers not caring by giving up.

Eleven of the twelve students exhibited aspirational capital. This is a student's capacity to hold onto hopes for a prosperous adult life in spite of social and economic barriers. Students spoke of the possibility of attending Stanford, becoming a psychologist, or owning their own company. Eight of the twelve students interviewed recognized that higher education was expensive. These students saw joining the military as a means to acquire the financial help necessary to attend college. I observed that students were willing to risk war and
death in order to be able to obtain an education when they perceived themselves as economically disadvantaged. This I saw as an ultimate symbol of aspirational capital.

Ten of the twelve students were first-generation Americans. These students exhibited linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005). These students are capable of functioning in a bicultural world. Four of the students portrayed themselves as having refined skills in art and music. Moreover, because many of the students serve as a conduit to American way of life for their parents, they exhibited a high level of social maturity. As such, these students demand to be treated as equals by adults (Yosso, 2005). However, too often, they are not.

Students also spoke of how their parents or older siblings cultivate in them a sense of responsibility and respect for education. This was known as familial capital (Yosso, 2005). Three students spoke of how it was important for them to excel academically in order to serve as role models for a niece or sibling. Some of the students spoke about the importance of giving back to their family and community. Moreover, students wanted to become successful adults in order to help their parents when they grew old.

Students demonstrated a variety of navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). In other words, six of the students have been able to sustain a high level of achievement despite the social and economic challenges they encountered daily. Four of the students spoke of major life crisis like a recent death of a loved one or experiencing the divorce of parents. For example, one of the students had recently lost his father to cancer but continues to show resiliency and aspirations.
Two of the students held part time jobs in order to help with their family income. I observed that those students who were more inclined to have had discipline referrals posed a higher critique of the school adults and policies. They maintained a sense of social justice and were quick to respond when they felt it was violated. Unfortunately, the form of opposition was too often self-defeating and fed back into the cycle of subordination by being excluded from class through detention and suspensions.

I observed how many of the students possessed the “seeds of critical consciousness.” Resistant capital was present even in those students who had exemplary discipline records (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). These students had an awareness of the realities of life. They had the ability to read their teacher and assess whether the teacher authentically cared for students or was just going through the motions. They were able to decipher their teachers’ level of caring by watching body movements and tone of voice. In the interviews, students communicated a wealth of information of the qualities of a good teacher. They recognized how important it was for teachers to forge trusting relationships with students.

Students possess technical capital regarding the physics of what constituted an engaging school culture. In addition, they maintained a wealth of information of what constituted good pedagogy. For example, they emphasized the importance of pedagogy that was dialogic, inspiring and project oriented. They longed for a school climate that allowed spaces for students to be heard and their realities to be recognized (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). They advocated
for those students that were “troublemakers” to be given a “second chance” and not be excluded. Students wanted teachers who took the time “to find out what the problem was” before excluding a student from school (participant 5, personal communication, February 7, 2010). They desired teachers that were flexible but at the same time had high expectations for their students. In addition, many students sat in a state of “silent lucidity” wanting to learn but through a process of domestication sat quietly and passively many times failing in silence. As such, students observed the importance for teachers to make “the first move” in engaging students (participant 5, personal communication, February 7, 2010). Above all, students wanted to be treated with respect and not like “little children” (participant 5, personal communication, February 7, 2010).

The second theme emerges from observing the resistant capital that students displayed when confronted with microaggressions. I began to notice that students had a depth of perception regarding their teacher's behaviors. Student interpreted these teacher actions or inaction as putdowns or microaggressions. Microaggressions are described as elusive belittlements (nonverbal, verbal, and/or visual) aimed toward the Other, often unconsciously or intentionally by school adults (Solorzano, et al., 2000). These teacher behaviors can be kinetic. For example, a teacher ignoring a student's repeated requests for help. Alternatively, they can be verbal as a teacher asking his class “how many of you guys have a medical marijuana card?” during a science lesson (participant 11, observation, October 9, 2010). It became apparent that all students became victims of insults aimed at a few students who were being disruptive.
Consequently, students became emotionally and cognitively disengaged from school through a process of alienation or educational neglect.

Students spoke about favoritism among some teachers. Students observed that teachers gave extra help and attention to those students that made their favorite list of students. At first, I postulated that maybe teachers unconsciously disregarded defiant students. Ironically, participants who referred to favoritism as a microaggression had exemplary discipline records. Being ignored was a microaggression that was apparent. Students respected teachers who "made the first move" in helping a student. Implicit in this is that at times students felt that they were allowed to fail by being ignored and teachers that were not willing to "take a stand." They also respected those teachers who took the time to share their personal lives with students and "get to know" the students (participant 6, personal communication, November 19, 2011). For example, when students were asked how many adults really knew them at school, ten out of the twelve acknowledged less than two adults. Worse, three of the twelve students replied that administration and security officers were the adults that really knew who they were. Another student mentions the military recruiter as the adult who really got to know him.

It became apparent to me that microaggressions imbued the school's culture. This became apparent in a variety of dimensions. It became apparent in a climate of student resentment. Students appeared to lack a means to voice complaints and have their concerns taken seriously. There is a lack of trust of students who were at times treated as children but whose realities demanded
them to behave as adults. Students were labeled as “troublemakers” by their urban mannerisms and ways of dressing. Microaggressions were manifest in zero-tolerance policies that were quick to exclude students who spoke back. In other words, a student’s sense of justice was not recognize or welcomed.

Microaggressions were also embedded within the curriculum. It lacked a socially critical dimension to it. Students lives and interests were kept out. This was seen by a lack of dialogic teaching. Teachers who had very good classroom management usually defaulted to a banking model of teaching where the teacher deposits knowledge into passive students. Even teachers who were entertaining and emotionally engaging were observed doing much of the speaking. The best teachers that I observed presented likable personality to their students did most of the talking. They failed to allow ways for students to be heard. In other words, curriculum was not negotiated around student interests and their lives.

In the final analysis, microaggressions were embedded in relationships, pedagogy, and power within the school’s culture. In my observations, there appeared to be an over emphasis on test taking strategies or teaching to the test. This focus on testing stifled instruction that cultivated critical thinking. Students also mentioned encountering meaningless assignments and busywork. This is reflective of the technocratic culture that high-stakes testing fosters in schools. Students also recognize when teachers fail to provide authentic feedback on their work.

A sense of marginalization emerged in students when they encountered aesthetic forms of caring from teachers (Valenzuela, 1999). I observed where
Teachers were masters at becoming likable to students through a sense of humor and being entertaining but lacked the "push factor" to engage students with the subject (L. F. Rodríguez, 2008). Furthermore, microaggressions were also observed in some school adults lacking the will to forge meaningful relationships with their students. Overall, evidence of acts of subordination towards students was found in my observations, interviews, and personal communications. I postulate that students are constantly engaged in sensemaking of their schooling experiences. In essence, adults wielded tremendous power over the internal engagement switch that all students hold for learning. Overall, students are keen assessors of their school's culture. They read the world and either remain in a state of silent lucidity or resist by becoming disengaged with school. Worse, they may begin internalize the discrimination encountered in their schooling experiences and begin to see the Other when looking in the mirror. This idea leads to my third theme.

Triangulation of data revealed how students had to contend with a bombardment of microaggressions. Students were perceptive of the messages communicated via the microaggressions embedded in school culture. Students construed the messages that they were inferior, unworthy, and immature. I observed that even innocent students with impeccable discipline records internalized the putdown that was intended for a disruptive group of students or student. In other words, a microaggression was like a bomb. Once it was deployed, there is usually collateral damage.
I argue that these subtle acts of ignoring, low teacher expectations, aesthetic caring, authoritarianism, menial curriculum, and overt putdowns directed at individual students and whole classrooms is the new face of racism in the 21st century. School adults enact these acts consciously and unconsciously. Furthermore, I postulate that these individual and institutional acts of racism are contributing factors to the dropout crisis among poor urban youth of color. When a student is confronted with a microaggression, he or she may respond through a display of self-defeating resistance that sustains the crisis. More insidious, a school culture imbued with microaggressions may become internalized in the students' psyche where they begin to believe the stereotypes and begin Othering their peers and community.

Using a CRT framework, internalized racism is defined as the "internalization of the beliefs, values, and worldviews inherent in white supremacy that can potentially result in negative self or racial group perception" (Perez Huber, 2010). The data began to reveal how students began to Other themselves. Students blamed themselves, their culture, and their community for their failures. Students situated the dropout crisis on how "they were raised" and "where they came from." Students described themselves using label such as "crazy" and "lazy." Moreover, they described their school as "ghetto" and infested with drug addicts. I interpreted this representation by students of their school as a form of self-hatred forged by a life of domination.

I reason that students go through a process of marginalization that is reinforced by their schooling experience. A ramification of this diminution of
identity formation is that students begin to perceive themselves and their peers as inferior. Consequently, students begin to subordinate each other and themselves by accepting the stereotypes imposed upon them by school adults, each other, the media, and society. This “false consciousness” sustains the acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which Latino students are consistently ranked at the bottom (Freire & Macedo, 1995). It is clear that the schooling experiences of students are having an adverse effect on their identities, psyche, and academic performance. Furthermore, I contend that a school culture imbued with microaggressions co-constructs the high school dropout and those students contribute to their own oppression through internalized racism.

Implication for School Leaders

Using the voices, experiences, and perspectives of urban students, how can school leaders inform practice and policy to address the high school dropout crisis? How does the physics of school culture help us better understand the co-construction of the dropout? I argue that by understanding the dynamic processes, interactions, and behaviors that flow in a school’s culture allows educators in identifying portals for student (dis)engagement. Because of this study, I have identified ten properties of school culture that I think are vital to curbing the “pushout” phenomenon:

1. Educators need to acknowledge the power they wield for student (dis)engagement through their actions, inactions and mannerisms.

2. Students read the teacher before engaging in the subject matter.
3. Educators need to be willing and courageous to take a personal inventory of one's political and ideological clarity.

4. Sarcasm, stereotypes, aesthetic caring or other microaggressions meant for a student has the consequence of creating collateral damage.

5. Recognize students as creators and holders of knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

6. School adults need to forge relationships with students by making the first move to get to know students on their own playing field and to take a stand in order to show that you care (confidence, trust, care, respect).

7. School adults need to believe that all students can learn.

8. Educators need to deliver a balance instructional approach of high expectations, flexibility, and sharing of power and experience with students.

9. Educators need to be present in the moment to read the classroom environment; they need to ask, “what is going on?” and take the next compassionate step.

10. School adults need to seize the opportunity for repair and to engage when a student displays acts of resistance.

Property 1 identifies the teacher as the most powerful person in the classroom. Property 2 recognizes that students are always engaged in sensemaking of the teachers' mannerisms. Together, these properties identify a
portal to student engagement. Educators need to be aware that students are astute observers of their teachers' behaviors. Those students that we are quick to criminalize or label as "troublemakers" appear to be the most critical observers of teacher behaviors. Students learn fast how to distinguish between aesthetic and authentic forms of caring (Valenzuela, 1999). As such, teachers have the power to engage and disengage their students by their genuine presence or lack of it. It appears that students consciously and unconsciously become (dis)engaged by what teachers do and how they do them. The teachers' tone of voice and body become a powerful communication instrument.

I argue that core aspects that drive school cultures of success are found in properties 3 and 4. It is imperative that school adults themselves are engaged in a process of monitoring their own ideological and political posture before they expect students to be engaged. "Political clarity" is described as a constant practice of critical analysis of how economic and sociopolitical forces influence student agency in the classroom (Bartolome, 2004). In addition, "ideological clarity" is achieved when educators contrast their own theories for the dropout crisis with the dominant society's assumptions that usually upholds a deficit explanation (Bartolome, 2004). This practice of being mindful of how macro-level ideologies inform one's assumptions thereby informing practice is crucial when working with socially subordinated youth. Without such critical consciousness, educators are inclined to default to microaggressions that sustain and contribute to the "pushout" phenomena. Additionally, it is imperative that educators recognize the collateral damage that comes along with "losing your cool" in the
classroom. Educational leaders would be addressing the dropout crisis head on by creating spaces for courageous dialogues using CRT and school culture as orienting theories for staff development.

Property five is a CRT tenet. Recognizing that students possess knowledge that can be tapped into by the instructor is another gateway to student engagement. The study uncovered how students had a wealth of aspirational, navigational, and other cultural wealth. It is by forging relationships that foster trust, care, confidence and respect that school adults begin to “let students in” and understand where “students are coming from” to better engage them with the subject matter. Property six emphasizes the importance of school adults to initiate constructing the bridge to “getting to know” their students. Finally, property seven sustains a school culture that genuinely believes that all students can learn. This property is crucial in short-circuiting the endemic quality of racism in society.

Finally, properties 8, 9, and 10 reinforce a culture of success especially for socially marginalized students. These properties identify the importance of a balanced approach to teaching where flexibility and high expectations are synchronized. In addition, property nine is vital in capturing an elusive but necessary quality in teaching. Presence in teaching is described as a teacher's connectedness to the cognitive, emotional and behavioral workings of the students and the class in context of their learning environment (Smyth, et al., 2010). It is when a teacher asks, “What is happening here?” and “what is the next compassionate step?” Moreover, it when a teacher sees opportunities for
engagement when students display acts of resistance rather than exclude, coerce, or punish.

Limitations

I believe that there are three limitations that need to be recognized and addressed pertaining to this research project. First, I would prefer to have followed the students until the end of their high school careers. This would have given me a more comprehensive picture of how school culture influences the educational trajectories of students. Time constraints and a heavy schedule of mandatory student testing prohibited me from extending the time span of the study.

Secondly, I would have liked to interview the teachers to better gauge their political and ideological postures toward students. How do teachers explain the dropout crisis? Do they possess an awareness of the power of school culture as orienting theory for student engagement? Furthermore, I would have explored teacher political and ideological clarity through perhaps a personal communication. Using a personal communication, I would have probed whether teachers were willing to engage in courageous dialogue about school culture using CRT as a scaffold.

Lastly, my positionality as a Mexican-American educator defined me as a biased researcher. I am simultaneously the Other and the researcher. I possess a “double consciousness” (Hubbard, 2003). I can identify with the students by my history of witnessing the marginalization that my grandparents and parents
endured through segregation and sparse educational and labor opportunities. Conversely, as a public school educator, I am part of the system that has the potential to emancipate or to oppress students. As I come closer to achieving my educational aspirations, I feel the intensity of my “double consciousness” come to life (Du Bois, 1996). I am seeing that the identity imposed upon me by the outside is not completely accurate. The identity of my childhood and young adult life was formed by the outside based on my phenotype, surname, mannerisms and epistemology that do not always synchronize with Eurocentric cultural capital.

Positionality Resolution

My positionality consisted of different identities. I am researcher, educator, and an active member of the Other. Like many of the students I interviewed, I too have a “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1996). I possess an identity that is shaped and privileged by how well it approximates the socially constructed version of idealism. Although, I entered the research site as an ethnographer, it became easy for me to synchronize my identity, struggles, hopes, and epistemology with those being study. This synchronicity of identity was instrumental in allowing me to uncover the community cultural wealth that Latino students possess. It also helped me to understand the manifestations of resistance that I was able to interpret as cries for social justice. Finally, my position as the Other, allowed me to comprehend the nexus between the manifestations of internalize racism and social culture.
In the final analysis, it became necessary for me to suspend my role as researcher in order to identify manifestations of microaggressions, deficit thinking, internalized racism, community cultural wealth, and student resistance. It also permitted me to gain the trust of students. Like me, many of the students possess the linguistic marker of the Other. I was able to see through the linguistic markers to unveil students' aspirational and intellectual capital. Furthermore, my role as an educator, student advocate and enforcer of school policy as an employee in the Department of Youth Services allowed me to see the macro-level pressures NCLB, Neoliberalism, and colorblind policies place on the public school system.

Future Research

I believe that an extended ethnographic study of the research site would give us a more comprehensive representation of how school culture contributes to the construction of a high school dropout. More importantly, it has the potential to reveal ways to curb the "push out" phenomena. Furthermore, more research is needed that does not pretend to be neutral regarding the injustices that poor urban youth of color experience.

As such, research needs to identify ways in which school districts can create spaces for both student and teachers to intensify their critical consciousness. PAR (participatory action research) offers another dimension to inform the abundance of mainstream technocratic knowledge we already possess about effective teaching and learning (Cammarota, 2008a; Rodríguez &
Brown, 2009). PAR includes students as experts in researching educational issues that affect their own educational trajectories. I believe PAR offers a wealth of information that represents a “missing link” to mainstream research. PAR is powerful in that it fosters youth development and informs practices from an insider's perspective.

Likewise, educational leaders, policymakers, educators and support personnel need to engage in monitoring their own political and ideological clarity. Adult stakeholders need to ask and interrogate the following questions: (a) establishing relationships for what purpose, (b) pedagogy for whom, (c) power to sustain what groups.

Reflection

The high school dropout crisis is a complex social problem. I have a difficult time grasping how a country as great as our fail to devote the necessary resources to effectively tackle this economic apartheid of 21st century. Educational research tends to focus on individual and structural risk factors to explain the crisis. Considering factors like immigration status and social economic status alone is not enough to adequately explain the variability of Latino academic achievement. The reality is that for Latinas/os and African American students only fifty percent successfully graduate from high school (L. F. Rodriguez, 2010).

Using school culture and CRT as orienting theories to help explain how the schooling experiences of students contribute to them “becoming somebody”
without school is a more realistic approach (Smyth & Hattam, 2004). It captures the complexities of the “how” and “what” schools do (L. F. Rodríguez, 2008). As a result, we can observe and hopefully intervene in the manners in which schools may unintentionally be disengaging students (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). Racist nativism is a conceptual framework that is derived from CRT or more specifically Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) that assists researchers in comprehending how the historical racialization of Mexican-Americans has influenced the contemporary experiences of Latinos (Perez Huber, 2010). It is through understanding how schools are agencies of social reproduction that we begin to reinvent our ideology from deficit thinking to anti-deficit advocates that recognizes the strengths of the communities of color.
APPENDIX A

STUDENT PERMISSION FORM
Appendix A

PARENT CONSENT FOR YOUR STUDENT’S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title: “In Pursuit of a Quality Education: Promoting Student Engagement and Achievement among Inland Empire Youth through Action Research”

We would like your teenager to be in a research study. The investigator of this study is Dr. Louie F. Rodriguez, a professor of education at California State University, San Bernardino. The study will include your son/daughter’s high school. The study will be part of your son/daughter’s normal school day and will be conducted in class with one of your child’s teachers. The research team from Cal State San Bernardino expects to be in the classroom with students for 2-3 hours per week and typically in a social studies-type course (i.e., history, multicultural education). Your student’s teacher has agreed to participate in this study. The study looks at how high school students can do research on their own schools and to better understand how students experience school. This study will help present and future teachers make better decisions about making learning more meaningful for high school students. If the project is successful this year, we hope to follow your child through high school to ensure he/she is on a pathway to graduation and college.

If you permit your son/daughter to be part of the study, he/she will be asked to: 1) complete a questionnaire about his/her perspectives toward school and society, 2) complete an audio interview that asks questions about students’ experiences in schools, 3) conduct his/her own research on issues identified important by students, 4) participate in on-going classroom sessions, 5) submit assigned work for review to determine your student’s progress, and 6) the research team will observe your student 3 times for one hour over the course of one year in three different places (i.e., in class, at lunch, assemblies, etc.) Your son/daughter’s participation will involve two class sessions per week for about 2-3 hours total per week.

There are no known risks related to the questionnaires, interviews, or conducting research. In fact, I expect that your son/daughter will be excited about this opportunity and will use every possible moment to share his/her experiences and become high school researchers. He/she will learn about educational policy and school reform issues and various issues impacting high school students in school. He/she will also learn how to conduct interviews, analyze data, write for different audiences, and present his/her work in a variety of forums. He/she will also learn how to use computer software, tape recorder, and other high-level software on the computer.

There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at California State University, San Bernardino. Your son/daughter’s name will not be connected to individual data collected from him/her. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, he/she no longer wants to be involved in the study, he/she can withdraw with no penalty.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to know more about this research, you can contact me, Dr. Rodriguez, at 909-537-5610. If you feel that your son/daughter has been mistreated or you have questions about participating in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB Chair at 909-537-7304.

If you have had all of your questions answered to your liking and you permit your son/daughter, to be in the study, please sign below.

Signature of Parent

Date

909.537.7404 • fax: 909.537.7310

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393
Dear Student:

My name is Dr. Louie F. Rodriguez, a professor of education at California State University, San Bernardino. I am asking you to be a voluntary participant in a research study on the reasons why some students dropout or stay in school. As you may know, over 50% of students in the Inland Empire region dropout of school each year. As a researcher, I am interested in understanding why students dropout and what can be done to improve schools so that more students graduate.

Your participation would be during the normal school day. A research team of graduate students from CSUSB and I will be working with you and one of your teachers for the remainder of the school year. If this year goes well, we may follow you until graduation, if you remain interested. Basically, the research team from CSUSB will work with you about 2-3 hours per week in one of your social studies classes (i.e., world history, multicultural education, etc).

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to: 1) complete a questionnaire about your perspectives toward school and society, 2) complete an audio interview that asks questions about your experiences in schools, 3) conduct your own research on issues identified important by you and your peers, 4) participate in on-going classroom sessions with your teacher and the CSUSB research team, 5) submit assigned work for review to determine your progress, and 6) the research team will observe you 3 times for one hour over the course of one year in three different places (i.e., in class, at lunch, assemblies, etc.).

There are no known risks to participate in this study. In fact, I expect that you will be excited about this opportunity and will use every possible moment to share your experiences and become high school researchers. You will learn about educational policy and school reform issues and various issues impacting high school students in school. You will also learn how to conduct interviews, analyze data, write for different audiences, and present your work in various forums. You will also learn how to use various multimedia such as computer software, tape recorder, powerpoint, and other high-level software on the computer.

There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at California State University, San Bernardino. Your name will not be connected to individual data collected from you. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, you no longer want to be involved in the study, you can withdraw with no penalty. If you choose to stop participation, you will remain in the class with your teacher but you will be given an equal assignment that is not connected to the research project. Because the research project is not altering the curriculum, you will continue to receive the curriculum as planned by your teacher.

Please know that you can withdraw from participation any time and there will be no penalty for doing so.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to know more about this research, you can contact me, Dr. Rodriguez, at 909-537-3643. If you feel that you have been mistreated or you have questions about participating in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB Chair at 909-537-7304.

If you have had all of your questions answered to your liking and you agree to participate in the study, please sign below.

Signature of Student __________________________

Date __________________________

909.537.7404 • fax:909.537.7516

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

This document is intended for educational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice. Please consult with your school counselor or other qualified professional for guidance regarding your educational or professional decisions.
As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of your son/daughter during their participation in the research project. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent

☐ Photograph  ☐ Videotape  ☐ Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

  Please initial: ___

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played to subjects in other experiments.

  Please initial: ___

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used for scientific publications.

  Please initial: ___

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played at meetings of scientists.

  Please initial: ___

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in classrooms to students.

  Please initial: ___

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in public presentations to non-scientific groups.

  Please initial: ___

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used on television and radio.

  Please initial: ___

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

SIGNATURE  DATE
APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
**Directions:** These topics are simple guidelines you should follow when shadowing students. You don’t need to think of all these items as a checklist, but as you are conducting observations, you should pay attention to these issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Discipline &amp; Control</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Student Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the nature of relationships between students and adults?</td>
<td>What is the nature of discipline?</td>
<td>What is the academic experience like?</td>
<td>How do students express their voices? Inside of class and outside?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is communication like?</td>
<td>How are rules enforced?</td>
<td>What is the nature of &quot;work&quot;?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are students greeted, if at all?</td>
<td>How do students respond to discipline policies (i.e., TNT)?</td>
<td>What kinds of things are students expected to do?</td>
<td>What is the nature of student voice? Where does this take place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are students spoken to?</td>
<td>How is conflict handled?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What's it like to be a students?</td>
<td>What are students learning?</td>
<td>How is testing referred to (i.e., CST, CAHSEE)?</td>
<td>What are the expectations of students, implicit and explicit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does school look through the eyes of students?</td>
<td>Is the learning &quot;culturally relevant&quot;?</td>
<td>How often is testing referred to in and out of classrooms, by students and adults?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do teachers look/appear/behave in the eyes of students?</td>
<td>Is there student interest?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do students respond to expectations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hallway/Lunch Activity</th>
<th>Peers/Friendship</th>
<th>College Culture</th>
<th>Purpose of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are students and their friends talking about?</td>
<td>What is the nature of peers/friends in school?</td>
<td>How, if at all, is college promoted to students?</td>
<td>What does the purpose of education seem to be? How do you know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the nature of friendships?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do you know? What is the evidence?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How is the purpose of education communicated to students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Interview Questions for PRAXIS Students 2010-2011

Background

- How old are you?
- What is your racial/ethnic background?
- Where were you born? Where were your parents born? If not, where have you and/or your parents been in the U.S.? 
- Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?
- Where do you live and who do you live with?
- What do your parents and/or other adults in your household do for work?

Schooling Experiences

- Tell me what you think about school. What do you like and dislike about it?
- What is your favorite/least favorite school subject? What do you like/dislike about it?
- What do you think you are good at when it comes to school? What are you challenged by at school?
- Tell me what a typical day is like for you in school.
- How would you describe this school (as compared to other high schools)?
- How many adults know you as a person? Explain.

Schooling Experiences (cont.)

1) Explain your success/failure in high school and what would you have done differently? Did you put forth your best effort? Why or why not?

2) Explain any obstacles you have had in high school, personally or otherwise, that may have contributed to your success/failure?

3) How do you think your teachers would describe you as a student?

4) What kind of student do you think you are?

5) When you transitioned from the 8th grade, were you academically prepared? Explain.

6) Describe a teacher that you had or have that you really like. Why did you like them? What kind of person were they? What was their teaching like? How did they treat students?

7) Describe a teacher that you had or have that you didn’t like. Why didn’t you like them? What kind of person were they? What was their teaching like? How did they treat students?

8) What was your most memorable moment in school? Why? What was your happiest/most proud moment in school?
9) What moment would you most like to forget about? Why?

10) What would you say is the most important motivator in your life? Why?

More Thoughts about School

- Why do you suppose that students in this school struggle academically?
- What have school adults done to help students succeed in school? What have school adults done to help students fail at this school?
- What do teachers in this school expect of you? How do you know this?
- What advice would you give teachers and administrators about how to deal with students that are having disciplinary troubles at school? Why?
- What advice would you give teachers and administrators about how to deal with students that are having academic troubles at school? Why?
- In general, how do you think school could be improved to make it more interesting, fun or engaging for students?
- Complete the following sentences:
  ✓ Students who are suspended from school are...
  ✓ Students who are expelled from school are...
  ✓ Students that drop out of school are...
  ✓ Students who attend my school are...
  ✓ Other people think that my school is...
  ✓ Other people think students who go to this school are...
  ✓ Students succeed in school because...

Research Seminar

- What do you think about the work we have done with PRAXIS? What has it been like for you to be in PRAXIS? What has it been like for you to work with other students?
- What specific things do you like/dislike about it?
- What specific things do you feel you have learned?
- Has what you have learned or experienced in the Seminar changed your thinking about school or about yourself? What has changed and in what ways?
- What do you think about your participation in PRAXIS? In what ways have you contributed to the work of PRAXIS? What has changed for you?
- How can PRAXIS be better?

Wrap-Up

Is there anything else I haven’t asked that you would like to add about your experiences at school now or in the past or about PRAXIS?

Plans After High School

11) What are your plans after high school?
12) What college will you be going to? Why?

13) Who helped you with college application process? Family? School (counselors, teachers, friends, mentors)?

14) What are your career goals? Do you know someone in that profession?

15) Think about your life ten years from now. You are in your mid-20s. Complete this sentence. “I will be...

**Voice and Change at Your School**

16) If you could change one thing at your school, what would it be and why?

17) What do you think the students can do to improve your school? What are some of things you would keep?

18) In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality teacher?

19) Is there anything else you want to say that I haven’t asked you?

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APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Human Subject Protocol Renewal Form

DATE: 1/3/11

IRB NUMBER: 09060________ Email Address: lrodrig@csusb.edu

REVIEW CATEGORY: If your application was originally submitted and approved under the exempt category, you DO NOT have to file for renewal. Please check off the appropriate category below if your application was originally approved under expedited or full board review.

EXPEDITED □ FULL BOARD ☑

INVESTIGATOR(s)/RESEARCHER(s): Dr. Louis F. Rodriguez

DEPARTMENT: __________Educational Leadership & Curriculum________

PROJECT TITLE: "In Pursuit of a Quality Education: Promoting Student Engagement Achievement among Inland Empire Youth through Action Research"

The above human subjects protocol is due for renewal. Please answer the following questions listed and return this form to the IRB Coordinator - Mr. Michael L. Gillespie in the Office of Academic Research (Administration Building). You may contact the IRB Coordinator by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu

Do you want to renew the above named protocol?

YES ☑ NO ☑

If you want to renew your protocol, please address the following questions listed below. If the answers to any one of the below questions is "YES" please elaborate the specific details on the back of this form or on a separate piece of paper and attach to this form.

Are there any changes in the original approved protocol/methodology that relate to the research conducted and/or human subjects utilized in your research?

YES ☑ NO ☐

I slightly adjusted one of the interview protocols and received CSUSB IRB approval for the change.

Have there been any adverse events or unanticipated problem(s) that relate to the research conducted and/or human subjects utilized in your research?

YES ☐ NO ☑

Investigator(s) Assurance:

The information and answers to the questions above is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and I understand that prior IRB approval is required before initiating any changes that may affect the human subject participant(s) in the originally approved research protocol. I also understand that in accordance with federal regulations I am to report to the IRB or administrative designee any adverse events that may arise during the course of this research.

Signature of Investigator(s)/Researcher(s) ____________________________ Date: 1/3/11

Signature of Faculty Advisor for Student Researchers ____________________________ Date: 1/1/11

Approving Signature of IRB Chair ____________________________ Date: 1/12/11

Approval of renewed protocol/methodology is granted from 01/28/11 to 01/28/12

Please renew in early January

Michael L. Gillespie, IRB Chair

2012
STUDENT ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title: "In Pursuit of a Quality Education: Promoting Student Engagement and Achievement among Inland Empire Youth through Action Research"

Dear Student:

My name is Dr. Louie F. Rodriguez, a professor of education at California State University, San Bernardino. I am asking you to be a voluntary participant in a research study on the reasons why some students dropout or stay in school. As you may know, over 50% of students in the Inland Empire region dropout of school each year. As a researcher, I am interested in understanding why students dropout and what can be done to improve schools so that more students graduate.

Your participation would be during the normal school day. A research team of graduate students from CSUSB and I will be working with you and one of your teachers for the remainder of the school year. If this year goes well, we may follow you until graduation, if you remain interested. Basically, the research team from CSUSB will work with you about 2-3 hours per week in one of your social studies classes (i.e., world history, multicultural education, etc).

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to: 1) complete a questionnaire about your perspectives toward school and society, 2) complete an audio interview that asks questions about your experiences in schools, 3) conduct your own research on issues identified important by you and your peers, 4) participate in on-going classroom sessions with your teacher and the CSUSB research team, 5) submit assigned work for review to determine your progress, and 6) the research team will observe you 3 times for one hour over the course of one year in three different places (i.e., in class, at lunch, assemblies, etc.).

There are no known risks to participate in this study. In fact, I expect that you will be excited about this opportunity and will use every possible moment to share your experiences and become high school researchers. You will learn about educational policy and school reform issues and various issues impacting high school students in school. You will also learn how to conduct interviews, analyze data, write for different audiences, and present your work in various forums. You will also learn how to use various multimedia such as computer software, tape recorder, powerpoint, and other high-level software on the computer.

There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at California State University, San Bernardino. Your name will not be connected to individual data collected from you. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, you no longer want to be involved in the study, you can withdraw with no penalty. If you choose to stop participation, you will remain in the class with your teacher but you will be given an equal assignment that is not connected to the research project. Because the research project is not altering the curriculum, you will continue to receive the curriculum as planned by your teacher. Please know that you can withdraw from participation any time and there will be no penalty for doing so.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to know more about this research, you can contact me, Dr. Rodriguez, at 909-537-5643. If you feel that you have been mistreated or you have questions about participating in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB Chair at 909-537-7304.

If you have had all of your questions answered to your liking and you agree to participate in the study, please sign below.

Signature of Student __________________________ Date ________________

909.537.7404 · fax 909.537.7310
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393
Appendix A

PARENT CONSENT FOR YOUR STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title: "In Pursuit of Quality Education: Promoting Student Engagement and Achievement among Inland Empire Youth through Action Research"

We would like your teenager to be in a research study. The investigator of this study is Dr. Louie F. Rodriguez, a professor of education at California State University, San Bernardino. The study will include your son/daughter's high school. The study will be part of your son/daughter's normal school day and will be conducted in class with one of your child's teachers. The research team from Cal State San Bernardino expects to be in the classroom with students for 2-3 hours per week and typically in a social studies-type course (i.e., history, multicultural education). Your student's teacher has agreed to participate in this study. The study looks at how high school students can be taught as they work on their own schools and to better understand how students experience school. This study will help present and future teachers make better decisions about how to make learning more meaningful for high school students. If the project is successful this year, we hope to follow your child through high school to ensure he/she is on a pathway to graduation and college.

If you permit your son/daughter to be part of the study, he/she will be asked to: 1) complete a questionnaire about his/her perspectives toward school and society, 2) complete an audio interview that asks questions about his/her experiences in schools, 3) conduct his/her own research on issues identified important by students, 4) participate in on-going classroom sessions, 5) submit assigned work for review to determine your student's progress, and 6) the research team will observe your student 3 times for one hour over the course of one year in three different places (i.e., in class, at lunch, assemblies, etc.) Your son/daughter's participation will involve two class sessions per week for about 2-3 hours total per week.

There are no known risks related to the questionnaires, interviews, or conducting research. In fact, I expect that your son/daughter will be excited about this opportunity and will use every possible moment to share his/her experiences and become high school researchers. He/she will learn about educational policy and school reform issues and various issues impacting high school students in school. He/she will also learn how to conduct interviews, analyze data, write for different audiences, and present his/her work in a variety of forums. He/she will also learn how to use various multimedia such as computer software, tape recorder, powerpoint, and other high-level software on the computer.

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There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at California State University, San Bernardino. Your son/daughter's name will not be connected to individual data collected from him/her. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, he/she no longer wants to be involved in the study, he/she can withdraw with no penalty.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to know more about this research, you can contact me, Dr. Rodriguez, at 909-537-5643. If you feel that your son/daughter has been mistreated or you have questions about participating in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB Chair at 909-537-7364.

If you have had all of your questions answered to your liking and you permit your son/daughter, to be in the study, please sign below.

Signature of Parent ___________________________ Date ___________________________
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Curriculum
Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
FOR TEACHERS

Title: “In Pursuit of a Quality Education: Promoting Student Engagement and Achievement among Inland Empire Youth through Action Research”

Dear Teacher:

My name is Dr. Louie P. Rodriguez, a professor of education at California State University, San Bernardino. I am asking you to be a voluntary participant in a research study on the reasons why some students dropout or stay in school. As you may know, over 50% of students in the Inland Empire region dropout of school each year. As a researcher, I am interested in understanding why students dropout and what can be done to improve schools so that more students graduate.

Your participation would be during the normal school day. A research team of graduate students from CSUSB and I will be working with you and one of your classes for the remainder of the school year. If this year goes well, we may follow you and your class until graduation, if you remain interested and if it is logistically possible given the constraints with scheduling. Basically, the research team from CSUSB will work with you about 2-3 hours per week in one of your social studies classes (i.e., world history, multicultural education, etc). The research team and I will find a common time to co-plan the lessons with one another and may also do so using email or phone. We expect that your involvement will be exciting and will provide you with an opportunity to collaborate with university peers on matters to improve student engagement in your classroom. We also expect there to be far reaching implications for other students in your school and for schools in the Inland Empire region.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to: 1) participate in on-going classroom sessions with your class of students, 2) help collect and evaluate student work, 3) co-plan and teacher sessions together, 4) participate in 3 interviews at the beginning, middle and end of this research project, and 5) agree to allow the research team to conduct on-going observations of the classroom sessions as we (you and the CSUSB research team) deliver instruction in class.

There are no known risks to participate in this study. In fact, I expect that you will be excited about this opportunity and will use every possible moment to share your experiences and observations as an expert high school teacher. In no way will the research team compromise the curriculum standards that you are expected to maintain. Rather, our role is to help bridge student engagement with your curriculum and perhaps expand and strengthen what already is in place in your classroom. As stated, if the project goes well during the next 5-6 months, we hope to follow this group of students and you as their teacher until the students graduate from high school.

There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at California State University, San Bernardino. Your name will not be connected to individual data collected from you. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, you no longer want to be involved in the study, you can withdraw with no penalty. If you choose to stop participation, we will withdraw ourselves from your classroom without consequence or penalty. Like you, we have the best interests of the students in mind.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to know more about this research, you can contact me, Dr. Rodriguez, at 909-537-5643. If you feel that you have been mistreated or you have questions about participating in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB Chair at 909-537-7304.

If you have had all of your questions answered to your liking and you agree to participate in the study, please sign below.

Signature of Teacher __________________________ Date ____________

909.537.7404 • fax 909.537.7510

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2303

The California State University • Camarillo • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fullerton • Fresno • Fullerton • LA Communica}
PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO/AUDIO USE
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS
CSUSB PROJECT
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS

As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of your son/daughter during their participation in the research project. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent
☐ Photograph  ☐ Videotape  ☐ Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.
  Please initial: ______

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played to subjects in other experiments.
  Please initial: ______

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used for scientific publications.
  Please initial: ______

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played at meetings of scientists.
  Please initial: ______

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in classrooms to students.
  Please initial: ______

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in public presentations to nonscientific groups.
  Please initial: ______

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used on television and radio.
  Please initial: ______

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

SIGNATURE  DATE
PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO/AUDIO USE
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for STUDENT ASSENT
CSUSB Project
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS

As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent
☐ Photograph   ☐ Videotape   ☐ Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

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• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in public presentations to nonscientific groups.
  Please initial: ____

• The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used on television and radio.
  Please initial: ____

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

SIGNATURE     DATE
PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO/AUDIO USE
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for TEACHERS
CSUSB PROJECT
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS

As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would **not** be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent

- [ ] Photograph
- [ ] Videotape
- [ ] Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

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  Please initial: _____

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  Please initial: _____

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  Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in classrooms to students.
  
  Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in public presentations to non-scientific groups.
  
  Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used on television and radio.
  
  Please initial: _____

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

SIGNATURE DATE

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REFERENCES


Aleman, E., & Aleman, S. M. (2010). “Do Latin@ interests always have to ‘converge’ with White interests?”: (Re)claiming racial realism and interest convergence in critical race theory praxis. Race, Ethnicity & Education, 13(1), 1–21.


