IDENTIFYING TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES FOR
CHICAN@/LATIN@ COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership

by

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San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Identifying Transformative Teaching Practices for Chican@/Latin@ Community College Students* by Alejandro Guerrero, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University.

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Efforts to improve student outcomes for Chican@/Latin@ students in community colleges have focused on fixing perceived student problems with little attention and accountability directed specifically towards the institutions and the educators who teach them (Huber et al., 2014/2015). This qualitative study challenged that norm by focusing specifically on teachers and their teaching practices. Given that community college students spend more time in the classroom than any other place on campus, it made sense to assume that students are greatly influenced by the teacher's teaching approaches and student-teacher interactions. The goal of this study was to analyze transformative ways of teaching and learn what works in the classroom for the most marginalized students on campus. For this study transformative teaching is defined as teaching grounded in social justice purpose that incorporates responsive teaching and learning approaches, and is focused on building strong meaningful relationships with students (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). This study was completed by utilizing the Extended Case Study methodology, which chooses specific cases because of their theoretical relevance and uses participant observation to find counter-instances to theory resulting in the augmentation and reconstruction of current theory (Burawoy, 1991). Three transformative teachers identified through community nomination were selected to participate in this research. Data were gathered through classrooms observations, semi-structured interviews of the teachers and their students, review of classroom artifacts, and a detailed field journal. The findings showed that transformative teachers in addition to having a social justice purpose for teaching, a responsive curriculum, and the ability to build strong meaningful relationships with students, also demonstrated urgency for their teaching, checked in frequently with their students, and built supportive communities in the classroom.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Chair, Dissertation Committee

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Tlazocamati, In Lak 'Ech, Gracias

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Chapter One: An Overview

Introduction

As a community college educator, a community member, and a researcher driven by social justice, I believe it is important to spend time trying to understand the reasons why so few Chican@/Latin@¹ students complete community college and even fewer transfer to the university. The data reveals that Chican@/Latin@² students consistently have the lowest degree completion rates for both associate and bachelor degrees as compared to their peers from other racial groups (Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez, & Vélez, 2015). While 32 percent of Whites and 40 percent of Asians earned a bachelor degree within six years of entry into higher education, only 19 percent of Latinos were able to do the same (The Campaign for College Opportunities [CCO], 2013).

In California, the state where this research takes place, the Chican@/Latin@ population is growing rapidly and will attain majority status within the next 40 years (The Center for Latino Policy and Research [CLPR], 2014). In fact, Chican@/Latin@s are the fastest growing sector of the entire U.S. population, yet they are not being educated equitably (Moore & Shulock, 2010; McKinsey & Company, 2009).

Research suggests that there are inequities happening at every level of the educational system impacting the overall success of these students (Huber et al., 2015). Researchers, educators, administrators, and policy makers must prioritize work that

¹ To capture the experiences of male and female students I use the @ symbol. Rather than lumping all students under the category of Latin@, I also include Chican@ because this term has political connotations and many students connect with it.

² Although I focus on Chican@/Latin@ students for this study, the findings of this research will be able to be applied to other historically marginalized groups. In chapter 5 I specifically address this.

allows us to better understand these trends. Educational institutions have a moral and a civic responsibility to enroll and support the success of students from all cultures and ethnicities if we are to achieve our lofty goals as a nation to become a pluralistic, multiracial democracy.

Statement of the Problem

Community colleges in America were established to provide educational opportunities and workforce preparation for all members of the community. They are specifically responsible for maintaining educational access and quality to their community in order to serve as a welcoming place of hope and opportunity for all students. However, for Chican@/Latin@ students this has not be the case as they drop out in record numbers, fail to graduate with their Associate degrees and transfer to universities at much lower rates than their counterparts (Huber et al., 2015).

Contrary to its mission some research has shown that the community college system has not been a welcoming place for all students (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). In a study on Latino college enrollment Vazquez-Urias (2012) found that after their first year in community college, 12.9 percent of Latino students dropped-out. By their second year, 35.2 percent left without return. In another study Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora (2000) found that some Chican@/Latin@ students experience feelings of inadequacy, isolation and culture shock when starting at the community college. Students also felt overwhelmed by confusing financial aid and matriculation processes. Others experienced discrimination and stereotyping by uncaring instructional faculty, counselors, and other college personnel, which led to a lack of confidence and self-doubt. As a result, they dropped out of the system all together. Community colleges are meant

to be places of hope, but for students in these studies, the college became a difficult and unwelcoming system.

Much of the conversation around helping Chican@/Latin@ students succeed in higher education has been framed around analyzing outcome data that highlight low graduation and transfer rates. Although using outcome data is important to ignite discussions, outcomes do not provide detailed analyses of the lived realities and experiences students face on and off college campuses. All too often this data can result in deficit thinking by college faculty, administrators, and staff, which locates problems within students, their families, and their communities, rather than in structural inequalities in the broader society and inside the educational institution itself. The result has been a set of initiatives and programming focused on addressing personal student failure rather than dealing with the real issues that plague higher education like racism, inequity, and deficit thinking.

Disconnections for Chican@/Latin@ students in the school system. If we are to alter these persistent trends in school failure, we will need to turn the lens onto schooling and teaching practices that discriminate against students, labeling them as unintelligent, lazy, and incapable of taking on the academic rigor of college. Schools have for a long time worked to subtract the cultural traditions and familial and ancestral knowledge from students of color in an effort to assimilate them into a Euro-American culture (Valenzuela, 1999). As members of a historically underserved group, Chican@/Latin@ students have experienced these types of schooling and teaching practices long before they ever set foot on the college campus. For years, researchers of the K-12 school system have documented how students of color are systematically

tracked into special education programs, vocational programs, or other non-college track programs because of their economic status and race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrel, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Oakes, 1985; Valenzuela, 1999). If these students do reach college, their negative experiences in the K-12 system shape their perceptions on the value of school and their general mistrust in school officials and faculty members. College classrooms present similarly uncaring and culturally alienating cultures. The real experiences of racism, dehumanizing schooling and teaching practices, and the negative perceptions of students impact their overall experience in school causing them to think twice about continuing in a system that has not supported their success.

Other barriers Chican@/Latin@ students face. Beyond the various pressures presented by schools themselves, many Chican@/Latin@ students are also dealing with issues like societal racism, poverty, police brutality, immigration, language barriers, violence in their community and health concerns. All of these social inequities can impede success in school; however, the impacts of these issues, and effective responses to them, are often missing from the educational literature.

As but one example, data reveals that people of color are more likely to be born into poverty than their white counterparts. According to the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey approximately eleven percent of Whites lived at or below the poverty line, while that same figure was 18 percent for Pacific Islanders, 21 percent for Latinos, 22 percent for Blacks, and 25 percent for Native Americans. If students are dealing with poverty then there is a real possibility they may also be dealing with homeless, hunger, or other social stressors related to income instability. Not having a place to stay or enough food to eat has major implications for students in school. Recognizing that these same

students fill our community college classrooms is imperative if we are going to develop institutional and classroom cultures that meet our students where they are.

The research has also indicated that growing up poor is clearly linked to reduced access to quality schools and other essential ingredients of success that middle class and wealthy families largely take as givens. Experienced teachers are one such ingredient. In high poverty school districts 20 percent of the teachers are inexperienced as compared to 11 percent in low poverty schools (Flores, 2007). Many Chican@/Latin@ students are forced by circumstances to attend schools that are among the most under-resourced, understaffed, poverty stricken, and neglected in the country (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The lack of support in classrooms lowers the odds that students will succeed in school, and therefore, they are less likely to take rigorous coursework, including higher-level math and science courses and other courses for university admissions (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, 2007).

Disparities in poverty have also been linked to disparities in health, with communities of color experiencing more frequent health problems than their majority counterparts (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015). The combination of increased susceptibility to health problems and lack of access to quality health care while dealing with the impacts of poverty and racism has been associated with higher mortality rates among people of color across the nation (Satcher, Fryer, McCann, Troutman, Woolf, & Rust, 2005).

Dealing with poverty while many Americans are wealthy adds another layer of pressure and illness for poor communities. One only needs to walk into a school in a rich community and see the obvious differences compared to the schools low-income students

are forced to attend. It is not hard to theorize that extreme poverty, increased health problems, and inadequate health care among people of color hinder their capacity to meet basic needs required to focus on academics.

Exceptions to the Story

Despite all the problems and barriers Chican@/Latin@ students might face in their educational journeys there are classrooms where these students are being supported and taught in effective and transformative ways. To make success more common for Chican@/Latin@ students it is important that community college personnel, especially teachers, acknowledge that racism still permeates the larger society and by default our school systems (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Research has shown that frameworks like critical pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching are effective responses to these inequalities and have positive impacts for low-income students of color who have historically been marginalized in school systems. Furthermore, teaching practices that establish deep emotional connections with students, demonstrate respect for them, and are built on care and trust are particularly important when working with vulnerable youth (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

The need for this study into effective practices in community college is clear as much of the research on what works for marginalized students has focused on the K-12 setting. This research is particularly important for community colleges since they are the primary point of entry into higher education for many low-income, first generation, and underserved students (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez and Solórzano, 2007). These students are likely to have experienced a K-12 school system that largely failed to serve them effectively. Community college teachers, if prepared and responsive, can correct years of

educational neglect with the ways in which they engage their students. In short, closing the research gap on transformative teaching in community colleges has the potential to add to the literature on effective teaching for all marginalized students.

It is also important to state that there is higher education research on supporting first generation and vulnerable students. However, much of it focuses on student services and academic support programs and fails to connect instruction to student success (Gándara, Alvarado, Driscoll & Orfield, 2012). This study intends to close this gap by considering teaching practices as an essential component in student success.

Theory of Change

Despite the overall trends of failure to serve Chican@/Latin@ students there are well-documented pockets of success. This study proposes to understand those pockets better so we can move them from the margins and center them in educational practice. I propose we respond to this educational problem by focusing on transformative teaching practices within the community college.

Transformative teaching demonstrates a belief for educational justice for marginalized students while empowering them for academic success. These teachers consider themselves change agents and resist hegemonic structures that oppress Chican@/Latin@ students (Darder, 2002; Berta-Ávila, 2004). When they enter classrooms their teaching becomes a political act and they hope to transform the injustices that happen inside and outside of schools (Darder, 2002; Berta-Ávila, 2004). They do this by inspiring students to self-reflect, critically think, question and take action against social injustices (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 2003). These teachers have a deep and meaningful purpose for teaching, are responsive to students' lived

realities and build caring relationships with students (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

Figure 1 illustrates the impacts transformative teaching can have on students. It shows structural inequalities like racism and oppression impacting schools. As a result schools become a place that subtract students' culture and language while judging them for what they do not possess rather than the assets they do bring to school (Valenzuela, 1999). Schools are meant to be democratic systems but instead they become vehicles that reproduce the injustices happening outside of schools. It is in schools where transformative teaching makes impacts and prepares students to push back against oppressive forces in society.

Grounded in a social justice purpose, incorporates responsive teaching and learning approaches, and focuses on building strong meaningful relationships with students (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999)

Figure 1. Transformative Teaching Theory of Change

Research Aim

Most research on transformative teaching focuses on the K-12 setting and fails to include higher education. The goal of this study was to add to the literature by challenging, disrupting and ultimately extending current theory on transformative teaching by analyzing transformative teaching practices in a community college setting. Specifically, I looked at the impact transformative teaching has on Chican@/Latin@ community college students enrolled at Golden Hills Community College³ in Northern California. I focused specifically on the experiences of low-income first generation⁴ students because according to the data, this group is the most marginalized in the community college setting (Moore and Shulock, 2010; CLPR, 2014). The findings of this study can and should be used to inform key stakeholders around how to help students succeed. To this end, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What does the literature say about the teaching practices of transformative teachers of Chican@/Latin@ students and other historically marginalized students?
2. Why and how are these practices transformative?
3. Does this research hold up in the community college setting?
 - A. When and how is it confirmed?
 - B. When and how is it disproved?
 - C. What are the nuances that emerge?
4. What are the implications of this research for instructors, instructional leaders, and policy makers within the community college system?

³ This is a pseudonym

⁴ Neither parent graduated from a college in the United States.

This research shifts the conversation from blaming Chican@/Latin@ students for their poor educational outcomes to a conversation focused on improving teaching and school practices. I did this by focusing on the lived experiences of students and their transformative teachers within the college system. By doing so, this research sought to understand how to better support Chican@/Latin@ students by engaging them and their transformative teachers as critical allies rather than seeing them simply as students who are falling through the cracks. It assumed that students needed to feel connected and valued as important members of the college community and society to be successful. Specifically, this research demonstrated that the teaching faculty is well positioned to make important connections through their teaching practices for students because they interact with them on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

To engage this process of capturing the stories and experiences of students and their transformative teachers I utilized Burawoy's (1991) Extended Case Study method. In general, this approach chooses specific cases because of their theoretical relevance and uses participant observation to find counter-instances to the theory, which results in the augmentation and reconstruction of current theory. The Extended Case Study method is appropriate for this work because theory on transformative teaching is incomplete since there is a gap in the literature on transformative teaching in the community college system; instead, most of the research focuses on the K-12 educational system. This study intended to extend transformative teaching theory by focusing on one community college in Northern California called Golden Hills Community College. My findings allow me to challenge, critique, and reconstruct current theory on transformative teaching.

Beyond extending theory related to transformative teaching practices, the findings of this study also have a practical purpose. A study of this nature will help teaching faculty of the community college system learn how to create optimal opportunities for transformative teaching to occur while challenging instructional leaders to re-think how to best support students success through instruction. I have completed this study by completing the following steps of Burawoy's (1991) Extended Case Study methodology:

Figure 2. Steps for completing this research

Conclusion

The next chapter discusses the relevant literature on transformative teaching. I introduce and discuss literature on transformative teaching and argue that research on this type of teaching is scarce in the community college. I end by summarizing key practices and themes I found in the literature of transformative teaching.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In spite of all the barriers Chicana/Latina students face in schools there are classrooms and educational spaces where they are being supported and taught in effective and transformative ways. Frameworks grounded in critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural relevance have been shown to be effective for low-income students of color that have historically been marginalized in schools. In addition, teaching practices that establish deep emotional connections with students, demonstrate respect for them, and are built on care and trust emerge time and again in the research as the most impactful when working with underrepresented students (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

The research has demonstrated that transformative teachers have a deep and meaningful purpose for teaching, are responsive to students' lived realities and build caring relationships with students. Studies have also shown that transformative teaching practices have the power to change and shape young people into empowered and critical members of society focused on using their education to positively transform their communities and the world in more equitable ways (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 2003; Cammarota and Romera, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

I have chosen the Extended Case Study (Burawoy, 1991) methodology to complete this study because the goal of this research is to extend theory on transformative teaching by focusing on the teaching practices of transformative teachers at one community college in Northern California. Extending theory on transformative teaching

is warranted because most of the research focuses on the K-12 setting and fails to include higher education as a place where this type of instruction can and should occur. Beyond extending theory, the findings of this study stand to help teaching faculty learn how to create opportunities for transformative teaching to occur while challenging college leaders and policy makers to re-consider how to best support Chican@/Latin@ students. With respect to the Extended Case Method, it is the goal of this chapter to identify the key components of theories related to transformative teaching practices by addressing the current literature related to them. Specifically, this chapter answers the first two research questions of this study: What does the literature say about the teaching practices of transformative teachers of Chican@/Latin@ students and other historically marginalized students? Why and how are these practices transformative? Chapter four and five attends to questions three and four.

Related Literature on Transformative Teaching

The literature on transformative teaching for historically marginalized students is extensive. However, for this literature review I focus on three of the most prominent schools of thought in this area: critical race theory, critical pedagogy and cultural relevance. I focus on these because they appear most often in a review of the literature of transformative teaching practices. This review synthesizes preeminent thinkers in these areas, and highlights the recurring themes as they relate back to transformative teaching practices. These recurring themes are what I will test in classrooms in the community college setting for this study. Ultimately, the goal of this work is to look for examples to confirm, find the nuances, and extend the theory on instruction that is recognized as transformative for marginalized students in community colleges.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) focuses on placing issues of race and racism at the forefront of discourse in order to deconstruct systems of racial oppression and marginalization (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). As a framework, CRT began in the 1970s as a method to examine discrimination within the United States legal system. It was later adopted and used in the field of education to discuss how race and racism impact the experiences of students of color.

Scholars Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman praised the focus of civil rights scholarship on race, but were critical of civil rights scholars' commitment to color blindness and their focus on intentional discrimination, rather than a broader focus on the conditions of racial inequality (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Derrick Bell's writings are largely influenced from his personal experience as an African American, an attorney, and as the executive director of a branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Bell, 1992, 1993; Tate, 1996). His writings are narrative in style and examined racial issues within the context of their economic, social, and political dimensions from a legal standpoint. The three major arguments employed by Bell (1993) in his analyses of racial patterns in American law include: (1) the Constitutional contradiction, (2) the interest convergence principle, and (3) the price of racial remedies (Bell, 1992, 1993; Tate, 1996).

The Constitutional contradiction, according to Bell, argues that the framers of the Constitution chose the rewards of property over justice. Interest convergence is the notion that Whites will promote racial advances for People of Color only when it promotes

White self-interest. The price of racial remedies (Bell, 1993) is the argument that Whites will not support civil rights policies that may threaten White dominant social status. Tate (1996) proclaims Bell as arguably the most influential source of thought to challenge traditional civil rights discourse.

Other critical legal scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988), Mari Matsuda (1996), and Patricia Williams (1995) embrace the focus on the reproduction of hierarchy in critical legal studies. These scholars also criticize other legal scholars for failing to focus on racial domination and specifically racial oppression. In fact, Crenshaw makes the argument that little difference exists between conservative and liberal discourse on race-related law and policies (Crenshaw, Gotonda, Peller & Thomas, 1995).

Critical Race Theory and Education. CRT also became useful for studying the condition of people of color in schools and universities (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In the early 1990's critical scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced this theoretical framework to the field of education. They specifically selected CRT because it challenges the unfair practices and policies that directly and/or indirectly hinder the opportunities and outcomes of students of color. In their ground breaking article "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue for a critical race perspective in education based on three propositions: "(a) race remains a significant aspect of U.S. society; (b) U.S. society is based on property rights and not human rights; and (c) the intersectionality of race and property establishes an analytical tool for understanding both social and educational inequity" (p. 47). They argue that CRT is necessary because race had not seriously been interrogated and theorized by educational researchers.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) suggest that CRT could serve as an analytical framework for examining educational issues related to racism and oppression.

Furthermore, they contend that a race-based analysis was important because class and gender based explanations were insufficient in describing the variance in educational experiences and performance of Students of Color's when compared to their White peers (Tate, 1997). By centering race and racism in understanding the experiences of Students of Color in education, critical race scholars challenge the commonly held deficit beliefs that culture, poverty, and language are the primary reasons that these students experience educational failure (Delgado-Bernal, 1998).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) also conclude "the ability to define, possess, and own property" (p. 53) is an essential component of power in the United States. They acknowledged that property relates to education in "explicit and implicit" ways, articulating that affluent communities resent funding public school districts that serve primarily Students of Color and poor students. In addition, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) identify the curriculum as a form of intellectual property. Finally, they discuss the intersection of race and property as central to understanding critical race in education. In doing so, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) discuss the property functions of Whiteness as: (a) rights of disposition; (b) rights to use and enjoyment; (c) reputation and status property; and (d) the absolute right to exclude. Their work is instrumental in laying the foundation for scholars to pursue work around anti-racist scholarship in education.

There are at least five themes that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of CRT in education. The five themes are:

1. The *Intercentricity* of Race and Racism: Critical race theory starts from the premise that race and racism are pervasive and permanent (Bell, 1987). CRT in education centralizes race and racism, while focusing on the intersections of racism with other forms of subordination (Yosso et al., 2001). Although race and racism are at the center of analysis, both are viewed at their intersection with other forms of subordination and oppression, such as gender and class discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993).
2. The Challenge to Dominant Ideology: Critical race theory challenges the traditional claims made by educational system such as meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Critical race scholars proclaim that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).
3. The Commitment to Social Justice: A critical race theory in education challenges us to envision social justice as the struggle to eliminate racism and other forms of subordination while empowering groups that have been subordinated (Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001). CRT seeks to advance such a social justice agenda.
4. The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge: Critical race theory recognizes that the experiential knowledge of People of Color is genuine, accurate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education (Yosso et al., 2001). It views this knowledge as an asset and draws specifically on the lived experiences of Students of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*,

chronicles, and narratives (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a&b, 1996; Olivas, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002).

5. The Interdisciplinary Perspective: Critical race theory draws from the strengths of multiple disciplines, epistemologies, and research approaches (Scheurich & Young, 1997). A critical race theory in education challenges traditional, mainstream analyses by analyzing racism and other forms of subordination in education in historical and interdisciplinary terms (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia, 1995; Olivas, 1990). Critical race methodology in education uses the transdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, political science, economics, and other fields to better understand the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on People of Color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002).

Latino Critical Theory. The seminal work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) inspired others to examine race and racism in the field of education. Chican@/Latin@ Scholars like Daniel Solórzano, Dolores Delgado Bernal, Tara Yosso, Alejandro Covarrubias and Octavio Villalpando among others have incorporated CRT frameworks when researching the experiences of Chican@/Latin@ students in both in the K-12 and higher education system. Their work in CRT demonstrates how this framework addresses and challenges the impacts of race, class, gender, language, immigrant status, accent, and sexual orientation on Chican@/Latin@ educational attainment and achievement (Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado, and Solórzano, 2001). The seminal work by Solórzano and Delgado (2001) argues that CRT challenges the dominant discourse on

race and racism as it relates to education and provides a powerful lens through which to examine educational theories and practices that are used to subordinate students of color.

Yosso (2006) adds to Solórzano and Delgado's assertions and points out that this method of interrogating race and racism is particularly important when studying the experiences of Chican@/Latin@ students because they have been conditioned by a disempowering educational system that believes their cultural beliefs and traditions are not important.

As a result of focusing on the racialized experiences of Chican@/Latino@ students, Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) became an extension of critical race theory, examining the multiple dimensions of subordination and oppression that Chican@/Latino@ students face in higher education (Yosso, 2005). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) argue that CRT and LatCrit together challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how mainstream educational theory and practice are used to subordinate and marginalize Chicano/Latino students. Mainstream theories and practices view Chican@/Latin@ students as having generalized cultural deficits, whereby education is the vehicle to help these students overcome and find their place in society (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Villalpando, 2004).

A LatCrit theory in education is a framework that can be used to examine the ways in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly influence educational structures, processes, and discourses that impact the Chicano/Latino community, as well as other People of Color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). LatCrit theory recognizes the tremendous heterogeneity, cultural and experiential diversity within Chican@/Latin@ communities.

This challenges misguided majoritarian and reductionist stereotypes and notions that Chican@s/Latin@s as a whole are homogeneous (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This homogenizing of this group drives distorted perceptions, assessments and services for them in education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Countestory Telling. Critical race scholars Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado are recognized for bringing stories of the oppressed to the forefront (see Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995). In education, majoritarian stories (stories of those with privilege and power) have been recognized as more valuable and important than the stories of poor communities of color. The stories of poor students of color are largely excluded from the mainstream educational discourse, which makes storytelling a powerful way to challenge myths and unchallenged dominant narratives (Delgado, 1989).

Delgado Bernal and Solórzano (2001) suggest counterstories in education have four core tenants: (1) build community among those who are marginalized by putting a human face to educational theory and practice; (2) challenge the perceived wisdom of those at the center of society; (3) nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance; and (4) facilitate transformation in education (Delgado Bernal and Solórzano, 2001; Yosso, 2006). In short, counterstories themselves act to deconstruct the master narratives, and they offer alternatives to the dominant discourse in educational research (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). To support this premise, Yosso published a groundbreaking book titled *Critical Race Counterstories: Along the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline* (2006) to narrate experiences of struggle and success of Chican@s students in schools. The core premise of the book is that counterstories are a

powerful way to acknowledge the unacknowledged while raising awareness about social and racial injustice.

Community Cultural Wealth. Yosso (2005) also introduced the theory of Community Cultural Wealth to education. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth model challenges deficit theories about low-income Students of Color. Community Cultural Wealth asserts that Students of Color bring important cultural capital in the form of knowledge, resources, and abilities into educational settings (Yosso, 2005). This capital is valued in a home context, but not in schools. An example of this according to Yosso (2005) would be the bilingual student who acts as interpreter for his or her parents and other family members. While the ability to translate for family members is an essential, and sometimes lifesaving skill, in immigrant communities, schools often treat languages other than English a barrier to be overcome. Acknowledging and placing value on a students' ability to navigate between their home language and English is Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005).

According to Yosso (2005) schools work toward helping so called "disadvantaged" students who are seen as culturally deficient by transmitting the values and expertise of the dominant class rather than focusing on the wealth of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and connections they already possess. She agrees with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) assertion that knowledges of upper and middle classes are considered capital to a hierarchical society and if one is not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable by a society then one could access it and have the potential for social mobility through formal schooling. He argues that schools become a core element of social stratification. However, Yosso stresses that all forms of

capital can and should be used to empower individuals, especially the cultural capital of historically marginalized students. Yosso contends that communities of color possess six different forms of valuable cultural capital, which they bring with them into schools. These include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital.

According to Yosso (2005) the first of these forms is aspirational capital. Aspirational capital is the idea of having hopes and dreams for the future despite the real or imagined barriers that exist in society. Yosso points out “aspirations are developed within social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice (consejos) that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions” (p. 77). Although Chican@/Latin@ students face the lowest educational outcomes as compared to other groups, their families hold high aspirations for their future (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Gándara, 1995; Yosso, 2005).

Second is linguistic capital. Linguistic capital, which comes from more than 40 years of research about the value of bilingual education and emphasizes the connections between racialized cultural history and language (Cummins, 1986; Anzaldúa, 1987; Darder, 1991; Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999; Gutierrez, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Linguistic capital refers to “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Linguistic capital acknowledges the “languages students bring to the school setting and realizes that these students may also have acquired certain skills such as memorization, rhyme, vocal tone, and volume associated with various storytelling traditions in the home” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78-79). Art, music, and poetry fit under linguistic capital as well.

Third is familial capital which is the “cultural knowledge” fostered among family

and “carried in a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Familial capital challenges traditional notions of family and engages commitment to community. This form of capital highlights the importance of kinships, respect for family, and pedagogies of the home that students bring with them to classroom settings (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Fourth is the concept of social capital, which are a student’s network of people including peers and community resources. Yosso (2005) provides the example of the student that draws upon social contacts and community resources to help identify college scholarships and other resources. This could include accessing the scholarship application, completing it, and receiving the emotional support to well in higher education (Yosso, 2005).

Fifth is navigational capitals which are the skills needed to traverse through institutions such as schools. Navigational capital assumes that students are successfully navigating educational institutions that were not created for them. For example, utilizing strategies to navigate through racially-hostile college campuses while sustaining high levels of academic achievement, despite stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and, ultimately, dropping out of school (Yosso, 2005).

Lastly is resistant capital, which “refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). An example of this is a students’ ability to transform unequal conditions at their schools. It means developing an awareness to recognize the oppressive structures and the motivation to work towards transforming them.

These six forms of capital together are known as community cultural wealth and

the recognition of this wealth by schools and teachers has the potential to radically transform how students of color are educated.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is usually associated with the Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire who used the principles of critical theory of the Frankfurt school as the main philosophical and theoretical sources for the development of critical pedagogy. Several influential scholars in education have built on Freire's work, including: Antonia Darder, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor, Jeff Duncan Andrade and Ernest Morrell. Their contributions have significantly expanded the field's discussion over critical pedagogy over the last two decades.

Freire's work remains seminal and has been significant in establishing classrooms and educational spaces that focus on justice and liberation from oppression for students. Freire is best known for *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) where he presents a detailed Marxist class analysis between what he calls the "colonizer" and the "colonized". He articulates the possibility for teaching and learning to be democratic, participatory and relational, allowing both teachers and students to be holders and beneficiaries of knowledge.

Scholars argue that Freire's critical pedagogy is both a democratic and humanistic approach to educating and transforming the lives and social conditions of oppressed students (Freire, 1970, Darder et al., 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Critical pedagogy advocates that both the teacher and student work together to create new meaning and new knowledge in a way that honors all participants (Taupier, 2013). Critical pedagogy aims to develop a microcosm of democracy within the classroom, a

dialectical understanding of the world, and a critical understanding of the hidden effects of power and privilege on a society that claims to give equal opportunity to all (Darder et al., 2003; McLaren, 2003). In the classroom these concepts are realized through six elements: shifting of teacher power towards students, self- reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action.

As a phrase, “critical pedagogy” became popularized through Henry Giroux’s writing during the 1980s. Giroux (1988) remarks that it is essential to make every day experiences problematic and critical by revealing their hidden political assumptions. He maintains that empowering students to develop the courage to participate in their self-formation has a liberatory purpose. Giroux further argues that dialectical thought is instrumental in examining naturalized and common sense notions of the world that contribute to injustice and inequality in human beings. According to Giroux (1997) teachers are *Transformative Intellectuals* who have the knowledge and skill to critique and transform existing inequalities in society. Giroux (1997) contends that teachers have the ability to create appropriate conditions that enable students to become cultural producers who can rewrite their experiences and perceptions. They also help students learn from each other and to theorize and understand how to question the authoritarian power of the classroom. Giroux also advocates for a radical pedagogy and he opposes the anti-democratic tendencies of neoliberalism, imperialism, religious fundamentalism and the ongoing attacks against the social state, the social wage, youth, the poor, and public and higher education (Giroux, 2003). Giroux's most recent work focuses on public pedagogy, a term he coined to describe the nature of the spectacle of the new media, and the political and educational force of global culture.

McLaren (2003) points out that there are many different strands within critical pedagogy (these include libertarian, radical and liberationist). He argues that critical pedagogy is a recent materialist intervention in the struggle for socialism within the field of regular and adult education. For McLaren (2003) critical pedagogy must be a collective process that involves utilizing a dialogical learning approach. He goes on to highlight that critical pedagogy has to locate the underlying causes of class exploitation and economic oppression. McLaren (2003) summarized that critical pedagogy should be participatory and involve building coalitions among community members, grassroots movements, church organizations, and labor unions. Finally, critical pedagogy needs to be “a creative process by integrating elements of popular culture (i.e., drama, music, oral history, narratives) as educational tools that can successfully raise the level of political consciousness of students and teachers” (p. 9).

For McLaren (1989), the major concern of critical pedagogy is understanding the politics and power of how educational institutions function and how knowledge is created in classrooms. He asserts critical pedagogues must be aware of the presence of a dominant culture, which refers to social practices and representations that affirm the central values, interests, and concerns of the social class in control of the material and symbolic wealth of society. Bowles & Gintis (1971) suggested that schools are meant to socialize students with structured knowledge and social authority trapping students between equally undesirable options of dropping out of school or becoming silent in the classroom. However, the classroom can also be a site for resistance, creating community, and action (hooks, 1994; Shor, 1992). The classroom should center on the experiences of students and it should empower them to be agents of social change for themselves and

their community. McLaren (1989) adds to this by highlighting that classrooms should shape a student's understanding of the world while critiquing oppression through critical consciousness. Students are encouraged to analyze the ideological and hegemonic intentions that are inculcated through traditional schooling, and examine the tensions that may be present to their own educational needs and social reality. With this foundation, and within these spaces, students can begin a process of transforming oppressive educational and social conditions through action.

Banking Models of Education. Freire (1970) believes that education should allow those that are oppressed to regain their sense of humanity and overcome their condition. For this to occur, he acknowledges that oppressed individuals must play a role in their own liberation. This way of engaging students is opposed to what Freire calls the "banking model" of education, where the teacher's role is to "deposit" information in the students' minds. Freire argues that banking models bestow knowledge on students by those who consider themselves knowledgeable. Those who receive the knowledge are like empty vessels waiting to be filled by their "all knowing" teachers. This way of engaging students negates students' own self-awareness, skills, and talents, and all the forms of capital acknowledged by Yosso (2005). According to Freire (1970), banking models of education are dehumanizing to both student and teacher and create oppressive attitudes and unjust practices in schools and society.

Critical pedagogue Ira Shor uses critical literacy to challenge banking models of education with college students. His work focuses on critical teaching philosophies and an empowering education. Shor (1992) believes education should be student centered, critical, and democratic. His work suggests that this is possible in all subject areas and

that teachers can transform traditional approaches into critical and democratic ones. Shor (1993) asserts that critical education should challenge teachers and students alike to empower themselves for social change, while advancing democracy and equality as students develop their literacy skills. Shor points out that through critical dialogue and the use of problem posing and thought provoking questions, teachers can stimulate students to think deeply about issues that challenge them and their communities. The very act of questioning, challenges students to ask their own questions and learn important academic knowledge in the process.

According to Shor (1993) some students may resist critical teaching because they have been trained to think of education according to the banking models and may consider co-developing a classroom and curriculum as “not real” education. “Real education”, in their minds, “is something that is done to students and not something they do” (p. 29). Students who resist critical teaching tend to believe in teacher authority and deny that collaboration should occur between student and teacher. According to Shor a critical classroom should have four important elements: 1. Power Awareness: knowing that society and history can be made and remade by human action and by organized groups; 2. Critical Literacy: analytical habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing which go beneath surface impression; 3. Desocialization: recognizing and challenging the myths, values, behaviors, and language learned in mass culture; 4. Self-Organizational/Self-Education: taking initiatives to transform schools and society away from authoritarian relations.

Laura Rendón, a researcher who specializes in the persistence and graduation of low-income, first-generation college students, completed a qualitative study of 15

exemplary college instructors and published her findings in a book titled *Sentipensante (Seeing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice, and Liberation* (2009). Her work looked at how college instructors combined holistic and critical approaches to teaching to engage historically marginalized students. Rendón interviewed and observed exemplary teachers in the classroom. She also spoke with students about their experiences in their classrooms. Rendón (2009) summarizes that the faculty she studied used a *sentipensante* (thinking/feeling) pedagogy that focuses on disrupting and transforming entrenched beliefs about teaching by "...cultivating *personas educadas* (well-rounded individuals who possess knowledge and wisdom) and instilling learners and educators with a commitment to social justice" (pp. 135-136). Rendón explains "...social justice became a theme anytime these faculty members worked with underserved students" (p. 92). She argues, that when faculty members embraced this approach, they emphasized activism, liberation, healing, and social change in their pedagogical practices.

Through her work, Rendón (2009) finds that faculty justify their decisions to incorporate social justice in order to counter banking models of education, deficit theories towards poor students of color, and to liberate their students from "...invalidating, self-limiting beliefs about their ability to succeed, beliefs engrained in them throughout their lives" (p. 93). The pedagogical methods she observed in the classroom include using writing as a contemplative practice tool, participatory epistemology, encouraging service learning activities, and other activities that allow students to see the interconnectedness of their background and cultural heritage and their learning. Her work challenges the values

that have been embedded in academia, which tend to privilege Western knowledge over non-Western knowledge and Indigenous wisdom (Rendón, 2009).

Problem Posing Education and Critical Consciousness. Freire (1970) states that banking models of teaching are countered through problem posing approaches. Problem posing refers to a method of teaching that emphasizes critical thinking, which leads to praxis (action), which then leads to personal liberation (transformation). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) have described praxis as a five-stage process, which begins with identifying the problem, then analyzing the problem, followed by creating a plan of action to address the problem, then implementing the plan of action and finally analyzing and evaluating the action.

Problem posing education leads to what Freire (1970) calls *conscientization*. This attempt to use education as a means of consciously shaping the person and society is considered *conscientization* or critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is a derivative of social consciousness and is not solely based on a person's social situation. Although Freire (1970) focuses much of his writing on class issues, critical consciousness moves past Marx and is applicable to other forms of marginalization such as race, gender, and sexuality.

The development of critical consciousness in college with the help of transformative teachers is especially important because students have started their adult lives. They are being prepared to be productive and positive global citizens. Giroux (1997) asserts that in higher education professors should engage students in political education by teaching them "...to take risk, challenge those in power, and honor critical conditions" (p. 65). Critically conscious students may deliberately choose careers and

majors like Ethnic Studies, teaching, counseling, social work, and law among others where they can make changes to unjust and broken systems.

Duncan-Andrade (2007) argues that beyond developing critical consciousness with students, teachers must also cultivate it for themselves. In a study of effective urban educators, Duncan-Andrade found teachers who make noteworthy impacts with historically marginalized students tend to have a “critically conscious purpose” for teaching. His research of a group of effective teachers revealed five common pillars of practice: critically conscious purpose, duty, preparation, Socratic sensibility, and trust (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). He calls these teachers “Ridas”. Their goal for teaching is to cultivate the students who will change the world. Duncan-Andrade points out that these teachers believe that the most marginalized students (who other teachers may label as trouble makers and challenging) are also most prone to change the world.

Duncan-Andrade’s (2007) “Ridas” challenge oppression through the way their classrooms are set up, how they engage students, the relationships they develop with them, and the curriculum they choose. These instructors understand how power dynamics in classrooms have affected students and work hard to engage the learning process in collaboration with their students rather than through power of their institutional authority (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Shor, 1992). At the same time their goal is to empower students to become critical thinkers and ask important questions about their state in school and society. By doing this they can become effective change makers on campus and in their community while developing the important skills to function successfully within society.

Praxis. Freire (1970) argues that the critical educator aims to be a revolutionary (not reactionary) and establish a permanent relationship with students from subordinated cultural and language groups. They take action through their teaching to help end oppression. He calls this praxis. Furthermore, Freire (1970) states that the revolutionary teacher practices a humanizing pedagogy where the method of instruction stops to be an instrument by which teachers can manipulate the students, "...because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves" (p 51). From her work with teachers, Bartolomé (1994) argues further, that a humanizing pedagogy "values the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers" (p. 248).

Cammarata and Romero (2006) demonstrated humanizing pedagogy through a study they did on the experiences of historically oppressed Chican@/Latin@ students in Tucson, Arizona. Their study focused on the critically compassionate intellectualism component of education. According to Cammarata and Romero critically compassionate intellectualism focuses on social justice content while demonstrating authentic care for students and giving them voice. They contend that Chican@/Latin@ students are subordinated in education through curriculum that is unchallenging and remedial and results in silencing their voices. To challenge this, Cammarata and Romero created classes focused on social justice for a cohort of 20 Chican@/Latin@ students in their junior and senior years of high school. In this space these students were taught their general social studies and literature classes through an Ethnic Studies framework. Their goal was to develop students' critical consciousness so the students could be empowered to challenge the inequities impacting their daily lives, inside and outside of school. They

conclude that critically compassionate intellectualism is a way to elevate the voices of a historically marginalized group of students and empowers them to get what they deserve in society. However, their study looked at the experiences of a small cohort of students or a short amount of time. Research around larger groups of students and in the community college system would add to the literature.

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) used critical pedagogy in an urban context to counter the marginalization of poor students of color in “failing” schools while giving their students the tools to counter oppression and transform their community. Contrary to what other educators and policy makers have stated, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell indicate that the “failure” of urban schools is precisely what schools in poor communities are designed to do. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell argue that some schools are given the resources needed to succeed, while others are not. As a result, predetermined winners and losers are chosen. Student of color from poor communities are forced to deal with schools with far less resources and support. They argue that society has embraced the failure of the educational system’s ability to produce civically aware and empowered students in urban communities as the status quo. They counter this by laying out a framework for pedagogies of possibility as implemented in their own classrooms and communities.

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) explain that educators should use critical pedagogy to frame classrooms “that critique notions of equal opportunity making education a weapon to name, analyze, deconstruct, and act upon the unequal conditions in urban schools, urban communities, and other disenfranchised communities across the nation and the world ” (p.10). They believe in the application of critical research theory

to use research as a tool for social change in their own pursuits toward an, “urban education model that utilizes critical counter-cultural communities of practice, developing a critical engaged citizenry with a democratic sensibility that critiques again all forms of inequality” (p.11). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell describe their teaching practice as driven by love for their students, the community, and the belief that equitable access to an education is transformative for all students and, by extension, our society.

Transformation and Liberation. Critical instructors view education as a political act, which positions the instructor as a political agent (Freire, 1998, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; McLaren, 2003). Consequently, according to critical pedagogues teaching is never a “neutral” act (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1988, 2003). Critical pedagogy argues that “neutral” reifies the status quo by failing to challenge the dominant discourse, which results in acquiescence to the traditional politic. Some college faculty may argue that it is not their job to take a stance on behalf of students and they should maintain business as usual. Not challenging oppressive policies, curriculum, and teaching practices is to side with those practices. For students of color this can continue to result in their on-going silencing in schools (Delpit, 1995). An instructor rooted in critical pedagogy has an expressed political agenda of empowering students and therefore challenges traditional ways of schooling students that are dehumanizing (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008). Furthermore, the critical pedagogue chooses a curriculum that examines the world and oppressive forces that maintain systems of inequality while centering experiences on both students and teachers to transform it. This leads to liberation.

Curriculum in critical pedagogy should be transformative in nature and based on the idea that no one method can work for all students. Rendón (2002) recommends that instructors in higher education who set up teaching and learning programs for low-income students of color, consider epistemological issues such as who can teach, what gets taught, how content gets taught, and how students are assessed, keeping in mind that being poor and of color results in a systematically different relationship to producing, understanding, and using knowledge. This type of learning experience is transformative because it fosters students' acquisition of the necessary strategies and skills that help them become social critics who are making decisions, which affect their social, political, and economic realities (Giroux & McLaren, 1992). Additionally, it prioritizes student knowledge and engages them as allies in ending oppression.

Cultural Relevance

Critical scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings defines culturally relevant teaching as a “theoretical model that not only addresses achievement but also helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). Her work is considered ground-breaking and has inspired many other scholars to follow in her footsteps. Contemporaries to Ladson-Billings like James Banks, Sonia Nieto, and Christine Sleeter among others, helped to establish the field of multicultural education. Luis Moll and his colleagues focused their seminal work on students' funds of knowledge. Inspired by multicultural education, resource and equity oriented pedagogies Geneva Gay developed culturally responsive pedagogy followed by Django Paris, who established culturally sustaining pedagogy. Ethnic studies scholars, Allyson Tintiangco-

Cubales, Augustine Romero, and others also moved the field forward by highlighting the importance of ethnic studies curriculum and pedagogies. Other researchers, like Angela Valenzuela, Laura Rendón, and Ricardo Stanton-Salazar moved past curriculum and pedagogy to focus more on relationships, validation, and advocacy as a way to better support marginalized low-income student of color.

Critical scholars have argued that traditional teaching and learning paradigms place educators in power and authority and situate students in passive learning undertakings, which exclude their diverse perspectives resulting in oppressive learning conditions (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008; Rendón, 2009). Approaches of these types fail to recognize students' cultural, linguistic, community and familial knowledge. Furthermore they do not respond to students' academic and social needs. In fact, the opposite occurs and students are often expected to adopt the cultural traditions and beliefs of the dominant culture. Beyond this, acknowledging students' cultural beliefs and ancestral knowledge is important in helping them succeed. Focusing on pedagogies and practices that acknowledge students' culture, home language, and community knowledge, while validating them as important members of the school community, are key elements in instruction that is transformative. Rendón (2009) points out that for Chican@/Latin@ students in the community college system, this validation is especially important because it acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritage that they bring to historically dominant culture institutions and reinforces their place in that institution as deserved and earned.

Multicultural Education. Multicultural education relates to education and instruction designed for the cultures of several different races in an educational system

(Sleeter & Grant, Nieto, 1992). This approach to teaching and learning is based upon consensus building, respect, freedom, justice, and fostering cultural pluralism within racial societies (Nieto, 1992).

James Banks' (1979) early work in multicultural education argued that educators "should carefully define concepts such as multiethnic and multicultural education and delineate the boundaries implied by these concepts" (p. 237). Later, he continued to emphasize this point and advanced a definition of multicultural education as a broad concept and focused on five dimensions. These five specific dimensions are: content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 2004). While highlighting the interrelatedness of the five dimensions, Banks (2004) promotes deliberate and specific attention to each.

According to Sonia Nieto (1992) multicultural education is not a program or curriculum that can be administered to students in additive ways, rather it is a philosophy and set of beliefs inspired by the work of Paulo Freire. Nieto explains that educators often talk about tolerance as the way to celebrate diversity in their schools, however she argues that tolerance is actually the lowest level of diversity support. She asserts that if students never move beyond this level, they will never fully respect and affirm the differences of others. Nieto (1992) explains that a mono-cultural education is one in which the entire school environment, including curriculum, pedagogical strategies, and policies, are representative of the dominant culture. The ethnicity of the teachers is not representative of the students, and their lessons do not reflect the students' diversity. This school is "color-blind" to its students; therefore, ignoring the differences that make

them unique. Sadly, according to Nieto, mono-cultural schools are the most common situations in American school systems today. Thus, it is imperative schools respond to their diverse students with multicultural education. She focuses on seven characteristics of multicultural education, which include: antiracist/antibiased, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process and critical pedagogy (Nieto & Bode, 2008). As schools progress through these levels, they will truly celebrate diversity and meet students' unique needs.

Scholars Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant connect the role of sociopolitical power to define multicultural education. They provide an extensive review of the literature through an article they wrote for the *Harvard Educational Review* (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). Beyond this, they also provide five distinct approaches for engaging multicultural work. These include: Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different; Human Relations; Single Group Studies; Multicultural Education; Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist. Proponents of Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different focus on helping students with different cultural backgrounds and disabilities adapt to the mainstream ideas of public education and society. Their main goal is to “build bridges between student and the school” (Sleeter & Grant, 1988, p. 35). The Human Relations approach promotes positive relations among groups in schools by eradicating stereotypes and encouraging tolerance and unity. Single-Group Studies promotes an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences and realities of an individual group like women, the LGBTQ community, or the working class. Those who are proponents of this approach argue that schools are socializing institutions and inherently political sites. Multicultural Education encompasses educational policies and practices

that try to affirm cultural pluralism across differences in gender, ability, class, race, etc. Social justice along with cultural diversity and universal human rights is stressed in this approach (Sleeter & Grant, 1988). Finally, Critical Multicultural Education is founded in critical theory and rejects conventional approaches to schooling. It focuses on developing a critically conscious, social, responsible, and politically active students body and citizenry (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

The work of Banks (1991, 2004, 2006), Nieto (1992), and Sleeter and Grant (1988) among others has helped launch a field of multicultural education that continues to sustain a discourse that is constantly evolving and changing. Their work inspired others to engage in scholarship and educational practices that focus on students' unique lived experiences, familial knowledge, and cultural contributions.

Funds of Knowledge. During the multicultural education movement, others began expanding the understanding of cultural epistemologies. For example Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) began to focus on students' funds of knowledge as a way to counter deficit theories and the marginalization of students of colors. Funds of knowledge is a theoretical foundation developed that focuses on the inclusion of students' home knowledge and resources from their families and communities. It assumes that students from working class backgrounds bring valuable knowledge with them to the classroom and it should be considered a resource for educators (Moll et al., 1992, 2005). This is contrary to mainstream education that privileges the resources and knowledge of middle class Anglo students. According to Moll et al., (1992) students' funds of knowledge are described as the "accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being"

(p. 33). Furthermore, it is based on the belief that people are competent and their life experiences have given them that knowledge (Gonzalez and Moll, 2002). These include knowledge and life lessons brought in from family collectiveness, respect, and work ethic.

Funds of knowledge began through a pilot project in Tucson, Arizona with the goal of using the households' knowledge, cultural funds, and skill to inform classroom practice (Moll et al., 1992). Their goal was to develop innovations in teaching that drew upon the knowledge of and skills in local households. This project was a collaboration between local Mexican households in working class neighborhoods, university researchers, and four elementary school teachers. Teachers assumed the role of researchers and conducted interviews with selected families with open-ended questions. The interviews collected students' funds of knowledge. Their findings concluded that funds of knowledge represent a positive view of households containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great potential utility for classroom instruction (Moll et. al, 1992). The open question is the degree to which classroom educators are willing and able to tap into these funds.

Culturally Relevant, Responsive, and Sustaining Pedagogies. Building on the work of multicultural educators, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) developed culturally relevant teaching. According to Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2014) culturally relevant teaching has been shown to be effective in meeting the needs of underrepresented students. Her research on effective teachers of African American students helped her define culturally relevant teaching as a pedagogy that “recognizes the importance of including student’s cultural identities in all aspects of learning and can

empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically” (pp. 16-17).

Ladson-Billings contends that teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching see teaching as an art rather than technical skill and believe that all students can succeed.

Ladson-Billings (1995) describes a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy encompassing three components: holding high academic expectations and achievement, acting on cultural competence and creating curriculum to focus on students' funds of knowledge, and cultivating a sociopolitical consciousness in students. Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that culturally relevant pedagogy is a “pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (p. 160).

Ladson-Billings' (2014) most recent work highlights that it is essential for pedagogy to be culturally sustaining and ever evolving to meet the needs of students. By adopting culturally sustaining pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (2014) pushes researchers to consider global identities, including developments in arts, literature, music, athletics, and film rather than exclusively focusing on racial and ethnic identity.

Building on the work of Moll et al. (1992) funds of knowledge and other resource pedagogies, multicultural education scholar Geneva Gay developed culturally responsive teaching. She defines culturally responsive teaching “as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31).

Howard (2012), in this same vein, contends that one of the primary ideas behind culturally responsive teaching is to create learning environments that allow students to utilize cultural elements, cultural capital, and other recognizable knowledge that they are

familiar with to learn new content and information in order to enhance their schooling experiences and academic success.

For Gay, culturally responsive teaching is important because the “validation, information, and pride it generates are both psychologically and intellectually liberating” (p. 35). She describes culturally responsive teaching as consisting of six distinct dimensions. The first dimension focuses on the ways culturally responsive teachers empower their students by setting high expectations with a commitment to student success. The second dimension asserts that culturally responsive teachers are multidimensional because they engage cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives of their students. The third dimension contends that culturally responsive teachers validate every student’s culture and bridge gaps between school and home through instructional strategies and multicultural curricula. The fourth dimension emphasizes that culturally responsive teachers are socially, emotionally, and politically thorough as they seek to educate the entire child. The fifth dimension highlights culturally responsive teachers as transformative of schools and societies by using students’ existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design. The sixth dimension identifies culturally responsive teachers as committed to liberating students from oppressive educational practices and ideologies.

Although the early work of Gay focused more on curriculum, culturally responsive teaching has evolved to focus on instruction placing the responsibility on the teacher. Gay (2013) believes that there are four actions essential to implementing culturally responsive teaching. The first requires replacing deficit perspectives of students and communities. In the second, teachers must also understand the resistance to culturally

responsive teaching from critics so they are more confident and competent in implementation. Third, teachers need to understand how and why culture and difference are essential ideologies for culturally responsive teaching given they are essential to humanity. Finally, teachers must make pedagogical connections within the context in which they are teaching (Gay, 2013).

Gay's scholarship in culturally responsive teaching has helped to shape the field by describing what a culturally responsive teacher should be doing in the classroom (Howard, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2016). In a different way, Ladson-Billings' work focuses on pedagogy and influences attitudes and dispositions, describing a posture a teacher might adopt that could determine planning, instruction, and assessment (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2014; Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Although many researchers use the terms culturally relevant and culturally responsive interchangeably, it is important to differentiate the two for focusing on two separate but complementary types of outcomes. Culturally responsiveness focuses on *teaching*, which affects teachers' competence and practice whereas cultural relevance focuses on *pedagogy*, which affects teachers' attitude and disposition (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). It is important to point out that both frameworks present visions firm in a commitment to social justice education and seeing the classroom as a site for social change (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2014; Gay, 2013). These frameworks are not meant only for the classroom but are also designed to push teachers and students out into their communities (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Building on asset and resource based pedagogical models, Django Paris developed what he calls culturally sustaining pedagogy. Paris (2012) argues that culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies do not go far enough to ensure students get

what they need from school. Replacing the terms relevant and responsive, Paris proposed a variation of the theory by offering the term *sustaining* which provides other experiences to the usual monolingualism and/or monoculturalism within schools, by implementing intrinsic and transformative teaching methods that focus on students' unique identities. According to Paris (2012) "culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 93). Paris (2012) contends that it is necessary that pedagogies are responsive and aware of students' ever changing experiences and culture. Moreover, Paris argues that is important that pedagogies sustain students' culture and language while preparing them to be competent in today's society. Therefore, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to combat deficit educational models that strive to devalue students' diversity, and instead confirm the experiences of a multilingual and multicultural pluralistic society (Paris, 2012).

According to Paris (2012) a unique aspect of culturally sustaining pedagogy is the instructor's capacity to engage students in celebrating students' cultural experiences and distinct backgrounds. Content that is relevant and sustaining can help students keep focus on lessons and assignments because it is more connected to their lives. Thus, students may be more apt to engage in class discussions and critically reflect on the importance of their roles in society and school. Luke Wood, Khalil White, and Frank Harris (2015) found just this when they completed a study of effective instructors in the community college system. They found that employing culturally sustaining and relevant content increases students' academic abilities, respect for multiple viewpoints, and interests in academic content. They make important conclusions for instruction in the

community college which points out that all subjects, regardless of topical area, can employ curriculum and content in meaningful ways that intentionally incorporates the contributions of diverse groups (Wood, et al., 2015).

Ethnic Studies. Ethnic Studies courses and programs arose as a counter to the traditional mainstream curriculum, which does not highlight the contributions of ethnic and/or racial groups in the United States (Tintiangco-Cubales, Kohli, Sacramento, Henning, & Sleeter, 2015). Ethnic Studies emerged from social movements in the 1960s as students, educators, and scholars of color pressed schools, school districts, and textbook companies to produce and offer curricula that reflect the diversity and complexity of the United States population (Sleeter, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2015). Sleeter (2011) defined Ethnic Studies as curriculum, courses, or programs centered on “the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group, reflecting narratives and points of view rooted in that group’s lived experiences and intellectual scholarship” (p. vii). Ethnic Studies focuses on the knowledge and perspectives of marginalized ethnic and racial groups, reflecting viewpoints rooted in that group’s experiences and intellectual scholarship (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Sleeter, 2011).

Cammarota & Romero (2006) assert that Ethnic Studies courses positively affect student outcomes through the creation of a relevant and meaningful curriculum that affirms students’ identities, draws from their funds of knowledge, and builds students’ critical intellectualism. In point of fact, a quantitative study completed by Dee & Penner (2016) in the San Francisco Unified School District used a regression discontinuity design and found statistical significance for “at risk” ninth-graders assigned to Ethnic Studies courses. Their school attendance increase by 21 percentage points, their GPA’s

by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23. These findings provide a compelling confirmation for the capacity of culturally responsive pedagogies to unlock the educational potential of historically marginalized students.

The concept of Ethnic Studies has a long history tracing back to Freedom Schools, Black independent schools, and tribal schools, among others, however the first official Ethnic Studies program was established through protest on the campus of San Francisco State University (Begay et al., 1995; C. D. Lee, 1992; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2014). Specifically, protestors spoke out against a lack of access, misrepresentation, and the overall neglect of indigenous peoples and people of color within the university's curriculum and programs (Dee & Penner, 2016). Ethnic Studies programs and courses took root and spread across many of the nation's universities and colleges. However, they are still relatively uncommon in elementary and secondary schools (Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan, & Landreman, 2002). Recently, several school districts have or are considering adopting Ethnic Studies courses as graduation requirements (Sleeter, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014; Gilbertson, 2014; Tucker, 2014).

In Tucson, Arizona a program grounded in Ethnic Studies was used with students through the Mexican American Studies Program in their middle and high schools (Acosta, 2007; Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Romero et al., 2009). This program focused on culturally relevant curriculum and established deep caring relationships with students, families, and the community. It challenged deficit perspectives by believing that students were worthy of college opportunities and helped seal up leaky educational pipelines for Chicano@/Latin@ students.

The teachers of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program would start from a framework that emphasizes indigenous heritage and engage students with literature that reflects the students' lives, families, and histories. Acosta (2007), a literature teacher of this program, explains that students were "encouraged to visualize and affirm their academic identities while confronting current issues of oppression, develop a critical consciousness, and become familiar with movements of resistance and action" (p. 36). Acosta engaged students with literature that reflected students' lives, families, and histories. Their focus was debunking deficit theories by focusing on students' community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), their historical legacies that are not taught in mainstream classrooms, and celebrating their assets. Furthermore, they engaged youth of the program by focusing on social justice and developing deep meaningful relationships with their students (Acosta, 2007; Romero et al., 2009).

The Mexican American Studies program named their work *barrio* pedagogy, meaning their work reflected the communities of the students that were being served. According to Romero et al. (2009) *barrio* pedagogy is an educational model that builds upon three core principles: culturally relevant curriculum, critical pedagogy, and student–teacher–parent interactions. Additionally, *barrio* pedagogy is derived from existing and constantly developing knowledge emerging from the Chican@/Latino@ community. Romero et al., argue that *barrio* pedagogy embraces Chican@/Latin@ community knowledge and affords their students the ability to negotiate multiple worlds, specifically educational institutions they attend as well as the communities in which they reside.

Subtractive Schooling, Educación, and Caring. Angela Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling* (1999) helped the field to better understand two distinct binaries in

education: schooling vs. education and aesthetic care vs. authentic care. While researching the experiences of Mexican American students in a Houston high school, Valenzuela (1999) found that schools subtract resources from Mexican students in two major ways: first by dismissing their definition of education and second by their assimilationist policies and practices that minimize their culture and language. She contends that subtractive schooling “diverts youth of important social and cultural resources leaving them vulnerable to academic failure” (p. 3). According to Valenzuela, the subtractive nature of schooling assures that “students who begin the year with only small reserves of skills, as do most regular-track, U.S. born youth, will not succeed and conversely those who come with more positive orientations or greater skills are better equipped to offset the more debilitating aspects of schooling” (p. 6). However, it is also important to note that her study also reveals the powerful benefits of educational practices that honor students’ culture and demonstrate authentic care.

Noddings (1984) put forward the notion that schools are structured on an aesthetic caring framework, which focuses relationships on things and ideas rather than the moral ethics of caring that nurture and value relationships. Noddings asserts that teachers are more concerned with non-personal content and only secondarily, if at all, with their students daily lives (Noddings, 1984; Valenzuela, 1999). Through her work, Valenzuela (1999) found that immigrant students tend to seek their teacher’s approval and are more likely “to accept their teachers’ aesthetic definition of caring and forego their own view of education” (p. 22). By withholding social ties from Mexican American students, educators confirm that schooling is “impersonal, irrelevant, and lifeless” (p. 22). The concept of aesthetic caring foregoes Mexican youths’ definition of caring, which

embodies the word *educación*. *Educación* translates from Spanish to English as education, however it has a deeper meaning. According to Valenzuela *educación* has cultural roots and refers “to the family’s role of inculcating in their children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility and serves as the foundation for all learning” (p. 23). It is based on the preparation to be respectful of others and socially competent in the social world.

Valenzuela (1999) also argues that schools should engage marginalized students, their families, and their community with a framework of authentic care or *cariño*. Valenzuela highlights the fact that schools often force Mexican-Americans to assimilate into a system that minimizes their culture and language. This, she insists, is why *cariño* is so important because it builds the foundation for the trusting relationships between teachers and students that are essential for meaningful learning experiences.

Cariño, which translates into English as care, moves beyond the aesthetics of care to a deeper level of care, more correlated with love and respect. Thus, a framework of *cariño*, includes the ability to recognize, understand, and incorporate Chican@/Latin@ families’ notion of *education* and *respeto*, and their implications on Chican@/Latin@ student academic success. In her discussion of *cariño*, Valenzuela introduces the notion of additive schooling, which builds upon and incorporates students’ and families’ cultural and social capital (i.e. family values and beliefs) into educational practices and the schooling experience.

Valenzuela’s (1999) work on historically marginalized students highlights the need for educators to challenge deficit perspectives, highlighting the need for transformative educators to respond to students’ culture, language and diverse

backgrounds in authentic and respectful ways. Valenzuela's work continues to influence educators and researchers across the field.

Validation Theory. Curriculum and pedagogies that respond to students' cultural backgrounds must also include practices that validate and honor students' lived experiences. Laura Rendón's work has focused in higher education and has tackled issues of social justice, equity, and multicultural educational practices. Rendón's (1994) seminal research study on validation theory demonstrated the importance of validation for first generation students of color. In her study she defines validation as an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and personal development. Rendón contends that there are two forms of validation: 1. Academic -- when in- and out-of-class agents take action to assist students to trust their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college student and 2. Interpersonal -- when in- and out-of-class agents take action to foster students' personal development and social adjustment.

Rendón's research seeks to answer the question of how students become active participants in the academic community. She focuses on in class issues such as curriculum, classroom interactions, and the role of faculty. The results from her study demonstrate that historically marginalized students communicated doubts about their ability to succeed, needed active intervention from college personnel and faculty for help in navigating college, and even the most vulnerable students could be supported to become successful in schools through validating agents. Rendón points out that faculty are regarded as validating agents when they show concern for students, are personable and approachable, treat students as equals, structure learning experiences to allow for

learning, offer extra help to students beyond the classroom, and provide meaningful and timely feedback to students.

Providing a sense of validation is of high importance and value to marginalized students in the community college system (Rendón, 1994, 2002). According to Rendón, historically marginalized students are often first-generation, low-income, students of color, who come from a working-class background and who encounter and experience multiple challenges as they navigate the higher education system—a system that traditional students do not experience in the same way. For many traditional students, validation is built-in institutionally, so the institution validates multiple aspects of traditional students' identity, which results in “a significant amount of academic and personal validation in their lives” (Rendón, 2002, p. 646). In contrast, historically marginalized students often approach their education with caution and often doubt their sense of belonging and their ability to succeed in college. Rendón further contends that many of these students feel disconnected to institutions that have not created a proactive approach to engage and validate them holistically. Rendón suggests institutions of higher education recruit faculty of color and implement curriculum that is reflective of how students see and experience their worlds.

Institutional Agents. Building on Rendón's (1994) validation theory, sociologist Ricardo Stanton-Salazar has done important work on social capital frameworks and the way racially diverse students can use institutional agents to succeed in schools. Drawing from empowerment theory, critical social work, and Freirian philosophy, Stanton-Salazar (1997) defines institutional agents as “school staff committed to the success of students of color that provide them with social capital by offering them various funds of

knowledge” (p. 1). According to Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2001) institutional agents act as mediators between two cultures—the institutional culture and student culture—with the purpose of supporting student success within educational systems. Institutional agents often act as human bridges for students by personally connecting them to their own networks and with critical services and organizations on and off campus. Finally, Stanton-Salazar notes that institutional agents model behavior, provide emotional and moral support, and provide important feedback, advice, and guidance.

In his most recent work, Stanton-Salazar (2011) introduces the concept of empowerment agents, a particular type of institutional agent. Empowerment agents not only offer emotional support and important connections for marginalized students, they also advocate for students on campus and foster a critical awareness of the social structures and conditions of educational stratification that restrict access to high status resources and opportunities for poor students of color. Stanton-Salazar (2011) points out that while “institutional agents might be motivated by a liberal, progressive point of view to assist the disadvantaged, empowerment agents are motivated by a critical consciousness” (p. 1089). They are not, however, motivated by a desire to simply teach students how to get by in the existing educational system, but rather how to use their education to “change the world” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1093).

While Stanton-Salazar’s research focuses on the influence of institutional and empowerment agents in K-12 schools, this perspective is also applied to supporting students of color in higher education as well. Rendón et al. (2000) explains how institutional agents have the ability to facilitate the socialization and success of low-income, first generation college students of color by conveying important cultural

knowledge and acting as role models. A qualitative study performed by Carrasco-Nungary and Peña (2012) looked specifically at the role institutional agents in a community college play in the transfer success of Chicano students to four-year universities. Carrasco-Nungary and Peña interviewed 8 students who transferred and graduated from a university. They nominated 5 faculty who helped them reach their goals. The findings from their studies suggest that effective faculty institutional agents take responsibility for student success, hold high academic expectations for students, develop strong relationships with students, share their personal educational stories and connect students to resources.

Similarly, Dowd et al. (2013) performed a narrative analysis of 10 students who started in community college and made it all the way to graduate school. Dowd et al.'s data showed that institutional agents played key roles in helping students navigate the transition through college by helping students realize they were indeed college material and assisted them to reach their highest academic potential. This was made possible because in each case, an institutional agent demonstrated authentic care (Valenzuela, 1999) for the student and helped to cultivate their academic interests. Through their mentoring and guidance, these institutional agents also helped these students develop their college navigational skills bolstering their self-confidence. Furthermore, these institutional agents connected students directly to key supportive staff in financial aid departments and counseling centers, which was critical for their success. The students entered college feeling under-prepared academically but were grateful when an instructor took them seriously enough to really teach them how to navigate college and succeed (Dowd et al., 2013).

Recurring themes within the Literature

This literature review has focused on three schools of thought that inform transformative teaching: critical race theory, critical pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching approaches. After reviewing the literature on the three schools of thought three themes consistently surfaced throughout the literature. These three themes are purpose, responsiveness, and relationships. See Table 1.

Table 1.

Reoccurring themes within the literature

Purpose	Responsiveness	Relationships
Social justice focus;	Challenges deficit perspectives;	Establishes relationships built on authentic care;
Focuses on developing student's agency;	Emphasizes counterstories;	Shows respect for students;
Cultivate critical consciousness in themselves and their students;	Responsive to students' lived experiences;	Collaborates with students;
Takes a political stance against oppression:	Embraces students community knowledge;	Validates students as important members of school community;

These themes do not appear in isolation from one another in the literature, but run concurrently to create transformative experiences for students. The final section of this review goes deeper into each of these themes, looking at the ways that critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural relevance utilize them.

Purpose. According to the literature the purposeful educator has a social justice focus, aiming to develop agency by deliberately humanizing and empowering oppressed

students. The literature on critical race theory (CRT) highlights the importance of interrogating race and racism within the field of education in order to deconstruct systems of racial oppression and marginalization (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). At the core of critical race theory is its theme of social justice. Educators who incorporate critical race frameworks into their work are deliberate and have a social justice purpose for doing so; because they know the educational system has oppressed and marginalized students of color. CRT names this and it is woven into the fabric of transformative practices.

Similarly, the literature on critical pedagogy has pointed out that critical pedagogues are revolutionaries, not reactionaries (Freire, 1970). The educator who employs critical pedagogy has purpose and takes a political stance to end oppression by being in solidarity with their students. They have hope and believe that their students have the capacity to change the world. Also, according to Duncan-Andrade (2007) the transformative educator is inspired to make change because they have a clear purpose for teaching and have cultivated their own critical consciousness. This critical consciousness inspires them to be change makers through their teaching.

The literature on cultural relevance demonstrates that at the foundation of these pedagogical practices there is a belief that education has been deficit based and focused solely on monolingual and monocultural experiences. As a result students of color, particularly those living in poverty, have been disconnected from their education and consistently experience unequal access and outcomes in schools. The response of the culturally relevant educator is to counter this through purposely employing curriculum

that is relevant, responsive, and sustaining for students. These educators are inspired by social justice and recognize they can make important impacts by focusing on students' culture and their unique experiences. Their goal is to disrupt the narrative that students of color do not succeed in school. They are purposeful in the curriculum they choose and the way they engage students. Adding to this, these educators intentionally work towards validating students and act as their advocates to demonstrate that they are indeed valuable members of the school community and are needed to make the community and society a healthier place.

Responsiveness. Responsiveness means that educators are clearly engaging, responding, and empowering students with pedagogy and curriculum that takes into account students' cultural backgrounds, ancestral knowledge, and lived experiences. Educators committed to responsiveness challenge deficit perspectives of students with what they teach and how they teach it. They challenge majoritarian stories with counterstories from communities who have historically been oppressed and left out of the curriculum. They do this by embracing and incorporating students' familial, cultural, ancestral, and community knowledge.

One of the five tenants of CRT in education is its interdisciplinary nature, drawing from ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, political science, economics, and other fields to better understand the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002). Pedagogies with critical race frameworks challenge White, middle-class, and male privilege in traditional pedagogical practices and create spaces to learn from pedagogies of the home (Yosso et al., 2001). Because power and politics are at the center of all teaching and learning, the

application of household knowledge to situations outside of the home becomes a creative process that interrupts the transmission of “official knowledge” and dominant ideologies (Yosso et al., 2001). The literature of critical race theory also argues that instruction should critique racism and oppression at all levels and build on student strengths. This means that instruction of this type is relevant to students’ lived experiences inside and outside of schools and they can apply what they are learning to immediately improve their lives. It should be meaningful for both students and their teachers and it should provide the foundation to develop counterstories and dismantle oppression.

As discussed in the literature on critical pedagogy, curriculum should be transformative in nature and based on the idea that no one method can work for all students. Teachers need to know their students and be responsive to their diverse experiences and learning styles. By doing so, teachers can engage them in the critical and liberating work for which critical pedagogy is known. Furthermore, critical pedagogy insists that both students and teachers collaborate to question oppressive forces and take action towards ending structural inequity. To accomplish this goal, students must connect to the curriculum and be challenged by it. But, it should not end there. Critical pedagogy asserts that students use this connection to take action and work towards creating the community and world they prefer to live in.

The literature on culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies clearly highlights the need for schools to respond to students’ culture, community knowledge, and unique experiences. The studies presented in that section of this literature review speak to the power of pedagogies that students consider relevant to their lives. They are effective in meeting the needs of underrepresented students by focusing on the

knowledge and perspectives of marginalized ethnic and racial groups, reflecting viewpoints rooted in that group's experiences (Sleeter, 2011). The teacher who is dedicated to this way of teaching is willing to challenge the status quo and bring in curriculum and instructional practices that students consider important and meaningful.

Beyond culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies, it is also important that educators include practices that validate and honor students and their lived experiences. This rarely happens in schools. Rendón calls this the need for validation. This validation creates a connection for students to the institution that has historically pushed them out. Stanton-Salazar added an additional step that includes faculty and other staff using their social capital to connect students with the support and resources needed to be successful, making it clear that transformative teaching extends beyond the classroom.

Relationships. The literature clearly demonstrates the importance of strong relationships between teachers and students. Positive relationships with teachers, and schools in general, are important for students because they help them feel valued, validated, and respected. Strong relationships between teachers and students have also been shown to promote student success for students by connecting students to important resources and building their self-confidence (Dowd et al., 2003; Rendón, 2000; Wood, et al. 2015). Research also finds that through positive interactions with students, teachers are able to validate students' presence on campus as important, socialize them to the school setting, and help them successfully navigate the educational system (Rendón, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Carrasco-Nungary and Peña 2012). Furthermore, positive relationships provide a strong foundation for meaningful learning

to occur because students are more likely to feel a sense of encouragement and support from their instructors (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2002, 2004).

In particular the dominant narrative in schools is that students of color are somehow incapable of success because their culture, family, and/or language fails to support them. This slowly pushes students out of the school system or tracks them into non-professional career paths. CRT calls this out and identifies it as racism and oppression in education. CRT challenges this by debunking deficit theories of poor students of color and focusing on counterstories of resistance and resilience. CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of students of color is genuine, accurate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education (Yosso et al., 2001). For counterstories to be told and included in schools, teachers must be willing to build trusting relationships with their students founded on respect and care. Students must believe that their teachers are critical allies focused on their well-being. Teachers must be willing to challenge mainstream stories and focus on students' cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). By lifting up these stories, students and teachers together can create opportunities for healing and transformation.

Critical pedagogy focuses much of its philosophy on the relationship teachers develop with students. It critiques power dynamics in classrooms and calls for teachers to acknowledge how their status in the classroom as teachers impacts relationships with students and knowledge creation. The priority for the critical pedagogue is to be cognizant of this power and engage students as knowledgeable and informed individuals, rather than passive empty vessels waiting to be filled by the teacher's knowledge. By doing this teachers are able to foster students' acquisition of the necessary strategies and

skills that help them become social critics who are making decisions that affect their social, political, and economic realities (Giroux & McLaren, 1992). Additionally, it prioritizes student knowledge and engages them as allies in ending oppression. This is not possible if teachers do not acknowledge their own power in classrooms and its impacts on the relationship they have with their students.

Related to this, Valenzuela's (1999) work provides a powerful demonstration of the benefits of educational practices that honor students' culture and demonstrate authentic care for them. Her research showed that indeed Chican@/Latin@ students have a poor relationship with educational institutions because schools subtract their cultural knowledge and treat them in disrespectful and marginalizing ways. However, curriculum that reflects students' cultural contributions and educators who demonstrate *cariño* for students can counter this and make positive impacts. Her work exemplifies the power of caring relationships in classrooms especially when students have been marginalized by educational systems.

At the core of culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies is a commitment to rigorous curriculum focused on high expectations for students and student success. Similar to critical race theory and critical pedagogy, pedagogies that attend to students' culture and their diversity are focused on challenging deficit theories of poor students of color. Connecting students to the institution by responding to their culture needs to be founded on respect for students. Building on these notions, Rendón (1994) and Stanton and Salazar (1997) highlight the need that educators actively try to validate students and act as their institutional agents on campus connecting them to the support and services that can help them navigate schools.

Conclusion

The objective of this research study is to conduct an extended case study of transformative teaching practices in the community college system. The first step in the extended case method is to identify the prevailing research and theory that will be tested in the field. This literature review has done that. The next step of the extended case study methodology is to test that theory in the field to determine its veracity so that it might be improved. The next chapter of this dissertation discusses the research methodology I will use to carry out that testing in the field.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This study employed a modified version of the Extended Case Study methodology (Burawoy, 1991) to answer following research questions:

1. What does the literature say about the teaching practices of transformative teachers⁵ of Chican@/Latin@ students and other historically marginalized students?
2. What makes their teaching practice transformative for students?
3. Does this research hold up in the community college setting?
 - A. When and how is it confirmed?
 - B. When and how is it disproved?
 - C. What are the nuances that emerge?
4. What are the implications of this research for instructors, instructional leaders, and policy makers within the community college system?

The remainder of this chapter is sorted into the following sections: purpose of the research; research design; descriptive categories for analysis; data collection and analysis; focal site and informants; role of the researcher; and contributions and implications for the field. Transformative teaching emphasizes social justice, inquiry, self-reflection, and action.

⁵Transformative teaching is grounded in a social justice purpose, incorporates responsive teaching and learning approaches, and focuses on building strong meaningful relationships with students (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). The transformative teacher considers themselves to be change agents and their goals are to empower students to self-reflect, critically think, question and take action against social injustices happening inside and outside of schools (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 2003).

Purpose of the Research

In general, research on historically marginalized communities has been implemented from a majoritarian point of view (Gutierrez, 2006). This means that research privileges the dominant narrative and silences the contributions of oppressed communities of color (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Smith, 1999). To disrupt this process, this research is inspired by a social justice framework, is equity oriented (Gutierrez, 2006), and takes on a decolonizing research approach (Smith, 1999). I do this by challenging deficit theories of Chican@/Latin@ students in community colleges and shifting the conversation to focus on improving the teaching of these students. I contend that current teaching and schooling practices are deficit based and focus on remediation rather than transformation.

This study responded to this problem by focusing on the classrooms that are working for students of color as sites to inform the development of more widespread transformative teaching in the community college setting. The literature has shown that transformative teaching is an effective way to engage historically marginalized students. Frameworks founded in critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural relevance have been shown to be effective for low-income students of color who have historically been marginalized in schools. In addition, transformative teaching practices that establish deep emotional connections with students, demonstrate respect for them, and are built on care and trust are significant when working with underrepresented students (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

My experience as a community college educator for the past 11 years leads me to believe that transformative teaching looks and feels somewhat different than it is

described in the literature on the K-12 setting. This, coupled with the fact that there is a dearth of research on transformative teaching in the community college classroom, particularly with respect to Chican@/Latin@ students, suggests the need for studies like this one. This study set out to identify the places in the community college where the existing research and theory (mostly K-12 focused) is confirmed, provides examples of counter-instances, and/or needs more nuanced analysis.

The findings of this study can impact the ways instructional faculty, instructional leaders, and community college policy makers think about and implement teaching practices and policies in the community college writ large, but particularly in those spaces serving students that the institution has not historically served well.

Research Design

This study utilized an Extended Case Study methodology (Burawoy, 1991). In general, case study methodologies are founded in grounded theory meaning the goal is to construct theory from the analysis of captured data (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989). According to Merriam (2009) case study research calls for researchers to systematically investigate a problem within a real-life context and answer questions of “How?” and “Why?” instead of purely “What?” This approach pushes the study beyond description alone and goes beneath the surface to get richer meaning of particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989). Merriam also points out that case study research in education can be used to identify and explain complex issues of teaching practice. The Extended Case Study differs because it does not focus on constructing theory but rather reconstructing it based off of participant observations and interviews from the field (Burawoy, 1991).

The Extended Case Study goes beyond the traditional case study approach by testing prevailing theory, focusing on confirming, counter-instances, and nuances to deepen the understanding of theories, and ultimately reconstructing theory by adding the observed changes (Burawoy, 1991). Since this study worked towards recording experiences of transformative teaching practices and Chican@/Latin@ student success the Extended Case Study was appropriate. The Extended Case Study research approach challenged teachers and students to ask questions and reflect rather than just narrating assumptions about what it meant to effectively engage community college students in the classroom. I kept with traditional approaches to data collection used in case studies (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989) by gathering data using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and classroom artifact reviews. I also kept a detailed field journal with personal reflections. These data collection tools are described in detail later in this chapter.

Extended Case Study. The Extended Case Study method is appropriate for this research project because theory on transformative teaching is incomplete since there is a gap in the literature on transformative teaching practices in the community college system—most of the research focuses on the K-12 educational system. This study intends to extend theory related to transformative teaching by focusing on one community college in Northern California called Golden Hills Community College. My findings allowed me to confirm, challenge, critique, and add nuances to the discussion, ultimately allowing me to reconstruct and advance theory on transformative teaching.

The first step towards completing the Extended Case Study is to review current theory on the phenomena being studied (Burawoy, 1991). Then the researcher should

test that theory in the field followed by confirming and/or identifying counter-instances to the theory and the nuances. When counter-instances or exceptions to the theory are identified then reconstruction of the theory is possible. Figure 2 outlines the Extended Case Study methodology.

Figure 3. Extended Case Study (Burawoy, 1991)

Descriptive Categories for Analysis. In Chapter 2 I reviewed current literature on critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural relevance. Three themes reoccurred in this literature: purpose, relationships, and relevance (See Table 2).

Table 2*Reoccurring Themes within the Literature*

Purpose	Responsiveness	Relationships
Social justice focus;	Challenges deficit perspectives;	Establishes relationships built on authentic care;
Focuses on developing student's agency;	Emphasizes counterstories;	Shows respect for students;
Cultivate critical consciousness in themselves and their students;	Responsive to students' lived experiences;	Collaborates with students;
Takes a political stance against oppression;	Embraces students community knowledge;	Validates students as important members of school community;
Believes students can transform the world;	Empowers students through relevant and responsive curriculum;	Empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically

Data Collection and Analysis

The full data set of this study consisted of three teacher interviews, nine student interviews, eighteen classroom observations, relevant classroom artifacts, a field journal, and data memos. Data were analyzed, transcribed, and coded shortly after it was collected.

I used community nominations and snowball sampling to identify transformative community college teachers. An email was sent out to over 75 current and former Chican@/Latin@ students (See Appendix E) clearly explaining the purpose of the study and asking them for teacher nominations. Approximately 25 faculty and four college administrators also received an email with a similar request for nominations. Names

were collected over a month-long period and sorted using an excel spreadsheet. The sampling revealed two teachers that were nominated frequently (20 or more times) and those two were asked by me to participate. I also asked them to nominate colleagues, which is how I identified the third teacher for this study.

In order to create a second data entry point, each nominated teacher identified three Chican@/Latin@ students to be interviewed for a total of nine interviews. These students were identified by the teachers as being successful in their class and using what they learned to make transformational changes in the community. I reached out to them via email and social media and asked them to participate in this study. I completed semi-structured interviews with these nine students using piloted protocols of the students and their teachers.

Beyond this, I also acted as a participant observer in classrooms using pre-codes from literature to perform observations. The addition of classroom observations allowed data triangulation to occur. Observing the classes also allowed me to watch teaching in action and code for relevant themes. I audio recorded the classroom teaching, took pictures of relevant classroom artifacts and kept a detailed field journal. At the completion of each class I also completed data memos. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the data corpus used to complete this study.

Table 3.*Data Corpus*

Classroom Observations	Semi Structured Teacher Interviews	Semi Structured Student Interviews	Classroom Artifacts	Field Journal
Observe the classes of transformative teachers; Scheduled to happen on a weekly basis from mid-January through February	Interview three transformative teachers between January and February	Interview nine students (three students each teacher) between January and February	Collect relevant artifacts throughout classroom observations	On-going reflections in journal throughout the extent of the study

Classroom Observations. All classroom observation were done using the descriptive categories identified in this chapter and based on the findings from the literature review. I voice recorded each class and coded for teacher's purpose in teaching, establishing caring relationships, and relevant curriculum. These observations began on the first day of the Spring semester at Golden Hills Community College (Mid-January 2017). This was meant to capture the teaching style and pedagogy of the teacher early on and to witness student engagement over time. A total of 18 classes were observed (6 classes for each teacher) which allowed for data saturation. Classes ranged between 1.5-3 hours per session. After each class, I informally engaged the teacher and students around questions that came up for me during the classroom observation. My observations and the post-class discussions were written up as field notes and data memos. I also checked my field note observations with the teacher to confirm what I had observed in class.

Semi-Structured Interviews. To add depth to the field observations, I also completed semi-structured interviews with both students and their teachers using interview protocols with the descriptive categories from the literature on transformative teaching (See Appendix A and B). In order to enhance internal validity and protect against other factors that could influence the research, interview protocols were member checked. The goal of this was to make sure interview protocols were clear and relevant to this study so I could capture the necessary data.

All interviews were recorded and selectively transcribed to capture teacher and student voice (Miles, Hubberman, Saldaña, 2013). Transcriptions were shared with the participants to further confirm that the correct data was captured. Furthermore, they were completed in a confidential space on campus or a secure and comfortable space in the community. Doing this created a safe and secure place for participants to express their thoughts and speak their truths. All interviews were completed between January and March of 2017.

I used In Vivo and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2012) to capture the exact words of students and their teachers. This commitment to exact transcription was done to insure the voices were heard and directly influenced my research.

In keeping with the Extended Case methodology, I tested the themes that emerged from the literature. I specifically coded for teachers' purpose, relationships built on authentic care, and relevance in the curriculum. I ran two cycles of coding to confirm, disprove and/or identify nuances that were revealed (Saldaña, 2012). Chapter four specifically highlights the additional themes and nuances that emerged. An excel worksheet was used to record all first cycle and second cycle codes.

Classroom Artifacts. Classroom instructional artifacts included class syllabi, handouts, evaluation tools, and any other classroom materials that seemed relevant. Artifacts were collected and coded for purpose, relationships built on authentic care, and relevance. I collected classroom artifacts as a way to reinforce and/or refute and add nuance to the theory of transformative teaching practices specifically for higher education teaching. Collecting artifacts also allowed for triangulation to occur because I had another data entry point to add to the classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, and a detailed field journal consisting of personal reflections and data memos. All artifacts were kept in a locked cabinet or were secured on my computer for safekeeping.

Field Journal. I also recorded personal reflections and observations from the field in a field journal. The field journal provided me an opportunity to process, through writing, what I witnessed in the classroom that could provide more insight into transformative teaching practices. The field journal also enhanced interpretation of the data collected and raised the quality of interviews, observations, and other data collection through introspection.

After completing journal entries, if further questions or thoughts arose, I checked in with the teachers or students to clarify. To capture the most accurate reflections, journal entries were done during class and right after interviews. I wrote for the necessary time to complete a thorough journal entry. These journal entries were dated, analyzed and coded as well.

Time Frame. This study was completed during the 2017 Spring Semester at Golden Hills Community College. The study began early in the semester (mid-January)

and progressed through to the end of the semester (May 2017). Figure 3 lays out the timeline of the study.

Figure 4. Timeline for Study

Ethical Considerations

I received approval from Golden Hill Community College (See Appendix C) and the Institutional Review Board (See Appendix D) of San Francisco State University to conduct this study. All participants of this study were 18 years or older. All identifying information was changed to maintain confidentiality. All data collected was placed in a locked cabinet in a secure place for safekeeping. Interviews also took place in a secure space to maintain confidentiality of all participants. Transcripts and recordings were deleted once the research was completed.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the small sample size. However, the small sample size also allowed for a deeper exploration and understanding of teacher and student experiences and perspectives. A smaller number of participants are also appropriate for qualitative research because it allows for greater detail and richness in the description

(Miles, Hubberman, Saldaña, 2013; Saldaña, 2012). A smaller sample may limit overall generalization however the findings from this research can add influential scholarship in the field pertaining to transformative teaching and Latino student success.

Internal Validity

All participants were given a thorough explanation of the study, the purposes for it, and they gave their permission for interviews and observations to occur. Students and teachers have checked interview protocols. The goal of this is to make sure interview protocols are clear and capturing the necessary data. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture instructor and student voice. I plan to share the transcripts with the participants to further confirm that the correct data was captured. Furthermore, I plan to complete the interviews in a confidential space on campus.

As a result of my work at the college I have developed deep relationships with participants of this study. For many of the student participants I have been either their counselor, instructor, club advisor, or mentor. In some cases I have been all of these things to students. This puts me in a unique situation because many, if not all the students chosen to participate in this study will know me in at least one of these capacities. Critics might consider this a weakness because of an increased likelihood that students and instructors would withhold criticisms and/or they might attempt to give answers that they think I am looking for in the study. These are real challenges to the validity of the study. In order to protect against these biases in the data, I have made sure to triangulate my data so that any conclusions that I draw are supported by multiple forms of evidence. I would add that since I am known and recognized on campus, participants

may actually be more comfortable and freer to talk openly with me. This can add to the richness, honesty, fidelity, and authenticity of the data acquired.

What might not get considered about my positionality in this research are the advantages I bring as a practitioner-researcher. As a practicing counselor at Golden Hills Community College I have built trust and respect with students and teachers on campus. I have a deeper level of understanding about the campus and broader community than an outside research could ever have by virtue of the fact that this is my community. An outside researcher cannot obtain this level of insider knowledge and would face another set of constraints in obtaining that information.

External Validity

My goal was to build on existing theory of transformative teaching in community colleges and the impacts on Chican@/Latin@ students and other marginalized groups. There is little research done in this area and therefore I used existing research to ground my work. Current research shows that effective teaching in the classroom has profound impacts for all students in the classroom (Wood, Harris, and White, 2015). By inserting student and instructor voices, I furthered the claims I make in this study.

Setting for the Study

Located in a rich agricultural area of Northern California, Golden Hills Community College was founded in 1942 and held its first class with just 16 students, only one of whom was male (Golden Hills Community College, 2016). In 1994 this college officially opened a permanent second Upper Valley Campus and brought educational opportunities closer to home for residents living in northern Golden Hills. Through this expansion the college was able to add new dimensions to its curriculum by

including a culinary program, among other new and expanded course offerings. The Golden Hills Community College celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2012 and continues to serve students and the community in achieving educational, career, and personal goals (Golden Hills Community College, 2016).

This campus has approximately 200 full-time faculty members. Of the 200 faculty, approximately 72% of them are White, while 17% consider themselves Chican@/Latin@. Figure 6 demonstrates the total ethnic breakdown of the faculty.

Figure 6. Golden Hills Community College Faculty, 2016

During the 2014-2015 academic year 9,387 total students enrolled in Golden Hills for an all-time record high. (California Community Colleges Student Success Score Card [CCCCSSS], 2016). Since 2011 this college has been considered a Hispanic Serving Institution because its Latino student population is totaling 36% (CCCCSSS, 2016), however the faculty does not reflect the student diversity. Figure 5 reveals the diversity of the student body.

Table 4.*Golden Hills Community College Data for 2014-2016*

Golden Hills Community College Student Demographic Information			
Total Students			9,387
Gender	Ethnicities		
Female		African American	6.6%
	4.0%		
Male		American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%
	4.5%		
Unknown Gender		Asian	3.1%
	.4%		
Age			
		Pilipino	9.4%
Under 20 years old		Latino	36.1%
	6.0%		
20 to 24 years old		Pacific Islander	0.4%
	3.5%		
25 to 39 years old		White	33.9%
	5.0%		
40 or more years old		Two or More Races	4.7%
	5.4%		
Unknown Age	0.1%	Unknown Ethnicity	5.4%

According the college's website, its mission is to prepare students for evolving roles in a diverse, dynamic, and interdependent world (Golden Hills Community College, 2015). This college prides itself for being an open-access institution that is committed to student achievement through high-quality programs and services that are continuously evaluated and improved. However, according to the college's student success scorecard 50% of all Latino students with the goal of completing a degree, certificate or transferring

to the university achieved said goal, as compared to 57% of White students, and 81% of Asian students (CCCSSS, 2016). Figure 6 provides the 2014-2015 completion rates for Golden Hills Community College.

Figure 6. California Community College Student Success Score Card, 2016

Positionality of the Researcher

I enter this work as a proud Xicano born and raised in the Golden Hills community. I grew up in a working class Spanish speaking home in the heart of Golden Hills and regardless of our socio-economic status my mother always prioritized our education. Although she was not educated in the academic sense, she believed that through education opportunities of upward mobility would become available for her children. However, she did not understand that there are hegemonic structures in place that perpetuate an ongoing stratification and inequality of specific groups in society like us, and that those structures would try to convince us that we were not “college material”

and should instead focus on finding work in one of the many vineyards picking grapes for a famed winery. Although manual labor is an honorable job, high school counselors never offered me the opportunity to even consider attending college after my high school graduation. Instead, it was up to me to use my navigational capital to get into and graduate from college. I did this via the community college system. I used what made sense to me, my mother's passion for hard work and dedication to obtain an education, and as a result I was the first to graduate college. Now, because of my experiences in schools, I have dedicated my life to transforming the inequities in the educational system and helping students like me. My own experiences in higher education have cultivated a critical consciousness in me that I consider vital to understanding and critiquing the structural conditions that lead to inequalities experienced by working class students of color in college. As a passionate and dedicated scholar-practitioner I am focused on equity and justice for all oppressed students. I believe research should challenge us to critically reflect and take action against the injustices happening in community colleges.

My education and dedication to my community has made it possible for me to work at Golden Hills Community College as an academic counselor. I was hired over 11 years ago and work specifically with first generation low-income students through the Extended Opportunity Programs Services (EOPS). The EOPS program was born out of the Civil Rights movements of the 1960's and is dedicated to helping first generation, low-income, student succeed in college. It does this by offering responsive counseling support to students. It is important to state that I also attended this school over 15 years ago and participated in the EOPS program as a student. As a former EOPS student I know first-hand what it felt like to be validated and cared for by a few loving faculty

when I was lost in the college system. Their guidance and support made a difference in my educational journey and motivated me to transfer to the university. These experiences inspired me to become a compassionate student-centered educator dedicated to helping the most vulnerable students succeed in college. It also has highlighted the importance of relationships in the school setting, which is one of the themes of this research. Now, as a researcher I know first-hand that navigating college can be scary and difficult process because barriers present themselves inside and outside of school but with the help of caring and loving faculty success is possible. My experiences as a student and now a professor have inspired me to do the work I do in critical and transformative ways.

It is important to note that I live in the Golden Hills community. Some of our students literally live across the street from me. I am proud member of this community with deep roots here. I can literally trace my relatives back in this town to the early 1900's. I have a large family of over 90 members who reside in or near the Golden Hills community. I have first-hand experience of the schools in this community because I went through them. Additionally, I am raising three children in Golden Hills and have this additional vested interest in making sure the educational experiences of students are just and equitable.

My personal experiences in the community and its classrooms helped me connect with the data for this research at a deeper level. I realized the importance of my own biases and mitigated them to the best of my ability in order to avoid disrupting the data retrieval process and the analysis of it. Steps I took to do this is included recording and transcribing verbatim all interviews. Transcriptions were also reviewed with the participants to make sure that they were valid and represented what they spoke.

Furthermore, classroom observations and the review of classroom documents and artifacts allowed for data triangulation to occur. I also kept a detailed field journal recording all my personal reflections around the research process.

I also recognize I have an important role as a mentor and role model to current Chican@/Latin@ students at this school. Unfortunately, the data has revealed that only 50% of Chican@/Latin@ students who enroll at Golden Hills Community College graduate and/or transfer to the university (CCCSSS, 2016). As a Chicano scholar from the Golden Hills community it is important that I model for students that they too can make it to the doctorate level. However, It is not enough to be a Chicano role model. It is also important for students to recognize why I am doing the type of work I am doing. Students need to see and feel transformative work so they too can learn to be critical and push back against injustices in the community. They are not offered this opportunity frequently. I consider this a major responsibility on my part, which further creates urgency and drive for this research.

Contributions

This study hypothesized that despite all the problems and barriers Chican@/Latin@ students face in their educational journeys there are classrooms in the community college system where they are being supported and taught in effective and transformative ways. This work intended to get into these classrooms, learn from these educators, and ultimately extend theory on transformative teaching. The following groups will be impacted by this research: community college instructors, community college leaders and administrators, and educational policy makers. Chapter five provides specific details about how each group is impacted.

Chapter 4: Report of the Findings

Introduction

This study focused specifically on teaching practices that have been identified by community college Chican@/Latin@ students and their teachers as effective and transformative. The goal of this study is analyze transformative ways of teaching, learn what works in the classroom for the most underserved students on campus, and ultimately inform key stakeholders around how to help these students succeed. Given that community college students spend more time in the classroom than any other place on campus, it made sense to assume that students are greatly influenced by the student-teacher interaction occurring in the classroom (Wood et al., 2015). Focusing on transformative teachers, as opposed to the general teaching population added an element of credibility to the successful teaching practices that were espoused by the participants in this study.

An Extended Case Study methodology (Burawoy, 1998) was selected to allow me to test current theory on transformative teaching in the community college setting. This work is warranted since most research on this topic is in the K-12 setting and not in higher education. The Extended Case Study methodology was also used to construct the following research questions:

1. What does the literature say about the teaching practices of transformative teachers of Chican@/Latin@ students and other historically marginalized students?
2. Why and how are these practices transformative?
3. Does this research hold up in the community college setting?
 - D. When and how is it confirmed?
 - E. When and how is it disproved?
 - F. What are the nuances that emerge?
4. What are the implications of this research for instructors, instructional leaders, and policy makers within the community college system?

Chapter two, the literature review, addressed questions one and two. The primary focus of this Chapter is to illuminate and answer question three while question four will serve as the primary topic of discussion in Chapter five.

Portraits of the Transformative Teachers

This research is inspired by a social justice framework, is equity oriented (Gutierrez, 2006), and takes on a decolonizing research approach (Smith, 1999). With these concepts as a foundation, the teachers who participated in this study were community nominated by other faculty members, administrators, and first generation, low-income Chican@/Latin@ students at Golden Hills Community College. The goal of community nomination was to privilege the voices of those who are often silenced in the

research process (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Smith, 1999). This was done through emails and personal contacts with faculty, administrators, and students. The transformative teachers selected for this study were identified 90% percent of the time. In addition, these teachers were nominated because of their proven track record of successfully working with historically marginalized students inside and outside the classroom. What stood out about each teacher is that they have a 96% retention rate of their students as compared to 55% for other teachers at this college (Golden Hills Community College, 2016). Also, each teacher participant identified having a strong commitment to social justice through their work as educators.

The following table provides demographic information of each transformative teacher selected for this study.

Table 1.

The Transformative Teachers

Teacher	Ethnicity	Department	Years Teaching in Community Colleges	Average Number of Classes Taught Per Semester
Professor Cuauhtémoc	Chicano/Pilipino	Ethnic Studies	7	1-3
Professor Navah	Pilipina/Black	Ethnic Studies	10	3-5
Professor Star	Black	Ethnic Studies	6	1-3

What follows are biographies of each teacher and excerpts of what I witnessed in each teacher's classroom. I bring in the teachers' and students' voices from the semi-structured interviews and interactions inside and outside the classroom to add depth and descriptiveness to the research process. After a description of each teacher I then move into the data analysis where I confirm and show nuance to the theory related to transformative teaching. I end this chapter with a conclusion of my findings.

Professor Cuauhtémoc. Professor Cuauhtémoc considers himself a social justice activist and as he stated, “engages in liberation of oppressed communities” through his teaching. Professor Cuauhtémoc believes in his students and is hopeful that he can inspire the next generation of change makers through his teaching. He teaches courses in Ethnic Studies at Golden Hills Community College because he believes this is a space where he can make impacts and push back on what he perceives to be “an oppressive educational system”. He has been an adjunct professor at this campus for approximately 8 years. Professor Cuauhtémoc is well known on campus for his unique teaching approaches and his ability to connect with students at a deep level.

As an educator Professor Cuauhtémoc has witnessed what he calls the “mis-education” of Chican@/Latin@ students. He describes this “mis-education” as the “dehumanization of students by the educational system”. He commented that students are not valued for the assets they bring to school but rather they are labeled and stereotyped as “not smart” or “college material”. Therefore, Professor Cuauhtémoc is

committed to social justice and believes he can make major shifts in how students are educated in Golden Hills. He does this by teaching through an Ethnic Studies perspective, which means he is critical of oppressive systems and believes in inspiring students to take action against them.

Professor Cuauhtémoc's courses focus on Chican@/Latin@ culture and are intended to broaden students' knowledge on culture and history while pointing out contributions Chican@/Latin@ people have made to this nation. Since he is a well-known professor in the community his classes fill quickly. He is known for averaging 50 plus students when he teaches. One semester he took 25 students over the cap and reached 75. This not typical for community college instructors because they are expected to enroll the number of students recommended by the college. Some might add 2-3 students over the cap but it is unprecedented that a professor would add 25 extra students. Professor Cuauhtémoc did this because he believes all students should have access to Ethnic Studies courses.

Professor Cuauhtémoc considers it important getting to his classroom as early as possible to open the space for students who may have questions or want to hang out. This is challenging with his demanding schedule, but he believes it is critical to be as available as possible for students. As he prepares for his classes, Professor Cuauhtémoc often plays Chicano music and purposely creates a space that is comfortable and welcoming to students. As they walk in the door he acknowledges them and often shakes

their hands. He points out “it is important to connect with students whenever possible” and according to him, getting to class early and welcoming students helps them feel “like they belong”.

After class is not much different. At any given students will wait to talk with him after class. On the first day of my observations I witnessed 2 students ask him for letters of recommendation for scholarships while another student asked for advice on a career paths in Ethnic Studies. He agreed to write the letters and then he spent the time needed counseling the other student on careers paths. He reported those are the type of connections he likes to make with students. Often community college professors refer students to their Office hours when they need additional support. Making it to a professor’s Office hours can be nerve racking and overwhelming for first generation college students who have not been prepared to engage with their with their professors outside the classroom. For others students, obligations like work and family make it challenging to attend the Office hours. These barriers can make it hard for students to connect with their teachers. Professor Cuauhtémoc challenges this and is committed to being as accessible as possible to students. He will spend the time needed after class.

Professor Navah. Professor Navah is an educator, author, and performer. She is a facilitator of leadership, mentoring, and cultural awareness programs and diversity trainings. She has published two books and a variety of articles on identity and parenting. Currently she is a tenured professor of Ethnic Studies at Golden Hills

Community College, teaching a variety of Ethnic Studies courses. She has also led a collaborative effort between the Ethnic Studies Department and the Associated Students of Golden Hills Community College to open a Cultural Center on campus. She holds a variety of Master Degrees from various universities in Northern California. Her professional and educational background have informed her work in the classroom and the community, influencing thousands of adults and adolescents for the last twenty years.

Prior to her work at Golden Hills Community College she worked as a high school teacher in Northern California. She stated that as a high school teacher she found a “love for teaching” because she was able to connect with students who were wanting validation and acknowledgement from their teachers but were not getting it in their classes. She would open up the classroom during the lunch hour and other breaks and allow students to come in and “hang-out” in the class. The classroom for her became a place of connection and community for marginalized students. This was important for many of her students who felt school did not care about them. She made it a point to acknowledge these students and purposely reached out to them.

Professor Navah considers herself transformative because, as she states, her goal as a teacher “is to help students who have historically felt invisible become visible”. What she means by this is that the educational system historically has marginalized and pushed low-income students of color out of the system. She can empathize with these students because it happened to her. Therefore, she purposely focuses in engaging

students in validating ways and understands the power teachers have to make students feel part of the college environment. She does this by connecting students to her own networks and with student services and organizations on campus.

Professor Star. Professor Star has been an adjunct professor at Golden Hills Community College for five years. She is an experienced educator who has taught from high school level to graduate school classes. She specifically enjoys teaching community college students because of the impacts she can make there. Her goal is to use innovative and transformative teaching approaches to help students navigate college. She believes in responding to the entire student including their emotional and physical well-being. Often her classes can start with self-reflection and meditation followed by group work and movement. She is not against taking her classes outside the classroom and using the environment to engage her students. This might mean doing group work or an activity on the lawn outside the classroom.

Professor Star is also an artist, dancer, consultant, and an urban farmer. As an artist she believes healing centered social justice organizing can build creative brave spaces that foster the wellbeing of people and the planet. According to her, this wellbeing is a form of “direct action” and can lead to “resilience and liberation”. She brings these perspectives to her classroom and challenges her students through the curriculum she includes and the assignments she gives. Her goal as a teacher is to prepare students to think critically, develop coping skills, and hold conversations with

others as they approach contemporary social issues such as race in America, environmental justice, immigration status, and violence in communities. Through her lectures and assignments she connects these concepts back to the experiences students and communities face daily.

When I was searching for teachers to include in this study Professor Star's name was highly recommended by other transformative teachers and students alike. I spoke with students who nominated her and they told me Professor Star would make a great fit for my research. Gloria, a young single mother who transferred to the university had taken two classes from Professor Star and described her as "genuine, kind, and passionate about teaching". She stated that Professor Star mentored her when she felt lost in school and believed in her when "no one else did". The first class she took from her inspired her to think about the "social conditions" and "barriers" women of color face in this society. This was meaningful for her and motivated her to do something about it. She decided she would be the first in her family to complete college. Professor Star's classes and the support she offered Gloria helped her feel validated and worthy of college. As a result, and with help from Professor Star, she was the first in her family to transfer to the university.

Roberto, a freshman student, stated "feeling inspired by her to make positive changes in the world". He took a variety of classes from her and each time he felt moved by the passionate way she engaged the subject material. Roberto went through schools in

Golden Hills and never “felt challenged” by the curriculum. As Chicano growing up in Golden Hills community he never learned about the “contributions” of his people. This was the opposite in Professor Star’s class. She used real world examples to teach about inequality and oppression in American society, which he thought, was unique, because “no other teacher would do this”. Roberto admired her bravery and willingness to teach about “social inequalities” and the “issues that plague the community”. Her curriculum also reflected the students lived experiences and made direct connections to what Roberto had experienced in the Golden Hills community. Her high energy in the classroom also made the class something to look forward to each week.

Report of the Findings: Confirming the Theory

Having Purpose. Duncan-Andrade (2007) states that the transformative educator is inspired to make change and has a clear purpose for teaching. A transformative educator has cultivated his or her own critical consciousness and is focused on pushing back on oppressive systems inside and outside of schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). The teachers in this study demonstrated their social justice purpose for teaching and believe their students can transform the world (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992; Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 2003; Cammarota and Romera, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). This was evident in the curriculum they chose and the assignments they gave their classes. Each teacher specifically spoke about his or her purpose for teaching. The three teachers of this study confirmed that purpose is extremely important for them as teachers.

Professor Cuauhtémoc. As a young child Professor Cuauhtémoc never would have guessed he would become a teacher. At an early age his experiences with the education system were not positive and he learned to dislike school. For him, school was not a place that embraced him, his culture, or his language. However, with the support of his family he pushed forward and graduated high school. With no real plan he decided to enroll at a community college in Southern California. It is here where he enrolled in his first Chicano Studies class. He recalled the moment when he entered the classroom for the first time and was engaged by a “young radical Chicano teacher with passion and commitment to students”. This teacher embraced him and made feel welcomed and valuable. He had never experienced that before in any school setting. Professor Cuauhtémoc described him as dedicated to the “Chicano struggle for justice” which resonated for him because his parents were active members of the United Farm Workers, a labor union focused on helping farmworkers. As he explained, this was the moment when education became alive for him and he realized that school could be for him too. He had finally found a space in education that embraced him.

Professor Cuauhtémoc’s early experiences in this Chicano Studies course and the inspiration he received later motivated him to seek a BA degree in Raza Studies and a MA degree in Ethnic Studies. He highlighted how his foundation in Ethnic Studies trained him to critique inequality and push for social justice. As a result, he states he is

purposeful in how he engages the classroom. When I interviewed him he specifically made connections to his purpose and agenda as a teacher. He stated:

I am purposeful. I have an agenda. I want students to leave this class wanting to help change our world. In this class we ground ourselves in Ethnic Studies. I know what it feels like to not be empowered as a student. I experienced that when I was younger. I believe in empowering youth toward taking action and becoming agents of social transformation in their communities. Through reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed. Through praxis, oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with their allies, struggle. I have a sense of urgency around social justice and social transformation (Prof. Cuauhtémoc, March 13, 2017).

Professor Cuauhtémoc speaks about the impacts oppression has had on students and he wants them to take action against it. His own experiences as a student whose language and culture were not valued add to his understanding of what students experience in school. This is not common practice among community college professors. Community college teaching is focused on preparing students for the university and/or careers with little attention on the social injustices students experience every day. Some scholars have argued that critical educators view education as a political act, which positions the teacher as a political agent (Freire, 1998, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; McLaren, 2003). As a transformative teacher, Professor Cuauhtémoc takes this stance and understands the classroom is a place for reflection, critique, and praxis. As he states, his purpose for teaching is to inspire students “to change the world”. He chooses curriculum that reflects the realities of his students. For Professor Cuauhtémoc teaching is never a “neutral” act because he “has urgency around social justice and social

transformation” in a society where poor people of color are marginalized (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1988, 2003).

Professor Cuauhtémoc describes teaching as a humanizing activity for his students and for him. Teaching has also been a way for him to make positive impacts with students. In the same interview he stated:

Teaching allows me to grow as a human being. It's a space for me to grow. Self-growing experience. This is my agenda. I want to make change in this world. I am trying to humanize the educational space because many of our students have experienced marginalization. We need to make conscious decisions to change this. (Prof. Cuauhtémoc, March 13, 2017)

Teaching allows Professor Cuauhtémoc to feel like he is making change in the world while growing as a human being. He calls it a “self-growing experience”. hooks (1994) points out that educators who include transformative models of teaching and learning will also grow and be empowered in the process. In addition he connects his purpose to the humanization of students who have experienced dehumanization in schools. Professor Cuauhtémoc understands that they have not been treated fairly in school so his purpose is “change this”. By doing this he is acting as a transformative teacher because his goal is to be a change agent and resist hegemonic structures that oppress students (Darder, 2002; Berta-Ávila, 2004).

Daniel, one of his former students, has just graduated from the University of California system. His family immigrated to Golden Hills from Mexico before he was born. Daniel was born in Golden Hills however his 2 older siblings were born in Mexico.

He is the only one in his family who is documented. This weighs on him because he understands that college is much harder for his two older brothers who do not have the same access to financial aid like he does. In Professor Cuauhtémoc's class he felt validated around his familial experiences. He connected early with Professor Cuauhtémoc and spoke how his classes inspired him. He stated:

Man. I think Professor Cuauhtémoc has an incredible understanding of the significance of humanizing methods of teaching...I think his purpose simply just boils down to ... I don't want to simplify it, but, um, the essence of his teaching from what I've seen, and I've known him for quite a few years now, is to just expose that history of oppression, of those that have been oppressed, that have been silenced, that have been marginalized. But, it doesn't stop there. We learn to take action and to change it. It's not our fault. No one ever told us that. The truth is we've been demonized, criminalized, deported, killed, murdered, lynched, excluded, and so how do we bring that history back to the forefront and talk about it, learn from the past? His classes are about truth. Other teachers don't do that at all (laughs). They don't touch any of this. It's the truth that has made me really think about how we are treated in society. My family is treated unfairly because of where they weren't born. Professor Cuauhtémoc's has opened my eyes to things. A lot of these things I already knew. Feels good that it's discussed in school. At least in his class. It's not fair and it's important we do something about it. That's why I majored in Ethnic Studies. So I can use my education to make changes in my community. Especially for our undocumented community members. Professor Cuauhtémoc motivated me for sure (Daniel, March 26, 2017).

For Daniel, Professor Cuauhtémoc spoke the “truth” in his classroom and this resonated for him. His teaching exposed the reality that many Chican@/Latin@s have been “demonized, criminalized, deported, killed, murdered, lynched and excluded”. Daniel understood these concepts because his family has experienced “demonization and criminalization” because of their immigration status. Daniel felt validated in Professor

Cuahtémoc's class. Gay (2012) highlights that when teaching validates students' experiences it can generate psychological and intellectual liberation. This finding also affirms what the research has said about effective teachers which highlights that successful educators are able to connect learning in the classroom to students' everyday life experiences in their families and in the community (Moll et al., 1992, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Cammarota & Romero, 2006). In this case Professor Cuahtémoc goes beyond connecting the curriculum to his students' backgrounds and cultures he connects it back to the struggles Daniel has experienced and is willing to share in his struggles (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). As a result Daniel feels empowered and wants to help the undocumented community. He plans to do this with his degree in Ethnic Studies.

The first day I observed Professor Cuahtémoc's class I witnessed him setting the foundation for what he called a "humanizing learning space". In a class of 50 plus students he discussed the Mayan Philosophy of *In Lak'Ech*, which translates into English as "You are my other me" (Valdez, 2012). This is the first thing he did before he engaged any typical first day class business like discussing the syllabus or content of the class. This philosophy is clearly stated on the class syllabus and it was explained by Professor Cuahtémoc as he stood in front of them. He stated:

This philosophy is about seeing yourself in another person and treating that person with love and respect no matter who they may be. Right now, with all the stuff happening in the world it is important we work hard to see ourselves in others. Our communities, our gente are being demonized by this country's

administration. We can't fall into the trap of believing it. We need to remember who we are and where we come from. Our ancestors gave us a strong foundation and provided us with ways to live our lives. One of those ways is the philosophy of In Lak'Ech. To have this as a class philosophy is about humanizing the learning space. This is also what our ancestors taught their children. So we will recite every day when we start class. Today I will take the lead in getting us started. Next class one of you will step up and take the lead. Remember, we are in this together so we will all help to make this learning space a learning space of love and support (Prof. Cuauhtémoc, February 7, 2014).

The philosophy of *In Lak's Ech*, as it was recited in class is shown here:

In Lak' Ech

Tue res mi otro you/You are my other me

Si ten hago dano a ti/If I do harm to you

Mi hago dano a mi mismo/I do harm to myself

Si te amo y respeto/If I love and respect you

Me amo y respeto you/I love and respect myself

Professor Cuauhtémoc spent the first half of class laying the ground-work of how the class would be. He started by talking about *In Lak'Ech*. He noted, "It is more than curriculum, it's a way of life". Professor Cuauhtémoc did all of this and connected it back to the students' families, culture, and language. This stood out as very different and unique among community college teachers.

I asked students specifically about Professor Cuauhtémoc's philosophy of *In Lak' Ech* for the class. Stephany came up to me after class and graciously offered her experience in the class. In high school, some teachers labeled her as a "troublemaker" because she wore what appeared to be "gang clothing" and "heavy make-up". This upset her and affected her confidence in school. She reports feeling stereotyped and "never taken seriously" as a student. This is her second year at the community college and she

states “teachers are not like Professor Cuauhtémoc”. According to her, Professor Cuauhtémoc is different “because he cares about his community and students” in ways other teachers do not. Below is an excerpt of brief discussion I had with Stephany.

AG: What do you think about this teacher’s philosophy of In Lak’ech

Stephany: I’ve never heard this philosophy before but I really like it. I think it’s important to have something like this for a class. I also like that it’s a Mayan philosophy. Professor Cuauhtémoc is all about connecting us to our ancestors and I like that this philosophy is connected to my ancestors. That’s important to me because I’ve never heard a philosophy like this about my people. You know? That makes me feel good and proud.

AG: Why do you like it? And why is it important for a class?

Stephany: I mean...Teachers usually don’t tell us to treat each other with love and respect. They tell us to not miss class and don’t be late...but, then, they don’t really care anyways. In here it’s different. I feel respected. Like I matter. I know that this professor cares because he models it for us. He calls us hermano (brother) and hermana (sister). I’ve never had a teacher do that. Like we are family. That’s how I feel in this class. Like we are family. I like coming to this class because I feel welcome and wanted.

AG: Why is it important to feel that way in school?

Stephany: Because most teachers just do what they need to. I actually had one teacher say she is here to get paid. And that was it. When you hear that. It’s like, they don’t care, so why should I care. I don’t know. It’s always been like that for me in school. I mean...I mean...I’ve had a few teachers that care about us. But, in this class...I know that Professor Cuauhtémoc really cares. He says it and I feel it. And that makes me want to be here and learn.

Stephany highlights how she feels cared for and acknowledged in the class. This is important for Stephany because she has never had a deep connection with her teachers. Stephany feels like she “matters” in his classroom. In addition she is moved by the

curriculum because it reflects her own ancestors and culture. Making connections with students and making them feel like they matter is what Rendón (1994, 2002) refers to as validation. Rendón points out that faculty are regarded as validating agents when they show concern for students, are personable and approachable, and treat students as equals. Providing a sense of validation is of high importance and value to marginalized students in the community college system because it is quite likely they experienced a K-12 school system that failed them (Rendón, 1994, 2002; Rivas, Perez, Alvarez and Solórzano, 2007).

Stephany also emphasizes how Professor Cuauhtémoc purposely calls his students *hermano* (brother) and *hermana* (sister). This is important to her because culturally for Chican@/Latin@s to be called *hermano* or *hermana* means you are family. I asked Professor Cuauhtémoc about this and he said his goal is to "...deliberately humanize the school system for students who have been oppressed and devalued, while at the same time treating them like they matter and are meant to be in college". He went on to point out that he treats his students like they are his family. For him, to treat someone like family means he deeply cares and respects them.

Luis felt that same care and respect Stephany talked about. Luis took time off after his first semester at Golden Hills Community College because unfortunately his brother passed away unexpectedly. He and his brother were extremely close so losing him impacted him dramatically. His entire family suffered from the loss. This was

difficult for Luis to deal with causing him to go into a deep depression. Luis states he “couldn’t concentrate” in school and wanted “nothing to do with education”. At this point he started drinking heavily and contemplated suicide. Luckily he connected with a mental health therapist that steered him out of the depression and back into school. This first semester back he took “Introduction to Chicano Studies” with Professor Cuauhtémoc. Below is an excerpt of a conversation I had with Luis about his experiences in his class:

Luis: Man. I was down in the dumps before coming back to school. Losing my brother was a blow, bro. I didn’t think I was going to get through it. It hit me really hard.

AG: I am sorry. That’s tough.

Luis: I eased back into school and took only one class to start. I took Raza studies because my friend had told me about it. And how it changed her life. I needed some of that. I didn’t want to enroll in some class with some smart ass teacher making me feel stupid. That’s happened before. I didn’t need that shit. Not now. Or maybe I could just hide in the corner. But this class is different. I don’t want to hide and he respects me. He respects all of us. He cares.

AG: How do you know he means it?

Luis: Because when I talk to him he listens and acknowledges what I am saying. He looks me in the eye. Other teachers are in a hurry to leave once class is over. Not him. He has a big class and he’s trying to learn our names. He asks how I am doing when he sees me. I wrote about losing my brother in one of the writing assignments. Professor Cuauhtémoc made a point to check about that after that class. He asked how I was doing and if he could help. That’s a big deal. I felt I could open up and trust him. I feel I am important in this class. In other classes, it’s just the subject and that it. Here I know I matter. He is so passionate about what he talks about. It’s more than a subject. He lives this stuff. He’s inspired me. I don’t want to miss this class. I work but I try my hardest to get here on time. This is my favorite class. I can say I’ve never had a teacher like him.

Luis had experienced hardships and needed a class where the teacher would treat him with respect. Other teachers had not done this. He was still vulnerable after the loss of his brother so stepping back into college was a huge step for Luis. Professor Cuauhtémoc's class was highly recommended by other students so he took the class. Luis explains explained that Professor Cuauhtémoc listens, learns names, and checks in with his students. He did this with him when he wrote about his brother in an assignment and that was important for him. This action caused Luis to feel acknowledged. This is an example of Professor Cuauhtémoc practicing his purpose for teaching, to humanize the learning experience for marginalized students and empower them.

Professor Navah. Growing up mixed race Professor Navah empathizes with the experiences of her students of color because she has experienced marginalization in schools. Her defense mechanism against racism and discrimination as a student in school was to forget her own culture and assimilate into a White lifestyle. This meant denying her Black and Filipina heritage. This hurt her, but it helped her navigate school. Now, as an educator she recognizes that the contributions of people of color are not highlighted in mainstream education. Often their stories are erased all together from the curriculum causing them to feel lost and without any stability. She spoke about her early experiences as a teacher:

The feedback that I was getting from students was that I was passionate. One of the students, how she described it ... She would just talk about being happy that I was passionate about what I was teaching, and that impacted her. Those weren't

exactly her words, but it was something along those lines. Now the words that I would give to it would be transformative and what not, but I don't think that I really had that language at the time. I was talking about real issues the students were facing in the community. How their families contributed to this society. I just knew that students kept coming to me, asking me questions during the break, during lunchtime, after school, in the hallways, and it kept on happening. It was always on topics that they felt they couldn't bring to their regular teachers. I felt like, okay, you know what? I have to listen to this. Even though teaching doesn't pay and I'm completely exhausted, but it felt like it's a calling (Prof. Navah, March 19, 2017).

Tintiango-Cubales et al., (2015) argue that traditional mainstream curriculum does not highlight the contributions of ethnic and/or racial groups in the United States, which is why classes in Ethnic Studies are critical for students. Professor Navah understands this because she experienced it as a student and teacher. College faculty who do not teach courses in Ethnic Studies or about culture may argue that it is not their responsibility to respond to students' ethnic identities and experiences in society. They maintain business as usual and never challenge oppressive policies, curriculum, and teaching practices that silence students of color in schools (Delpit, 1995). Professor Navah is transformative because she challenged this and purposely “gave voice to those that have been silenced in schools”. Professor Navah’s purpose for teaching is grounded in her own experiences as a marginalized student and teacher. Her purpose is grounded in social justice as she pushes back on systems of oppression in the educational system that “erases the lived experiences and contributions of people of color”. This resonated for students as she mentioned in the interview. Students would stop her “at all times” and ask her for support.

Professor Navah purposely chooses curriculum and teaching approaches that privilege stories of historically marginalized students and believes that counterstories are “important and valid and must be told”. At another point in the interview she stated:

I want them to understand that this class is a place for our stories, that there often times we're expected to keep our personal stories personal, and in the classroom we're just expected to share what is in the text, what is in the book, and I told them, I was like, you know, I don't want us to feel like split in two that this is a place where we can share our narratives, can share our stories, that the personal stories that we have to share are just as valid as the answers. If not, more valid than what we find in a textbook (Prof. Navah, March 19, 2017).

This excerpt speaks to Professor's Navah's focus on counterstories. She believes that the knowledge students share in the classroom about their own families, experiences in the world, and communities is as valid, if not more important, then what they will engage through books. Solorzan and Yosso (2002) state that counterstories themselves act to deconstruct the master narratives, and they offer alternatives to the dominant discourse in education. The use of counterstories are powerful ways Professor Navah “acknowledges the unacknowledged” while raising awareness about social and racial injustice. Cammarota & Romero (2006) assert that including curriculum that reflect students can positively affect student outcomes by affirming students' identities, drawing on their funds of knowledge, and building students' critical intellectualism. Bringing in their experiences and voices is also validating and empowering for students (Rendón, 2009).

Isaac, a former student, had a lot to say about feeling empowered in Professor Navah's class. This feeling of empowerment was important because he felt teachers never took the time to help him when he needed it most in high school. He became a father when he was a teenager and he reports his teachers treated him "like an outcast". As a result Isaac felt school was no longer for him so he dropped out and ended up earning his school diploma through a continuation school. Despite the barriers, he started taking classes at Golden Hills Community College because he felt that one day he might make it to the university. Isaac considers himself a deep thinker and hopes to become a lawyer someday. He specifically connected to Professor Navah because of her ability to make students "think deep" about social issues. Isaac also appreciated her ability to connect with students:

I feel like Miss Navah gives students empowerment of who they are. A lot of times ... Well what I have learned is we have a power structure where people decide what to put in the history book or decide how the history goes, too, and most of these people in power are people that don't have something that we call social disadvantage like us as Latinos, have every day. We're socially disadvantaged from the day we're born in this country. It can be through legal, legal actions, ethnicity, and pretty much everything. So, I feel like empowerment is knowing the struggle for what it is and acting on it is the reason why we need teachers like Miss Navah. They help us to learn this and tell us to do something about it. They are teaching us about the truth. Other teachers never touch that (Isaac, February 28th, 2017).

The above excerpt provides an example of how Isaac is feeling "empowered" to question oppressive systems. Furthermore, he is doing his own self-reflection and understands that he can do something about it. He highlights the need for teachers like

“Miss Navah” who are teaching them about the “truth”. The literature highlights these points as well. According to some scholars transformative teachers choose a curriculum that examines the world and oppressive forces that maintain systems of inequality while centering experiences on both students and teachers to transform it (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008). Rendón (2009) argues that when this happens in higher education settings for students of color it can lead to liberation. Isaac is now in his senior year at the university and preparing his application for Law School.

Professor Star. Professor Star did not grow up in the Golden Hills Community however she attended high schools there for a few years. As Black woman she expressed experiencing “lots of racism” at Golden Hills High School. However, she felt she had the resolve to manage it and made to her senior year. Unfortunately, things got harder for her to handle and she began feeling unsafe. During this time she reported her family sought support from the campus however she received little help. She decided to finish at another high school in an entirely different community. Her early experiences with racism and bigotry inspired her to be the type of teacher who would confront these issues through her curriculum and how she engaged her students. Now, as a community college instructor she brings this into the classroom. She confirmed purpose as being extremely important for her. Furthermore, she adds that her purpose is also about being flexible in the classroom. The following excerpt is from my interview with her:

AG: How important is it for you to have a clear purpose for your teaching?

Professor Star: Extremely important. Should I say more?

AG: Sure.

Professor Star: It's extremely important, but for me, it's also important that there's fluidity to it. If I'm too locked in, I'm going to miss things that can arise. If you're too locked into whatever your purpose is other things will be happening in the classroom that you might miss. I want my purpose to permeable.

The excerpt describes the Professor Star's recognition that their needs to be fluidity and flexibility in her own purpose. She wants to make sure she is not so grounded in her own agenda that she is not attentive to other things that can come up with her students.

Later in the interview, she spoke about her purpose being grounded in social justice and her focus on creating transformative experiences for students. Specifically, she spoke about transformation through her teaching. In her syllabus, she clearly identifies her teaching philosophy to be transformative. A summary of that statement reads:

I invite students to co-create brave classroom spaces for dialogue and deep inquiry. I expand on definitions of brave space offered by Arao and Clemens (2013), to include both the physical classroom space and the opening of the heart space. In this setting, students are well equipped to define learning, while considering the social and political structures that may help or hinder their academic growth. My pedagogy is informed by transformative and experiential education and includes counter narratives, empathetic listening, non-oppositional thought, self-reflection, and creativity as essential (Prof. Star's Syllabus).

In the interview she went on to describe what transformative means for her:

AG: How would you define transformative?

Professor Star: I find myself very drawn to liberation, and painting about that theme. It's coming up a lot for me. Transformation is in some ways, transcendence, or transcending a certain state into another state. It's also this ability to grow. It's about growth, for me. My learning has come from the earth, a lot of it. I watch plants. I did some activities with youth, and we talked about resilience, and transformation, and stuff like that. We're saying, "Well, the fact that a seed can come up, and make it through the dirt. It's resilient... That's what transformation is in a very broad, general sense.

AG: Hmm. Can you tell me a little more about you do this in the class?

Professor Star: Well, first off I think its important that we keep it real. I don't try to sugar coat racism or discrimination. We go there and talk about it. These students know all about it because they experience it. Maybe they've never been given the opportunity to dissect it or to talk about it. I think as an educator who believes in transformative practices its important to talk about. The way these students get taught, what they see in the media, on TV, it gets them to hate who they see in the mirror. I think my responsibility, as an educator is to help them to learn to critique these systems of oppression so they can feel good about themselves. Our communities need to heal. There is too much self-hate they are taught. This healing can lead to liberation and transformation.

Professor Star connects transformation to liberation and believes effective teaching can lead students to freedom from oppression. Specifically she chooses to focus on resiliency as a theme in her classes and she focuses on creating brave space in the classroom so students feel challenged to question and critique social political structures that may hinder growth (Arao and Clemens, 2013).

Berta-Ávila (2004) argues that teaching becomes transformative when it helps Chican@/Latin@ students recognize their own realities and how it exists within the White hegemonic framework. This then opens the possibilities of understanding how they have been swayed by dominant theories that have contributed to their own oppression.

Professor Star confirms this when she says it is important to “keep it real” with students and talk about “racism and oppression”. This is not the “norm” in college classrooms. Her purpose is to get students to reflect and take action. The action comes out through assignments like her “Transformative Change Project”. According to her syllabus the goal of this assignment is to “...challenge students to use self- compassion as a tool for change and to bring awareness to the change you want to see out in the world”. Students use this project to make changes in themselves and in their community. One student I spoke with highlighted how the “Transformation Change Project” got her to reflect on her “bad eating habits”. She learned that poor communities have few options for low-cost healthy food so she decided to start a community vegetable garden.

Responsiveness. Some scholars have argued that traditional teaching and learning paradigms place educators in power and authority and situate students in passive learning undertakings, which exclude their diverse perspectives resulting in oppressive learning conditions (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008; Rendón, 2009). Approaches of these types fail to recognize students’ cultural, linguistic, community and familial knowledge. Furthermore they do not respond to students’ academic and social needs. Transformative teachers recognize this and make it a point to respond holistically to their students. The three teachers of this study clearly confirmed their responsiveness to their students.

Professor Cuauhtémoc. I witnessed Professor Cuauhtémoc include power point, discussion, small group work, problem-posing questioning and reflection in his classes. He would mix these up and engage students with problem-posing questioning while he was going through his power-points. Professor Cuauhtémoc was intentional in this because his goal is to “get students to think deeper about societal issues that impact their everyday life”. In other classes he would start with small group work and then transitioned into a lecture. I asked about his different approaches to engaging students and he stated “having a plan a head of time” but being “flexible” and “understanding students will take the class where it needs to go”.

Responsiveness to students was obvious in the assessment of students’ knowledge. On the second day of class he engaged students with a combination of art-work, self-reflection, and small group work. I asked about this and he stated, “Students bring many talents to the classroom and it’s important we incorporate those too”. An example is an assignment he gave focused on students’ experiences in the K-12 school system without Ethnic Studies. Figure 7 is a copy of the hand out.

Figure 7. Exercise 1, Ethnic Studies

This image presents the experience of a student sitting in his desk stating: “I am not going to college”; “This is so boring”; “I’m just not smart enough to get it”; “When am I ever going to use this”; and “College is not for everyone”. Professor Cuautemoc handed this out in class and proceeded to discuss what students saw in the image. A discussion then followed on the experiences of the marginalization of Chican@/Latin@ students in the school system. Students began opening up and sharing their own experiences in Golden Hills schools and spoke directly about what marginalization felt like.

During this discussion in class Felipe and Brenda were very engaged and offered their points of view. I could tell based off of Felipe's comment that he had strong feelings about the marginalization students experience in high school. Felipe is a returning student and in his early 40's. He has no children of his own however his partner does have a teenage son that he is helping to raise. He reported that the stories of "the community" were not being included in the mainstream curriculum so he disconnected from school all together. He believed school was something he had to do, but it never really prepared him for anything other than "goofing off". It was not until he returned to school and took his first Ethnic Studies class with Professor Cuautémoc that he realized that school never "felt right" because it excluded him. Now he considers it important to find out about the contributions of the "Raza community" and purposely is taking classes that will reflect this curriculum. This is also something he tries to instill in the young people around him, including his partner's teenage son, his nieces and nephews.

Brenda also shared her experiences in school. She is a returning student in her mid 30's. Brenda believes it is important to learn about the Raza community because it was never talked about growing up. She shared that high school was not a "serious" place for her and that "only the white kids went off to college". She recalled her teachers never spent the time to connect with her or her friends so "school was not" her priority. Since she is the first in her family to attend college she does not recall receiving guidance

from school officials on the steps to access higher education. This is why she took time off. However, because of the type of work she does now (assistant social worker) she is expected to take some professional development courses so she decided to take Professor Cuauhtémoc's class because it "sounded interesting". She never expected to learn the reasons why high school was "such a bad experience" for her. Brenda made a point to talk about how the class "has opened her eyes to how the school system really is" for students of color. Now she wants to do something about it and intends to do so as a parent, community member, and social worker.

After about 15 minutes of a larger discussion with the students about their experiences in high school Professor Cuauhtémoc asked students to reflect and write a story about their own experiences in schools. This entailed them spending about 15 minutes of quiet time reflecting and writing before pairing up and sharing with each other. I made a point to ask Felipe and Brenda about their experience and this is what they said.

AG: How was this assignment for you?

Felipe: I felt exactly like that student in the seat in this image.

AG: Can you tell me more?

Felipe: Yeah, definitely. I never learned about my gente (people) in school. My family doesn't know about our ancestors either. They just know that their Aztecs and Mayas but they don't know the details. I always wanted to learn more about my ancestors. I feel like I am getting that here.

AG: Hmmm. Thank you. How about for you?

Brenda: No teacher has ever talked about our experiences in school. It's always about White people. There is nothing wrong with that, but I want to learn about me. When you don't hear your stories in school it's like I don't feel comfortable there. Why go to school. I know exactly what that feels like.

Felipe: Yup. That's what I mean.

AG: How is this class different?

Brenda: Professor Cuauhtémoc makes us feel like we matter. This is important. I take what I am learning hear and I go home and I share it with my kids. I told my mom and dad about too, hahah (she laughs).

Felipe and Brenda had never taken an Ethnic Studies course before. They had heard about Professor Cuauhtémoc's "dynamic teaching" so they decided to take his class. Felipe told me that when he was choosing his classes the Chicano Studies course looked like something he should take since he wanted to learn about his "gente". Brenda specifically made a connection about feeling disconnected to her education in high school because she never learned about the contributions of her people. Felipe quickly agreed to this. Brenda was so inspired she shared what she was learning in class with her family. At the same time the class is validating for her and she is learning that the school system was an oppressive place for her. She uses this knowledge and assignment to reflect on the injustices in schools (Cammarota & Romero, 2006). What Professor Cuauhtémoc did through this exercise was expose the reality that schools fail to include stories and experiences from students of color into the curriculum. Instead, curriculum is centered around a European perspective. Ethnic Studies scholars have argued that including

curriculum that is culturally responsive unlocks the educational potential of historically marginalized students (Camarota & Romero, 2006; Sleeter, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Dee & Penner, 2016).

The final exam also challenged traditional ways of assessment in higher education. Some professors give take home finals while other do in class finals. Still others require research papers. These are appropriate methods to measure students' ability of retaining and regurgitating what has been taught to them over the extent of the semester. However, Professor Cuauhtémoc is more interested in understanding how students will use what they learned in his class to make "change in the world". His final was titled the "Xicanx Pop-up Project" and its purpose was to reflect upon students' lived experiences by making connections to their past, their present, and the their future while demonstrating connections to the "Xicanx Indigenous concepts". Ultimately, this project was meant to help students understand that their stories, their histories, and contributions will always "pop-up" and are "valid". Figure 8 demonstrates a few examples of what some students came up with.

Figure 8. Examples of Pop Up Book Student Finals

I spoke to Professor Cuauhtémoc about his decision to use this project as his final and he told me it was the first time doing this project and he borrowed from Chicano Studies activist in southern California. However, he changed it to reflect his course and the students from Golden Hills. Professor Cuauhtémoc commented that he felt engaging students with type of final would get them to “think at a deeper level” about what was talked about in class and “how important they are to the world”.

Professor R. Navah. Professor Navah set the tone early in the semester. The first class I observed specifically focused on discussing the importance of culture. She spoke specifically about Pilipino cultural traditions. One Latina student made a connection between Latino culture concept of food and Pilipino culture food concept. She used the last 20 minutes of class to allow for students to introduce themselves, share one thing they want the class to know about themselves, and why they are taking the class. At the end of the class on this particular day Lydia stayed behind and talked with me about her experiences in Professor Navah’s class. Lydia shared that college has not been easy for her. She feels that high school did not prepare her for college and therefore she now needs to learn how to be “good student”. For her this means taking good notes and finding the time to study while being a mom and attending to two little children at home. Her partner never attended college either and does not know how to support her. She relies on her professors for help. However, prior to this class she had not made any deep connections with her professors. Lydia stated that she is using her community college

experience to establish herself and create a future for her family can benefit from. She also said she wants to be a good role model for her kids. Lydia noted in our interaction:

This is the second time I've taken Miss Navah's class. She makes us believe the material rather than just lecturing like other teachers. We can debate about it and then come up with our own conclusions. I like that about her class. She is very passionate about her subject. I like learning from teachers who show us passion for the subject. Her passion got me thinking about a lot of different things. Things we discuss in this class. A lot of what she says and teaches about makes a lot of sense because I've experienced it as a Latina growing up here. She also helps me to study. There is a lot of material here and I feel comfortable asking her how to get ready for the essays and exams. It's easy to talk with her. She loves teaching. I can tell and feel this a great class for me. (Lydia, February 8, 2017).

Lydia stated that this is the second class she has taken with Professor Navah and has come to think of her as a “mentor and guide” in college. She reported that, “Professor Navah has made an impact” on her because she “looks out for her students and wants them to succeed”. Professor Navah also ended up connecting Lydia with a trusted college counselor who helped her prepare a university application. In addition Professor Navah wrote her a letter of recommendation that helped her get a scholarship. This was a big support for Lydia who is low-income and needs the financial help to pay for books. Stanton-Salazar (1997) defines this type of educator as institutional agent. According to Stanton-Salazar (1997) institutional agents are “school staff committed to the success of students of color that provide them with social capital by offering them various funds of knowledge” (p. 1). Institutional agents often act as human bridges for students by personally connecting them to their own networks and with critical services

and organizations on and off campus. Professor Navah modeled behavior, provided emotional and moral support, and provided important feedback, advice, and guidance for Lydia (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

The second class I observed was broken up into four groups and each group took on a Pilipino Ethnic Group Creation Myth and acted it out. Groups consisted of four to five students. They were given instructions on what was expected but they had free range on how to present their skits (creation stories). They used readings from the class to ground themselves. Groups worked for about 30 minutes to get their skits ready for presenting. They used props like butcher paper and some costumes. I observed students discussing and preparing their skits. It was apparent that each group already possessed their own version of creation stories and they shared them with each other. What stood out was the level of energy and focus each group had. They all appeared eager and excited to share with each other what they knew about creating stories. In one group I overheard students sharing stories of their grandparents and how they immigrated to the United States. Another group actually considered calling their elders on the phone to verify what they knew about creating stories. What I witnessed were students taping into their own funds of knowledge and familial history to engage this assignment (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992). Figure 9 is an example of a group working on their presentation.

Figure 9. Creation Story Skits

After each group performed their skit, Professor Navah led a small discussion.

This is a brief excerpt of that discussion:

Professor Navah: How many of you had heard of these mythologies before? How can we pass on these different mythologies that we have?

Miguel: We can write about these mythologies in our other classes... You know, like in English 100 class or in History.

Professor Navah: How do we pass it on to the younger generation?

Sandra: We can share these stories with younger kids, like bed-time stories.

Jovana: We can write a stories book for kids.

Professor Navah: Can you picture yourself doing it this semester? Are there ways we can teach and pass this on to folks our own age, who are older than us?

Jose Luis: Yes, we can do this in our other classes. Like English. We can write about creation stories in there. That's one way. That way we can talk about it in school with other students and teachers.

Miguel: It's hard to teach elders because they already know a lot (laughs). But, it would be good to share it with them and see what they can add. I shared this story in the car the other day with my family. My grandmother was in the car and

she started adding to the story. All the little kids in the car were listening. We always listen when she talks.

Bianca: It think it's important for us to talk about this. We don't get to learn about this in my other classrooms. I love learning about this because it means so much for me.

This assignment exemplifies ways Professor Navah connects students' culture to the classroom. They shared with each other through skits and then they planned to share it in other classrooms and with their families. What was unique was the high level of energy and eagerness of students to share what they already knew. She uses these skits as a way to engage the counterstories from their own communities. Professor Navah believes students come in with their own cultural capital and are eager to share their stories, talents and assets if given the chance (Yosso, 2005). She purposely does this in her class and by doing so she acknowledges her students and challenges traditional teaching strategies that fail to include the stories of marginalized students of color (Delgado Bernal and Solorzano, 2001; Yosso, 2006).

Professor Star. The first day I observed this class, Professor Star made a point to check in with me prior to starting class. She spoke in great detail about her philosophies for teaching and the methods she had chosen to engage her class. This stood out to me because she did not have a prescribed curriculum but rather made reference to how she changed her curriculum to "fit the class" and "connect with the students". On this particular day students would be starting out with a "Reading Group" assignment. This

task had student groups become responsible for presenting on the previous weeks reading.

Marisol has been at Golden Hills Community College approximately a year. Her goal is to transfer to a university and be the first person in her family to “use education for a career”. Most of her family members work in wineries or restaurants. In high school she specifically remembers her counselors telling her to consider the community college degree because university would be “too tough”. She believed this because as she stated “she didn’t know any better”. However, at college she started taking classes that inspired her to learn about “societal issues” and changing “the problems in the community”. She has taken courses in Psychology, Sociology, and Ethnic Studies. Now, as a second year student her goal is to complete the necessary course work to transfer to a University of California. This is something she never considered in high school because she was not given the support to do so. I spoke with Marisol about the “Reading Group” assignment and she stated:

At first I didn’t know if I liked doing this because there is a lot of reading to do in the class. But, I realized that I could use my group to help me through the reading. We actually ended up breaking up the reading into different sections and each one of took a part of it. This worked much better for me. I’ve done that with other classes now too. The readings are also really cool too. I like the stuff about Chicano culture. As a Chicana I want to learn more about myself too. Sometimes it’s a lot but I split the heavy reading with friends from class and we talk about. I like that Miss. Star had us do this. We are able to analyze the readings we do at a different level. And we can connect it back to the themes we’ve talked about class. Doing this brings awareness. I especially like when these presentations lead to talk about the social problems in our society right now (Marisol, March 20, 2017).

Another student, Gabriel had a similar story to Marisol. He is also completing the necessary course work to transfer to the university. He is unsure if he will attend a prestigious California State University or a University of California however he knows he can “get into anyone” of them because of his competitive GPA. This is something that never crossed his mind in high school. Gabriel was very open and stated that “he hated school when he was younger” because he never thought he could learn something “that inspired him” until he got to college. The first Ethnic Studies class he took the previous semester changed that for him. In Ethnic Studies he found his passion, which is learn about his “ancestors” and “their contributions to the world”. Now, his goal is to “soak it all in” and “get to the university”. Ultimately he hopes to use his education to become a teacher and support the immigrant community. He stated:

Doing the Reading Assignments makes us hold each other accountable. I like that. In some of my other classes it's the teacher who is up there doing all the talking. That happens a lot. I've learned that college is like just listening and taking notes. I zone out Its easy for me to blend in. We don't have to step-up because the teachers don't expect us too. Here, we get to talk, and since I am a student, I want to make it interactive. When we did this assignment we led a discussion by using an app (computer application). The app where we ask questions to the class and they get to answer through their phones. It was cool and different and easy for me to do. I love technology and I think the other students got it pretty fast (Gabriel, March 20, 2017).

Both of these excerpts highlight different ways students are engaged in the classroom. The first excerpt speaks to how Marisol used the Reading Group idea for other classes. She learned to tackle heavy loads of reading through community efforts.

Another reason why this is important for Marisol is because she disclosed during my brief interaction with her that she has never “really done well” in school but found “motivation” in Professor Star’s class. She spoke specifically about being moved by the readings assignments because they were relevant to her life as a “Chicana”. Also, she appreciated working in groups and learned to count on others for support.

In the second excerpt, Gabriel appreciated taking leadership in the class. He stated that in other classes “its easy for him to blend in”. There is no need to “step-up” and take on leadership roles because the teachers “don’t call on him” anyway. He purposely wants the class to become interactive so they can learn. Professor Star’s assignment has empowered him by giving him voice. His group chooses technology to engage the students, which is relevant to them and this something he has wanted to do for a while. These findings confirm the research that content and curriculum that is relevant and sustaining can help students keep focus on lessons and assignments because it is more connected to their lives (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paris, 2012; Gay, 2013). Thus, students may be more apt to engage in class discussions and critically reflect on the importance of their roles in society and school. Luke Wood, Khalil White, and Frank Harris (2015) found just this when they completed a study of effective instructors in the community college system. They found that employing sustaining and relevant content increases students’ academic abilities, respect for multiple viewpoints, and interests in academic content. In Marisol and Gabriel’s experience, the class engaged them in ways

other classes had not which resulted in them feeling affirmed as important and valuable members in class (Rendón, 2009).

Another way Professor Star responds to her students is through what she calls activism. She noted:

Activism is a transformative way to engage students beyond the typical lecture. It is a way for her to cultivate students' critical consciousness through the arts, especially poetry and spoken word. Activism allows for students to stretch their creativity muscles through art, poetry, and rap (Prof. Star, March 20, 2017)

At this particular class she brought examples of Aztec Poems, poetry by Tupak Shakur, and other poems by Carmen Tafolla that focused on Chicana identity. After sharing these with the class and dialoging about them students shared their own poetry in class.

One student, Rosie, shared her poem about her battle with mental illness. As a teenager she struggled with an intense depression that got her thinking she was not worthy of a successful life. This depression got her to think that ending her life was the only way out her struggles. Luckily, a caring teacher in high school connected her with a school psychologist that helped her through it. It was hard for her family to come to grips with Rosie's depression because in her family, this "wasn't something that they talked about". She felt embarrassed and ashamed of her battles with depression. Engaging in activism in Professor Star's class was an empowering way for her to express her feeling about dealing with depression. In her poem she spoke about the impacts of her illness her resolve to get through it. I spoke with her briefly after class about the experience of sharing her poem. This is an excerpt of what she said:

Sharing my poem is really helpful for me. I get really personal in it but I need to do that. I like that in this class this teacher lets us share these things. It helps me to share my emotions in a way that is healthy. I write a lot. But I don't always share what I write. In this class I feel safe enough to share. But, it's also me having to step up and raise my hand and share. Our teacher talks about brave spaces. Yeah, I feel I am being brave by sharing (Rosie, March 20, 2017).

In this excerpt Rosie speaks how the writing and reciting her poem has helped her. The “brave space” the teacher has established in class has allowed her to tackle a heavy topics she is facing. This is unique in the community college classroom, as typically these types of activities and assignment that deal with intense and personal topics are not shared in the classroom. Activism, according to Professor Star, helps students identify oppressive factors in their own lives and write about it. In Rosie’s case, she expresses how “helpful activism” is for her because it empowered her to express a difficult topic. Professor Star described this as “liberation through activism”.

I also witnessed the class preparing for their “Final Group Project”. The “Final Group Project” would be an opportunity for students to share with their community what they had learned in Professor Star’s class. The goal, according to Professor Star, is “not to test for facts they have learned in class but rather challenge them to profess to other students, their families, and community members how they have changed as a result of the class and the change they want to make in the world”. This involved students choosing meaningful topics for them and then presenting it in a community forum organized by the class. The students named this forum “Interpretations: A Multimedia

Gallery Walk Exploring the American Mind". Figure 10 is the flyer students created for their event:

Figure 10. Final Group Project Class Flyer

The night of their event I arrived a few minutes after the event had begun but was greeted by excited students. They offered me some refreshments and then asked me to walk around and enjoy the art pieces in the gallery. Each student who created the art stood by their piece and then described their work. This activity allowed me to witness students engaging their community with topics that are relevant and important to them. The teacher did help to facilitate some dialog but it was mostly student led. I spoke with some of the community members present and they were impressed with students' leadership. One mother stated, "I feel proud of my daughter for her artwork" while a

teacher stated, “this final is not just for students, it’s for us too. I learned a lot being here tonight”.

What I witnessed in Professor Star’s class confirmed what McLaren’s (2003) has noted, that pedagogy should be a creative process and integrate elements of popular culture like drama, music, oral history, narratives as educational tools that can successfully raise the level of political consciousness of students and teachers. Rendón (2009) has also stated that the transformative teacher includes curriculum that engages all senses of the students and challenges them to engage in social justice. This is happening in this teacher’s classroom. Professor Star mentioned that “it’s her goal” to “think outside” the box when teaching her students and “engage all their talents”. Traditional teaching and learning experiences place the teacher in the position of expert and student as receiver of knowledge (Freire, 1970). Professor Star believes this way of student engagement does a “disservice” to students and “fails to tap into students talents and skills”. She reported that she “meets students where they are at” and this for her means, “trying many different things in the classroom” to produce meaningful learning. What is important for her is that students feel “acknowledged and challenged”. She defined acknowledgement as seeing them as important and “valuable members” of her class and challenged refers to believing they are “capable of being prepared scholars ready to take on college”. This confirms what research has said about what works best for marginalized students, that teaching practices that demonstrate respect for students,

acknowledge different ways of learning, and validate them as worthy of college have positive impacts for first generation college students (Rendón, 2009; Wood, et al., 2015).

Relationships. Research clearly demonstrates the importance of strong relationships between teachers and students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Rendón, 2009; Wood, et al., 2015). Positive relationships with teachers, and schools in general, are important for students because they help them feel valued, validated, and respected (Noddings, 1984; Rendon, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999; Duncan-Andrade, 2007). This was confirmed in the classrooms of the transformative teachers I observed. They stressed that without building relationships with their students, none of the transformative work towards social justice would be possible. For them, building rapport and having trust are important factors in creating meaningful relationships. This reiterates Valenzuela's (1999) research on authentic care, which states that relationships are key elements in helping marginalized students succeed in the classroom. As reported by each teacher, the delivery of different forms of curricula would be extremely difficult without building strong foundational relationships with students.

Professor Cuauhtémoc. Professor Cuauhtémoc believes it is extremely important to build meaningful relationships with students. When he was a student at the university he connected with a professor that helped “better understand” the injustices occurring to people of color across the country. This professor cultivated a critical consciousness in

Professor Cuautémoc that “changed his life” and inspired him to become a “social justice advocate”. This teacher saw something special in Professor Cuautémoc and took the time to connect with him at a deep level. To this day he continues his relationship with this professor and considers him a “great mentor in his life”.

As a result of meaningful relationships Professor Cuautémoc had with a teacher at the university he understands the power of positive relationships in the classroom.

During the interview he commented on this:

Demonstrating care is an important foundation for learning to occur. It's the foundation. The relationships I build is 100% important. The subject I teach is a very personal subject. If we want students to trust then teacher needs to be trusted. You walk the walk. You are authentically giving the subject respect and compassion and purpose. There is purpose behind all of this. Students know if the teachers are in it or not. If you are in it with a community mindset. When students walk into the classroom, I want them to feel connected so I have to connect with them. I want students to think, if this person can model that why can't I? (Prof. Cuauhtémoc, February 7, 2014)

Professor Cuautémoc confirms that building meaningful relationships is at the core of learning for students. He understands that he needs to do his part to connect with students. Like he points he has to “walk the walk”. Professor Cuautémoc considers this part of his responsibility as a good teacher. Often, students of color in higher education institutions believe their teachers do not care about them because they are disrespected and treated badly by them (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This leads to students feeling their teachers being un-approachable (Rendon, 1999; Wood et al. 2015). Professor Cuautemoc countered these ideas when he commented that it is especially important to

show community college students that he cares because these students have experienced school system that has oppressed and marginalized them.

However, Professor Cuautemoc also reported that building meaningful relationships with students can be challenging because he is a part-time teacher. Part-time teachers at Golden Hills Community are not provided offices for Office Hours. It is up to them to find the time to meet with students. Due to this, many part-time teachers do not connect with students beyond the classroom. Professor Cuautémoc is literally from job to job, from classroom to classroom. This is the reality many part-time are faced with. He stated not have the time he would like to cultivate relationships outside the classroom. He reported:

Interpersonal relationships have been challenging on the individual level. If I were a fulltime teacher I would be joining club and being an advisor. I know what it is like to be a student and trust teachers. I experienced it in college with my mentor. We would sit in the cafeteria and talk shit. He was real and always there for us. All of this beyond the classroom. He was like an amazing trusted Tio. So now I bring that into my own teaching. I think many colleges have lost their connection to students. We are in the business of students. I am not sure how people forget that. That's why I think relationships are soooo important! I may not have all the time in the world but I will try to my hardest to honor students, and connect with them if possible. Relationships with students can make a huge and powerful difference for students. I won't stop doing what I do because I know it's right (Prof. Cuautémoc, February 7, 2017).

This excerpt recognizes the difficulties he has as an adjunct however he is committed to trying. This is contrary to the norm. He mentions again the connections he had with his mentor who he trusted like an “amazing Tio (uncle)”. Although his time on campus is limited he is committed to building relationships with students because as he

states “it’s right”. Valenzuela (1999) points out that relationship with school personnel, especially with teachers, play an important role in determining the extent to which students find the school to be a welcoming or alienating place and Professor Cuautémoc understands this.

Professor Navah. Professor Navah also confirmed that meaningful relationships are extremely important to develop academic success for students. After class one day I asked her how important positive relationships with students are and she said they build a “strong foundation for learning to occur because trust develops”. She stated:

Sometimes ...I think that shows me that they trust me, they trust the environment, they trust each other. When I see that going on, I begin to feel really good about what we’ve accomplished in the classroom. Sometimes then when the banter ... Banter may not be the appropriate word. When that dialectical thing happens, even the first few minutes before class begins or right after class, that is another indicator that there’s a strong relationship. It’s more than just ... It’s being liked but it’s more than being liked. There’s a combination of like, trust and a few other things. Pardon me. I’m a little clumsy about this because some of this is intuitive when I do it and so to wrap words around it, I’m like, oh shoot, what? (Prof. Navah, March 19, 2017)

She went on to state that she understands that schools often treat students of color as “if they don’t belong” in college. Some students told her that they feel “invisible” in the classrooms of some of their other teachers. Their teachers “never call on them or include them in class discussions”. This is something that angers Professor Navah. She believes this is fueled by “racism and fear”. She purposely acknowledges her students, checks in with them constantly and tries showing them they matter and are cared for. This is not typical practice for community college teachers. In fact, Rendón (2004) stresses

that not all educators are willing to engage in such personal relationships with their students. However, when they do, teachers can become mentors, guides, social change agents, healers, and humanitarians.

Gabby, a former student of Professor Navah described the importance of feeling cared for by teachers. For Gabby feeling cared for is important. She finds it difficult to trust teachers because they have hurt her in the past. As a young student learning English she recalled teachers treating her like she “wasn’t smart” or “capable of doing school”. At a young age she felt labeled and ridiculed by teachers. Now, she is first in her family to attend college, however she lives with constant fear of deportation because she did not qualify for the immigration policy Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which allowed some undocumented minors to stay in country and obtain work permits. She stated:

Yeah, I think the moment you notice teachers care for you, it's when you feel that commitment to give back to that person. You know like if you don't feel like they care for you it's like oh I don't have anything to do for him or her and my teacher, you know? So it makes you feel more committed to do your job in the classroom, your work. And also like, listen to that person that teacher so yeah I feel like, the moment that they show you that they care. And it can be in different ways, like knowing your name or knowing what you're up to (Gabby, May 8, 2017).

Not many people at Golden Hills Community College know about her status. However, Gabby is focused and resilient and is about to start her second year at the university. Her career goal is to become a teacher.

Professor Star. Professor believes cultivating meaningful relationships with students is important. She states, “I want my students to know they are cared about”. I asked her why relationships are important and she responded, “Because these students have experienced a lot of racism, oppression, and neglect”. She went to describe wants her students to develop their own “critical consciousness so they can have the important tools to dismantle systems of oppression, starting with how they view themselves. She further confirmed this in our interview when she commented:

I think the definition of caring relationship can be interpreted differently, depending on so many different people. For me, it's really important that they know that I care about their work in the classroom, their participation in class discussion, their presence in the classroom. I think that they feel that right away. I feel that from the energy I put in. I also want them to trust me. We talk about a lot of social injustices and inequalities in this class. A lot of times they internalize this all and don't realize they hate themselves because of some inequality out there. Especially when they are students of color. I want my classes to be places of liberation of this oppression. I want them to open up so they can start to critique inequality. The goal is for action. If I don't show them that I care, then they won't trust me and we can't do this work (Prof. Star, April 4, 2017).

This excerpt confirms how important it is for her to build trust with her students. She wants them to know they are cared for and believes in the possibility of meaningful relationships. Taking the necessary steps to connect with students is part of her goal as a transformative teacher because ultimately she wants them to take their own steps towards “healing themselves” from any self-hate that has resulted from oppression. hooks (1994) notes this should be the goal of teachers, to connect with students and tailor learning

experiences that aid in increasing their engagement in the classroom so they can heal themselves and the world. This is of high priority for Professor Star.

Griselda, a sophomore student spoke specifically about how Professor Star creates meaningful relationships with students. Griselda experienced a school system that did not embrace her. She pointed out that when she was growing up teachers could not pronounce her name, which left a lasting impression on her. This was embarrassing for her and as young child in the school system she often cringed on the first day of school when teachers tried saying her name. This led her to “hate” her name and despise her language and culture. It was not until taking classes in Chicano Studies at the college that she learned to love her culture again. In her high school years she does not remember having any meaningful relationships with students. She stated:

Yeah, Alex, she does create relationships with students. I think she really cares about us. She made a point to talk with each and every single one of us when we were in class. I like that she asked me how to pronounce my name. That's important to me. She pronounced it correctly. Um, I liked her class a lot because she would make us feel welcomed. She did that by always being warm. She's a kind person and I know she cares about students. I still keep in touch with her (Griselda, April 18, 2017).

Carmen, a former student, spoke about the mentoring relationship she developed with Professor Star. Connecting with a teacher this way is something she never experienced before. In her other college classes her professors do “very little” to connect with students and are often in a “rush” to leave after class. She commented feeling “use to it”. However, in Professor Star’s class, things were different. She noted that Professor

Star made a point to connect with students and “really took them under her wing”. When I spoke with her she stated:

I took a lot of classes from her because she is a dynamic teacher. I connected with her right away. She is a caring person. She would talk with me a lot about Ethnic Studies since it's my major. I felt she mentored me. Now, I am at the university and I still think about my experiences in her class. I think she is the first professor who ever believed in me like she did (Carmen, April 4, 2017).

In both of these comments the students speak about the warmth this teacher possess. They feel welcomed and respected by her. In their other classes they do not feel this genuineness from their teachers. Griselda speaks about how this teacher takes her time to get to know her and then, pronounces her name correctly. Carmen appreciates her mentorship and feels this teacher believed in her. Professor Star is demonstrating what Valenzuela (1999) calls *cariño*. *Cariño*, which translates into English as care, and moves beyond the aesthetics of care to a deeper level of care, more correlated with love and respect. According to Valenzuela (1999) the subtractive nature of schooling “diverts youth of important social and cultural resources leaving them vulnerable to academic failure” (p. 3). Professor Star countered this by demonstrating a deep love and respect for her students, which made a lasting impact on them.

Additional Findings: Nuances of the Theory

Urgency. In all three classrooms I witnessed each teacher teach with a sense of urgency. Urgency that demonstrated importance and swift action. Each teacher spoke about the urgency to engage in critical topics and challenge racism because of the current

political climate in this country. They also highlighted the limited time they get with students (18 weeks per semester) as a need for urgency. Finally, each teachers spoke about the community college system as being a transition phase for students in their high education paths and the urgent need to engage them there, before transferring to the university or starting their careers. What follows is a description of how each teacher acted out urgency in their classrooms.

Professor Cuautémoc. In addition to having a social justice purpose for teaching, Profesor Cuautémoc spoke about urgency for doing the work. As a trained social justice activist, Professor Cuautémoc considers any engagement with marginalized groups as urgent. He understands that schools, especially colleges, are place he can prepare the next generation of “activists that can change the world”. Professor Cuautémoc reports it is especially important now, “under the current administration that marginalized and scapegoats people of color”. He described the urgency in his teaching when he commented:

No bro, the urgency is there for sure, especially in this class. Well, actually all my classes. Here it's like there's no doubt of urgency...I'm a messenger. We're talking about our legacy, we're talking about our roots, we're talking about communities, and how to keep it through survival, through a resistance, and through a libratory journey. Especially given the political climate that we're in now, there's no ... This is critical that we braiding this knowledge together. Man, I feel the purpose is like thousands of years, I can feel it in my veins. I will do what I need to make sure we teach our students to survive (Prof. Cuatémoc, February 7, 2017).

Professor Cuautémoc considers himself a messenger for this work. Contrary to traditional ways of teaching in the community college system, teaching for Professor Cuautémoc is about “survival, resistance, and liberation”. It is more than a subject to him, its “survival for students, their roots, and their communities”. His goal is justice and he believes in obtaining it through action. Freire (1970) calls this praxis. He argues that the critical educator aims to be a revolutionary (not reactionary) and establish a permanent relationship with students from subordinated cultural and language groups. They take action through their teaching to help end oppression. Furthermore, Freire (1970) states that the revolutionary teacher practices a humanizing pedagogy where the method of instruction stops to be an instrument by which teachers can manipulate the students, “...because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves” (p 51). This was evident in Professor Cuautémoc’s class.

Additional evidence confirming urgency surfaced when Edgar asked a question about the energy of the class. The following interaction occurred towards the end of class:

Edgar: Is this class always like this?

Professor Cuautemoc: How?

Edgar: With so much energy?

Professor Cuautemoc: (smiles) Its urgent we learn what our communities have contributed to our society. You don't learn that in high school. We are going to do it here. I am very passionate about that. Our stories aren't included and when they are, they demonize us. We need to change that. I'm a messenger for this.

Soon many of you will transfer or go off to work. You all need to know this now. In this class, every minute counts. I am going to bring it. This work is urgent. We need to do it now. You all deserve that.

After class I stayed behind and spoke Professor Cuautémoc about this interaction with Edgar. Below is a brief excerpt of this conversation:

AG: A couple of different time you talked about the urgent need to learn Chicano Studies now. Especially for the students in this class [Chican@/Latin@ students]. Can you say more about that?

Professor Cuautemoc: I only have these students for a semester. How many weeks is it? Like 18? And this is a late start class. It's so important that we get into it. I have a short time to inspire their thinking. I want them to become activists for the community. We need them out there doing the work.

AG: Yeah, bro. For sure.

Professor Cuautemoc: Even my joke at the end of class about, "We have 12 minutes left?" For whatever reason, I lost track of time. I was like, damn we could have done one more journalism project. I was dead serious about that. Man, a lot of things could change in 12 minutes. We can do a lot of work in 12 minutes. While I say it in a joking way, I was also serious about it.

Both of these excerpts provide further evidence of urgency. In the first interaction with Edgar he tells students that their stories and contributions have been excluded and that he is a messenger that will teach them about it. In the second excerpt, he highlights the importance of time.

Professor Navah. Professor Navah also spoke about her urgency for teaching when I interviewed her. She highlighted the urgency to teach about “racism and injustice” in wake of the 2016 presidential election. She commented that demonstrating “hate and racism” has become appropriate because the current president “does it so

much". Prior to his election it was more covert. Now it is in everyone's faces so it is "easier" to talk about. However, she also pointed out that this has been going on for years but "teachers" did not talk about it in classrooms. She noted, that a result of the racism students experience they are made to feel "invisible". She stated:

I think that a lot of our students live with being invisible and they just get used to it. They don't think anyone will ever see them, whether it'd be their own professor or the very students that they sit in the classroom with. They expect to be anonymous and have become quite comfortable with that. I know what it feels like to not be seen. If there's anything I can do as a teacher to not have students feel that then that's what I'll do. I think that ends up being the primary. A lot of times teachers don't do this in schools. They don't push back on systems that have privileged some students over others. I do this when I teach. (Prof. Navah, March 19, 2017).

In this excerpt, Professor Navah specifically makes a connection to students who are made to feel invisible in school as a result of marginalization. She can empathize with this because she herself has felt this. McLaren (1995) describes a hidden curriculum that excuses teachers from engaging in pedagogical self-scrutiny or a critique of the school's function within the wider society and the ways these contribute to school failure. Bowles & Gintis (1971) suggest that schools are meant to socialize students with structured knowledge and social authority trapping students between equally undesirable options of dropping out of school or becoming silent in the classroom. However, for Professor Navah, the classroom can also be a site for resistance, creating community, and action (hooks, 1994; Shor, 1992). As an educator focused on social justice who is in the business of educating people, it is urgent that she do something about this.

Rene, a freshman student spoke about urgency she witnessed in Professor Navah's class. This urgency made her feel "like she mattered" and that was important for her. In other classrooms she feels like "just another student" and "it doesn't matter" if she is in class or not because the teachers "don't know her". In Professor Navah's class this is different. Rene recognized Professor Navah's goal of helping students feel "visible". Rene has struggled with feeling "visible" when it comes to her academics. She commented:

I am not sure if its just me, but Professor Navah really makes sure to connect with us right away. I'm shy and don't always talk with teachers because sometimes I feel like they don't care. She made an effort to get to know my name right away. From the first class she makes us feel important. She doesn't waste time. We only have a semester. I appreciate that because not all teachers do that. I would say that's urgency. I feel like that's her priority. I don't feel invisible in here. That helps me learn the material because I want to come to class because I know this class wants us to be here. She shows us that (Rene, March 21, 2017).

Later in our interview, she reported "never feeling like school" was for her and "connecting with a teacher" would had made a difference for her. Professor Navah's teaching and engagement helped Rene feel like she too mattered and belonged in school. She demonstrated an urgency in getting to know students names and "connecting with them". In community college, students might only take one class from an instructor before they move on. Professor Navah recognizes this and makes it a priority to connect with students. The urgency in Professor Navah's work, her ability to connect with students, and a reflective curriculum helped foster "visibility" for Rene.

Professor Star. Professor Star also made reference to urgency in her work. To her, urgency is an important strand of her work and connected to her purpose. She commented:

Black and Brown people in my opinion, have an urgent need to see the change their ancestors dreamed of and worked hard to set in motion. I try to do that through my teaching. We engage that knowledge. I think the urgency increases as well under a political regime that uses hate, discrimination, and policies that highlight the oppressive structures that have been in place in this country for so long. Now, to tell you honestly. I think another piece of urgency comes from not having a voice. When I feel that urgency surfacing in my classroom I feel called to envision and create transformative curricula, art, research, etc. But I also think it is really important to take a deep breath collectively and get rooted. Urgency is fuel for a fire but it can be used against us if we move from a space where we believe we are running out of time. I actually really reject that vibration from my being because I will not be rushed or forced into chaos. It is good to have ruffled feathers or want change NOW as long as our vision is clear. Urgency might not serve us if we are not connected to one another, the land, spirit or whatever that higher power is for different people. My personal urgency is in strengthening that human nature connection. This is hard to do without a strong relationship to self. It is all related. So, I see urgency as a lighthouse. It can bring ships in to our shores that are lost out in the fog (Prof. Star, April 24, 2017).

In this excerpt Professor Star speaks to the importance of urgency in her teaching. Urgency for her is taking her time and responding to all students. She does not want to create “chaos” if she goes to fast. She also showed urgency through how she used her time in the class. She made it a point to speak specifically about the limited time she has with her students and the importance of “connecting” with them. She stated, “I try to use all the time I can with my students because I will only have them for a semester. It’s important for me to do all I can in that time”.

Sandra, a student who had taken classes from Professor Star a few years back

shared her a bit about her experiences in Professor Star's class. I was told to talk to her by another student I had already interviewed. Sandra spoke of the "motivation" she experienced and her willingness to excel in her classes after taking some classes with Professor Star. She considers herself a motivated student however she spoke about the "need" and "importance" for women of color to complete the community college and transfer to university. Sandra is first in her family to attend college and has transferred to the university. For her, it is critical she be the example for her younger siblings. She noted that she found this "*ganas*" in Professor Star's class. She stated:

I never thought I'd even graduate high school. You know. For Chicanas like me we don't go to college. We end up staying here. If we are lucky we can find a good job. In high school no one believed in me. My mom only made it to like the third grade in Mexico so she doesn't know how to help me. My dad is always working. He doesn't speak English. And.. And, they get confused when I tell them about college. To them, its something for rich people. And, my mom said as a girl I should stay home. You know how it is with Latinos. So over protective with the girls. It sucks. But, I took the Women's Ethnic Heritage Class with Profe Star. She got me all excited about college. It's like when I saw another women of color telling me its ok to go to college and this is how. She also spoke about all the barriers we face as women. I felt she got me and understood what I was going through. She told me how important it is for us to go to college. She always reminded us. And she taught about how women have been oppressed and we think we can't do things. That's not true. This teacher motivated me to do it. I convinced my parents and now I am at state. Now, I have hella ganas because I want my siblings to follow in my footsteps. When teachers show they care, and share with you how important it is to study, it makes a difference. Especially if you've never heard that before. You know? (Sandra, May 18, 2017)

Duncan-Andrade (2009) points out that students are looking for critical hope, which aims to humanize students and educators in their struggles by reminding them that they are collectively struggling alongside one another sharing in the victories and the

pain. Sandra felt validated by Professor Star and finally heard by an educator. Professor Star was in solidarity with her. She had not experienced this before. In addition she understood that Professor Star could empathize with Sandra as a woman of color. This was impactful for her. Sandra is now a senior at the State University where is majoring in Chicano Studies and states she wants to be a teacher.

Checking-in. Checking in became a relevant theme with each teacher. I witnessed them check in with their students in groups and individually. Checking in refers to the teachers ability to respond holistically to student needs. This goes beyond curriculum and attends to students' emotional well-being as well. As historically marginalized students this theme became relevant and important in each classroom. Contrary to what other community college teachers may practice in their classrooms, the teachers of this study used their spaces as places of reflection and healing and believed that liberation is possible during class time.

Professor Cuautémoc. Professor Cuautémoc strives to understand who is in his classroom so he can respond accordingly to them through the curriculum. What he chooses to bring to class represents the students he teaches and the community he is in. However, I witnessed more than a culturally responsive curriculum in his classroom. I saw Professor Cuautémoc respond to students' emotions, feelings, and well-being. He would regularly "check-in" with his students to see how they were doing. In particular what stood out most was his response to students' anger around current politics in this

country. In one case, he was talking with students around the current immigration policies of this country. Students responded in anger around this topic. Instead of moving forward with his lecture he took time to attend to his students' emotions. This is an excerpt from that class:

Professor Cuautémoc: Ok, you all. I feel like there is some anger here. Let's talk about that.

Raul: I think its messed up what this president is doing. He has no idea why immigrants come to this country. My mom and dad came her to give my family better opportunies...

Samantha: Mine too, dang I totally agree.

Professor Cuautémoc: Thank you, hermano and hermana for sharing. Thank you for inviting your mom and dad into the conversation too. Let's honor them. How are others feeling? What are your thoughts? Let's stay with this for a bit. It's important for us to talk about.

In this interaction Professor Cuautémoc picks up on Raul's anger. Samantha jumps in and confirms what he Raul is saying. Professor Cuautémoc responds by thanking him for sharing and then validating his feelings. Rather than continuing with the lecture, he opens up the space for others to also share feelings and thoughts. I asked him about this after class and he commented:

Teaching is about humanizing hermano. If we don't respond to how all this political bull-shit, racism, oppression, and other stuff impacts our students then we aren't doing our job. Our students are hurting and we need to listen. We are hurting too, if we open up the classroom to talk about this we and the students can find healing (Prof. Cuautémoc, February 18, 2017).

This small excerpt speaks to Professor Cuautémoc's ability to respond to students' anger and hurt they may be feeling as a result of oppressive forces. He recognizes the importance of his own healing process and chooses to be in solidarity with his students. hooks (1994) notes that that the act of teaching should transcend from merely the depositing of information to also sharing in the "intellectual and spiritual growth of ones students (p. 13)". According to Darder (2002) this work by teachers becomes an act of freedom and liberation for all involved.

Professor Navah. Professor Navah also "checked in" with students in similar ways. For her, it is important to create spaces where students feel safe enough to share stories. By building "rapport and trust" with student she strives to create this space. She also commented that trust and rapport is only built when teachers are able to respond to how students are feeling in the classroom. Some may bring hurt and pain with them, yet others are triggered with what is being discussed in class. In the following example, the professor just finished a discussion on spirits in Pilipino culture. Many students seemed to be uneasy with the discussion.

AG: When you said you can do these things to keep yourself safe, why did you do that?

Professor Navah: Because I sensed, kind of like in the last class, I sensed that people were uncomfortable. Any time you talk about spirits, it's important to have some kind of closure, because there's some real shit. You can't just have people being freaked out, when they're walking up in the hallway, still being freaked out, and one thing I do have to clarify. Some people understand that the thing that I mentioned isn't necessarily just Pilipino-specific. I learned that from actually a

different cultural tradition, so I need to share that with them when I see them on Wednesday.

In another class the professor was showing the class example of Pilipino characters that were used in the United States to depict Pilipinos. The caricatures portrayed Pilipinos as childlike and animal like. She used these caricatures to demonstrate Western imperialism, colonization, and racism. Many students had emotional responses to these as they had experienced some form of racism. Below in Figure 11 is an example of one she used in class:

Figure 11. Pilipino Caricature

The professor went through a series of these caricatures, discussed them with the class, and then opened up for students to speak their emotional responses and thoughts.

One student said:

This shit is messed up. I can't believe they used this stuff. But, you know. I am not surprised either. There still hella racism out there and we feel it every day. It

makes mad to see this. I have a lot of feelings about this. It makes me mad. But, you know, this way of thinking still is out there. Not that much has changed.

Upon this student sharing his response other students also shared their feelings.

Many of them agreed with him. At this point Professor Navah asked the class if they could spend some time talking about these feelings. A discussion occurred facilitated by the professor. After this class Professor Navah commented:

Going deep like this isn't possible unless your students trust you. They have a lot of emotions about this shit except it hasn't been ok for them to let it out. I want them to feel safe here to do so.

Historically marginalized students might find it difficult to open up and trust educators. The research is clear that they experienced a K-12 school system that oppressed them and worked towards “pushing” them out the path towards college (Huber et al., 2015; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Researchers of the K-12 school system have documented how students of color are systematically tracked into special education programs, vocational programs, or other non-college track programs because of their economic status and race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrel, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Oakes, 1985; Valenzuela, 1999). Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora (2000) found that some Chican@Latin@ students experience feelings of inadequacy, isolation and culture shock when starting at the community college. Others experienced discrimination and stereotyping by uncaring instructional faculty, counselors, and other college personnel, which led to a lack of confidence and self-doubt (Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora, 2000). Professor Navah understands these realities and works hard towards

building trust in the classroom. Checking in regularly with students allows to build a foundation for students to be cared for.

Professor Star. Professor Star also responds to students' in similar ways. She believes it is important to attend to "entire being" (mental/emotional/spiritual) to be truly transformative. In one particular class she began the class through breathing and relaxation techniques. She did this as a response to how she read the energy levels of the class. Below is an excerpt from the beginning of that class:

Professor Star: *How you all feeling?*

Giovanni: *Tired*

Joana: *Hot!*

Professor Star: *Let's get up and stretch. (The entire class, including this researcher stands up, and the teacher leads us the group through some stretches. This lasts about 5 minutes. After the stretching she asks the class to sit down because she has a few things to talk about). If I can make a request. If we can minimize the side conversations. I like side conversations but if we can focus our energy. Now you are going to see a little change in me so we can get on the ball. Why, because we have one class left. I want you all to succeed. We will talk about the final project. But, I really need your assistance. Ok sounds good. Today I want to start off class by thinking about ways that we can connect across differences? Honey Bees are a metaphor for class today. Because they work hard and come together when they need too. It's time for us to come together.*

The teacher's ability to be responsive goes beyond the curriculum. She noticed the class was starting to plateau with side conversations happening at different time throughout class. She felt she was starting to lose students. As a response she engaged them in an activity that helped them to focus. Rather than punishing side conversations

she asked for cooperation from the class to make it a better experience for everyone. The class responded accordingly agreeing to work together. This is not possible in a classroom without trust. When trust is developed the “check-ins) become easier and more meaningful for students.

At other times during the semester Professor Star would talk with students individually to “check in” with them one on one. I witnessed her do this before class, during the break, and after class. Since she is not a full-time teacher she does not have office hours so she must make use of the time she has with students. She did state that even if she did have office hours she would still continue to check in with students.

Creating Community in the Classroom. Creating community in the classroom was an additional theme that surfaced in this study. What stood out for each teacher was their ability to establish meaningful relationships among students in the classroom. In the community college setting this is especially important due to the large number of students each teacher engages in their classrooms.

Professor Cuautémoc. Professor Cuautémoc believes creating community in his classroom is critical for student success. He commented to that he wishes he could get to know each other on a personal level but understands that is difficult because of his limited time with them. Instead, he tries to connect his students with each other. He believes that “college is best done in community”. By this he means “college should be

done with the support of a community”. He purposely tries to create community so students feel supported.

An example of community buildings was “the Mayan hieroglyph folder activity”. Students used Mayan hieroglyphs to draw their names on a folder. This folder became a way they would submit their work for the semester. Students created beautiful folders and proudly displayed them. This activity took students some time to complete. The class was loud, with students sharing their folders with each other. During this time the teacher specifically made it to each table and sat down and engaged them in conversation.

Lili, a freshman student came up to me after that class and asked about my research. I used that moment to describe the doctoral process but then also engage her in discussion around her experiences in Professor Cuauhtémoc’s class. However, prior to this she opened up about her general experiences at Golden Hills Community College and recounted story after story about how teachers “can be rude” and “sometimes judgmental” of her because she speaks with a heavy Spanish accent. She immigrated to this country from Guatemala only a few years back and has worked hard to “get through school”. She understands that having an “education can open doors” so she tries her hardest. She also wants to make her family proud. She noted:

Professor Cuauhtémoc is for real. I mean I like this class because I feel like we are familia here. You know? He makes an effort to know us. I feel my voice matters here. I don’t always feel like that in other classrooms. Some teachers are rude or treat you bad because the way you speak. I try my best, but other teachers look down on you. I’ve participated like 5 or 6 times today in class. I never raise my hand in class. Teachers don’t always talk to us like we are important.. I can

see that in here, that's not happening. I also like all the activities we do. It's like we are all getting to know each other in her. I like the art work and stuff. That's cool. I love to draw. Back in high school I would doodle on my binders and folders. I here we get to do that and its ok. Hahaha. It's an assignment. Ha.. that's what's up (Lili, February 12, 2017) .

Through this folder exercise students are engaged, validated, and community is created. Providing a sense of validation is of high importance and value to nontraditional students in the community college system (Rendón, 1994, 2002). The group work and the artwork tap another skill set that often is not prioritized in college. Furthermore, the group work again is prioritized here. The professor highlights the importance of group work. His goal is to cultivate a community that supports one another.

Professor Cuauhtémoc's approaches in the classroom are examples of what Rendón (2009) would call *Sentipensante* (Seeing/Thinking) Pedagogy. *Sentipensante* Pedagogy combines holistic and critical approaches to teaching historically marginalized students in college. Rendón (2009) summarizes that *Sentipensante* (thinking/feeling) pedagogy focuses on disrupting and transforming entrenched beliefs about teaching by "...cultivating *personas educadas* (well-rounded individuals who possess knowledge and wisdom) and instilling learners and educators with a commitment to social justice" (pp. 135-136). She argues, that when faculty members embraced this approach, they emphasized activism, liberation, healing, and social change in their pedagogical practices. Professor Cuautémoc embraces this approach because his curriculum is purposely

focused on activism and liberation. He believes that by preparing students for action against injustices it can lead to their own liberation and social change.

Professor Navah. Professor Navah began the semester by purposely creating “community” in her class. She described “community” as the entire class coming together to support each other towards their success. On the first day I observed her class she ended her class by gathering students together to “check-in”. This “check-in” consisted of students circling up at the front of the class and sitting on the floor. She began this exercise by asking students to “breath, center themselves, and listen attentively to each other”. At this point, the teacher asked for each student, one by one, to share their names, major, and reason for taking the class. Students took their time and followed her directions. At the end of this exercise she told students that her goal is to create “classroom where they all feel comfortable to share and participate in class”. She called this activity “community building”.

After class one day Ramon was waiting to talk with Professor Navah. She was busy with another student so I asked if I could quickly talk with him about this study. He obliged and offered some insight about his own life and his experiences in Professor Navah’s class. Ramon is not from the Golden Hills community. He commutes about 30 minutes every day because he believes he can “get a quality” education at Golden Hills. Where he grew up schools were a “dangerous place” because of the “fighting, the gang problems, and drugs”. Ramon never connected with his teachers because they “didn’t

want to be there”. Ramon feels lucky that he graduated high school and after high school a cousin helped him enroll at Golden Hills. This same cousin advised him to take classes with Professor Navah. He noted:

Man, bro. I love these classes with Professor Navah. I took the Africana class last semester and now I'm in here. It's a safe place here. I didn't feel that way in high school. Everyone was always on edge and the teachers didn't care. Nah, not in here. One thing this professor does really good is she gets us to work in groups. In other classes we do that too, but in here we get to know each other and I start relying on my group. She's constantly asking us how we are doing and she check's in. She says its community. I agree. I feel like students in here got my back (Ramon, February 8, 2016).

Professor Navah added:

I want my students to feel comfortable in here. I also know that if they learn to work with each other they will do better in school overall. I am not sure if other teachers spend time creating this space in their classes or not. As a teacher, and Ethnic Studies teacher, I know the importance of community building especially for students who have experienced racism and discrimination. I know that if we are a community, it's easier for them to succeed because they start holding each other accountable. They also don't let each other fail. I want them to feel community when I teach them. I also want them to know that in here they have support (Professor Navah, February 10, 2017).

In both of these excerpts “community building” comes through as a theme.

Ramon points out Professor Navah’s skill in getting students to work in groups. Her ability to do this, according to him, is better than what he has in other classes. He also feels like other students in class “have his back” which is an unusual experience for him in school. As he noted his high school experience was an “unsafe experience”. Professor Navah also notes that racism and discrimination are real issues facing these students. Her goal is to teach students to build community among each other so they can use each other

as support networks. Historically marginalized students in higher education need allies because the system has not treated them fairly and consistently sets up barriers (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). As a result of these barriers Chicana@/Latin@ students consistently have the lowest degree completion rates for both associate and bachelor degrees as compared to their peers from other racial groups (Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez, & Vélez, 2015). Professor Navah strives to counter this.

Professor Star. Professor Star also believes in creating community in her classroom. She does this in a variety of ways. One specific way is by having students present on “current events” happening in the community and in the world. She commented that this allows students to hear from each other about what’s happening in the world and they learn to work together. The “current events” activity also gets students to work together, because as a group they discuss issues pertinent to the. This happens at the beginning of her classes. She believes it is important for students to have this time to report on “current events because so much is happening right now” and she wants to provide a supportive space to discuss it. By engaging the large group this way she hopes to inspire students to self-reflect, critically think, question and critique themes impacting them (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 2003). In addition, students in community are allowed “to vent” and “discuss solutions” to societal problems and take action (Freire, 1970). However, she reports that this is best done in a large group because

input from the entire class is critical for the community building aspect and to create solidarity around the issues going on. This is her way of cultivating the next leader of critically conscious thinkers.

In one interaction, the teacher spoke specifically about the Golden Hills' High School mascot, which is a stereotypical symbol of a Native American. I checked in with Jessica and Vickie because they seemed really bothered by the use of a Native American mascot. During the discussion they were engaged and shared their perspectives openly. Both students resonated with the theme of the discussion because each has experienced marginalization and racism in separate ways. Jessica is in her second year at Golden Hills Community College. She described the Golden Hills community as a "racist place" and wants to use her education "to stop it". She believes that through awareness, its possible to end "discrimination. Vickie is about to graduate and transfer to the university. She is majoring in Sociology with a focus in Chicano studies. She chose this major because she understands the importance of "making change in society". She believes a major in Chicano Studies will prepare he to do so. Her long-term goal is to become a social worker. They both stated that Professor Star's class has impacted them and got them to think deeper about the issues facing society. Jessica shared:

I think it's important to talk about what's happening in the community. We need to do this because it's like there is so much shit happening right now. Its real shit and it hits us hard. I like that in this class we talk about the real issues impacting us. Right now there is so much stuff we see on the news. Black men are being shot by police left and right. We don't talk about that in my other classes. We've talked a lot about Trump and all the stuff he's doing. Like he is going to build a

wall. I like that here we got to talk about how that affects us. Usually, people just respond in anger. That's important but its also important to think deeper about these issues. Today we talked about the mascot at Golden Hills High School. I don't know why a school would want to have a mascot of a group of people. It's dehumanizing. I didn't go to the school district meeting but we got to talk about it here. We don't talk about these kinds of things in other classes (Jessica, March 8, 2017).

Vickie added:

Yeah, I agree with Jessica. I like the current events because our teacher lets us talk about what we think is important and happening in our world. But, it's not just in other countries. It's here too. In our town. I have friends who go to Golden Hills High School and they don't ever talk about the how bad it is to have an Indian Mascot. They probably don't really care about it. But, in my opinion its not OK. They should care about it. But, if you don't learn to think about it or question it, it doesn't really matter. It's not ok for people to be hella racist about it either and say it doesn't matter. That's just wrong. I like that our teacher shares her perspectives but listens to us too. This way we get to come up with our own conclusions. But, she gets us to see that sometimes there is privilege that some groups have over other groups. I think this has been an eye opening experience for me (Vickie, March 8, 2017).

Giroux (1988) remarks that it is essential to make every day experiences problematic and critical by revealing their hidden political assumptions. He maintains that empowering students to develop the courage to participate in their self-formation has a liberatory purpose. Both students speak to their experiences in the class and highlight the importance of covering current events through a critical perspective. Jessica makes a connection to her immigration status and the current political discussion. This is relevant and important for her. Vickie feels it is “not ok” for the Native American mascot to be used for Golden Hills High School. She problematizes it and critiques the current school systems because the friends she has who attend this high school tend not think the topic

“matters”. Through this “current events” activity Professor Star invites students to become cultural beings that have the agency rewrite their experiences and perceptions (Giroux, 1997). Furthermore, what they also highlight is a feeling of validation when they get to discuss what is impacting them and their community. This validation has the capacity to build community, which is important for their overall success in school (Rendón, 1994, 2002, 2009)

Extending the Theory

Chapter two of this dissertation illuminated three specific themes of transformative teaching in the K-12 setting. These three themes are purpose, responsiveness, and relationships. The purpose of this study was to test these themes in the community college setting. The transformative teachers of this study confirmed a social justice purpose for teaching, were responsive to their students and built meaningful relationships with their students. In addition to these three themes nuances also surfaced. The nuances were *urgency*, *checking in* and *community in the classroom*. These nuances appeared differently for each teacher, however, they were consistent among the educators.

Table 2 shows the themes that were confirmed and surfaced in this study.

Table 2.*Findings from the field*

Purpose	Urgency	Responsiveness	Checking-in	Relationships	Community in the classroom
Social justice focus;	Current Political Climate	Challenges deficit perspectives;	Responds to students emotional needs;	Establishes relationships built on authentic care;	Helps to establish meaningful relationships among students;
Focuses on developing student's agency;	Limited time with students;	Emphasizes counterstories;	Uses the class as a place of reflection;	Shows respect for students;	Builds social networks for students that help them navigate college;
Cultivate critical consciousness in themselves and their students;	Recognize community colleges are in transition period for students;	Responsive to students' lived experiences;	Believes healing and liberation can occur in the classroom;	Collaborates with students;	Believes college success is achieved in community;
Takes a political stance against oppression;		Embraces students community knowledge;		Validates students as important members of school community;	
Believes students can transform the world;		Empowers students through relevant and responsive curriculum;		Empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically	

Conclusion

All three professors believe that students have the potential to make powerful impacts on social injustices. The class observations and interviews consistently confirmed that fact. Through teaching they believe they can participate in making the world a better place. They have confirmed what the literature said about transformative teaching and added nuance by demonstrating urgency for their work, checking in with students on a regular basis, and creating community in the classroom. The next chapter provides the implications and recommendations of these findings as they pertain to community college faculty, faculty leaders and administrators, and community college policy makers.

Chapter Five: Implications and Recommendations

Implications of Findings

Much of the conversation around helping Chican@/Latin@ students succeed in higher education have been framed around analysis of outcome data that highlight low graduation and transfer rates (Moore and Shulock, 2010; Huber et al., 2015). Although using outcome data is important to ignite discussions, it does not provide detailed analyses of the lived realities and experiences students face on and off college campuses. Furthermore, the data fails to recognize the important role schools play in academic failure. The result is that this data tends to influence deficit thinking of college faculty, administrators, and staff, which locates problems within students, their families, and their communities (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). This result in initiatives and programming focused on addressing personal student failure rather than dealing with the real issues that plague higher education like racism, inequity, and deficit thinking. This research challenged that by looking specifically at the teachers, rather than students, as the focus of intervention for supporting Chican@/Latin@ students at a community college.

Typically, research on marginalized communities is implemented from a majoritarian point of view meaning it privileges the dominant narrative and silences the contributions of oppressed communities of color (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Smith, 1999; Gutierrez, 2006). This work pushed back on this approach by giving voice to the transformative teachers and their students. I spent time understanding transformative

teaching practices in the community college system by focusing on the lived experiences of three community college transformative teachers and Chican@/Latin@ students at Golden Hill Community College in Northern California. I gathered my data through classroom participant observations, semi-structured interviews of both the students and their teachers, reviewing classroom artifacts, and by keeping a detailed field journal of my reflections from being in the classroom with the teachers and their students. I made every attempt to humanize the research by honoring the classrooms I observed and the stories and experiences of the participants. When possible I included word for word what I heard from teachers and their students. I also recorded in great detail what I saw and experienced in each classroom.

This research confirmed the hypothesis discussed in chapter one of this dissertation, that despite all the problems and barriers Chican@/Latin@ students face in their educational journeys there are classrooms and educational spaces where they are being supported and taught in effective and transformative ways. Also, the findings of this study support and add to the existing literature highlighted in chapter two. The transformative educators of this study confirmed their belief in social justice and were focused on pushing back against oppressive systems inside and outside of school systems. This was evident in the curriculum they chose and the assignments they gave their classes. These teachers cultivated their students' own critical consciousness and inspired them to take action against social injustices and oppression at their schools and

in their community. In addition, these educators confirmed the three themes that surfaced in the literature review regarding transformative teaching theory. These themes are *purpose, responsiveness, and relationships*. Beyond this, nuances also became apparent. These nuances included *urgency, checking in, and community in the classroom*. These findings add to the literature and extend theory on transformative teaching in the community college setting.

Recommendations for Action

Community College Instructors. The findings of this work serve to benefit community college teaching faculty because they are well positioned to make important connections through their teaching practices for students because they interact with them on a weekly and sometimes daily basis. Community college teachers, if prepared and responsive, can course correct years of educational neglect Chican@/Latin@ students have experienced with the ways in which they engage their students. Based off the findings from this study, I make the following recommendations for community college instructors:

- Include responsive curriculum and attend holistically to students,
- Build meaningful relationships with students founded on trust and care,
- Create communities of support in the classroom.

Include responsive curriculum and attend holistically to students. Teachers can work towards including curriculum that represents students they teach. This goes beyond

ethnic identities and should include curriculum relevant to students' community experiences, their families, and ancestral background. Content relevant to students' lives can show them that teachers care about their experiences. Faculty can do this by being intentional about addressing the contributions of Chican@/Latin@s and other marginalized groups. Teachers can choose curriculum directly applicable the real life experience of marginalized students in the context of their families, work life, and social life (Wood, et al, 2015). The course content like class readings, assignments, essays, research papers, and lectures should provide opportunities for students to make connections to what they are learning and their lives (Wood, et al, 2015). By responding to students in this way teachers can validate and honor the contributions their students, and their students families and communities have made to American society.

In addition teachers should be willing to attend to students emotional needs as well as the academics. If students are having problems or stressed out this can have negative impacts on the academics. Also, many first generation students of color have experienced marginalization in the school setting and will be coming to the college classroom wounded. Allowing spaces for healing to occur by naming the many barriers students experience, or other pressures students experience is validating for them. This can be done by "checking-in" with students during class time, during office hours, through class discussions, and assignments like journaling and writing that allow students to express their feelings. "Check-ins" should be frequent and done in every class if

possible. Making sure teachers ask their student how they are doing, how their week has been, or if they are having any struggles is important. Letting students know that they are there to help should they need the support can make important impacts for students. If students do need additional support beyond what the faculty member can provide the faculty member can take some additional steps like directly connecting them to a trusted Student Affairs staff member or counselor. Instructors should avoid general referrals to large services without making a personal contact for them as this can add additional stress for busy students.

Build meaningful relationships founded on trust and care. This study has confirmed that indeed building meaningful relationships with students is vital for their overall success. Teachers should recognize the power they have when they enter the classroom and how much their engagement with students impacts them. Professors can make themselves available before and after class to interact with students and build rapport. Asking how students are doing, how their classes are going, and other questions like these can be important for students. It is important that faculty members recognize that Chican@/Latin@ students and other historically marginalized students have experienced a school system that has not embraced them and has actually worked towards “pushing them out” of school all together (Moore and Shulock, 2010; Huber et al., 2015). Understanding this, teachers should be proactive and make every attempt to reach out to students first instead of waiting for students to reach out to them (Wood, et

al., 2015). Other steps faculty can take is making sure they make every attempt to learn students' names. Using name cards or activities where students introduce themselves can help with this. If teachers cannot remember student names asking them to remind them of their name and how they prefer it pronounced can let students know teachers care.

Create supportive communities in the classroom. The transformative educators of this study understood that community is a strength and asset students already possess so they chose to use it in the classroom. Creating community in the classroom is grounded in social justice because for students who have experienced oppression, racism, and marginalization in schools it can be easier to navigate college as a group than alone. When students are in groups or in community they can feel supported by each other and recognize they are not alone in navigating college. By creating community in the classroom, teachers are also cultivating students' social networks and building their social capital. For students who have historically been shunned from education, having a space where they are supported and cared for can be helpful. This can be done by offering the opportunity for meaningful group work to occur during and after class. Group work focused on specific goals to counter injustices in school or in the community can cultivate students' critical consciousness and lead to civic engagement and leadership opportunities. Situating the classroom in an oval or a horseshoe shape or by arranging desks into small groups when possible is also important for building community. If this is not possible, then creating opportunities for small study groups, developing group

assignments, and making time for students to talk with each other and engage in discussion can make important impacts. The sharing of ideas in community serves to benefit all students regardless of ethnic background.

Instructional Leaders. Instructional leaders (e.g. department chairs, faculty development professionals, academic deans, vice-presidents, and presidents) benefit from this work too because they can use this cutting edge research and strategies on what works in the classroom for the most marginalized students. Based off the findings from this study, I make the following recommendations for community college instructional leaders:

- Plan professional development opportunities focused on social justice and transformative teaching practices,
- Create evaluation tools for faculty based on transformative teaching practices,
- Develop transformative learning opportunities for students.

Plan professional development opportunities focused on social justice and equitable practices. These professional development opportunities should challenge perceived student deficits and spend more time focusing on the accountability of institutions and educators and the roles they play in enabling outcome disparities to persist. Critical professional development that focus on social justice and equity should be of the highest priority for institutions. These should not be optional trainings but

instead required of all staff. These critical professional development could be offered throughout the year. Instructional leaders can use the steps taken in this dissertation to identify the transformative teachers on their campus and consult with them around how to specifically engage other faculty in training on transformative teaching practices. When appropriate, these same faculty can mentor and train other faculty on the effective strategies they use in the classroom. It is important to state that transformative teaching is more about how teachers see education and their students and their place within it rather than a set of prescribed techniques that can be used with students.

Create evaluation tools for faculty based on transformative teaching practices.

In addition, instructional leaders can use these findings to evaluate the current teaching practices of their instructors especially during their tenure evaluation processes. On most campuses faculty are evaluated when they are hired and throughout their teaching careers. Spending time evaluating for transformative teaching practices should be incorporated into these evaluation processes. Through this evaluation processes teachers can be asked to share their teaching purposes and demonstrate concrete examples from the classroom on how effectively they develop meaningful relationships with students, create community in the classroom, and respond holistically to students. If they fail to meet these requirements then they should be recommended to attend additional critical professional trainings. In addition cultural competence and retention strategies for marginalized students should be imbedded in tenure and promotion policies (Wood, et al,

2015). It is important for instructional leaders to recognize the power of transformative teaching and the impacts it can have on students.

Create transformative learning opportunities for students. Finally, instructional leaders in the community college system should prioritize creating spaces where students are encouraged and engaged in equitable and transformative ways. Establishing critical learning communities focused on meeting the needs of marginalized students can do this. Some learning communities on campus have made important strides by bringing in culturally relevant curriculum and counseling support. However, these communities have focused on student success and have failed to address the inequities students face on a daily basis. Therefore, critical learning communities grounded in social justice should be of the highest priority for campuses. Critical learning communities focused in Ethnic Studies, Critical Math and Sciences, and First Generation College experiences serve to benefit all students on campus. Campuses could start this by engaging transformative teachers on campus who are already making impacts and asking them to lead these critical learning communities. As part of these learning communities there should be a service learning aspect focused in civic engagement and social justice in their own communities. This would build students' skills of advocacy and leadership.

Policy Makers in the Community College System. Community college policy makers and leaders have boasted about the strides they have made state wide on educational equity (Museus, et al, 2015). However, the current data has demonstrated

that Chican@/Latin@ students are still falling through many cracks of the higher education system (Huber et al., 2014/2015). Based off the findings from this study, I make the following recommendations for policy makers in the community college system:

- Provide additional funding to the neediest campuses in the state,
- Focus on instruction as an ingredient in student success.

Provide additional funding to the neediest campuses in the state. Additional funding and resources are necessary for struggling colleges and in particular those with large numbers of working-class students of color. If the educational attainment of all students, and in particular Chican@/Latin@ students who are the fastest growing ethnic group in the state and the country (McKinsey & Company, 2009; Moore & Shulock, 2010; Huber et al., 2014/2015) is of the upmost importance for policymakers, then they must invest the necessary resources to help these students succeed. This can be done by accessing funding sources designed to support students. According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) website the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) is meant to ensure *all* students complete their college courses and persist through the assistance of student-centered support programs (California Community College Chancellor [CCCCO], 2017). Funding has been allocated to ensure students receive the help they need to succeed. Programs have been developed that focus on student services but they do not include instruction. Part of these resources should be

steered towards instruction. Transformative faculty members, along with their students, can consult with college leadership around the best ways to use the resources to help the neediest students on campus. This is not happening right now. Given the abundance of research, and the findings of this study, it is clear that through effective teaching students can create greater success for themselves, which ultimately impacts their families and communities.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study has focused on transformative teaching practices and the impacts it has had on Chican@/Latin@ students. A limitation of this study was the small size of the teachers investigated (N=3). Although large amounts of data were retrieved it would be beneficial to expand this study and include additional educators and students. A study looking at transformative teaching practices statewide is also recommended and could add to the findings of this study. In addition I recommend adding a quantitative component to further confirm the findings and add depth to future research. This could better inform teachers, leaders on campus, and policy makers as to the most effective teaching practices for vulnerable students.

Secondly, this study focused on transformative teaching practices as an intervention for helping Chican@/Latin@ students succeed in college. Although the findings of this study could be generalized and applied to other marginalized groups on campus it is recommended that research be done specifically around the experiences of

African American students, Pacific-Islander students and other groups who fall through the cracks of the educational system.

Lastly, this research spent time understanding transformative teaching practices directly in the classroom. It would be beneficial for schools to spend time understanding transformative practices in other areas like counseling, athletics, library, and administration. This could help to establish transformative practices in general as something colleges do in different areas to help students succeed.

Conclusion

This research focused on giving voice and lifting up the experiences and knowledge of transformative teachers and their students in one community college. This was done to challenge deficit perspectives towards marginalized Chican@/Latin@ students in community colleges and to identify what works best in helping them succeed in school. The findings of this study discovered that having a clear purpose for teaching, including responsive curriculum, and building meaningful relationships can cultivate student success. Also, when there is urgency for the work teaching tends to be focused and achieves specific goals. In this study, these teachers' goals were to counter marginalization of Chican@/Latin@ students while validating them as critical members of the college. Students felt the teacher's passion for their topic inspiring them to do their best. For some students the impacts inspired them to take action against injustices in their communities. This research is also clear that responsive curriculum makes impacts

for students. Including assignments and projects that reflect student's contributions to society can make meaningful impacts. This study also found that teachers who spend time checking-in with students and create community in the classroom make important strides for students.

The three teachers of this study exemplified what it means to be transformative. Through their teaching they made meaningful impacts for students changing and shaping them into students who felt valued and motivated to make positive impacts in the world. This study should inspire other educators to closely reflect on their own teaching practices and consider exactly what motivates them to teach and the steps they take to inspire student success for all students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Community Nomination of Instructors

Email to Faculty, Staff, Administrators, Students

January 2016

Dear Golden Hills Community,

As you may know I've entered the last phase of my doctorate program, which means I will be starting my research soon. The title of my dissertation is "Identifying Transformative Teaching Practices for Chican@/Latin@ Community Colleges". This is an area that is near and dear to my heart and I hope through my research I can impact the field of instruction in hopes of creating even additional support for our most marginalized students on campus. I am defining transformative teaching as the type of teaching that changes and shapes how students see themselves and their worlds while empowering them to use their education as a weapon to make transformational changes in their communities. Ultimately, transformative instructors are change makers and they use the classroom to do so.

My goal is to impact how instruction is given, the decisions instructional leaders make, and the policies that are created. As soon as I'm done with this work I will share the findings with the greater campus community.

I am reaching out to you because I am hoping you can help me by nominating 1-3 instructors on our campus you consider transformative. If you are a student which teachers have inspired you to use your education to make positive changes in your community? If you are a staff person, teacher, or administrator which faculty member do you know is inspiring students to use their education to transformational changes in their community?

All nominations will be kept confidential. Thank you for your support in this work!

In community,
Alejandro Guerrero
Educational Leadership
Doctoral Student
San Francisco State University

Appendix B

Transformative Teacher Interview Protocol

Name:

Date:

Domain 1: Purpose

1. How important is it for you to have a clear purpose for your teaching?

Extremely
Important

Moderately
Important

Somewhat
Important

Unimportant

2. Why did you become a teacher?
3. Why do you teach here (at this school/in this community)?
4. Can you give an example of a time you achieved your purpose for teaching? How did you do that?
5. What impacts do you think it had on your students/class?

Domain 2: Relationships

6. How important is it for you develop caring relationships with your students?

Extremely
Important

Moderately
Important

Somewhat
Important

Unimportant

7. Describe what a strong relationship with a student means to you?

8. Can you give an example of a time you established a strong relationship with a student? How did you do that?
9. What impacts do you think it had on the student?

Domain 3: Responsiveness

10. How important is it for you to be responsive to the particular students you teach?

Extremely
Important

Moderately
Important

Somewhat
Important

Unimportant

11. Describe what being responsive to a student means to you?
12. Can you give an example of a time you were responsive to a student? How did you do that?
13. What impacts do you think it had on your student/class?

Appendix C

Student Interview Protocol

Student Name: (pseudonym)

Date/Time:

Demographic Information:

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age: _____
3. Ethnicity: _____
4. Are you first generation college student? Yes ☐ No ☐
5. Do you have academic major? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. If so, what is your major? _____
7. What is your educational goal? AA/AS ☐ Certificate ☐ Transfer ☐ None ☐

Purpose:

8. Why do you think this teacher teaches?
9. What do you think this teacher's purpose is for teaching?
10. Can you provide an example?

Relationship:

11. How important is it for you to have a relationship with your teacher?
12. How do you know when a teacher truly cares about you?
13. Can you give an example of a time when you felt the relationship?

Relevance:

14. Is this teacher's teaching style (pedagogy) responsive to the realities of your life?

*If they answer YES: Can you give me an example of when/how it's responsive? Why did that matter for you?

*If they answer NO: Is it important for you that a teacher's teaching style be responsive to the realities of your life? If so, why?

Appendix D

Letter of Support for this Study

March 21, 2016
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Administration 471
1600 Holloway Ave
San Francisco State University
San Francisco, Ca. 94132

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Golden Hills Community College, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Alejandro Guerrero, a student in the Doctor of Educational Leadership Program at San Francisco State University (SFSU). We understand that his study will focus on effective instruction of Chicano/Latino students on our campus. We are also aware that Mr. Guerrero intends to conduct his research by administering a survey, interviewing students, instructors and observing some instructors teach their courses.

As the Vice President of Student Services at Golden Hills Community College, I give Mr. Guerrero permission to conduct his research on our campus. He has the full support of this college.

We are interested in hearing student and instructor voices as they relate to instruction so we look forward to his study. We hope Mr. Guerrero will present his findings at Golden Hills Community College at the conclusion of his work.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Vice President of Student Services
Golden Hills Community College

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Exemption Notice

From: "protocol@sfsu.edu" <protocol@sfsu.edu>
Subject: Exception Notice
Date: April 1, 2016 at 4:40:44 PM PDT To: "agguerrero707@gmail.com"
Cc: Jeff Duncan-Andrade <jandrade@sfsu.edu>

Dear Alejandro Guerrero,

Based on the information that you have provided, ORSP - Human and Animal Protections has determined that your project entitled **“Echandole Ganas: Transformative Instructors of Community College Chicano/ Latino Students,”** does not require further IRB review.

I have attached your application for your records. You may proceed with your project as described, adhering to your own discipline's professional code of ethics. If you plan to change your project or have any questions, please contact our office ahead of time.

Please feel free to contact our office with any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Benjamin D. Lee
ORSP - Human and Animal Protections
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Avenue
Physical Address: 471 Administra6on Building Mailing Address: 250
Administra6on Building Phone: 415.338.1093
Fax: 415.338.2493 ATTN: Human and Animal Protections
Email: protocol@sfsu.edu hGp://research.sfsu.edu/protocol/