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**Racialized Social Class Pedagogical Praxis:  
Critical Compassion, *Cariño*, *Respeto* and *Confianza***

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**Abstract**

This article explores the ways in which high school teachers understand their students in relation to their own racialized social class backgrounds. It problematizes ethnic outsider inabilities to engage teaching philosophies and practices, which render teachers unable to create constructive dialogues with students that have been marginalized in the culture of schooling. Given classed, raced, and gendered past practices in education and their schooling trajectory, which have historically truncated their potential mobility, this study is mediated by racial social class positions, which veil issues that intersect with structural inequalities. As such, this case study explores teacher/student engagements, focusing on reproduction of consciousness as unrealized teacher/learner schooling interactions. It is framed in contradiction to normative teaching practices, problematizing the absences of critical pedagogy in instruction, as it suggests alternative venues from an empowered perspective.

*Keywords:* Social class; social reproduction; high school education; critical pedagogy; sociohistorical theory; intersectionality

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At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the structure of schooling in western nations focused on economic productivity. This was a direct result of the Industrial Revolution, which focused on production that mirrored factory assembly lines, thus schools took on the task of socializing youth, a role previously assumed by the nuclear family (Arum et al., 2015). The structure of schooling became a fundamental tool in the reproduction of the social class structure. Immigrant labor was welcomed; however, language, culture, race, and identity were viewed as barriers. Americanization and a standardized English language were viewed as favorable practices of Anglo-Conformity (Combs et al., 2014). Those who failed to meet imposed expectations of production levels were viewed as unintelligent and deficient in their preparation to ascend the ranks of factory management (Anyon, 1997, 2005, 2011; Ball, 2013; Foucault, 1977; Griffin, 2013; McLaren, 2005; Oakes, 2005). Within such dynamics of power, teachers served as both normative agents and labor brokers and purveyors of cultural norms ensuring compliance to ideological doctrines of power (Giroux, 1992; Torres, 2009).

It is not our intent to argue that schools lack the option for teacher resistance to schooling norms, as its practice is guided by traditional expectation embedded in symbolic ideology (Willis, 1977). Our aim is to advance a conversation mediated by sociohistorical and intersectionality theories and explore race and social class discourses in the structure of schooling when the teacher has the awareness and is conscious of their social location, and then they are unaware and negate the structural differences that reproduce inequality. Furthermore, we problematize school culture and the normalization of social inequity within such structures, given the lack of literature about race and social class, and lack of intersectionality within education (Codioli McMaster & Cook, 2019). We offer that education has been and continues to be a mechanism of discomfort imposed by an economy that promotes inequity as a norm, whereby the majority of poor people in rural and urban communities are Black or Latino (Anyon, 1980; Kozol, 2012).

To frame schooling experience and its dynamics of power within a social structure, we begin with an overview of sociohistorical and intersectionality theories. Then, we outline schooling in the context of race and social class background, and teaching, as these intersect in the refinement of social reproduction. We examine contemporary literature on critical pedagogy. Thereafter, we present the methodology and participants in this study, with a subsequent analysis of the themes that emerged, concluding with implications for future

research. We posit that there is a continued need to scrutinize the ways in which racialized social class influences teacher-student engagement by exploring modes of inquiry concerning teacher-to-student pedagogical engagements across circumstances, framed by the following questions:

1. In what ways did social class background influence teachers' beliefs about their students?
2. In what manner did teachers' family beliefs influence their early interactions with peers?
3. By what means did teachers arrive at an understanding about the race and class difference in schooling?

### **Sociohistorical Theory and Intersectionality**

From a sociohistorical paradigm, this article draws on the theoretical contributions of critical education scholars (Anyon, 2011; Illich, 1970; McLaren, 2005; Oakes, 2005; Willis, 1977). This necessarily calls to interrogate epochs in history, as we observe, critique, and problematize the repetitive sides of the discipline. Important to critique how social stratification is reproduced and manifested through social class, race, gender, age, religion, disability, and how forms of oppression are interrelated and can be understood as intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 2000). Sociohistorical paradigm is the dynamics of power in the schooling process that is actively influenced by ideas transmitted directly from the past: "Consciousness is reproduced not only directly through the individual's contact with work and membership in a particular class, but also through these institutions of reproduction" (Bowles et al., 2015, p. 101). These theories compliment Marxist feminism, which postulate that oppression occurs within different spheres of identity in which privilege resides (Davis, 1983).

### **Ethnocentrism as Social Reproduction**

Teacher educators need to interrogate selective perceptions that trigger their social distance from students, particularly when traditional education requires them to impart taken for granted beliefs from their traditional socialization which perceive difference as a threat (Carignan et al., 2005). When teachers fail to become aware of their cultural knowledge, they must recognize how ethnocentrism or "the tendency to judge other groups, societies, by the standards of one's own culture" (Healey & O'Brien, 2015), impedes their practice, which

implicates dehumanization and the disconnection of the body, mind, and spirit in a closed environment. The objective of a teacher in a classroom then becomes one of monitor, in which she or he must produce learning outcomes for students, with an understanding that some will fail while others will succeed (Ball, 2013). In such mechanical learning environments, the underlying message is one closely aligned with labor: a reflection of an economy that is predatory in relation to the limited number of jobs to fill and embedded presumptions about whom shall occupy such spaces. Within the western tradition, the reality for many students in schools is one where an authoritarian figure restrains their feelings and spirits' in their ability to understand the world (McLaren, 1995).

### **Critical Pedagogy**

Contemporary structure of schooling in the United States was transformed from traditional pedagogies influenced by philosophies of education and essentialism, to ones that argue students become prepared for basic positions in society (Oakes et al., 2018). Such pedagogical approaches have been argued as outdated in contemporary U.S. schooling (Bartolome, 2004).

Critical pedagogues have called for changes in the preparation of educators. They argue that with fluctuations in the structure of schooling, the critical importance is the preparation of teachers, along with the scrutinization of practical skills of teachers in credential program, while teacher assumptions, values, and beliefs are examined (Bartolome, 2004; Sleeter, 2017). These traditional ideological notions are directly transmitted from the past and have been early tools of socialization whereby teachers apprehend and relate to 'difference' as products of society (Linley, 2017; Lynch, 2018). Critical pedagogues offer that teaching is a political act and not an objective one where content is solely delivered (Graziano, 2008; Licona, 2004). For these reasons, hierarchies must be dismantled, as teachers collaborate with their students to create a community of learners built upon a mutual respect, whereby culture, language, and customs are valued as resources in the production of knowledge through holistic dialogue (Creswell, 2016; Jaime-Diaz, 2019; McIntyre et al., 2001; Méndez-Negrete, 2013b; Orozco & Jaime-Diaz, 2016; Orozco & Lopez, 2015; Ovando & Combs, 2018).

With this study, our objective is to illustrate the ways in which one teacher may reproduce relational structures of oppression and inequality, while another validates students' experiences and locates it in the history of their people—people who are members of devalued

racialized ethnic groups. Thus, we offer that relational interactions and the ways in which teachers choose to relate with students influences, not only their success in school, but also their continued schooling as they opt to consider and pursue higher education. Thus, awareness and consciousness of their own social location and position inspires teachers to impart knowledge with a heart, as they refrain from further damaging or traumatizing students who come from marginalized groups.

### **Methodology**

This article relies on a qualitative case study approach. Data is examined from work conducted with five high school teachers, from which two ideal types have been created. One supports the sharing of lived experiences as ways to engage race and class as systems of oppression, while the other diverges from that point of departure, perceiving education as an Americanization process (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, 2011). To carry that out, we relied on a *conocimiento* approach that retrieved family and community legacies, dating back four generations, to identify the points of connection between the researcher and student, and what is taught in the classroom (Méndez-Negrete, 2013b).

### **Context**

With the pseudonym *Vigilancia* or Surveillance High School, we discuss a high school located in a working-class community on the southside of *Mihoco*, or the place of the cats, a city in the southwest approximately an hour from Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. The city's identity is referred to as the "Dirty M," while the Southside is labeled as the "South," implicating derision and devaluation because of poverty and ethnic make-up. Economically, the median income per household is about \$14,587, with a median income of \$17,614. When using gender, the median income is \$20,504 for males and \$14,754 for females. Forty-six percent of the population live below the poverty line, and 43.5% are families where 61.2% are under the age of eighteen, and 36% are over the age of 65 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

*Vigilancia* began with a student population of 900 students in 1956; as of 2015 the school enrolls 1,526 students. From its foundation, *Vigilancia* has provided education for the regional Mexican community on the south side of *Mihoco*. The school's philosophy, however, is embedded in the commitment to foment active student participation and leadership as part of the school's culture.

## Participants and Data Collection

*Vigilancia* school was founded on the beliefs that education must incorporate respect along with an understanding of the community composition and needs. I (first author) sought to engage in research at the site, inspired by the school's philosophy, and was introduced to teachers through the principal at *Vigilancia*, after completing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, which gave me access and allowed me to secure IRB consent forms. When teachers agreed to participate, I explained the research project, elaborating on their rights as human subjects. Five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews and *pláticas* or conversations which were tape recorded, and later transcribed (Fierros & Bernal, 2016; Gonzalez, 2012; Seidman, 2006). Among the participants, there was one math teacher and four English teachers, which included two Chicanas, two white females, and one white male—all from and living in a working-class community.

Throughout the academic spring semester, February-May 2017, I, the first author was a participant-observer, attending high school administrative meetings, participating with parents and community members, and attending classroom activities. So as to gauge the different views and interpretations of those who engage in a learning environment, the emphasis of this case study focused on teacher-student interactions in relation to their racialized social class background.

## Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through Appreciative Inquiry, a feminist methodology that explores what works for people, and incorporates their experiences in the creation of knowledge (Reed, 2007). It offers teachers a life-centric structured approach, which encourages them to take the direction they freely desire, in relation to their early socialization. Such a critical aspect uncovers ideas rather than explore them through organic conversations. It is designed to create knowledge with participants who are viewed as co-creators of the process and honors their experience at the moment of data collection and beyond. Throughout the project, teachers often commented on their teaching experience and identified what was important to them, which assisted the coding process.

With intersectionality as a theoretical tool for liberation, Marxist feminist have argued that oppression requires an analysis beyond social class, which necessarily implicates understanding the ways in which subject engage divergent structures (Cornish, 2001). We

examined the data using a holistic coding approach, beginning with an understanding of the practices that influence the way in which teachers viewed difference in schooling, in the context of their early upbringing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldaña, 2009). Themes that emerged in relation to upbringing, neighborhood stratification, and social niches, were relied upon to complete topic coding, connecting these to the ways in which early ideologies are refined within teacher-student engagement across time (Richards, 2014).

### **Positionality**

[Wo]men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances existing all ready, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

Marx & Engels (1999), *The Communist Manifesto*

The experiences that we confront during our lifetime surface in our personal, community, and social histories. What we live is mediated through historically institutionalized rules, norms, and expectations. For that reason, intersectionality influences the ways in which we view ourselves and treat others within the communities in which we are raised and educated, as well as the ways we understand others in relationship to us. History is never the past, we carry it within us, to revisit and examine it, as we implement decisions that we make about research, teaching, and the activism we engage.

I, the first author, was born in Northeastern Oregon, and my parents are Mexican immigrants from Nayarit and Durango, Mexico, who migrated to work in agriculture and later toiled in potato factories, in a predominately white rural community, where the intolerance to foreign languages and cultures was the norm. The oldest of six children, I am second generation Mexican American. My home language is Spanish, and I learned English in public school. It is my view, that culture and identity are strongly connected to my language, and my social class position originates in the struggle of the working poor. Nonetheless, my parents provided for their children, and taught us the culture, history, and values of Mexico. In our formal schooling, they entrusted us to teachers whose authority we were expected to obey.

My third-grade teacher referred me to special education, when she identified me as having a speaking deficiency. In an isolated room, I was given a popsicle stick to place in my mouth, so that I could sound the letter “S” correctly. All the while, and all around me, I was

called a beaner, wetback, spic, taco bender, fence jumper, and scratch back. My siblings and friends were chased by cowboys—white kids—in their big trucks, after school and for their amusement. Once a cowgirl in a truck, rolled the window down, yelling “hurry up you beaner, before I spit’cha.” In another case, an Anglo woman came out of her house, yelling for us not to walk on her sidewalk; we got scared walked through a field during our elementary school years. This treatment was the norm.

The underlying message was that the work our people did was not respected, and we were labeled as non-college material. There were a few Anglo teachers and community members that tried to help us as at-risk youth. In an attempt to learn how to become part of the community, I joined the Boy Scouts and even recruited my two brothers. As minoritized children, we received a “sink or swim” education, with tokenized bilingual pull outs. As a result, our academic language skills and the acquisition of a college preparatory education necessary to understand curriculum or content, was stripped from us.

As a result of our miseducation, a whole generation of youth were criminalized in the mid-1990’s, some were tracked by the juvenile justice system, while others were incarcerated. With our equal participation in society forever limited, we were restricted to second class citizenship. Without an ethnic studies lens or a multicultural education in schooling that problematized the social construction of communities, or where we were valued as an asset for our language, culture, and identity, the outcome was detrimental for Mexican American youth. With spirits broken, with a misplaced anger of not knowing where to direct it, few youths were able to obtain a high school diploma or a GED, limiting their college options or social mobility through education. Other losses in my life would mitigate my own educational journey and shape the way in which I invested in becoming an educator with a vision for change.

The second author, a professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), where I was a doctoral student from 2011-2013, in Culture, Literacy, and Language, in the Department of Bicultural Bilingual Studies, was and continues to be my mentor. In addition to supervising my teaching assignments, throughout my stay there and into the present, she advised me on the trajectory of my professional development. As such, we often spoke about the contradiction found in academia, as a result of being a first-generation scholar. Also, she would advise me about various life circumstances I confronted. For example, when I lost my

brother and contemplated leaving the academy, her words still resonate with me. “*Tu tienes tu destino marcado,*” you have your destiny marked, which was her way to convey that the past never leaves us; it stays with us at all times. However, we concluded that all was not lost, as survivors, we rely on this experience and knowledge we gained from them, to learn, teach, conduct research, and make a positive contribution for the betterment of humanity.

It is difficult to separate my heart from my mind. I now have earned a PhD in Education with emphasis in Language, Reading, and Culture, and a Minor in Mexican American Studies from The University of Arizona. Throughout that process, I have come to understand the myriad ways that racism, prejudice, and discrimination manifest in the lives of individuals and groups. Also, I have come to terms with the knowledge that everyone is a product of her or his socialization—influenced within a particular epoch in human history (Brabeck, 2003). Intersubjective consciousness and awareness facilitate my ability to give meaning to social situations, as I interpret lived experiences endured by those who reside in my community. These derive from what we have endured and facilitates the cultural transmission of knowledge (Cortina & Liotti, 2010). When we understand the historical struggles of our families and communities, along with whatever limited privilege we have amassed, the ways in which our lived realities intersect with history, we carry *conocimiento* or knowledge. Thus, we became active agents of change in the creation of knowledge (Méndez-Negrete, 2013b, 2006). As an activist scholar, I have amassed the knowledge to confront social injustice and inequity, having gained an education in pursuit of the common good. With this study, we deconstruct ideologies deeply entrenched within a schooling culture that exiles students and contributes to the problematization of the genealogy of education.

With this article, it is our hope that people understand our pressing need to problematize the early socialization of future teacher educators. In particular, we urge those in teacher preparation programs to prepare future educators with the insight and awareness of the ways in which their lives shape how they see learning as an extension of their own education.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In this section, we present themes that emerged from the study: 1) the obscurity of ethnocentrism, 2) critical compassion and *cariño*/affection, and 3) *respeto*/respect and *confianza*/trust. We then conclude with implications for racialized social class and education

research, relying on a *conocimiento* approach that has retrieved the family and community legacy of the teachers who participated in this study.

### **The Obscurity of Ethnocentrism**

*Maestra Acero* is the pseudonym used for a White teacher that traced her origins to the far eastern United States. Coded as a steel personality, one related to rugged individualism, her persona and character were often difficult to engage. She claimed to not see racial difference in her everyday interactions with the local African American community. In her view, *Vigilancia* is not giving students a ‘real’ education. She did not agree with the exaggeration of the word critical in education, and tokenized my request with her response, albeit she agreed to participate. “I’ll participate in your ‘little’ interview.” Because they were not problematic, as she “knew her job.” *Maestra Acero* rejected intersectionalities under examination. In our *plática*, she said:

Where Black people lived—we knew it was segregated. Yeah, not on purpose; it’s just how it was ... People had their neighborhoods; we had our neighborhoods. Black people were poor, most of them were poor. I made friends, if people talked to me, I would talk to them. I just wasn’t Ms. Social Butterfly.

With this example, *Maestra Acero* spoke about social and racial class segregation in a notion of otherness that is normalized through early socialization and family upbringings. She failed to acknowledge the ways in which her family reinforced power differences and supported the segregation of people by race. *Maestra Acero* offered that she built friendships with Black children, if and when they spoke to her. However, interaction with Blacks were controlled by her parents who would warn her that the community did not approve of such friendships and cautioned her about interacting with Blacks. However, these individual and family actions were not perceived racist.

For her, waving at Black people when she would pass by at the bottom of the hill in her neighborhood, signified a type of friendship, framing her pedagogical approaches in the classroom, and marking the social distance she practiced with her students, particularly objectifying the ways in which she related to them. In the classroom, *Maestra Acero* displayed a tight-knit inclusiveness with a few students who looked and acted like her, while demonstrating distance and distrust in those who were least like her. Her teaching practices emerged to show the ways in which she internalized relationship with others, illustrating the social distance of just

how she projected difference in her teaching. Although she spoke with concern about treating everyone equally, the norms of social inequity were reinforced in her classroom—there was no need to make adjustment, things were as good as they were.

Through observation, I learned that *Maestra Acero* favored those who were obedient and loyal to her. The day she was interviewed, she asked five students to re-state and affirm her beliefs and ideas (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). While *Maestra Acero* claimed she did not see or express difference, her narrative spoke otherwise, as she recalled her own schooling.

You knew which kids were the favorite, they were the popular kids. We didn't really have a social economic issue in our school; we were all lower middle to middle. In my school, the poor kids were the brown kids. But I never saw them as different, that is why I would talk to them. I knew they were Black—that is obvious—we didn't have Hispanic students in our neighborhood. We didn't have anybody else in our neighborhood.

While she found points of connection with lighter complexioned blacks, in her teaching, *Maestra Acero* actively imparted a color-blind approach, in her denial she failed to recognize the structural inequality embedded in racism. She reproduced the culture of home, and adhered to traditional views of schooling, stating that race and class did not warrant scrutinization. Her denial displayed a lack of awareness of the students' experiences, resulting in the enactment of controlling measures that repressed their identity—their history and cultures became irrelevant, for example. Thus, avoidance becomes a tool within which controversial topics are dismissed in a counterfeit of niceness, which is ever-present in normative teaching practices (Orozco, 2019b).

### **Critical Compassion and *Cariño*/Affection**

In the art of teaching, it is vital to activate critical thinking, which calls for reliance on critical compassion in the schooling context. Thus, they must shed traditional order of operation to adopt self-reflexive ways of teaching and understanding what it means to enact a liberatory practice in teaching, and they must be mindful about their students' lived experiences. To carry out their practice, teachers must rely on their emotions as sources of connection, to engage and examine interactions with their students (Rabois, 2016). This calls for them to authentically care for their charges, by integrating a social justice framework, which values the dignity of students, by recognizing their experience (Valenzuela, 1999). It is

indispensable that educators advance a critical compassionate intellectualism, which requires them to acknowledge and develop learning interactions where students are co-creators and subjects in the schooling process (Romero et al., 2009).

When human beings are born into a world of chaos and double messages, they receive mixed messages about the ways in which they feel about themselves and learn to devalue their lived experience. For this reason, they must be provided a space whereby they are valued, heard, and accepted, in the production of knowledge. Toward this end, Freire (2000) posited that problem-posing education allows for students and teachers to dismantle subordination by collaborating in the educational process, with an open up dialogue that mediates the learning process between teacher/learner. When students understand the meaning of injustice through critical pedagogy, they problematize their world, departing from a heightened social consciousness. In contrast to homogenized common sense view of teaching, we present a critical examination provided by one of the few Chicana teachers in this study.

*Maestra Corazón Mágico* evidences and demonstrates love and value for students, and treats them with compassion and respect, allowing them to express their emotions. During lunch break, she stays in the classroom, hanging out with students, to expand their perspective about class, and often draws student from other classes. She builds on her early upbringing growing up in the barrio, as this allows her to engage the knowledge they have in common:

As a child, I didn't have anybody there for me. So, it was hard. I found solidarity with my friends but even then, struggling all through life. But I made friends. I was a social person and it wasn't the same. My mom would come home irritable, tired. So, I don't have memories of my mom asking me, "How was your day? Let's talk about school, let's do this, let's do that." My mom was exhausted, [and as a mother] I emulate my moms' behavior.

She has a strong social life, expressing and validating a Chicana identity. However, with her own children, *Maestra Corazón Mágico* continues to reproduce her family upbringing experiences, but her reflections about motherhood provide her tools for critical compassion and empathy. Congruent with Freire and Macedo (2005), she asserts that human beings can locate themselves through their histories into the present, and, with reflection, teachers must engage the struggle for human life and freedom. As such, *Maestra Corazón Mágico* relays knowledge to her students, whereby she attentively monitors and continuously checks on her students' learning. During a

class observation, in a class of about twenty-five students, she consciously used space in an effort to reach all student. Constant movement, in addition to reflecting on their common experiences as working-class people, verified the ways in which she affirmed their communal knowledge as social resources in their schooling.

Critical pedagogy stimulates thought-provoking engagement, when students understand the wrongs of the past, they create a better future. Toward that end, *Maestra Corazón Mágico* problematizes the tools utilized in the social control exercised within confined spaces, in the culture of schooling (Foucault, 1977). Within structures of schooling there also must be ways to challenge feelings of confinement, which restrict self-determination. For students to understand detrimental boundaries that impede their self-empowerment, an alternative space must be created.

In observation, I witnessed *Maestra Corazón Mágico* creating spaces for disagreement among students, as she fashioned venues to challenge. At times, she did not intervene in heated arguments that mattered to students. Around issues that were critical to dismantling oppression, such as gender and immigration, she interacted and created the ambiance for students to reach collaborative resolutions. She also created power space, when not in the classroom, and there were times when students showed up to create a space of unity, finding sanctuary in the creation of knowledge because it was a brave space.

In *pláticas* with *Maestra Corazón Mágico*, she spoke about the theory she puts into practice, elaborating on the ways in which historically marginalized communities disengage. *Maestra Corazón Mágico* worked to actively diminish hierarchical boundaries, and students were provided a brave space to confront interaction with her, in relation to *machismo*, when male students made a case that *machismo* was the dignity of men in Mexican culture, while *Maestra Corazón Mágico* counterargued by challenging such views as complicit in the reproduction of women's subservience. This rhetoric of confrontation called for female students to engage the discussion from a place of empowerment. At times, I, the first author, felt uncomfortable and did not know exactly what to do with such heated engagements. However, as her students are known to do with her, I spoke to *Maestra Corazón Mágico* about the experience, and she clarified that such culturally relevant topics provoke interest and elicit student reaction in a constructive way. Her approach gave students the confidence to speak in class, nurturing social consciousness. Within these pedagogical approaches, 'difference' among students is not

tolerated as deficient, inferior, or unequal. Instead, her pedagogical praxis democratizes schooling space to broaden a moral vision of education (Giroux, 1992).

*Maestra Corazón Mágico* problematized that in the structure of schooling, the learning environment must necessarily examine the experiences of working class/poor or underprivileged communities, and how they cope with poverty, despair, and violence. This can be facilitated through an environment of self-awareness and insight into the community of which they are part. Crucial in this understanding is that youth cultivate culturally informed knowledge in their educational trajectory, thus viewing culture as a critical component of the creation of knowledge, and as an alternative model of teaching. This ensures that youth do not internalize poverty or fall into a culture of shame, as such space allows students to attribute cultural capital to their family life and educational experience (Yosso, 2005). These pedagogical approaches must be considered in the implementation of non-exploitive culturally relevant pedagogies rooted in languages, cultures, and epistemologies that value and honor counter-lessons of survival and resilience, because it affirms cultural dignity and integrity (Sánchez & Ek, 2013). Clearly, when working with marginalized communities and students of color, the creation of such unconventional spaces is needed within structures of schooling.

### ***Respeto and Confianza (Respect and Trust)***

At the forefront of a conversation, *respeto* and *confianza* mutually inform Mexican-immigrant culture (Valdés, 1996). Historically, schooling in the United States has focused on the deculturalization and aggressive assimilation of minoritized groups who are perceived as outside the norm (Spring, 2016). They continue to invoke myths of individualism and meritocracy, as ways to achieve social mobility, while cloaking social inequality and de facto segregation in the schooling of marginalized children (Elenes, 2003). Within this ideology, failure and success in schooling are positioned as the sole responsibility of the individual. What is seldom interrogated is traditional educational philosophies that trump the education of minoritized students in regimented schooling spaces designed to limit freedom of movement (Foucault, 1977).

*Maestra Corazón Mágico* includes *respeto y confianza* in the curriculum, she articulated: Students were disrespectful, but people have different tolerances of what is respectful. Teachers perceived it as you are being disrespectful, “so, get out of my room,” or you’re being disrespectful, “so, go sit outside in the hall.” It was traumatizing, teachers

were very punitive. I've never seen a teacher, except in high school, who dealt with measures like that discipline. Everything was punitive, one female teacher who had the audacity to treat us like human beings, took us outside to say, "let's talk about it." "Okay come back inside," and that was it. The rest of them definitely had that power trip of humiliating people in front of the class.

In her own experience and in her teaching, *Maestra Corazón Mágico* spoke about the ways in which teachers disrespected students. She demonstrated the ways in which *confianza* was articulated outside of the classroom and never modeled as an alternative for students. These ideas were experienced in *Maestra Corazón Mágico's* early schooling. She never forgot what she witnessed, and in her pedagogical practices or art of teaching, she worked with an oppositional consciousness. She developed an empowering state of mind in her teaching, by constantly reflecting on her own oppressed reality, thus undermining traditional pedagogical approaches within the culture of schooling that socially reproduce a culture of hurt. For her, social classification replicates the other. Such dogmatic practices thus become tools of social control in colonial practices (McLaren, 1995). Her aim was to treat her students differently from what she had experienced as a youth. For her, early socialization and educational experiences were traumatic.

*Maestra Corazón Mágico* regarded the students with respect and they responded, this was evidence of the foundation of the mutual trust displayed in the openness of her class environment. In carrying out the responsibility to influence future lives of their students, it was her aim to equip students with the necessary tools to address social justice in the classrooms and in their communities, so that they may become informed about society in order to create their own ideas.

Neighborhoods with concentrated poverty and relative deprivation historically have been associated with violence and delinquency and identified with the pathological behavior attributed to cultural disorganization (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Critical scholars in education studies have countered deficit stigmas and have argued that poor marginalized communities can rely on social networks to make healthy choices in the development of their communities. They argue that a shift of consciousness can take place when youth engage racism and understand privilege, power, and difference, thus not repeating cycles of harm (Méndez-

Negrete, 2015). Consequently, to engage their students, teacher's constantly manifest or navigate racial/class privilege to disrupt structures of control (Orozco, 2019a).

### **Conclusion: Implications for Social Class and Education Research**

We have argued that critical praxis and pedagogical engagements are central in teaching, about racialized social class within the structure of schooling. Through *pláticas*, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations, we have illustrated the ways in which social reproduction takes place in schooling practices, when teachers' lived experiences are not interrogated and shared, to model self-knowledge and reflexivity among students as critical thinkers. By giving students the tools to be critical thinkers, they will become better prepared to instruct others to become invested citizens of their communities. Education must provide students opportunities to understand the world in which they participate, to transform it (Méndez-Negrete, 2013a). Future teachers must recognize that social transformation will not come by changing the schools, but by cultivating an education that is politicized and simultaneously unlinked to the status quo (Méndez-Negrete & Rodríguez y Gibson, 2014). Change will only come when society transforms the systemic apparatus of schooling into an organic social movement that shares its struggle with the working-class experience (Torres, 2009).

By examining teachers' beliefs, an ideological tracking exists that influences the engagement that teachers provide students, informed by race and social class ethos. Sociohistorical and intersectionality theories argue that social and historical factors must be problematized in relation to privilege, power, and difference, and in the ways in which they are enacted.

Critical theory offers that all human beings are born with their own unique gifts. Within such heightened consciousness, a learner challenges ideology, unmasking power, overcomes alienation, and learns about liberation as facets of democracy (Brookfield, 2004). There is a danger in pedagogical practices that restrict the organic human experience to one of privilege, power, and difference. West (2003) warns, "Nihilism is...the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaningless, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness. This usually results in a numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition towards the world" (p. 596). This is what happens to a person when their schooling experience devalues their self-worth in a world where a person is labeled a failure (Ter Borg, 1988).

We advance the conversation and call for action on the preparation of teacher credential programs to incorporate self-reflexive methodologies that assist future educators in uncovering their prejudices, traumas, and stereotypes (Bartolome, 2004; Graziano, 2008; Licona, 2004). To counter social reproduction within the art of teaching, those who teach must revisit their early socialization, while simultaneously taking account of what is the most sacred for those who aim to become agents of change. This calls for an interrogation of traditional socialization, which is not limited to legacies of religion, family, immigration/migration histories, and education. It also implicates unpacking the trauma associated with the realities of our human experience. Through what Méndez-Negrete (2013b) calls pedagogical *conocimientos*, teachers engage self and other in interaction, as they participate in a collaborative and collective process of knowledge creation. With this approach, future teacher preparation must incorporate a self-reflexive methodology whereby a teacher/learner approach foments understanding about ourselves and others, in which teachers are immersed. The art of teaching must engage critical compassion, empathy, *respeto*, *confianza*, as paths to bridge difference toward critical consciousness. Race, racialized class, gender, and sexuality, among other interstitial spaces, must become central in the preparation of those who desire to create a human connection in the schooling of others.

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