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After School Programs: Space For Caring and Community Cultural Wealth

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After School Programs: Spaces for Caring and Community Cultural Wealth

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

by
Stacey Krywaruczenko
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After School Programs: Spaces for Caring and Community Cultural Wealth

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

In

INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by
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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project (or thesis) has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Dr. Onllwyn C. Dixon   November 18, 2016
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ABSTRACT

The number of after school programs have significantly increased over the past 100 years. These programs were initially conceived of as beneficial to a small subset of children. More recently, they have been high percentages of minority students in attendance. Due to their increase in demand, many forms of program evaluation have been created. These evaluations do not speak to the levels of care that these students are receiving. This project aims to examine existing best practices used for Latin@ students in the classroom and in afterschool programs. Utilizing Nel Nodding's Theory of Care, Tara Yosso's Commuinity Cultural Wealth Model, and the experiences of four student experts, this project will serve as training for after school professionals in developing their programs.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Before I completed my undergraduate degree, I went through the same uncertainty that many seniors experience. I asked myself: What is next in life? My undergraduate education had been filled with a variety of experiences from studying abroad, to ministry opportunities and volunteering all over the country. I fell in love with helping people. It is how I best used my skills and felt a sense of purpose. I entertained different ideas. I thought about pursuing a master's in Spanish. I also applied to the Peace Corps. I did not feel excited about either option. I decided to research AmeriCorps. The organization had volunteer opportunities all over the country but only one peaked my interest.

The organization was called CalSERVES. It was an organization provided an after school program for low-income Latino@ students. I had never thought that a job like that would be of interest to me. but upon applying and receiving a job offer, my excitement increased. After my AmeriCorps service began, I soon realized the importance of the after school program to the community. We served over 100 kids in the program, most of whom needed academic support. I became puzzled why such a high percentage of the students we worked with needed academic support.

As I began another year of AmeriCorps, at a different school but serving the same demographics, I realized that a larger issue existed than I was first aware of. I began to reflect on my own schooling experience. I went to a predominately White, middle class school where most students did not have significant academic setbacks. In fact, there were no after school programs where I lived. How was it possible that I was seeing the complete opposite before me? Why did

the after school program I was working with have such significance for the community? I decided that I wanted to discover some answers.

After school programs are an integral part of many communities in the US and in California. Many parents rely on them to support the social and academic development of their children. At their conception, these programs were established to serve low-income families. In the early 1900s, there was an increase in compulsory education and a decline in child labor. During this period over 80 percent of children were attending school. The problem that occurred with these two trends was that after school hours had little purpose for youth, and they often tried to determine how to spend time when school was over. Some chose to go home, but this soon seemed unfit and dangerous for them. Some youth would spend time on the streets, either making money or seeking unhealthy activities. Officials came up with solutions to help youth, such as curfews and laws but these only escalated the issues. It seemed that the only proper solution was to create programs that would help them. Robert Halpern (2002) believes that "progressive reformers began reinterpreting the "problem" of working class children's out of school time as an opportunity, to use that time to improve those children and through that effort ultimately improve society" (p.181). Adults wanted these youth to be prepared to enter a changing society and still be successful.

Adults saw that children needed to be around other children for socialization and learning and therefore two types of movements were started. The first was an outdoor play movement that focused on playing in playgrounds, and the second was the indoor play movement that would eventually lead to the after school program setting that is seen today. Religious groups began sponsoring these programs, which served both boys and girls. Halpern (2002) states that the basic goals of these programs were: "protection, greater opportunities for play, and reduction in

crime" (p.178). These programs were intended for boys to learn vocational skills so they felt

prepared to enter the workforce, and domestic skills trainings were available for girls. After

school programs were also serving immigrant populations, where they could learn more of the

American culture. These programs contrasted the school day because students could play, learn

skills, and build relationships in ways not available to them during regular school hours

(Halpern, 2002).

Since they began, after school programs have taken on new forms, and serve thousands of

students all over the country. They have become more and more organized and have focused on

teaching youth new skills. After school programs were once seen as just a hangout spot,

developing into well-organized institutions. As they grow there is more and more of a push for

them to be academically based where students can reach their academic grade levels and help

them to be college bound. Examining programs today allows for people to see that since their

beginning, they still have the same goals.

During the industrial period and even today, the hours from 3:00 to 6:00 PM are

identified to be the riskiest three hours for kids. This time of day, kids are more likely to sit at

home or become involved unproductive activities. It is currently estimated that over 10.2 million

youth are involved in after school programs, 21 percent which are Latinos (Afterschool Alliance,

2014). Over $1,000,000 dollars is spent on these programs to meet the requirements outlined in

the No Child Left Behind Act. These programs take on a variety of forms and have had profound

effects on the youth of the nation. They have helped slowly increase test scores, teachers have

seen behavior improvements, and more youth are completing their homework. There is a

plethora of tools utilized to measure the success of these programs. Test scores and quality

assessment standards that have been created just for after school programs demonstrate that they are indeed helpful.

One factor that is not seen in these assessments is the experiences of how youth are cared for. Schools and extended day programs tend to get caught up in academic pursuits, but are failing to teach students how to care for themselves and the world at large. Society is demanding that students excel academically while failing to ensure that they will become moral caring beings. Although there are many youth receiving positive benefits from these programs, how are they helping and caring for youth? There has been a growth in the number of participants in after school programs in recent years which has led to an increase in how these programs are evaluated. These evaluations do not demonstrate the level of care students are receiving and how it impacts them.

Purpose of the Project

After school programs have been expanding over the years as a means to help students improve their test scores, keep them safe, and help them develop into healthy individuals. In order to examine the overall success of these programs it is important to research the voices of youth, particularly those belonging to communities of color. These are voices that are continually not found in the research on after school programs, yet they are the sole beneficiaries of the services. The purpose of this study is to examine how a culture of care is demonstrated in after school programs through the lens of Latino youth. The California After School Network has conducted much research on the success of these programs through the lens of stakeholders, teachers and administrators. How is a culture of care featured through the lens of a child and how can their experiences change how after school programs serve them?

This project will be examining the experiences of four Latino second graders who are experts in caring. They each have attended the YMCA After School Safety and Enrichment Program at John Reed Elementary School, located in Rohnert Park California, for three years. This project desires not only to know the voices of these youth, but to transform the way after school programs serve Latino students at large.

<div align="center">**Theoretical Frameworks:**</div>

For the purpose of this study the Nel Noddings theory of caring and Tara Yosso's LatCRIT were utilized. Both of these frameworks have been utilized in researching and transforming predominately Latino populated schools. These frameworks have not been utilized in research regarding after school programs, an institution that serves many youth of color. In many ways these frameworks mirror each other, and applying both of them to this research provides new perspectives on the potential impact of after school programs throughout many communities.

Theoretical Framework 1: Caring

There is no one method that teachers can use to teach all students. This same concept can be said for how to care for students. Teachers must know all of their students in order to know how to care for them. In the United States there has been rooted a deep sense that students must achieve academically and it will be measured by a test score. These tests don't measure who a students is or what gifts or talents they might have; it only measures how much information a student is able to retain. If schools as a whole perform poorly on a test, they are deemed a poor performing school. Since there is such a focus on being successful academically, schools are failing to reach kids in a deep and powerful way. Nel Noddings, author of *The Challenge to Care*

in Schools states, "the structures of current schooling work against care, and at the same time, the need for care is perhaps greater than ever" (Noddings, 2003, p. 20).

Caring is a relationship that is created between two people. There is a carer and the cared for. The carer is the one who is doing the action of caring, and the cared for is the receiver of that action. In order for this relationship to be successful, there are certain acts that must be done by each party. The carer must realize that, "caring is a way of being in relation, not a specific set of behaviors." In order to care a person must engross themselves in the other person. The cared for must be open to receiving and recognize that they received care. When people care for others they want to ensure that the other person received their actions. (Noddings, 2003, p. 18)

There are a variety of ways that teachers can care for their students. Noddings believes that students do not want to be treated as just a number. She states "classrooms should be places in which students can legitimately act on a rich variety of purposes, in which wonder and curiosity are alive, in which students and teachers live together and grow" (Noddings, 2002, p.12). Students want to feel that their identity and interests are valued in the classroom. When schools only focus on certain curriculums such as math and reading, and do not incorporate the cultures of students, schools are not doing a good job of caring. Schools need to teach students how to care and love themselves, those around them and the world at large.

Theoretical Framework 2: LatCRIT

When we look at the differences in privileges and social advantages in the United States, some might think that it is hard to really give a concrete reason as to why they exist in the first place. Tara Yosso examines these inequalities through the lens of social capital theory, which draws from the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory. He defines cultural capital as "an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by

privileged groups in society" (Yosso, 2005, p.76). This theoretical framework is utilized in

identifying why there is such a huge gap in educational success in the United States. Bourdieu

discusses that groups gain cultural capital from their families and schooling experiences. Within

the United States it is viewed that only the privileged majority, white and middle class, are the

holders of cultural capital. Bourdieu argues that all races and socioeconomic classes have their

own forms of cultural capital, but because of the dominant educational frameworks, the cultural

capital of other groups is being ignored (Yosso, 2005, p.69-76)

Yosso also utilizes critical race theory, which describes educational gaps as a result of

institutionalized racism. Yosso uses CRT because she believes that theorists are turning too

heavily toward a deficit thinking model. A deficit thinking occurs. because communities of color

are not of the privileged group; they are then deemed deficient in many ways, when in actuality

they have their own forms capital. Yosso uses both of these frameworks to create what she calls

a community cultural wealth model. This model allows for us to see the capital that other

cultures bring to education, but her focus is on the Latino community. She believes that

communities of color have six different forms of capital that they foster which include:

aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant. This model allows scholars

and educators to see the strengths that communities of color bring to the classroom setting

(Yosso, 2005, p. 77-81).

Significance of the Project:

The After School Safety and Enrichment grant is a product of Proposition 49. This bill

passed in 2002 as a means for schools and community organizations to work together to improve

the academic performances of schools. It is important that constant research is done on these

programs to examine their effectiveness. Although reports show how youth are growing

academically these reports do not always demonstrate how effective programs are at mentoring youth, and ensuring they develop healthy relationships and care for themselves. Since this project will be centered around Latino youth, a group that is continually marginalized and overlooked, it is important that research on their perspectives is conducted. In order to better serve this community, and ensure that they not only grow to be healthy adults, but also help make their academic journey an empowering experience.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Over the past decade much progress has been made in the number of children who have access to afterschool programs. Subsequently, the hours from 3 to 6 p.m. have been transformed from a time of concern for millions of working parents to a time for academic, cultural, and extracurricular engagement. Latino/a children are two times more likely to participate in an afterschool program than Caucasian children (Afterschool Alliance, 2014b). Therefore, it benefits programs serving this population to better understand how to support these students.

This chapter provides an overview of literature that highlights the importance of being mindful of Latino/a community cultural wealth and also provides examples for how educators can better understand how Latina/os use different forms of capital to successfully navigate educational institutions. In addition, the review highlights how Latina/o students can be best served by providing safe environments, creating positive relationships, and positive institutional culture. Furthermore, this review emphasizes after school programs that have high levels of success serving students.

Understanding Latin@ Community Cultural Wealth

Every cultural group has a variety of beliefs, values, and ways of doing and being. In the US, the cultures of minority groups have been largely undervalued. In other words, their cultures are often represented as deficient in some manner. Latina/o students, in particular, have their own ways of learning and interacting with peers and teachers that can be traced back to their communities and families. They possess community cultural wealth which Yosso (2005) defined as an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts that are invaluable for resisting macro and micro-forms of oppression. Latina/o students use their cultural wealth to navigate a society that

views them as culturally deficient. Their cultural wealth is comprised of six different forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant (Yosso, 2005). Studies have indicated how Latina/o students use their capital to define and shape their educational experiences.

DeNicolo, Gonzalez, Morales, and Romani (2015) conducted a study with students at Planas Elementary School. The participants included 14 bilingual students (Spanish and English) in Ms. Perales's 3rd grade classroom. Through observation, interviews, and analyzing student classwork, the researchers examined what forms of capital were present. The primary purpose of their study was to counter deficit notions of Latina/o students, families, and communities. In addition, DeNicolo et al. wanted to illuminate the ways students utilized various forms of community cultural wealth. The study was framed by critical race theory (CRT) and Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) and Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth. (pp.1-4)

DeNicolo et al.'s findings indicated *testimonios* can be an effective pedagogical tool to help students identify their individual and collective community cultural wealth. Specifically, the participants' discussions, responses, and *testimonios* underlined the numerous forms of cultural capital they developed in their communities. In one *testimonio*, Isabella shared why she thought being bilingual was important:

> Being bilingual is important because it can help us with the future because when people talks in English we can understand what they say and it is important because when we grow up and we work we can talk to a lot of people in work. It is important because we can learn new languages to. (p.7)

Isabella's statement highlighted her aspiration that bilingualism would allow for her to participate more fully in society. Additionally, her statement highlighted the value she attributed

to bilingualism as a form of linguistic capital. Other students also discussed how being bilingual would help them reach their goals of becoming an American citizen and would help them get into a good university. Additionally, cultural capital was also apparent in the classwork the students had completed earlier in the school year. For example, the researchers concluded the students were able to draw on their linguistic knowledge for clarification or to engage in discussion. According to DeNicolo et al., student writing throughout the school year indicated that aspirational, navigational, and linguistic capital may not be utilized by students if students are not explicitly taught how to connect this knowledge with learning. Therefore, the researchers concluded linking what Latina/o students know across their communities, schools, and other settings has the potential to provide insight into learning and may lead to a more nuanced understanding of what students know and can accomplish. (pp. 8-12)

Luna and Martinez (2013) also focused on documenting the cultural wealth of Latina/o students. However, the study participants were 15 academically successful college students. Academically successful, as defined by the researchers, were students who graduated from high school and were enrolled full-time in a four-year institution. Luna and Martinez used focus groups to collect data between the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009. (pp. 2-3)

A student named Thomas, whose parents stopped going to school to help support their families, stated, "I grew up like with their stories and my dad would always say that he was really smart and that the only reason my dad didn't go to school...was because of like him having to work. So I knew ... that I wanted to finish high school so I would set goals for myself" (Luna & Martinez, 2013, p. 5). Family aspirations can be significant motivating factors for many Latina/o students. Many of these students' parents work difficult manual jobs and this motivates them to further their education so they can have better opportunities. For example, Alder shared

how her parents wanted her to work for a scholarship. One of her parents told her, "I work so hard and I don't want you to work this hard and education is very important it's a luxury not many people can afford it. I break my back every day to get you through school and you gotta help yourself out too, getting a scholarship" (p. 7). Although many students shared how their parents possessed little knowledge about the application process for school or scholarships, the motivation to excel in school was common. Parental support involved high educational aspirations and encouragement. Several students revealed the encouragement they received from their families facilitated higher aspirations and achievement. In other words, familial support made it is possible for many participants to pursue higher education.

The findings suggested that the cultural capital of Latina/o students often goes unrecognized and undervalued in educational settings. Traditional school rhetoric continues to focus on the need for parental involvement. Nevertheless, this rhetoric often does not recognize the ways that Latina/o parents are involved in educating their children. Rather, it assumes these parents do not encourage their children to envision and pursue academic goals

Similarly, Burciaga and Erbstein (2012) utilized *testimonio*s to examine what strategies Latina/os used for school persistence. They analyzed the *testimonios* of six Latina/os who were 18 to 20 years of age living the 9-County Sacramento Region of California to ascertain how they articulated, cultivated and employed cultural capital through individual aspirations and practices. The participants had all left or considered leaving high school before graduating. The researchers observed all forms of cultural capital in the participants' *testimonios* (pp. 24-26).

The majority of the participants grew up in households where English was not the primary language. The primary languages included Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL). For instance, Angelica utilized her linguistic capital while acting as a translator for her

deaf parents. Angelica described a conversation with a teacher who insisted on speaking to her parents. She revealed,

> I would always explain to [school officials] that my parents can't hear. They always said, 'I want to talk to your parents directly.' I was like, 'the only way you can do that is if you bring an interpreter.' And they were like, 'Oh. Well, can your mom bring one?' Even if we were to be able to bring one, they are too much money . . . I've been pulled out of school [to interpret] a lot. (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2012, p. 27)

Angelica's story highlights the cultural capital that she and other participants displayed but is not always valued in the school setting. Nonetheless, the participants motivation to succeed was overlooked because they did not receive the necessary support and resources to navigate the educational system successfully.

The three qualitative studies reviewed in this section (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2012; DeNicolo et al., 2015; Luna & Martinez, 2013) reveal the variety of forms of cultural capital Latina/o students use in their everyday lives. Adults who work alongside Latin@ students should work towards shifting their efforts to advocate for using institutional resources to support various forms of cultural capital. Subsequently, they will be able to model for these students how to navigate, address, and anticipate challenges that could affect their schooling experiences. Moreover, their insights can be invaluable for developing and sustaining more effective programs and practices that are focused on supporting school persistence.

Best Practices for Latin@ Students

Success in school can be measured in many different ways. These include academic achievement, social development, and attainment of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. However, there is often a disconnect between the pedagogical practices of schools and the necessary support for Students of Color (Yosso, 2005). Nevertheless, academically successful

Latin@s, as well as other Students of Color, have been able to thrive in spite of many institutional obstacles that arise because of a lack of recognition of their unique needs. As result, the kinds of institutional and pedagogical practices that are implemented are imperative to consider. There are best practices that have been identified for educators who work with Latino@ students. Specifically, these best practices focus the need to build strong relationships, provide safe learning environments, and create engaging curricula, establishing the conditions for Latino@ students to become academically successful and become agents of change in their communities.

Antrop-Gonzalez and De Jesus (2006) conducted a qualitative study at two predominantly Puerto Rican high schools, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) (Chicago) and El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice (El Puente) (Brooklyn, New York City), to identify ways teachers created and sustained a culture of care for supporting Latin@ students. Both schools were established to meet the educational needs of Puerto Rican students. The researchers used semi-structured interviews with students and facilitators (the term used to refer to teachers) and observations in and outside of classrooms to determine the kind of school culture at the two institutions. (pp. 409-411)

Antrop-Gonzalez and De Jesus determined both schools emphasized high academic standards. To illustrate, the researchers observed facilitators would often spend time after school providing academic and emotional support. Ramón, an El Puente 11th grader, shared:

> Facilitators are caring; they take their time out with the students. Make sure they're passing their classes. If you're not passing they stay after school knowing they could be doing other things. 'Cause most of the teachers take out their time and stay here with you and make sure you got the work down. (p. 424)

This quote, as well as several others, indicated to the researchers that the sense of social closure and high expectations were necessary for Latin@ students academic performance. Another student, Carmen, spoke about the impact of care demonstrated by her math teacher, William: "...my math teacher, he explains it and explains until you get it. He makes sure you get it. If he thinks you didn't get it, he'll explain it more. That's what I love about [him]" (p. 425). The care this student received was significant because it helped her to build her intellectual confidence, set goals, and develop a strong academic identity. Most importantly, it appeared to help her build self-confidence regarding her academic progress.

For many of the Latin@ students, care was demonstrated when adults spent time building relationships with them and also set high academic expectations. Antrop-Gonzalez and De Jesus concluded PACHS and El Puente were successful in supporting Latin@ students because of their explicit commitment to creating and implementing curriculum that affirmed students' identities. They also stated structures and practices at the two schools strongly suggested a critical analysis of the social position of Latin@ communities helped to establish authentic student and teacher relationships that were based on a principle of care. (pp.417-420)

Similarly, Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) were interested in identifying best practices for supporting Latin@ students across the K-20 pipeline. They conducted a qualitative meta-analysis of the literature. The researchers focused on developing a framework for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers to investigate, comprehend, and respond to the issues facing Latin@ students. They began by providing an overview of some of the persistent challenges this population of students experiences in the US. The literature that comprised their meta-analysis highlighted how Latin@s continue to face two significant challenges that impact their academic progress: lower high school graduation rates and higher dropout rates in comparison to their

White counterparts. Once they gain access to institutions of higher education, they have limited access to resources such as mentorship options and financial aid. In addition, they encounter lower expectations and other issues related to retention.(pp. 128-130)

Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) suggested that too often literature focuses on the deficits of Latin@ students instead of highlighting the possibilities for improving the educational pipeline for these students by shifting to a paradigm that recognizes and makes use of the significant cultural wealth these students possess. They denounced the suggestion that Latin@s are solely to blame for their academic failures because many public institutions are failing them. Rodriguez and Oseguera outlined best practices for how educators and institutional leaders can transform the educational experiences of Latin@ students by reshaping curricular and institutional practices to reflect a deeper understanding of not only the challenges many of these students face but also the responsibility institutions have to ensure their institutional culture empowers these students. The researchers define institutional culture as the values, beliefs and processes that characterize interactions within institutions. Rodriguez and Oseguera highlighted best practices that can be connected to seven principles or dimensions of institutional culture: 1) Relationships, 2) Students as Intellectuals, 3) Culture of Recognition, 4) Students' Voices, 5) Learning from Marginalized Students, 6) Culture of Dialoguing, and 7) Building a Culture of Excellence. (pp. 131-132) In the subsequent section, the most pertinent best practices to this field project are outlined in order to emphasize how institutional culture can be reshaped to reflect more student-centered and holistic approaches. Some of these ideas overlap with those proposed by Antrop-Gonzalez and De Jesus (2006).

Relationships

In their literature review of the best practices for Latin@ students, Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) discovered that several researchers identified relationships as key for academic

achievement for many of these students. In particular, positive engaged teacher and student relationships play an important role in keeping students connected and focused on achieving goals. No Child Left Behind has shaped classroom dynamics, and also created specific standards of what constitutes a qualified teacher. However, for many Latin@ students, they want teachers who not only motivate and inspire them but also recognize their presence and contributions. (p. 134)

Many assumptions can be made about the nature of recognition. Recognition can come in the form of daily greetings or teachers learning names or specific information about students. The assumption is that these kinds of interactions constitute recognition. Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) suggested failing to recognize Latin@ students in the development of curricula, pedagogical techniques, etc. limits the ability of institutions to support students in developing relationships with adults that can become the impetus for them to be socially, culturally, and academically successful. (p. 134) In other words, relationships should be based upon a Praxis of Recognition. Praxis begins with relational recognition. In his observations at urban high schools on the East Coast, Rodriguez (2012) found that teachers stereotyped students based on student dress. For example Latinos dressed in baggy pants were seen as being disengaged at school. On the other hand, while their white middle class dressed counterparts were seen as more engaged. (p.14) When asked what students wanted in a teacher, many mentioned how they wanted a teacher who inspired them, motivated them, and would tell them they were proud of them for even the smallest of academic accomplishments. Teachers have the potential to make school a transformative space for Latin@ students. Rodriguez suggested that recognition must go beyond a physical recognition. Subsequently, teachers who recognize that Latin@ student experiences

have value, begin to reconstruct power dynamics in the classroom and recognize students current

social contexts. (Rodriguez, 2012, p.15)

Antrop-Gonzalez and DeJesus (2006) in their interviews with students found that one

way schools can implement a culture of recognition is through restructuring power dynamics.

Several student interviewees at PACHS and El Puente referred to the importance of their

relationships with teachers, viewing them as family members or friends. This stems from the

Latin@ cultural idea of *personalismo,* which emphasizes caring relationships which mirror that

of family. By recognizing the importance of *personalismo* to the development of Latin@

students, "staff transcend the boundaries of traditional schooling and create social conditions and

relationships that are more aligned with students' cultural orientations and which overlap with

extended family life" (p. 421). Most importantly, relationships between staff and students can be

used to align institutional culture to the cultural values of Latin@ families and also emphasize

high expectations and academic preparedness.

Safe and Supportive Environments

Oseguera and Rodriguez (2015) identified three best practices for creating a safe and

supportive environments for Latin@ students: creating a culture of dialogue, providing forums

for student voices and learning from marginalized youth. Dialoguing in the classroom between

teachers and students promotes relationship building, reframes power dynamics and overall

contributes to a much more engaging classroom environment. The authors also discussed that

safe spaces are created when teachers provide forums for student voices. Students want to share

not only their life experiences but also desire to provide feedback regarding their education.

Sharing this information and having staff who listen to and collaborate with students to develop

solutions, gives value to the experiences of Latino@ students. Likewise when educators create

and sustain a space for marginalized youth to share their experiences, "these students can often be the most insightful sources of knowledge and solutions for school improvement and promoting student engagement" (Oseguera & Rodriguez, 2015, p.141). Creating safe spaces where Latino@ youth can be respected, heard and valued ensures a more engaging environment.

DeJesus and Oseguera (2006) found that students valued how teachers provided them with clear expectations, communicated respectively, and comprehensive methods for conflict resolution. The staff also communicated to students policies and procedures in a respectful manner while also demonstrating that student safety was the highest priority. One way staff emphasized safety as priority was through their knowledge of local gangs. One student at PACHS described how she had to leave her school because there was no policy in place for gangs or fighting:

> At my old high school I was tired of all the gangs fightings and stabbings. People would even pull fire drills to get out of school. I could even walk out whenever I pleased and nobody would challenge me. At this school[PACHS] I can't even walk down the hall without a teacher coming up behind me to ask me what I'm up to. At this school, the teachers care what I'm doing. They also don't put up with fighting or gangs in the school. (p. 427)

Knowledgeable staff communicates to students that staff are aware of the social conditions they are living in, and also diminishes gang violence in school and their neighborhood. (Antrop-Gonzalez & DeJesus, 2006)

At El Puente one way they ensure a safe and supportive environment is by addressing interpersonal conflicts using a Holistic Individualized Process, or HIP. In a HIP seminar,

"students focus their goals and action plans in the areas of body, mind, spirit and community within the following four major components: individual and collective self-help, group development, wellness and community action and development" (Antrop-Gonzalez, p.428). These seminars give students the tools to understand conflicts and how to solve them. These seminars are about seeing students as valuable resources to solving issues in their communities.

Curriculum

Oseguera and Rodriguez (2015) identified that an engaging curriculum is key to keeping Latin@s in school. One methodology, Participatory Action Research, allows for youth to explore an issue in their community. Providing Latin@s with opportunities to be the researchers reframes them as Public Intellectuals. As stated previously, the experiences and circumstances of Latin@s are viewed through a subtractive lens, wherein viewing Latin@s as Public Intellectuals creates an institutional culture where Latin@ experiences and culture are viewed as valuable and have the potential to change oppressive systems. The authors highlight a project wherein students researched and defined what it means to be a "quality teacher." which led to a series of pre-service trainings for teachers at a university. The project gave students the confidence they needed to pursue college. (pp. 137-138)

A relevant curriculum does not just mean research projects, but it should also focus on students discovering their histories and identities. Antrop-Gonzalez and DeJesus (2006) found that at El Puente they used a curriculum known as "Sankofa" which has students asking "Who am I?" and "Who are we?" Through poetry, art, and the reading of cultural histories, students discover their own histories. The school also connected this curriculum to the local history of the Domino Sugar Factory, and how it further connects to current issues facing their community. (Antrop-Gonzalez and De Jesus, 2006, p.417). At PACHS they have a "curricular objective of

decolonizing the mentality and actions of students and community members"(Antrop-Gonzalez and De Jesus, 2006, p.418). Their curriculum centers around three components known as 'Identity', 'Cognitive Skills' and 'Action'. In the 'Identity' component students have the option to take a literature course that focuses on cultures of Mexicans, African Americans or Puerto Ricans. In 'Cognitive Skills' students focus on traditional sciences, and 'Action' gives students opportunities to engage in community service projects.(p. 418)

Another means for recognizing Latinos is through a socially relevant curriculum. Julio Cammarota (2007), a professor of Mexican American studies at at the University of Arizona, alongside two high school teachers at Cerro High School in Arizona piloted a Social Justice Education Project(SJEP). Cerro High School offered a Chicano Studies course and Cammarota and his colleagues wanted to expand the program by adding critical theory material and a Participatory Action research project. Cammarota was able to enroll 17 Latin@ students into the program 14 of which were considered "at risk" for not graduating because of their lack of credits. Those 14 students were originally enrolled in a remedial program called "Team Program" where students were given repetitive lessons in hopes of improving their test scores and give them credits. This program was proven to be very disengaging and boring for students causing them to drop out of school entirely. (pp. 87-90) One of Cammarota's students, Validia, was once part of the remedial program but through the SJEP saw huge success and change in her attitude towards school. Cammarota stated:

> the distinction between remedial coursework and a challenging, socially-relevant
> curriculum is that Validia realized that social justice activism could benefit both herself
> and her community, whereas remedial education was not about change. Addressing

problems of injustice gave her a different perspective of education—one in which learning meant gaining knowledge for change (pp.91-92).

Recognizing Latino students identities through curriculum allows for higher levels of engagement and success.

The best practices for Latin@ which are used in schools can be mirrored in an after school setting. After school setting have the potential to be transformative spaces. The practices previously described changed the ways that Latin@s viewed themselves and empowered them to change their circumstances. Thousands of students attend after school programs, and as we will see many of these best practices are already implemented in these program. Through accountability measures, and caring workers, these programs are having high levels of impact on the communities.

After School Program Models

Throughout the United States, it is estimated that over 10.2 million youth participate in an after school program, and there are still 19.4 million who could be enrolled. With such a high percentage of youth enrolled, there has been an ever increasing demand for funding and with funding comes measurements on the successes of these programs. There are a variety of ways to measure the success of these programs that can be seen through data collection and testimonies from youth participants, parents and ASP workers.

In 2011 The California Department of Education After School Division created Quality Standards for Expanded Learning that programs can utilize to self-assess how effective they are at reaching participants. Programs use these standards to assess themselves and then plan ways to improve in areas they feel are weak. The goal is to always improve program quality. These

standards are also a way for parents, youth and school administration to assess a program. According to the CDE, these standards include the following: safe and supportive environments; active and engaged learning; skill building; youth voice and leadership; healthy choices and behaviors; diversity, access and equity; quality staff; clear vision, mission and purpose; collaborative partnerships; continuous quality improvement; program management; sustainability.(Quality Standards for Expanded Learning, 2014, pp.1-2) For this study only a closer look at a handful of these standards is necessary.

Similarly in 2008 the Harvard Family Research Project put out a brief that covered 10 years of research on Afterschool Programs all over the country. The HFRP created a national database where hundreds of ASP evaluations have been conducted, but in their brief they highlighted studies that focused on was designed to determine effects of ASP's. From the evaluations they found that after school programs improve academic achievement, youth are less likely to partake in risky behaviors such as drugs and sex, and they support the emotional and physical well being of youth. These successful outcomes are the product of quality programming, building strong connections within the community and with continuous participation of youth. (After School Programs in the 21st Century, 2008, pp. 1-10)

The most important key standard for after school programs, is that students want a safe and supportive environment. Safe does not just mean physical safety, it means emotional and social safety as well. After school directors and program staff should create a positive learning and discipline environment. This includes praising students for accomplishments, resolving conflicts that arise at the program, and co-creating behavior management tactics between staff and students. The Quality Standards for Expanded Learning also outline the importance of

programs referring participants and families to other community agencies that provide further emotional, and physical support. ("Quality Standards for Expanded Learning," 2014, p.7).

One key component to the success that is attained in these programs is due to intentional programming, quality staff, and collaborating within the community. Kirshner, McLaughlin, O'Donoghue and Strobel (2008) conducted a qualitative analysis of five San Francisco Beacons, after school programs that serve predominately low income minority students. Their analysis focused on the qualities of after school programs that continually attract youth and the direct outcomes of participation in these programs. The youth were also ethnographers who interviewed students in spaces not easily available to the authors. The interview questions focused on how time at the Beacons contrasted family life, neighborhoods and schools. From interviews and focus groups conducted over a two year period they found that supportive relationships with adults and peers, safety, and opportunities to learn were of most value. (pp.1685-1688)

When talking about positive relationships, youth describe adults as their mentors, confidants and mediators. Beacons staff are able to relate with youth through their own life experiences. Many staff members have had the same struggles and provide advice that youth use to navigate their struggles. These adults were also excellent confidants and mediators of conflict who really listened to youth and made their opinions feel valued. Beacon staff were also good mediators in comparison to teachers who tell students not focus on their feelings or on conflicts while in the classrooms. At the Beacons students were given tools to resolve conflicts and time to focus on personal growth. Relationships extended past adults to their peers where youth established relationships across ages, felt relationships were more caring and students were more like minded in their opinions. (Kirshner et al., 2008, pp.1689-1691)

Youth felt safe at the Beacons because of the amount of adults who knew the neighborhood they were working in, adults would walk students home, and were very protective over youth. Students commented how they felt free to be themselves, express their opinions and that the space valued confidentiality. The youth also believed that there were a myriad of activities that taught them life skills, and mirrored their own self interests.Students valued collaborating and learning the perspectives and opinions of others, again another element that differs from the regular school day (2008, pp.1697-1699). The students were given choices for which activities they would want and how they should be managed. Providing opportunities for youth voice and leadership are both concepts that align with the Quality Assessment Standards. There are many ways that programs can ensure that youth voice and opinions are honored, for example; "participants share in ownership in the design of program activities, participants express opinions and feedbacks in surveys or group discussions regarding what they want to learn and participants can reflect on learning experiences ("Quality Standards for Expanded Learning," 2014, p10).

Barton Hirsch in his book, A Place to Call Home: After School-Programs for Urban Youth (2005), provides a clear example of a successful after school program in his study of four Boys and Girls Clubs serving primarily urban middle school youth. Utilizing interviews and observations of the youth he discussed why these clubs were important. (pp.10-12) The youth he interviewed, explained how the after school program was like a second home to them. Hirsch talked about one youth, Tiffany who struggled with school, making friends, and had conflicts with team members in volleyball. Since joining the after school club Tiffany fostered healthy relationships with girls her age and even some boys. She could problem solve better than her peers, and built strong relationships with club staff. One younger staff, whom Tiffany looked up

to, would use the skills that the staff member taught her. An older female staff member Tiffany

describes as being like her grandmother. Other youth had similar sentiments about staff and

youth in the club. (pp.52-53) To them the club was like their second home, most feeling more

comfortable there than in regular school or even at home. The youth believed that because the

program was not an exact replica of what they did in the regular school day, meaning there was

flexibility to what these youth can do. They had more freedom to solve problems at an easier

pace, and there was better ratio where they can have more one on one interactions with staff, not

something they receive from parents or teachers consistently. (pp. 41-49)

Summary

Examining Latino Community Cultural Wealth allows for educators to transform their

practice. Focusing on Latinos forms of capital, their ways of learning and knowing that come

from their families, is an important ways for schools to better serve Latinos. It is also important

that schools develop a positive institutional culture of care where students feel safe at school, are

building strong relationships with peers and administration, and engage in a socially relevant

curriculum. All of these factors are ways that schools can care for Latino students in the

classroom environment.

After school is a place where these same practices can be done. They have the potential

to be powerful spaces for Latino youth. Kirshner et. al., commented, "Policy discussions often

construct inner-city African American, Latino, and Asian American youth in terms of deficits,

vulnerabilities, and even pathologies. But by engaging young people in publicly visible

activities, such as the arts, sports, or social activism, effective programs help transform the kinds

of public identities available to urban youth" (Kirshner et. al.,) After school programs can be

spaces that care for Latino youth because they provide a safe and supportive environment, youth

build strong relationships and give them the resources they need to succeed.

CHAPTER III

THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

After school programs are designed with students of all ages in mind. From academics to physical activities, after school personnel plan with student interests and needs. This project will add to existing but limited literature on how after school programs can create. It will also operate as a training for Afterschool professionals where they can reflect and improve their programs. The project will first outline the need for successful after school programming and the benefits it can have for Latino students. Secondly it will outline existing best practices for Latin@s used in academic and after school programs. Thirdly the experiences of four second grade experts, whom through focus groups and interviews described how their after school program has and can better utilize Nel Nodding's Theory of Care and a Latin@ Community Cultural Wealth model.

Development of the Project

In 2013 I began working with a group of Kindergarten students, at the YMCA After School Safety and Enrichment Program at John Reed Elementary school in Rohnert Park California. As their teacher, I was responsible for not only teaching them the foundations needed to be successful academically, I felt this need to really teach them how to care for one another. I wanted them to learn what it meant to be a good friend and citizen of our classroom. After my second year working in this program, I became the director. I watched my original group move on to first and then second grade, with a different after school teachers, I saw huge changes in behavior. Some of them continued to thrive in our program, and some who struggled. With these changes in behavior, and being the Director I began to question why, and how can after school programs assist in student successes in and out of the classroom. I cared for all of my students, but how could I teach them to care for one another and the world around them.

The same year I began working with my Kindergarten students, I began my journey to obtain my Masters degree at USF. It wasn't until I took a class called Latinos in Education, that the content really struck home for me. This course really helped me to understand the academic struggles Latin@s have experienced for centuries, but it also gave me unique perspectives on how to engage, and care for my students in an academic setting. This course really gave me the lens I needed to create this project. After the semester ended, I began meeting with Dr. Dixon, who really helped solidify ideas and strategies to start my project.

I began my research, and reflected on how I would structure my research. I decided that I would choose four student experts. The experts I chose were all second graders, two boys and two girls. All four of them have participated in the YMCA since they were in Kindergarten. Over a two week period I conducted two separate interviews, one with the boys and the other with the girls. After the interviews I held two focus groups with all the students, that lasted fifteen minutes each. These interviews along with my research provided me with enough information to create my project.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Over the past one hundred years the United States has seen exponential growth in the number of Afterschool programs serving youth. The programs have taken on many different shapes and serve students in a variety of ways. The demands of schooling are ever increasing, and Afterschool programs have been included in ensuring that students perform well on tests and in class. Our schools can not ask our students to just become math magicians and reading experts, they must go beyond these and develop students into caring, well rounded individuals who will care for their peers and world. Although Afterschool program participants have been considered more academically successful, not much research has been on the care these students receive while in these programs, especially students of color. This project adds to the very limited research on this topic but is also unique in that it utilizes the experiences of Latin@ students and examines how Afterschool programs can be improved using these student lenses.

Recommendations

It is recommended that further research be conducted on the academic and social impacts that Afterschool programs have on students of color. More research can be done to demonstrate the long term effects of students who were enrolled in an Afterschool program, and how it benefits their access to college. This project is open to be utilized as a training to anyone who is interested.

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