

“Everybody Grieves, but Still Nobody Sees”: Toward a Praxis of Recognition for Latina/o Students in U.S. Schools

LOUIE F. RODRIGUEZ

California State University, San Bernardino

Background/Context: *The academic success and failure of low-income youth, and Black and Latina/o youth in particular, has received significant attention in the educational literature, particularly in relation to school dropout. Over the last decade, several studies have demonstrated that student–teacher relationships, committed teachers, and notions of caring are critical to the success of Latina/o youth. However, high-poverty urban schools are graduating fewer than half of their students, in comparison with about 70% at the national level. There remains a scant body of research, policy, and conceptual frameworks to help address the crisis, popularly deemed the “dropout crisis,” particularly among Latinas/os, the youngest, fastest growing, and lowest educated group in the United States.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *In what ways can and should researchers, practitioners, and policy makers recognize the existence of Latina/o youth? The purpose of the article, contextualized in the theoretical and empirical literature, is to problematize the concept of recognition, particularly for Latina/o youth, and introduce a conceptual framework to understand, examine, and help rectify the crisis facing this population.*

Research Design: *In this conceptual paper, I argue that key stakeholders must recognize the existence of the Latina/o youth by acknowledging their human existence through legitimizing the unequal conditions and struggles they face in school. Educators much engage youth in curricular and pedagogical experiences that seek to raise students’ consciousness through critical thinking and dialogue. This article is focused on the human and interpersonal actions and processes that are necessary to facilitate agency and change among students. Theoretical origins informing recognition are discussed, followed by a contextualized analysis of recognition within the present-day conditions of U.S. schools, particularly for Latina/o youth. I then propose five pedagogies of recognition: relational recognition, curricular recog-*

tion, pedagogical recognition, contextualizing recognition, and transformative recognition. Each form of recognition is situated in the relevant literature.

Conclusions/Recommendations: *This article argues that the proposed pedagogies of recognition need to be enacted to foster the intellectual, academic, and political development of youth, particularly Latina/o youth. Recognition can help educators and scholars understand how the social, political, and economic conditions impact Latina/o youth and helps educators reframe the conceptual bases of their work by challenging them to interrogate the (in)effectiveness of institutional and classroom-level practices. The ultimate goal is to help educators and researchers reconstruct and redefine the purpose of education for Latina/o youth in U.S. schools.*

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

The academic success and failure of low-income youth, and Black and Latina/o youth in particular, has received significant attention in the educational literature, particularly in relation to school dropout (Brown & Rodriguez, 2008; Conchas, 2001; Fine, 1991; Rodriguez, 2009; Rumberger, 2001). It is estimated that struggling schools in high-poverty communities are graduating fewer than half of their students, in comparison with about 70% at the national level (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). For these youth, school quality, community and family dynamics, and the nature of policy implementation and regulation are among the factors associated with dropout or graduation from high school (Brown & Rodriguez; Rumberger). The research also shows that these youth are more likely to attend large, overcrowded schools with unequal resources, face underprepared teachers in the classroom, and experience school cultures with low expectations and blatant racism often evident through unjust disciplinary practices (Advancement Project, 2006; Brown, 2007; Fry, 2003; Kozol, 2005). Such schools serving marginalized youth also dedicate considerable time, resources, and political will to upholding test-centered pedagogies that overemphasize quantifiable outcomes (Rodriguez, 2009), even when the research on best practices shows that such approaches are counterproductive to student achievement (Meier & Wood, 2004). It is also clear that schools are often mirror images of their community contexts, and youth who attend struggling schools often come from racially, economically, and linguistically segregated communities characterized by poverty, violence, and political disenfranchisement (Noguera, 1996).

If we were to begin with an analysis and understanding of this staggering reality, the extent to which the dropout problem is a crisis is a gross understatement. Yet, if someone completely unfamiliar with the field of

education was to peer into the policy world at the local, state, or federal level, he or she would be hard-pressed to find mass activity or mobilization around the topic of dropout. At the level of training and development, if the same person visited any run-of-the-mill college of education across the country, the likelihood of finding evidence of widespread activity around the issue of dropout would be next to nil, particularly in the way future educators are prepared. At the level of research, scant attention has been paid to the matter, and insightful analysis often falls short of reaching the levels of policy and practice. Yet, the evidence before us (concerned stakeholders) is clear. Why youth drop out of school or, in some cases, are pushed out of school is rooted in a deep history of social inequity. This inequity leads to unfortunate yet predictable outcomes that negatively and disproportionately affect poor communities of color. Yet, there is hope.

Over the last decade, several studies have demonstrated the possibilities in spite of the inequity-based challenges present in impoverished schools. Specifically, qualitative studies examining the processes of school for low-income youth of color, and especially Latina/o students, have demonstrated that high expectations, high-quality caring relationships, and dedicated and committed teachers are directly correlated with student engagement, achievement, and success (Bartolomé, 2002; Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). These studies demonstrate that despite the challenges associated with poverty, it is possible to lift every student to his or her highest potential, even in the face of seeming impossibility. But how is this possible? Who does this work, and what does it look like? In a study of the Chicana/o student walkouts of the 1960s, scholars have labeled such educators as “transformative mentors” who surround, inspire, and support youth so that they can enact their own agency as people (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Others have argued that successful teachers with youth of color and English language learners must have political and ideological clarity about the relationship between the society and schooling, and how their own perspectives and beliefs coincide with dominant perspectives in society (Bartolomé). And yet others have discussed how student–teacher relationships and notions of caring are really political constructs that resist or perpetuate social inequality in and beyond schools (Stanton-Salazar; Valenzuela, 1999).

UNVEILING THE HOPE

From all of this, my question has become, What can we do? What role do educators play in the lives of youth facing difficult circumstances? These

questions have evolved from my last 10 years of work as a high school teacher, middle school counselor, researcher, university professor, and advocate for marginalized youth. In particular, during my ethnographic dissertation work in Boston, I found myself in the middle of a large-scale study examining the effects of school structure and culture on academic achievement. With an interest in understanding the veracity of student–adult relationships in high-poverty high schools, I began to observe the degree to which youth are noticed, greeted, and acknowledged, or what I have come to call *recognized*, within the school context. An empirical look at this phenomenon resulted in my dissertation, a book, and several scholarly papers in peer-reviewed journals (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005a, 2008a, 2008b). Yet, these papers and my continued research in urban schools and communities have helped me expand the paradigm of recognition that includes simple forms of recognition (i.e., greeting youth in school) and has blossomed into more complex layers of applying and understanding recognition in low-income schools and communities, particularly with Latina/o youth.

Through the lens of recognition, I argue in this article that key stakeholders must *recognize the existence* of the young people by acknowledging their human existence through legitimizing the unequal conditions and struggles they face in school, by recognizing their potential to act on their own behalf, and by contextualizing their experiences in a larger struggle for voice, identity, and existence for historically marginalized communities in the United States. I also argue in this article that educators must engage youth in curricular and pedagogical experiences that seek to raise students’ consciousness through critical thinking and dialogue-inspiring action to transform the purpose of schooling and education.

As a way to home in on the role that teachers and other important on-the-ground adults play in students’ lives, this article is focused on the human and interpersonal actions and processes that are necessary to facilitate agency and change among students. I argue that various pedagogies of recognition need to be enacted to foster the intellectual, academic, and political development of youth, particularly Latina/o youth. Serving as a “language of possibility” (Freire, 1996), recognition has practical implications that can help educators and scholars understand how and why marginalized youth struggle for their existence. The proposed recognition framework for youth of color in U.S. schools seeks to help educators reframe the theoretical bases of their work by challenging them to interrogate the (in)effectiveness of institutional and classroom-level practices. As stated in the title of this article, Tupac Shakur, the late hip-hop artist, declared that although the myriad of problems and

challenges facing young, poor people of color are “grieved” over by society, those who are grieving still don’t see the problems in the way that he tells the story. That is, even though people are grieving, they still don’t or can’t begin to see the significance of the challenges facing youth. Thus, the proposed framework of recognition in this article can serve as a lens through which to better understand the struggles and challenges facing our country’s most vulnerable populations, such as Latina/o youth, as a way to better serve our youth and forge hope in impoverished communities.

Thus, the proposed pedagogies of recognition are aimed at engaging educators, researchers, and other stakeholders in an exercise by acknowledging the social, political, and economic conditions that plague marginalized communities with substandard schools serving low-income youth of color. The proposed pedagogies of recognition seek to help educators and researchers reconstruct and redefine the purpose of education for Latina/o youth of color in U.S. schools in ways that facilitate “pockets of hope” for social and political change (de los Reyes & Gozemba, 2001). It is my goal to move beyond theorizing. I invite and challenge readers to examine the extent to which recognition is a practice and pedagogy as much as it is a theoretical construct to be used for dialogue and analysis.

First I explore some of the theoretical origins that inform my understanding of recognition, followed by a contextualized analysis of recognition within the present-day conditions of U.S. schools, particularly Latina/o youth. Then I propose a *praxis of recognition* framework for educational theory and practice, and close with a challenge to educators, researchers, and policy makers interested in the well-being of Latina/o youth.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF RECOGNITION

ORIGINS OF RECOGNITION

One can witness the act of recognition in almost any social situation. A simple “good morning” to another person communicates a message that the presence of another is acknowledged. In most cultures, a simple verbal or a physical gesture, such as a nod of the head, may be customary. In schools, the practice of recognition is also common, often through praise. For instance, students with perfect attendance often receive positive recognition from teachers, administrators, and parents. In other situations, teachers call on students who raise their hands in class, or high achievers are recognized and rewarded for their performance. In other instances, recognition can be negative. For example, teachers discipline

and sometimes punish students for not asking permission to get out of their seats. Phone calls home, particularly when they are negative, is another form of recognition. Whether positive or negative, instances of recognition can be inclusive of praise, and it is certainly a common daily practice for educators, especially given the seemingly familiar nature of recognizing students in school.

However, the purpose of this article is to invite educators, researchers, and policy makers to step away from the familiar nature of recognition as described and to challenge the reader to consider an alternative role that recognition plays in the education, particularly the role of recognition when serving Latina/o youth. It is my intention in this article to argue that recognition should indeed be different when considering the challenges facing low-income Latina/o youth.

For the purposes of this article, the notion of recognition involves the process by which two individuals engage in a struggle to recognize the existence of the other. Within the context of schools and for the purpose of this article, this struggle for recognition is in essence a power struggle between teacher (or any school adult) and student. In this article, recognition considers the social, political, historical, cultural, and economic context in which students and teachers interact with one another. Recognition in this article also privileges a consideration of the reform, policy, and research context that directly and indirectly affects daily life in schools, particularly schools in survival mode. Finally, recognition in this article also considers the ways in which Latina/o youth are often stigmatized, pathologized, and criminalized in society and within various institutions that are intended to serve them (Brown & Rodriguez, 2008; Noguera, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999). It is through these lenses that the proposed framework of recognition emerges; because of recognition's everyday occurrence within schools, recognition as a framework "lacks application and specificity" to education (Bingham, 2006, p. 326) and is thus a goal of this article.

RECOGNITION AS IDEA VERSUS RECOGNITION AS ACTION

The concept of recognition has been addressed in the areas of social and political theory. For example, Taylor (1994) used the *politics of recognition* to understand the relationship between dominant and subdominant groups in society. According to Taylor, two types of recognition exist—the politics of universalism (equal dignity to all people) and the politics of difference (due recognition to group difference, i.e., ethnic minority groups). Because the politics of recognition is used to understand the degree to which equal recognition is exercised to all groups, Taylor

argued that recognition is “a vital human need” (p. 26). That is, every group in society *should* be recognized with dignity and respect. However, Taylor’s critics have suggested that the politics of recognition has been underexamined, particularly in socially stratified societies such as the United States (Andersson, 2000).

Multiculturalists in the field of education assert that due recognition should be exercised upon all groups in society. For instance, “school-based movements of multiculturalism, including the efforts of teachers and students to transform curriculum and pedagogy in ways that afford positive recognition to all students” (Bingham, 2006, p. 325), should be a key goal of multicultural education. Although micro-level analyses of recognition, such as those between students and curriculum or even interpersonal relationships, may give researchers a methodological base to examine recognition, equal attention must also be placed on interrogating the institutional power structures that legitimize or deny recognition (Young, 1990).

Though discussions of recognition have been largely absent in education, there are some exceptions in the U.S. context. bell hooks (1994), for example, stated, “one way to build community in the [university] classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice” (p. 40) and “to hear each other (the sound of different voices), to listen to one another, is an exercise in recognition” (p. 41). hooks argued that recognition is fundamentally interpersonal and provides opportunities for individuals to recognize the existence of the other. hooks challenged educators to interrogate the extent to which community building and the recognition of individual voices are practiced within the university classroom. hooks also suggested that a core responsibility of the teacher, or transformative mentor, would be to create conditions in the classroom where recognition can flourish, or what she called “teaching to transgress.”

As hooks primarily addressed issues in higher education, Max van Manen extended an understanding of recognition within the K–12 context of Canada. Van Manen’s “pedagogy of recognition” is a relationally driven pedagogy that aims to facilitate identity formation and consciousness raising for students. Negative recognition, or denying one’s existence, on the other hand, is counterproductive and typically places students in precarious relationships with educators and the school system. To engage in this pedagogy, Van Manen believes that educators should name, know, respect, and celebrate students. Although useful, this pedagogy “has not received systematic or thorough attention and research” (Van Manen, 1996) and has its limitations in the U.S. context, particularly because no mention of race, class, gender, or any other

characteristic of teachers or students has been incorporated into Van Manen's framework.

I believe that an underexamination of recognition within the U.S. context is attributable to several factors. For instance, a discussion of education through the lens of recognition interrogates social and institutional policies, processes, and practices with a critical look at how people coexist—that is, the ways in which educators treat children in school, particularly in the K–12 context. When factors such as race, class, gender, power, and politics arise, the discourse of recognition becomes far more tenuous. On a theoretical level, recognition inspires an analysis of the purpose of education. For example, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) espouses to create an equal footing in education for all children, however, too much emphasis is placed on one's performance on a test, and discussions about the promise of student–teacher relationships, and conversations about equity, justice, and the opportunity to learn, particularly for marginalized communities of color, are typically absent (Fine, Roberts, & Torre, 2004). Recognition has the potential to challenge educators to reflect on the human side of policy compliance and institutional practices, particularly among practitioners and other stakeholders responsible for serving youth, especially Latina/o youth, who often face unique challenges such as housing and family resettlement issues due to migration, language development, and cultural distinctions from mainstream institutional cultures and practices.

Another possible reason that recognition has been sidestepped in the United States is its Western-centered pedagogical approaches best articulated by Urrieta (2003), who stated, “We are faced with the brick walls of Western modes of scholarship that are devoid of the analysis of humanity, more specifically the emotion behind it” (p. 153). In fact, as I reflect on my own struggle to exist as a Chicano student in California's urban public schools, the absence of recognition in my own schooling experiences makes me wonder, What if recognition had been a widely used practice for my friends and me? Yet the overwhelming educational practices and conditions that marginalized youth continue to face today suggest the opposite—that is, an overwhelming absence of recognition in the way I am suggesting in this article: recognition for transformation, liberation, and existence. I recently visited my high school and had a conversation with more than 100 students. I discovered that many Latina/o youth complained about many of the same issues I experienced nearly 20 years earlier. The absence of transformative mentors, then and now, is related to Urrieta's contention that the culture of U.S. society, particularly in Latina/o communities, has yet to allow certain dimensions of our realities (i.e., personal experiences) into the educational sphere, thus

hindering institutions and practitioners in their efforts to reach Latina/o youth.

Thus, Van Manen's (1996) recognition framework provides an analytical framework to understand the plight of Latina/o youth in schools and gives practitioners a theoretical tool to analyze and reflect on their own work. However, in the United States, and particularly in urban schools and communities, a more contextualized analysis is required. That is, although the political theorists mentioned earlier and much of the work of multiculturalists aim to recognize subdominant groups out of principles of dignity and respect, I would argue that some segments of U.S. society may not necessarily see its diversity as an additive characteristic of its national identity (e.g., Arizona's anti-immigrant Senate Bill 1070 criminalizing the presence of Latina/o immigrants). Thus, to more adequately understand how Van Manen's framework can be used in the U.S. context, I provide a Fanonian and critical race theory (CRT) analysis of recognition. First, I draw on Frantz Fanon's concept of recognition, followed by an analysis of the ways in which CRT informs my understanding of recognition in the U.S. context. These analytical lenses privilege a more relevant and nuanced consideration of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of domination—a more relevant analysis of the schooling experiences of Latina/o youth of color in U.S. schools—and thus provides a basis to roll out my proposed pedagogies of recognition in the following section.

A FANONIAN ANALYSIS OF RECOGNITION

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) provide a postcolonial analysis of race and racism in North Africa and serves as a foundation for understanding the application of recognition theory to the experiences of Latina/o youth in the U.S. educational context. (For a historical and general discussion of the theoretical basis of recognition, see Hegel, 1910; Honneth, 1995; and Du Bois, 1903.) Fanon argued that a central factor in the power struggle between master and slave is the battle for recognition—the struggle for one to recognize the existence of the other. This is significant because recognition of one's existence is, in part, recognition of one's humanity. In the case of colonized North Africa, Fanon observed a struggle for recognition between the French colonizers and enslaved Africans. The French colonizer recognized the slave through his labor, however, the colonizer refused to recognize the slave's fundamental existence as a human being. Once the slave was freed, Fanon argued, the colonizer continued to deny the fundamental existence of the slave. However, Fanon argued that recognition

would have been fully exercised had the slaves liberated themselves versus being freed by their masters. Although Fanon's analysis of recognition existed within a context of both physical and mental enslavement, one can argue that the current struggle for equitable schooling, particularly among youth of color, is an evolution of similar oppression. Similar to the colonization process, youth today, particularly Latina/o in segregated schools, are struggling to develop a consciousness about the self in and with the world, a fundamental purpose of recognition.

Fanon's application of the master-slave battle for existence through recognition has interesting implications for understanding social relations of urban schooling in the United States. For example, in the slave's struggle for freedom/liberation, Fanon believed that the slave looked to his master for recognition—that is, the need to be recognized as a free person. However, Fanon also asserted that the slave wanted not only to be recognized as free but also to become the master thirsting for a position of power. Thus, Fanon's notion of recognition encourages the question, To what extent do Latina/o youth yearn for positions of power, such as teacher, storyteller, and theory builder? In what ways would this new social reality challenge conventional power relations between students and teachers in schools? In a Fanonian sense, the students, like the teachers, want to be in a position of power by having their presence, experiences, and knowledge bases legitimized.

Given the realities of urban schooling, particularly with the interpersonal dynamics between students and teachers, the battle for recognition is relevant. As a teacher, researcher, and scholar, I have witnessed numerous instances in which youth of color, specifically Latina/o youth, proclaim their lack of interest toward the curriculum through verbal and spiritual detachment from school, only to have these proclamations fall on deaf ears. In fact, an all-too-common form of recognition that marginalized youth do face is recognition through school exclusion (Brown, 2007) and through policies such as high-stakes testing and zero-tolerance measures that recognize many low-income and youth of color through narrow markers—often as failures or dropouts (Lipman, 2005).

During data collection for my dissertation in various low-income urban high schools, Fanon's notion of recognition began to unfold before my eyes. Conducting research in a large northeastern city notorious for its history of volatile race relations, most public school students were low-income Black and Latina/o students, whereas the teachers were predominantly middle class and White. In this context, there were daily battles of recognition between students and school adults. I observed that students sought to be seen, heard, and legitimized. Students were often openly critical of schooling processes, such as the absence of student voice in

decision-making processes, the irrelevance of curriculum, and low expectations from teachers. These observations not only illuminated how youth were disempowered in school, but also highlighted the degree to which such processes and experiences were a function of both institutional and interpersonal acts of explicit and latent racism. I found that there was a lack of transformative mentors who acknowledged the significance of the role that school played in students' lives. Fanon's analysis provides an argument for the significance of recognition and its role in understanding the power dynamics between school adults and historically marginalized youth. Yet, Fanon's analysis and application of recognition were focused primarily on macro-level race relations in the postcolonial context, not in the context of the U.S. education system. Thus, CRT provides a relevant contextual base to understand recognition's significance for marginalized youth in U.S. schools, particularly because it considers issues of race, racism, and power, specifically in the field of education.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND RECOGNITION

Scholars within the CRT tradition typically outline five core tenets that inform how researchers and practitioners engage in their work, particularly in the field of education (Yosso, 2005). Because Van Manen's (1996) framework excluded race and racism altogether, and Fanon's (1963, 1967) analysis focused on race relations in a nonschool, postcolonial context, CRT privileges a context-specific analysis of recognition in the United States. The five core tenets of CRT are: (1) an examination of the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of oppression, such as sexism, classism, and discrimination by language; (2) an examination of the need to challenge dominant ideologies, particularly those used to explain the experiences of historically marginalized groups; (3) commitment to social justice and transformation; (4) commitment to examining the experiential knowledge bases of marginalized groups; and (5) commitment to engaging in an interdisciplinary analysis of recognition, particularly in the U.S. context (Yosso).

The goal of this section is to discuss how CRT strengthens the applicability of recognition in the U.S. context, particularly in urban schools and communities serving Latina/o youth. Among the many assets associated within the CRT-in-education paradigm, this analysis of recognition will focus on issues of the various forms of oppression (i.e., racism, classism, and so on). In an analysis of recognition, CRT centralizes race and racism by encouraging scholars and practitioners to critically assess who the actors are within the paradigm of recognition, a power analysis of institu-

tional agents, and how the power or powerlessness of each actor coincides with institutional norms and practices.

For instance, CRT challenges conventional explanations of student–teacher engagement in U.S. schools, particularly in contexts in which there are significant cultural differences between students and teachers. Whereas Van Manen’s (1996) framework encourages teachers to recognize all students, and Fanon (1963, 1967) described the power dynamic between the master and slave, CRT encourages a critical examination of assumptions that often drive teachers’ beliefs and practices. For example, in my work with preservice teachers, the significance of relationships and interactions are grossly underplayed, even in the face of empirical research that shows the positive impact that relationships play in the educational experiences of and outcomes for low-income youth of color (Rodriguez, 2008a; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). CRT not only encourages educators to examine why relationships are critical for marginalized youth, but also helps interrogate why relationships are deemed insignificant in the dominant educational discourse. Once educators engage in these important analyses, their role begins to shift from teacher, counselor, and coach to transformative mentor (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). A CRT analysis of recognition encourages educators to see the significance of recognition by understanding and applying how recognition emerges in their own work.

Further, whereas Van Manen’s (1996) recognition framework aims to promote healthy identity development and consciousness-raising among students, the CRT framework raises the question, identity and consciousness for what? Overlapping with Fanon’s (1963, 1967) purpose of recognition, a CRT analysis of recognition urges educators to ask, How can recognition be used for self-determination and social change? To arrive at this possibility, CRT also challenges traditional definitions of knowledge. Whereas Van Manen’s recognition framework encourages the celebration of students, CRT prompts educators to ask, What kinds of experiences do Latina/o students, for instance, bring to school, and to what extent are such experiences legitimized within the school context? This effort can be achieved, in part, by the way CRT privileges a critical understanding of schooling from paradigms that validate and legitimize frameworks that help explain the lived experiences of marginalized groups within the U.S. context (see Yosso’s description of community cultural wealth, 2005). Thus, in an analysis of student–adult relationships in school, notions of respect may need to be analyzed through the ways that respect emerges in students’ families and through interpersonal relationships in communities of color (Yosso).

Thus, CRT provides a critical lens through which to understand how

various forms of oppression (e.g., racism) influence the student–teacher battle for recognition within the schooling process. Moreover, the proposed pedagogy of recognition provides a new framework for practitioners, researchers, and policy makers to consider when understanding their role and that of school in mediating the engagement of Latina/o youth. In fact, the goal of this proposed pedagogy of recognition is to shift the role of teachers, school leaders, counselors, coaches and other school adults to that of a transformative mentor for whom the political role of teachers and teaching is deliberate (hooks, 1994).

The proposed pedagogy of recognition also provides a practical and tangible framework for understanding the impact that practice, process, and policy have on Latina/o youth through five types of recognition: (1) relational recognition, (2) curricular recognition, (3) contextual recognition, (4) pedagogical recognition, and (5) transformative recognition. In the end, it is my hope that all stakeholders can ask, In what ways do I know, relate to, and respect my students (relational recognition)? In what ways does the curriculum reflect the lived realities of the youth I serve (curricular recognition)? In what ways does the social context help me understand the lives and schooling experiences of the students I serve (contextual recognition)? In what ways does power influence the learning and relational environment of the classroom (pedagogical recognition)? Finally, in what ways do all aspects of the educational endeavor live up to principles of justice and transformation (transformative recognition)? Following is a more articulated discussion of each form of recognition.

TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF RECOGNITION FOR YOUTH OF COLOR IN THE UNITED STATES

RELATIONAL RECOGNITION

Relational recognition involves the ways in which Latina/o youth are seen, named, greeted, and acknowledged within the school context.

The research on student–adult relationships in urban schools is expansive, with particular significance given to Latina/o youth (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008; Nieto, 1999; Pianta, Stuhlman, & Hamre, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). The centrality of care (Noddings, 1992; Walker, 1996) and being known (Rodriguez, 2008a); the role of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002); and the emphasis of respect (Rodriguez, 2005b, 2008b) on the development, sustainability, and impact of school-based relationships for Latina/o youth are vital to stu-

dent engagement, learning, and achievement. The research also shows that one's social network of resources (Stanton-Salazar) and relationships can serve as a gateway to meaningful teaching and learning (Nieto) and is particularly critical for Latina/o youth (Valenzuela, 1999). Yet, the in-school experiences of Latina/o youth overwhelmingly suggest otherwise (Conchas, 2001; Conchas & Rodriguez; Fine, 1986; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Student disengagement and dropout rates among Latina/o youth suggest that many do not feel cared for or known personally and that they are frequently alienated from the schooling process (Calabrese & Poe, 1990; Rodriguez, 2008b).

In the highly acclaimed ethnography of youth's experience in high school, Valenzuela (1999) described instances in which Mexican-origin students were automatically dismissed because of their physical appearance. Mexican-origin students typically wore baggy pants that teachers associated with not caring about school. The White students, on the other hand, typically sported the "preppy look," which was associated with school engagement. Valenzuela's study suggests that a student's physical appearance in many ways dictates the degree to which he or she is acknowledged or recognized in school. In this case, students were racially and culturally profiled and subsequently denied an equal opportunity to learn.

During data collection for my dissertation, I spent numerous hours shadowing youth of color, especially Latina/o youth in urban high schools. Some of these high schools were enormous, housing thousands of students; enrollment often exceeded building capacity. In hours and hours of observations, there were few striking moments of meaningful student-adult interactions inside and outside the classroom (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008). In contrast, in some of the smaller high schools, I frequently witnessed teachers and administrators calling students by name, sometimes inquiring about an important event in the student's life, or simply asking, "How's your brother doing?" These gestures were simple and seemed almost commonsensical. Yet, across both settings, there were always students who slipped through the social cracks of school. Whereas high-achieving and socially outgoing students seemed to command attention from school adults, the low and middle achievers and more introverted students often went unnoticed, as long as they did not cause disruption or dissent too loudly (Fine, 1987). The question I often asked was, In what ways, if any, are these students recognized in school? Were the students recognized as learners and students, and to what degree were they recognized as people? I often wondered to what degree the missed opportunities were a function of school structure, school culture, or an educator's inability to acknowledge the power that recognition

could play in his or her particular school context. Nonetheless, the absence of recognition begged the need to more vigorously acknowledge the possibilities associated with basic forms of human recognition, such as saying, “good morning,” particularly to youth whose educational opportunities have been historically limited and who rely on school to open doors of hope and possibility.

Most recently, I have been engaged in a participatory action research project at a pervasively failing high school in a large metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. After engaging a classroom of students in a discussion about the various problems in urban schools, such as the impact of standardized testing, peer pressure, and low teacher expectations, I asked, “What kinds of teachers do we want to see in our classrooms?” Students interjected, “We want teachers that inspire us,” “motivate us,” “support us.” One 19-year-old 11th grader, “Lorenzo,” stated, “I just want a teacher to say, ‘good job.’” He continued, “My sister always gets good grades and positive notes from her teachers. And my parents are always getting on me about this. For the first time of my life, a teacher wrote me a note in an earlier class today that said, ‘Good job today.’” The students in the class sat stoically, as I did. For more than a decade in the public school system, Lorenzo simply wanted an adult in school to recognize him by acknowledging his existence and performance for a minor academic accomplishment. I could not help but wonder what role his tall stature, dark skin, gold teeth, and baggy pants played in his schooling experiences thus far. CRT and the findings from Valenzuela’s (1999) study suggest that these factors are centrally related to the way Lorenzo has been narrowly recognized over the years.

Thus, relational recognition challenges educators to reconceptualize the ways in which we think of “good” and “bad” students and urges an interrogation as to how Latina/o youth are treated in school. Before we pass judgment on a student based on the way he or she looks, we should be asking ourselves about the degree to which we greet students, whether we know their names, and in what ways we know them. Although the literature on caring has been well theorized (Noddings, 1992), relational recognition suggests that before caring for, respecting, and knowing students is possible, we should be asking educators and scholars, How, if at all, do we even *see* Latina/o youth within the school context? Is Lorenzo recognized as a thug, and does he resemble someone who is disengaged from school anyway, or is he a young person who is finding his way through a complex school system and merely wants teachers to facilitate opportunities to excel for school success and self-determination? Educators who practice relational recognition acknowledge the significance of relationships in student engagement and achievement and are

willing to enact the simple yet critical gestures of acknowledgement, like the one experienced by Lorenzo, that many youth require but are often deprived of within the school context.

CURRICULAR RECOGNITION

Curricular recognition considers the ways in which the knowledge and experiences of Latina/o youth are affirmed, validated, and legitimized within the school context.

Analyzing recognition through the lens of CRT also promotes an analysis of the knowledge and experiences that Latina/o youth bring to the school context. Because of the cultural incongruence between Latina/o youth and the White middle-class culture of schools, there is a pervasive struggle over whose knowledge and experiences count. In other words, whose culture has capital (see Yosso, 2005)? That is, whose knowledge and experiences speak to the truth in the school context? Legitimizing the knowledge and experiences of Latina/o youth can be a contested battle in most school contexts, especially with educators who often believe that knowledge exists in district- and state-mandated curriculum and textbooks—materials that are often disconnected from, and irrelevant to, students' lives.

The struggle to define, create, and own knowledge has been well researched and theorized in the educational literature. Knowledge is a controversial topic laden with social realities of power, control, and privilege (Apple, 1995). Macedo (1994) argued that U.S. culture deliberately stupidifies its citizens by defining knowledge and masking the truth through various forms of control and deception. Ladson-Billings (2000) contended that epistemologies of people of color have been largely discounted in theory, research, and practice (and youth as well; see Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). Valencia and Solórzano (1997) have challenged the traditionally deficit-oriented paradigms that continue to define communities of color, and Yosso (2005) encouraged scholars to look at communities of color as culturally wealthy, possessing various forms of capital that are used to navigate communities and institutions. Finally, Moll et al.'s (1992) "funds of knowledge" theory has fundamentally challenged how pre- and in-service teachers engage in their definitions of knowledge and has produced a pedagogical alternative to conventional, deficit-oriented views, particularly toward Latina/o students and communities. These scholars posit that despite the dominant White power structure that continues to control policies and structures of education that shape knowledge, people of color, and Latinas/os

specifically, have always asserted and created their own theories and spaces to reconstruct knowledge most applicable and relevant to the social realities of their communities (Anzaldúa, 1987).

These perspectives encourage an analysis of traditional forms of knowledge construction and legitimization in U.S. schools and place value on the capital that Latina/o youth bring to the school context. Youth of color, and Latina/o youth in particular, bring a complex set of skills for analyzing, theorizing, and predicting realities in their communities and in the world, but institutional policies and practices often fail to legitimize students' knowledge and experiences as their true reality. For example, Latina/o youth across the nation are staggered by the racial undertones embedded within Arizona's SB 1070. A denial of their assessment is an act that delegitimizes their knowledge and experiences. Reasons for this denial may be related to the structure of certain forms of knowledge within conventional curriculum materials, or by the way a teacher refuses to believe that such realities actually exist in students' communities. Not only does this lack of recognition completely overlook any possibility of using the students' analysis as an opportunity to engage youth in the classroom, but it is also a misuse of power and abuse of institutional authority that only further marginalizes Latina/o youth from a just educational experience.

Curricular recognition is also a process by which Latina/o youth are the creators of curriculum. On a recent participatory action research project, I engaged a classroom of students in a dialogue about what new teachers should know before they enter the profession. This dialogue was in preparation for a formal presentation to be delivered to a class of pre-service teachers at a local university (Rodriguez, 2009). The student engagement during these dialogues is indescribable. It seems that for the first time, students' experiences as "students" are legitimized through their perspectives, stories, and experiences as knowledge. In this sense, students are recognized as intellectuals, a position that unfortunately is rare in schools serving Latina/o youth. In other words, students are recognized because their knowledge base is validated within the classroom, transforming the relationship between student and knowledge and between student and teacher/classroom. Throughout this research project, students' experiences were frequently publicized in the classroom and used as themes that were woven into dialogue and ongoing projects throughout the school year. These exercises demonstrate that curricular recognition is far beyond isolated lessons on Black and Brown heroes of the past—curricular recognition provides opportunities for youth to create and own the content themselves. Once their perspectives and knowledge bases are legitimized, students are validated as storytellers, theory

builders, and intellectuals, and more likely to engage with the learning process. Institutions and practitioners who practice curricular recognition see knowledge as a complex and politicized tool that has been used historically to exclude and marginalize Latina/o youth in U.S. schools.

CONTEXTUALIZING RECOGNITION

Contextualizing recognition considers the ways in which Latina/o youth are recognized within their social context as a means of understanding their experiences in school and beyond.

Contextualizing recognition considers the social, political, historical, and economic conditions that low-income, linguistically diverse Latina/o youth face in the school and social context. Because the social context directly impacts school life, contextualizing recognition challenges institutions and educators to examine how various factors impact student learning, student engagement, and opportunities to learn within and beyond the school context.

The literature that critically examines education within the larger context of the political economy is particularly useful in understanding contextualizing recognition. For instance, the connection between capitalist society and the function of schools is central to examining the challenges within them (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Urban education scholars have provided scathing critiques of the political and policy environments that perpetuate inequitable opportunities, particularly for low-income communities of color (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Kozol, 2005; Mirón, 1996). Within urban contexts, scholars have examined how the political and economic conditions of cities mis(represent) or disregard schools through social policy and political agendas and directly impact parent engagement, community organizing, and school violence (Noguera, 2003). At the school level, scholars have also documented how schools perpetuate societal inequality by tracking students by race, class, and linguistic difference (Mosqueda, 2007; Oakes, 1985), by systematically structuring opportunities for students by race, class, and immigration status (Conchas, 2001), and by actively pushing students out of school (Fine, 1987; Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008).

Although the aforementioned research has influenced a critical examination of the role that context plays in schools, the realities that cause social inequality often lose their significance in the everyday functioning of schooling, particularly for practitioners. That is, although inequity at the school level is known to be directly linked to larger forces beyond the control of schools, explanations of educational inequality are framed

through the deficit perspective, with a focus on “failing” students and their communities (Solórzano & Valencia, 1997). It is imperative that institutions and educators engage in an ongoing analysis of the context in which students attend school, particularly Latina/o youth, who are among the most likely to attend volatile environments that include overcrowding, overemphasis on student surveillance, and segregation by race and class (Fry, 2003; Orfield, 2004).

To engage in these analyses, educators need political and ideological clarity by assessing how their own personal, political, and intellectual experiences, especially race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, influence their beliefs and practices as educators in schools (Bartolomé 1994, 2002). Political clarity in an ongoing analysis of understanding how the social, political, and economic structures of society relate to schooling, whereas ideological clarity is a continual assessment of society’s explanations of social, political, and economic hierarchies to their own (Bartolomé, 2002). Like political and ideological clarity, contextualizing recognition seeks to utilize the realities of schooling as a basis for guiding institutions and educators in understanding and engaging with their students.

Contextualizing recognition also involves a process in which Latina/o youth are given opportunities to analyze, understand, and challenge the realities within their social context in order to transform the conditions that actively work to marginalize their existence. To do this work, institutions and educators must recognize the contextual factors that may contribute to a student’s absenteeism, for example. While engaged in a high-school based research project, I inquired about a habitually absent student. Often, such students (or parents) are accused of deprioritizing or devaluing education. However, when I applied contextualizing recognition by actively inquiring about this particular student’s situation, I learned that the student faced a relatively serious medical condition, which explained his absences from school. A deeper understanding of his reality revealed that his low-income status and absence of health care began to paint a more complex picture of his life. I also learned that there was an absence of social services in his community, and the national anti-immigrant climate contributed to his family’s reluctance to seek medical help. Thus, institutions and educators practicing contextualizing recognition acquire a more complex understanding of students and the challenges they face, particularly for the purposes of responding more favorably to each student’s individual needs so that his or her experiences in school are filled with opportunities rather than barriers.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOGNITION

Pedagogical recognition considers the degree to which the pedagogical processes of schooling reflect the realities of Latina/o youth.

If institutions and educators recognize the existence of Latina/o youth in marginalized schools through relational, curricular, and contextualizing recognition, it is highly likely that they are already driven toward political and pedagogical principles that seek to transform the lives of Latina/o youth. However, in what ways can educators engage Latina/o youth in deliberate projects for social and political change?

Pedagogical recognition encourages processes in which educators can act *with* Latina/o youth for positive personal, political, and social change, within schools and beyond. Pedagogical recognition incites institutions and educators to advocate for students, and, more important, to forge opportunities for students to advocate for themselves, similar to ways that “transformative mentors” did during the student walkouts in 1968 (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Transformative mentors recognize their students by identifying, analyzing, deconstructing, and seeking the “codes of power” that shape the nature of schools (Delpit, 1996) and use classrooms and schools as social spaces of resistance, identity formation, and hope (Lauria & Mirón, 2005). Within pedagogical recognition, political education and transformation are also deliberately sought by questioning the policies and practices of the very institutions that serve marginalized communities (Woodson, 1933). For instance, in the spirit of political transformation, Freire’s problem-posing method can be used to engage students in processes that work to raise graduation rates among Latina/o students through identifying the factors that contribute to student dropout, analyzing the possible causes, and brainstorming solutions (Rodríguez, 2004; Solórzano, 1989). Outside the school context, institutions and educators can encourage students to investigate community concerns such as segregation, gentrification, community services, or community violence (Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2009; Oakes & Rogers, 2006). These efforts deliberately encourage students not only to politicize their realities by understanding the current and historical discourse around particular issues, but also to engage for the purposes of raising their own critical consciousness and taking action for social and political justice.

The goal of this kind of pedagogical engagement is to complicate traditional understandings of Latina/o youth engagement in and with school. Through pedagogical recognition, institutions and educators not

only demonstrate creative and courageous teaching pedagogies with Latina/o youth, but also fundamentally provide opportunities to disrupt orthodoxal relations of power within schools and beyond (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). Pedagogical recognition not only encourages Latina/o youth to earn their power within the context of the curriculum, but also challenges the ways in which students relate to one another and to teachers. For example, student–adult relationships may need to be viewed as partnerships in which trust and respect are mutual and reciprocal. This type of engagement disrupts traditional power dynamics in which teachers exist *over* students and demonstrates to students that teachers could be learners *with* students. During a session in my high school-based research project, a student asked, “Can we leave 15 minutes early? After all, isn’t this a participatory effort?” Rather than denying the student’s request, I engaged the entire class in a dialogue about the implications of this request, legitimizing students’ perspectives, and used this as a transparent and pedagogical moment to discuss power and power sharing. At the end of the conversation, students collectively agreed that leaving early for lunch is counterproductive to the goal of the research project. This type of relational engagement requires that institutions and educators embrace a degree of risk-taking and courageous will so that educators begin “to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students” (hooks, 1994, p. 13).

Another way that pedagogical recognition is practiced is by transforming Latina/o students’ familiarity with critical perspectives in education. For example, during my high school-based research project, youth were exposed to various forms of educational theories to explain the conditions that resonated with their lives. After becoming conversant with CRT according to Daniel Solórzano; social class according to Jean Anyon; the culture of power according to Lisa Delpit; the politics of education according to Paulo Freire; and social reproduction according to Jay MacLeod, students identified key experiences in school that related to the theoretical explanations provided in the readings. The students then made a presentation to a class of preservice teachers at a local university to demonstrate their learning of and expertise in college- and graduate-level course content in a college classroom. This type of pedagogical recognition both repositioned the high school students as experts in relation to the college classroom and demonstrated to the preservice teachers that marginalized youth can engage in critical college-level idea sharing.

Pedagogical recognition also models novel forms of learning and accountability, particularly in a standards-based and test-centered climate. The post-NCLB context has led to an absence of genuine relational

and intellectual engagement for students, particularly in the most marginalized schools (Rodriguez, 2009; Meier & Wood, 2004). In these schools, marginalized students, Latina/o youth in particular, are among the most in need of inspiring, motivating, and revolutionary pedagogies. Therefore, institutions and educators must be at the vanguard in challenging conventional forms of learning (i.e., standardized tests) and demonstrate how alternative forms of learning and accountability can be achieved (e.g., art, poetry, dialogue, and so on). Institutions and educators practicing pedagogical recognition can revolutionize the role of teacher to that of transformative mentor by acting on the theories and ideas that inform transformative teaching.

TRANSFORMATIVE RECOGNITION

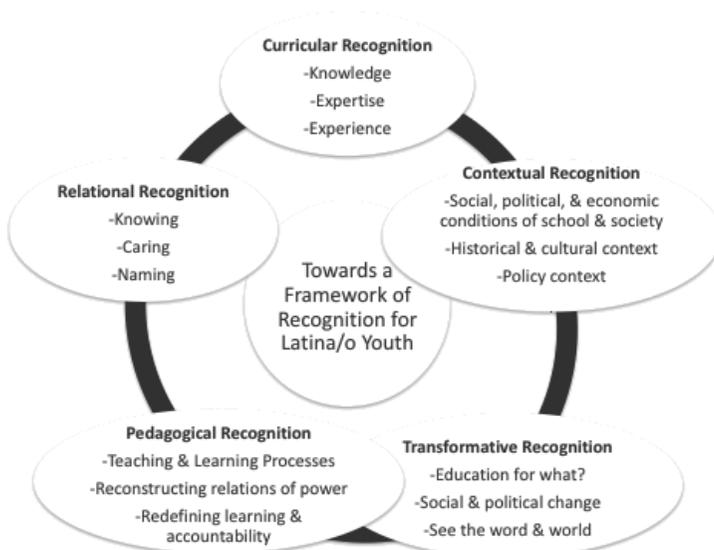
Transformative recognition is an ongoing process in which justice-seeking projects are central to the educational process, and questions are forged about the purpose of education.

The final principle of recognition coincides with CRT's commitment to liberatory and transformative efforts toward social justice. Drawing on the social diffusion theory (Rogers, 1962), which is used to understand how ideas or actions disperse through society, *transformative recognition* encourages institutions and educators to constantly interrogate the purposes and goals of their policies, processes, and practices. That is, education for the purposes of what? Lisa Delpit (1995) posed the following question when discussing the role of educators and institutions serving marginalized populations: "Education, literacy—for whom, for what purpose, toward what end?" (p. 78). Further, hooks (1994) challenged educators to examine the degree to which they "teach to transgress" for the purposes of liberation. Similarly, Woodson (1933) challenged stakeholders to engage in political processes to serve, with social change as the end result. Finally, Bob Moses, civil rights leader and founder of the Algebra Project, encouraged grassroots mobilization for educational, economic, and political rights, specifically among Black, Latino, and Native American groups in the United States (Normore, 2006).

Whereas pedagogical recognition challenges educators to interrogate the pedagogical modes of engagement between Latina/o students, teachers, and curriculum for the purposes of transforming relations of power and learning in the classroom, transformative recognition challenges institutions and educators to examine how education coincides with larger goals for social change and liberation. If educators understand that factors such as relationships, curriculum, social context, and

pedagogy are vital to Latina/o student engagement and achievement in school, then the purpose of education should indeed look different for this population. This is particularly important when the education research shows that these factors, when exercised counterproductively, are directly associated with student failure (e.g., high-stakes testing), not to mention that marginalized students are most likely to rely on schooling as the one possible experience that may help them escape poverty and envision a promising future (Noguera, 2003). Thus, successfully passing a statewide standardized test is just one necessary hoop to jump through but means very little in determining one's preparation for college or life. Institutions and educators must be willing to recognize that for the most marginalized children, education should really be both about reading the word and the world (Freire, 1970). This means that Latina/o youth must be literate beyond any high-stakes test, must be academically competitive to excel in challenging situations, and must be equipped with the critical skills to connect their realities with the larger influences of school, community, and society for self-determination. Institutions and educators who practice transformative recognition encourage students and communities to recognize the connections between individual teacher practices, micro- and macro-policies, and the processes that Latina/o youth face in the school system with the overall question, education for purposes of what? Figure 1 summarizes each

Figure 1. The Five Pedagogies of Recognition for Latina/o Youth



proposed form of recognition encompassing a praxis of recognition for youth of color in U.S. schools.

DISCUSSION

This article has attempted to reframe the way institutions, educators, and researchers conceptualize their understanding of Latina/o youth in low-income schools and communities. For the reason that schooling is inherently a sociopolitical phenomenon, the ways in which people interact with one another within the various domains of education are vital to the success or failure of institutions, teachers, and students, particularly those functioning within the harshest and seemingly impossible conditions (Anyon, 2005). Most significant, the proposed praxis of recognition discussed herein has direct implications for the ways in which schools respond to top-down policy mandates such as high-stakes standardized testing, for how schools can prevent student disengagement, and for how schools can intervene and prevent school dropout, particularly among the Latina/o population, which is represented among the lowest levels of educational attainment.

The proposed praxis of recognition also encourages educators and researchers to question sweeping assumptions that are frequently made about the experiences of Latina/o children, particularly in large-city school districts. For instance, we should not assume that Latina/o youth are acknowledged in school. We should not assume that Latina/o youth are greeted or that adults know their names. We should not assume that the voices and experiences of Latina/o youth are validated within the school context. We should not assume that Latina/o youth leave their communities behind when they enter the classroom. We should not assume that all educators understand that the promises and possibilities promoted by a free public education are often a life or death matter for countless Latina/o youth. To regulate these assumptions, institutions, educators, and researchers can benefit from a set of counterassumptions facilitated in part through the proposed praxis of recognition in this article.

Relational recognition demonstrates that within rigid climates of accountability through testing, student–adult relationships are typically sidestepped, particularly in contexts in which the research suggests that relationships are particularly vital for student engagement. Institutions, educators, and scholars should assume that Latina/o youth, like all youth, benefit from meaningful relationships that begin when teachers say, “Good morning, Lorenzo. I’m glad you are here today. By the way, good work yesterday.” Yet, beyond the urban context, relational recognition is

also relevant to Latina/o youth in any setting where their disposition is not perceived as the norm. Students with disabilities, English language learners, immigrants, gay/lesbian/bisexual youth, and students who identify with alternative forms of music, art, and culture can also benefit from relational recognition. The onslaught of mass shootings on high school and college campuses highlights the significance of recognizing all students.

Curricular recognition encourages institutions and educators to examine the degree to which the knowledge and experiences of Latina/o youth can serve as legitimate forms of cultural wealth by transforming students into true experts of their own experiences, particularly experiences that are ignored within the school context (Yosso, 2005). *We should assume that Latina/o youth are ready to engage in rich intellectual activities, particularly when the content is directly relevant to their lives.* For example, Latina/o immigrant youth can document their experiences using photo or video, particularly in light of recent federal and state immigration legislation and the subsequent backlash against immigrants across the country. Because the typical White middle-class culture of schools subtracts the realities that Latina/o youth face in the community and the world (Valenzuela, 1999), curricular recognition urges educators and researchers to examine how various forms of social subordination mediate the ways that their knowledge and experience are validated within the classroom and school context.

Contextualizing recognition urges educators to connect Latina/o students' dispositions and engagement with school to the social context for the purposes of transgressing the dominant paradigms that students experience today (i.e., school–community disconnection). The education community needs to focus on a more additive paradigm that recognizes Latina/o communities to be used as a catalyst for change (Solórzano, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005). *We should assume that Latina/o youth bring a wealth of experiences and expect schools to capitalize on these experiences.* Latina/o youth navigate various contexts and systems for themselves and their families, and such experiences require a degree of skill and knowledge that is rarely validated in the school context because it may not be considered “official” curriculum. For example, understanding how transportation to and from school may shape a student's disposition is an exercise in contextual recognition.

Pedagogical recognition is exercised through creative and courageous pedagogies that stem from, and are shaped by, students' experiences in schools, the values they place on particular knowledge and experiences, and how these experiences and life lessons interact within the larger social context. *We should assume that Latina/o youth want to teach about their*

experiences. At this level, recognition is both a practice and pedagogy, given that it challenges existing theories and practices within the classroom by demanding a more suitable accountability system for marginalized youth, Latina/o youth in particular. For instance, educators and researchers should stimulate dialogue that examines how educators advocate for marginalized youth, how educators struggle *with* students, and understand the degree to which educators work toward consciousness-raising so that students realize their position in the world and fight for social justice. If pedagogical recognition is practiced, schools and the educators within them need to determine how recognizing and legitimizing the knowledge and experiences of young people may disrupt and transform the social relations of power typically found in schools.

Finally, transformative recognition urges educators and researchers to ask, recognition and education for the purposes of what? *We should assume that Latina/o youth, particularly those who have been subjected to years of social, cultural, political, and intellectual alienation, are ready for a new kind of pedagogical experience in U.S. schools.* Marginalized youth who live in the most marginalized conditions in many ways need to be recognized by school and educators, both for the purposes of easing the transition from community to school, and as a simple gesture of human dignity.

All five forms of recognition encompass a larger proposed framework for a praxis of recognition, suggesting that until revolutionary structural changes are adopted, institutions and educators can and should recognize their role in forging change from the ground up. I deliberately use the term *praxis* to convey the notion that recognition is not solely a framework, nor is it simply a practical exercise. Rather, the proposed forms of recognition are a blend of merging a working framework with practice that is political, pedagogical, and practical. Further, this proposed framework is far more than just advocating for individual teacher activism in the classroom. That is, although the praxis of recognition can facilitate the ways in which teachers engage in the daily practices on the ground level by engaging in critical reflection and asking critical questions of their practices, this pedagogy is also meant to spark debate among educators, researchers, and intellectuals who may dream of ways to create conditions in schools and universities that lead to cultures of recognition that impact classrooms, schools, and communities—especially in today’s tumultuous and contentious climate surrounding immigration, language, testing, and debates around equity and education reform. It is also my hope that readers may create their own forms of recognition, build on this proposed framework, and apply it to other marginalized populations. In this respect, the proposed praxis of recognition advocates both interpersonal and relational change as much as structural and

cultural change at the policy and institutional levels. It is believed that educators (and researchers) must be given opportunities to apply, practice, and reflect on their praxis of recognition to appreciate its relevance to Latinas/os and other historically marginalized youth in U.S. schools. Educators are at the vanguard of a movement *to recognize*, and it is in a context of deliberate gestures of recognition that educators may grow to appreciate and experience the possibilities associated with the praxis of recognition in and beyond the classroom.

In closing, the title of this article, “Everybody Grieves, But Still Nobody Sees,”¹ Tupac’s depiction of life in the nation’s roughest communities, serves as a pedagogical challenge to institutions and educators dedicated to the transformation of society. This challenge is particularly critical in a time in this nation’s history when the purpose of education has been reduced to “test-prep pedagogy” in which test preparation and rubrics have replaced relationships, respect, and true reform (Rodriguez, 2009). Before schools and educators begin to find ways to boost student achievement, we need to first recognize the existence of youth (and educators for that matter) in schools and society. In one of his lyrics, Tupac states,

Oh my Lord, tell me what I’m livin for
Everybody’s droppin got me knockin on heaven’s door
And all my memories, of seen brothers bleed
And everybody grieves, but still nobody sees
Recollect your thoughts don’t get caught up in the mix
Cause the media is full of dirty tricks

Tupac suggests that although the problems associated with marginalized communities, like the proliferation of drugs and addiction, incidences of violence, and its impact on children, are known and, in a sense, *grieved* over, he questions the extent to which such issues are truly *seen*, particularly by the stakeholders. Therefore, one can ask, What will it take to stop grieving and start to see the problem? Through the proposed praxis of recognition discussed herein, researchers, educators, and policy makers can begin to transform how schools respond to the voices, experiences, and dreams of Latina/o and other marginalized youth. Perhaps through recognition, we may be able to see, and thus forge a new reality for, the nation’s youngest, fastest growing, and potentially largest student population in U.S. public schools.

Note

1. Excerpt from Tupac Shakur, “Only God Can Judge Me.”

References

- Advancement Project. (2006, Spring). *Arresting development: Addressing the school discipline crisis in Florida*. Report prepared by Florida State Conference NAACP, Advancement Project, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.
- Andersson, M. (2000). *The situated politics of recognition: Ethnic minority, youth and identity work*. London: University of London.
- Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. New York: Routledge.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The new Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Apple, M. (1995). *Cultural politics and education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bartolomé, L. (1994). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64, 173–194.
- Bartolomé, L. (2002). Creating and equal playing field: Teachers as advocates, border crossers, and cultural brokers. In Z. F. Beykont (Ed.), *The power of culture: Teaching across language difference* (pp. 167–191). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education.
- Bingham, C. (2006). Before recognition, and after: The educational critique. *Educational Theory*, 56, 325–344.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brown, T. (2007). Lost and turned out: Academic, social, and emotional experiences of students excluded from school. *Urban Education*, 42, 432–454.
- Brown, T. M., & Rodriguez, L. F. (2008). School and the co-construction of dropout. *International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22, 221–242.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Calabrese, R. L., & Poe, J. (1990). Alienation: An explanation of high dropout rates among African American and Latino students. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 14(4), 22–26.
- Cammarota, J., & Romero, A. (2006). A critically compassionate intellectualism for Latina/o students: Raising voices above the silencing in our schools. *Multicultural Education*, 14(1), 2–10.
- Conchas, G. Q. (2001). Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71, 475–504.
- Conchas, G. Q., & Rodriguez, L. F. (2008). *Small schools and urban youth: Using the power of school culture to engage students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- de los Reyes, E., & Gozember, P. A. (2001). *Pockets of hope: How students and teachers change the world*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Delpit, L. (1996). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Duncan-Andrade, J., & Morrell, E. (2009). *The art of critical pedagogy. Possibilities of moving from theory to practice in urban schools*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of Black folk*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fine, M. (1986). Why urban adolescents drop into and out of public high school. *Teachers College Record*, 87, 393–409.
- Fine, M. (1987). Silencing in public schools. *Language Arts*, 64, 157–174.

- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban high school*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Fine, M., Roberts, R. A., & Torre, M. E. (with Bloom, J., Burns, A., Chajet, L., & Guishard, M., & Payne, Y.) (2004). *Echoes of Brown: Youth documenting and performing the legacy of Brown v. Board of Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Freire, P. (1996). *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on my life and work*. New York: Routledge.
- Fry, R. (2003). *Hispanic youth dropping out of U.S. schools: Measuring the challenge*. Retrieved from <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/19.pdf>
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1910). *The phenomenology of the mind*. New York: Macmillan.
- Honneth, A. (1995). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York: Crown Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 257–277). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lauria, M., & Mirón, L. F. (2005). *Urban schools: The new social spaces of resistance*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Lipman, P. (2005). *High-stakes education: Inequality, globalization, and school reform*. New York: Routledge/Falmer.
- Macedo, D. (1994). *Literacies of power: What Americans are not allowed to know*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Meier, D., & Wood, G. (2004). *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and schools*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mirón, L. F. (1996). *The social construction of urban schooling: Situating the crisis*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31, 132–141.
- Mosqueda, E. (2007). *English proficiency, tracking, and the mathematics achievement of Latino English learners*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.
- Nieto, S. (1999). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noguera, P. A. (1996). Confronting the urban in urban school reform. *Urban Review*, 28(1), 1–19.
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). *City school and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Normore, A. H. (2006). From a pivotal civil rights activist to radical equations: Grassroots leadership and lessons for educational leaders. A conversation with Robert Moses. *UCEA Review, University Council of Educational Administration*, 68(1), 19–22.
- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Oakes, J., & Rogers, J. (2006). *Learning power: Organizing for education and justice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Orfield, G. (2004). *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.
- Orfield, G., Losen, D., Wald, J., & Swanson, C. (2004). *Losing our future: How minority youth are being left behind by the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. Contributors: Urban Institute, Advocates for Children of New York, and the Civil Society Institute.
- Pianta, R. C., Stuhlman, M. W., & Hamre, B. K. (2002). How schools can do better: Fostering stronger connections between teachers and students. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 93, 91–107.
- Rodriguez, L. F. (2004). Latinos and school reform: Voice, action, and agency. *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, 3(2), 38–39.
- Rodriguez, L. F. (2005a). *Struggling to recognize their existence: The battle for recognition in two urban high schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.
- Rodriguez, L. F. (2005b). Yo, mister! An alternative urban high school offers lessons on respect. *Educational Leadership*, 62(7), 78–80.
- Rodriguez, L. F. (2008a). Struggling to recognize their existence: Student-adult relationships in the urban high school context. *Urban Review*, 40, 436–453.
- Rodriguez, L. F. (2008b). “Teachers know you can do more”: Manufacturing deliberate cultures of success for urban high school students. *Educational Policy*, 22, 758–780.
- Rodriguez, L. F. (2009). Over-coming test prep pedagogy: Getting urban high school students to educate pre-service teachers using liberatory pedagogy. *The Sophist’s Bane: The Journal of The Society of Professors of Education*.
- Rodriguez, L. F., & Brown, T. M. (2009). Engaging youth in participatory action research for education and social transformation. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 123, 19–34.
- Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovation*. New York: Free Press.
- Rumberger, R. W. (2001, January). *Why students drop out of school and what can be done*. Paper presented at the conference Dropouts in America: How Severe Is the Problem? What Do We Know About Intervention and Prevention? Cambridge, MA. Sponsored by Achieve, Inc., and the Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.
- Solórzano, D. (1989). Teaching and social change: Reflections on a Freirean approach in a college classroom. *Teaching Sociology*, 17, 218–225.
- Solórzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24, 5–19.
- Solórzano, D., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Critical race theory, transformational resistance and social justice: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36, 308–342.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2001). *Manufacturing hope and despair: The school and kin support networks of U.S.-Mexican youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In D. T. Goldberg (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: A critical reader* (pp. 75–106). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Urrieta, L., Jr. (2003). Las identidades también lloran/identities also cry: Exploring the human side of Latina/o indigenous identities. *Educational Studies*, 34, 147–168.
- Valencia, R., & Solórzano, D. (1997). Contemporary deficit thinking. In R. Valencia’s (Ed.), *The evolution of deficit thinking in educational thought and practice* (pp. 160–210). New York: Falmer Press.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Van Manen, M. (1996). *The pedagogy of recognition*. Retrieved from <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/max/projects/hsrecogn.html>

- Walker, V. S. (1996). Can institutions care? Evidence from the segregated school of African American children. In M. J. Shujaa (Ed.), *Beyond desegregation: The quality of African American schooling* (pp. 209–226). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Wehlage, G. G., & Rutter, R. A. (1986). Dropping out: How much do schools contribute to the problem? *Teachers College Record*, 87, 374–392.
- Woodson, C. (1933). *The miseducation of the Negro*. Washington, DC: Associated Publishers.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

LOUIE F. RODRIGUEZ is currently an assistant professor at California State University, San Bernardino. His research focuses on school culture and dropout, equity and access issues in urban schools and communities, and youth engagement. He is the author of *Small Schools and Urban Youth: Using the Power of School Culture to Engage Students* (2007) and “Dialoguing, Cultural Capital, and Student Engagement” (2009) in *Equity and Excellence in Education*.