ISBN 978-607-59619-4-1

Academic Essay: Intercultural Pedagogy

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Introduction

In order to truly understand and support intercultural pedagogy, we must first direct our attention to culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) as teaching "to and through [students'] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments" (p. 26). CRP is premised on "close interactions among ethnic identity, cultural background and student achievement" (p. 27). CRP includes the recognition of how an instructor may teach "to and through" the assets and strengths students bring with them to the classroom. This concept brings Dr. Tara Yosso's theory to mind, encompassing her community cultural wealth framework (2005). The six forms of capital that Yosso details are 1) aspirational, 2) linguistic, 3) familial, 4) social, 5) navigational and 6) resistant. In centering this framework, Yosso "emphasizes the connections between racialized cultural history and language and the value of bilingual education." We know that students of color come to their PreK12+ schooling with language and communication skills; by centering not just the student's perceived academic excellence—but also their linguistic capital—we move toward more equitable educational structures that disrupt language hegemony. Employing Yosso's framework can invoke culturally sustaining practices that will enhance an intercultural pedagogy agenda.

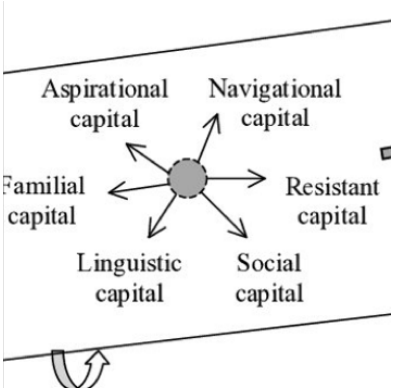

Figure 1

I Seminario de Investigación Binacional Oaxaca-San Diego: Un espacio intercultural DOI: https://doi.org/10.56643/Editorial.LasalleOaxaca.12.c84

As Figure 1 illustrates, Dr. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Framework consists of a multitude of abilities and skills that students of color and their communities (i.e., 1st generation Latinos/Chicanos/students of color in the U.S.) possess and apply to survive different forms of oppression. This framework consists of six forms of cultural wealth that ultimately add to cultural capital. Yosso importantly states, "...these various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (Yosso 2005). These processes can overlap with other forms of capital to challenge and resist oppressive situations.
To define each form of capital, Yosso provides us with the following descriptions:

Aspirational capital is the ability to have hope while facing structural inequality (real or perceived). For example, Latinos living in the U.S. have the lowest educational outcomes in comparison to every other racial group, but consistently have high aspirations (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Solórzano, 1992; Auerbach, 2001). Thusly, Latino families maintain high aspirations for their children's future academic endeavors through storytelling by "allowing them to imagine possibilities beyond their present circumstances" (Yosso 2005).

Linguistic capital is the set of skills attained through holding more than one language or style of communication. This form of capital is confirmed by extensive research conducted in bilingual/multilingual learners, noting the important cross-cultural skills that these students acquire.

Familial capital points to the cultural knowledge and sense of collective identity that students may possess. Here, familial capital refers not just to immediate kin, but extended family as well. The capital acquired here is informed by researchers who have "...addressed ***communal bonds*** within African-American communities, the ***funds of knowledge*** within Mexican-American communities and ***pedagogies of the home*** that students of color bring with them to the classroom setting" (qtd. Yosso 2005).

Social capital is defined as the social networks students acquire and maintain through the support of peers or their community. A critical foundation to social capital is not only the resources acquired (e.g., a scholarship application opportunity), but the ***assurance*** from these social ties which accompany said resources (i.e., emotionally reassuring the peer that they are not alone in the process).

Navigational capital refers to how students of color navigate their way through white-dominated institutions in the U.S. which were not created with these students in mind. Navigational capital refers to the student's "set of inner resources…or cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning" (Yosso 2005).

Resistant capital refers to the skills and awareness acquired through "…oppositional behavior that challenges inequality." This form of capital points to how parents of color teach their children to engage in behaviors that will challenge the status quo (e.g., to not fall into stereotypes based on a racial/ethnic group). Some research defines navigational capital as a form of ***resistant capital*** (i.e., oppositional behavior that helps Latino students endure adversities experienced in college) (Pérez, 2017; Harper, Williams, Pérez, & Morgan, 2013). Interestingly, studies that highlight navigational capital show that it is most readily observable within the context of predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Specifically, resistant capital is gained among students exercising navigational capital at PWIs that are unresponsive and/or unequipped to properly support ethnic minorities' academic and social needs (Harper, Williams, Pérez, & Morgan, 2013).

Yosso's framework allows us to see how race, ethnicity, cultural upbringing, and resistant capital all play a role in a student's acquired navigational capital. Yosso defines ***navigational capital*** as "… the skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind" (Yosso 2005). This theoretical framework allowed me to further explore current literature that explains the cultural transition experience from environments with Individualistic Culture to Collectivistic Culture (IC and CC) and how communities of color in the U.S. navigate their way through social institutions that are individualistic. More broadly, I was able to explore a multitude of factors that Latino students navigate within higher education institutions that can imply educational inequalities, namely how individualistic culture-based institutions may be unfairly hindering educational experiences for some students and enhancing it for others.

Education reforms that have dominated U.S. schools since the 1990s have been deliberately context blind. Although racial achievement gaps have been a focus of attention, solutions have emphasized offering all students the same curriculum—which was designed to be taught in the same way to all students regardless of cultural context—based on the language, worldview, and experiences of White English-speakers (Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002). Importantly, approaches to schooling that responded constructively and proactively to culturally and linguistically diverse students were visibly effective (Gay, 1983), when supported by culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP).

Three Dimensions of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)
Holding high academic expectations and offering appropriate support (such as scaffolding)
Acting in favor of cultural competence by reshaping curriculum, building on students' funds of knowledge, and establishing relationships with students and their home environments
Cultivating students' critical consciousness regarding power relations

Collectivist Latino Culture

Students in the U.S. from Latino, African American, Native American, Polynesian, and most Asian cultures are more likely to have collectivistic values (Hofstede 2009, 2001; Black and Mrasek, 2003). In comparison, students with European backgrounds have a high likelihood of holding individualistic values (Black and Mrasek, 2003). Therefore, a fair assumption can be made that Latino students who hold collectivistic values may have academic goals that harmonize with the essentials of their collectivistic group.

The collectivistic group for most Latino students is not necessarily limited to immediate family and can include extended family as well. In Black and Mrasek's 2003 study, participants were found to be motivated to attend and succeed in college for familial reasons, an example being a student with desires to please their parents, escape poverty, and support family members financially. Within collectivistic cultures, family plays an influential role in a student's college experience, especially if the family already has predetermined academic goals for the student. When these familial goals are in place, the student may feel stress and pressure to succeed, especially if they are first-generation college students (Black and Mrasek, 2003).

College Campus and Individualistic Culture

College campuses tend to foster an individualistic environment; students who are already accustomed to this type of environment may not face the same challenges as students from a collectivistic culture. The individualistic culture within college environments can be a difficult obstacle for first-generation college students—especially within the Latino community—since this population tends to be more collectivistic (Hodge, 2010). A collectivistic cultural upbringing can present certain challenges to how students navigate higher education institutions that students from an individualistic culture may not face (Black, 2003).

Previous research shows that universities' focus on independence does not match the experiences of many students of color, including Latinos. First-generation students' interdependent motives for attending college can sometimes result in a cultural mismatch (Covarrubias, 2012). One study found that this cultural mismatch is associated with lower academic performance for collectivistic-oriented students (Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015). The concept of individualism impacts many collectivistically-oriented students and seems to explain much of the cultural clash that Latino students experience when navigating the highly-prized individualistic approach fomented within the American educational system. The following quote reinforces this concept: "For many students from collectivist groups, the school experience is characterized by conflict, misunderstanding and cultural mismatch. They find it extremely difficult to conform to a system in which (a) school demands are expected to take precedence over family needs, (b) explicit verbal interaction is the main avenue of communication, and (c) students are required to compete with and outperform their peers" (qtd. Black, 2003).

The Latino Educational Experience in U.S. Schools

Latino students who represent both the largest and youngest population of color in the U.S. continue to have lower scholastic completion rates in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups (Luna and Martinez 2013). Nationwide, this statistic can be seen as a major weakness in the U.S.'s ability to educate and graduate their Latino youth. Because of this weakness, Latino students tend to be underrepresented within higher education institutions (León, 2003).

Recent research has begun to move its focus away from the burden of educational attainment resting solely on students and families, shifting it rather toward highlighting the elements that Latino students employ to be successful. This change allows for the educational narrative to transition away from a mindset that Latino parents or students do not value education, recognizing that significant structural hurdles exist—such as a dominant cultural orientation—that can negatively affect these students (León, 2003; Luna and Martinez 2013). A multitude of reasons illustrate why Latinos are underrepresented in higher education institutions, especially 4-year colleges. Common themes of underrepresentation explain boundaries to academic preparedness, such as "… access to college-bound curriculum, financial aid, access to college information, mentoring and advisement, and family commitments" (Luna and Martinez 2013; León, 2003; Llagas & Snyer, 2003; Olivas, 1986; Stanton, Salazar, & Dornbusch, 1995; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). Latino students who are able to "make it through" the educational pipeline to college face additional challenges. These additional challenges, along with obstacles to academic preparedness, (like a lack of access to guidance counselors or ***cultural guides,*** discriminatory admission practices, and the effects of higher rates of tracking into vocational programs) place Latino students at a disadvantage even prior to college.

An important finding by the Pew Hispanic Center found that Latino youth ***begin*** at a disadvantage when compared to their peers, stating that "…Latinos have different experiences than White students even when they enroll on the same campus" (Fry, 2002). Not blatantly stated in this report, however, is the amount of research regarding "…racially hostile college climates, unwelcoming environments…" and the influence on student experiences (Clements, 2000; Solórzano, 1998). Research on Latino education from a "deficient perspective" fosters assumptions that home and family culture often deter academic success (e.g., language, family/community commitments, strong ethnic identity). However, research is now shifting focus toward analyzing how Latino students, despite challenges (economic, political, and structural), are high academic achievers. A look at these studies offers new insight into the role of Latino culture on educational experiences and the ways in which these students develop ***culturally-based survival strategies*** (***Yosso, 2005;*** Delgado Bernal, 2002; Gonzalez, Moll, Amanti, 2005; Hurtado, 2003; Orelleana, 2003).

Scholars, in particular, Yosso (2005), influenced this movement in research away from a deficient perspective toward highlighting the resources communities of color obtain. In contrast, educational policies with deeply embedded assimilationist practices pervade, "...which continue to place Latino students at an educational disadvantage and view students and their families as intellectually and culturally inferior" (Luna 2013).

Studies that utilize the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework find various situations in which aspirational capital, familial capital, and social capital are acquired by Latino students. Navigational capital appears to lack research and provides fewer examples than the other forms of capital used within the CCW framework, which could be due to the fact that these forms of capital are not mutually exclusive and can overlap with one another. One study (Luna and Martinez 2013) interviewed Latino students and gave an isolated example of navigational capital. A participant in this study stated that he/she went to a school where "anything Latino was not welcome", specifically that his/her professors discouraged the organization and establishment of a Latino club on campus. This participant eventually started the organization but at the cost of changing the name of the club by excluding "Latino" from the title (Luna and Martinez 2013). Although we can see this instance as an example of navigational capital and "playing the game" to reach the end goal (establishing the club), the goal was reached only through the exclusion of the racial/ethnic identity of the club. Yosso (2005) explains that navigational capital is acquired when students resist and overcome discriminatory exclusion practices. Does "playing the game", therefore, "count" as navigational capital as well? Future research, as I will explain below, is needed for understanding the elements and consequences that navigational capital includes.

Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of current knowledge, theories, and literature about culturally responsive pedagogy, intercultural pedagogy, and educational experiences for Latinos in the U.S. We learned that the underlying meso factor in this study can be seen as the cultural difference between collectivism and individualism as Latinos gain specific cultural capital when navigating oppressive educational systems and spaces. This field of work is important to

the understanding of how educational institutions can be better equipped to serve Latinos and have broad implications for students of color. Findings which imply that students of color must assimilate to dominant narratives, beliefs, and behaviors in order to prosper in American institutions (such as the educational pipeline) are not only damaging but also contribute to a colonial ideology of the erasure of alternative knowledges. It also does not fully explain the variables that contribute to the exclusion and discouragement of students of color; Latinos' success pathways to continue their educational courses in the United States, we know that there is more to the story. Latino students not only gain various forms of cultural capital to help them navigate these discriminatory spaces, but also, "...Latino students construct paths through the terrain of discrimination and prejudice in schools through a variety of ways" (Barajas and Pierce 2001). Furthermore, the ideology that students must assimilate to the dominant culture assumes that these students will fail if they do not assimilate and that giving up one's cultural values/group identity is not only inevitable but "desired" for students of color in order to experience academic success. This type of framework boxes in other cultural orientations apart from individualism as erroneous and can—intentionally or unintentionally—erect hurdles that hinder educational experiences for a Latino student body.

Latino students bring with them an abundance of knowledge, abilities, and skills that are not always ***traditionally*** valued in educational settings. Despite sometimes faltering Latino retention rates, the literature demonstrates that Latino students value education and hold high educational aspirations. Educational institutions can create welcoming climates where Latinos and students of color are able to better integrate into campus culture through multiple avenues, such as membership in racial/ethnic organizations on campus to promote a sense of belonging. Club membership also promotes collectivistic values—like cohesiveness—as we know that for many Latino students, "...educational achievement is not an individual attribute, rather the result of a collective process of commitments among and between individuals who are embedded in a supportive aspirational network" (Luna 2003). The aim of this work is to further equip educational institutions and personnel to not only acknowledge but value Latino students' strengths and capital to encourage Latino educational success at every stage of the educational pipeline.

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