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Pedagogies of the Home: A Phenomenological Analysis of Race, Class, and Gender in Education

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Going up and down the block was one thing, but taking the first curve, out of sight of Mom and the house, was another. I was scared of riding on Sarah Street. Mom said hungry dogs lived on that street, and red anger lived in their eyes. Their throats were hard with extra bones from biting kids on bikes...(Gary Soto, 1993, p. 231)

In his story, *The Bike*, Gary Soto (1993) describes his desire as a young boy to leave his front yard and explore his neighborhood. His mother tells him a *cuento* or story about the “hungry” dogs that wait for disobedient children. By telling Soto (1993) this *cuento*, his mother attempts to keep him within the realm of her watchful eye. In her story, the “hungry” dogs are a metaphor for the dangers that await the young Soto if he leaves the safety of his home. Likewise, the research in Chicana/o Studies describes how Latina/o parents impart *cuentos*, *consejos* (advice), and notions of *respeto* (respect) to their children. In this paper, I provide a phenomenological analysis of an interview that I conducted with Mr. Hernandez, the parent of Victoria and Edward Hernandez.

His experiences illuminate not only his educational experiences but the ways in which he has tried to create and provide new opportunities for his children’s education. From his experiences it is evident that there remains a breakdown in communication between Chicano families and schools. According to Mr. Hernandez this lack of communication is one of the primary reasons why he has chosen to seek assistance from a community center. His counternarrative explicates how the Gus Garcia Community Center and the pre-college program it hosts, the College Éxito Program (College Success Program) addressed his concerns about college and how that differed from his children’s school. In my phenomenological analysis, I provide a horizontalization of the themes related to “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992) experiences in the home and school, how the College Éxito Program assisted this particular family, and the aspirations that Mr. Hernandez has for his two children.

Significance of the Study

My study will describe the agency of one Chicano family and the efforts of the father to assist his children in their pursuit of higher education. The focal participant, Mr. Hernandez, like many Chicana/os respond to school policies and practices and income disparities by seeking out community based centers that will assist them in matriculating to higher education and by drawing upon their “home pedagogies” (Delgado Bernal, 2001). In this context this study agrees with Pedraza and Rivera (2005) of the National Latino/a Education Research and Policy Project (NLERAP) who argue that the “miseducation” of Latinos is often seen as the sole failure of the group. Yet, the position of the NLERAP holds that “...U.S. public schools are miserably failing Latino/a students” (p. 4). This sentiment supports Ochoa’s (2004) contention that the “structure

of schools, their policies, and their practices mirror and reproduce the dominant values, ideologies, and inequalities apparent in the social, political, and economic structures of the United States” (p. 14). For Chicana and Chicano students in schools today, this impacts their identity, their beliefs about culture and education, and their life chances (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Ochoa, 2004; Pizzaro, 2005). Finally, as the title of this study suggests, Delgado Bernal (2001) contends the “pedagogies of the home,” of Chicana/o families, is important to consider when discussing their lived experiences. Delgado Bernal (2001) defines pedagogies of the home as “the communication, practices and learning that occur in the home and community...and serve as a cultural knowledge base that helps Chicanas...negotiate the daily experiences of sexist, racist, and classist microaggressions” (p. 624). The Hernandez family believed very strongly in the “pedagogy of the home”; their “pedagogy of the home” greatly influenced how and what they understood about school, teachers, higher education, gender, and employment. As their counternarratives explicate, their worldview was different from the school’s understanding of success and communication.

Considering this, my study extends upon the work of Chicana and Chicano scholars whose ontological perspectives situate the lived reality of Chicana/o families within a sociohistorical context so as to challenge and dismantle deficit perspectives that erroneously maintain a fatalistic and deterministic explanation of school failure due to cultural deprivation (Valencia, 1997; Donato, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Lopez, 2003; Flores, 2005). By culling the lived experience of Mr. Hernandez, this phenomenological approach describes his family’s experiences in school and describes their resiliency. It also describes how their cultural capital of *consejos* (moral advice), *cuentos* (stories), *educación* (more than education), *respeto* (respect), and funds of knowledge is imparted from generation to generation (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 1997; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994, 2004; Villenas & Moreno, 2001; González & Moll, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological approach is to describe the educational experiences for a family participating in a pre-college program in San Antonio, Texas. Education is defined by participants as their experiences at home, in school, and in the pre-college program. Considering the sociohistorical context of education for Chicana/os, this study employs the term “Chicana/o” for the participants. The belief that calling oneself Chicano equates with a “political act” is significant because this study also utilizes-two theoretical frameworks, Critical Pedagogy (McLaren, 2007) and Chicana Feminist Epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Both frameworks provide a critical lens to understand discrimination in this study; the experiences with discrimination were reported by the participants. This study’s purpose is to illuminate students’ educational experiences by sharing how they used forms of cultural capital and their families’ funds of knowledge so that they were successful in navigating the Chicano educational pipeline (Yosso and Solórzano, 2006). The educational pipeline is a conceptual outline of how many Chicana/o students complete high school and higher education.

Research Questions

The central question driving this study is: Considering the sociohistorical context of schooling for Chicanos in the U.S., what are the educational experiences of the one Chicano family? How do race, class, and gender play into those educational experiences?

Methodology

In my phenomenological approach, I followed Creswell (1998) methodology for phenomenology analysis. According to Creswell (1998), the data analysis of the phenomenology in this study is a “psychological approach” which focuses on the “meaning of experiences” of “individuals” not an entire group (p. 53). To collect my data, I utilized ethnographic methods of participant observation and structured and unstructured interviews. In this context, utilizing a feminist framework for ethnographic research, I conducted what is known as participatory research or participant-oriented research (Glesne, 1999). For my study, I collected data from October 2009 to April 2011. By detailing the lived experiences of “individual cases,” I was able to conduct longer interviews and spend quality time with the family. To understand his family’s experiences, I drew upon the work of Elenes (2006) who used a counternarrative in her work as a tool for presenting “...alternatives to contemporary hegemonic discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (p. 15). This study aims to offer a different perspective and new method regarding the educational experiences of Chicana/o high school students and their families. As I investigated the themes, the “discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality” were a part of my theoretical lens for interpretation. Finally I found that working with my participants over a two year period, helped in the formation of our relationship of trust or *confianza*.

Delimitations/Setting

I collected data at a community center located in San Antonio, Texas. The community center hosted a pre-college program for high school students. It is important to note that while this phenomenological approach is situated within the broader sociohistorical context of Chicano/Latino education, this study *does not aim to generalize to the whole Chicano/Latino student population regarding strategies for schooling success*. By focusing on one focal family and a community center I provide some ways for understanding the process of navigating the road to educational success. The goal of interviewing Mr. Hernandez, the father, was to understand the family experiences at home, in school, and in the community center

Data

My initial contact with Mr. Hernandez began with his daughter, Victoria, in the fall of 2009. I met Victoria and her brother, Edward, a year before during a mentoring session. Mr. Hernandez is very tall and stocky standing just above 6’0 and around 250 pounds. He has a friendly smile surrounded by a large beard. Victoria informed me that some people found her father very intimidating because of his stature, but she assured me that he was also a very loving person. Upon meeting him, I realized what a kind personality he had and that he was a very caring parent. Mr. Hernandez explained that he was born and raised in San Antonio. He attended schools in the Garrett Independent School District during the 1970s and 1980s. His mother, a U.S. citizen, had a third grade education. She worked in a cafeteria in a local hotel. His father, a Mexican citizen born in Monterrey, Mexico received his U.S. citizenship by the time Mr. Hernandez “met him”. From my understanding he “met” his father as a young child. Spanish is the first language of Mr. Hernandez.

Mr. Hernandez is a single father of two children, although he has a small child from a different relationship. A single father since Victoria was six and Edward was four, his approach in the upbringing his children, the “pedagogy of the home” he employs is to try to maintain an

environment of being “positive.” “I tell them, if you want to have good grades in college, then study. When you don’t study, you don’t have anything. That’s how life is. You work hard for what you want. Then you get it.” The *consejo* of “hard work” is meant to motivate his children. By teaching them to study and to work hard in school, he hopes that his children will be able to attain more than he did in school such as college. Mr. Hernandez is practicing what Villenas and Deyhle (1999) describe in their research, that *consejos* will guide his children to make “good decisions” regarding their academics and life.

He explains that in addition to helping his children have access to college his other goal is “...for them to be self sufficient. That they don’t ask for money from anybody, so that they can have a good job and a good education. My hopes for my kids are to be independent. They know how to wash and cook.” Mr. Hernandez’s notion of education mirrors what Valdés (1996) found in her study with Latina/o families. She states that the “hopes and dreams” of her participants “...might not seem much at all. Their dreams had little to do with success or achievement as it is generally defined in this country, and their hopes had a great deal to do with simply, raising good responsible human beings” (Valdés, 1996, p. 182). For her participants, “mainstream” notions about success concerning school were valued just as Mr. Hernandez values education, however, based on their experiences raising productive and hard working adults was just as important. It is significant that Mr. Hernandez mentions the ability of his children to be “self independent,” “have a good job,” “know how to wash and cook,” and “to cook poor” because Valdés (1996) describes that her participants stated that they wanted their children to “have all the basic necessities” (p. 182). Finally, the participants in Valdes’ (1996) study also expressed that they did not want their daughters to become pregnant prior to marriage. While Mr. Hernandez does not explicitly state this, Victoria his daughter, described in her interview a time when he made her take her little brother (age four) to college all day. By taking him to school and being responsible for him over a twelve hour period, she stated that she knew this meant that he did not want her to become pregnant. Pregnancy would alter plans of self-sufficiency; as Valdés’ (1996) writes good parents keep their children on the right path. For Mr. Hernandez, teaching his children to be “successful” meant that they stay on the right path by working hard, going to school, learning particular skills like cooking and cleaning, and having a good job so that they don’t depend on him as adults. This can also be attributed to Mr. Hernandez experience with his sister that left home, became pregnant, and then returned to his mother’s house so that the family could assist her. Mr. Hernandez’s *consejos* to his daughter is significant because it illuminates Valdés’ (1996) summary of her participants’ goals for their children:

- (1) They were concerned about the physical survival and health of their children;
- (2) They were concerned with developing their children’s capacity to make a living;
and
- (3) They were concerned with developing their children’s behavioral capacities for maximizing the cultural values central to them. (p. 188-189)

Mr. Hernandez is very “concerned” with the survival of his children and that their educational goals and achievements ultimately lead to a practical profession that will aid in their independence. Finally, his children must maintain *respeto* or respect for all adults in particular teachers.

While his children are in school, Mr. Hernandez provides everything that they need so that their only job is to go to school. He believes that they “pay him back” by “sticking to their academics and rules” and by “studying.” When his children follow these guidelines, Mr.

Hernandez believes that it ensures that they will be prepared for any experience that they may encounter in life. He explained this idea as he was speaking about his daughter: “I tell her there’s going to come a time when you want this or that. You learn to work for it. I’m here today gone tomorrow. You’re eighteen years old. You’re a young adult and if you don’t go by my rules, there’s the door. If you think it’s going to be easy to walk out that door it’s not...you have no body.”

Mr. Hernandez’s description of his expectations and “rules” echo Valdés’ (1996) discussion of “*respeto*” in her study. In her study and in my study, *respeto* is not simply a Westernized view of “respect,” rather Valdés (1996) defines *respeto* “...involves functioning according to specific views about the nature of the roles filled by the various members of the family (e.g., husband, wife, son, brother). It also involves demonstrating personal regard for the individual who happens to occupy that role” (p. 130). Further, Valdés (1996) found that parents defined *buenos hijos* (good sons and daughters) as “...considerate, obedient, and appreciative of their parents’ efforts” (p. 131). Mr. Hernandez explains that discipline and *respeto* means following his rules and being “obedient” by completing homework, studying, and doing other chores, like cooking and cleaning. Like Valdés (1996) found, it is expected that the children in the Hernandez family maintain a high level of respect for their father, since he is also fulfilling the role of a mother. To “appreciate” his efforts means that they do not question this. If they do question it or disagree with it, he reminds them that they can leave his home. *Respeto* coupled with a *consejo* is evident in the line: “If you think it’s going to be easy to walk out that door it’s not...you have no body.”

However, this does not mean that the children, in particular, Victoria always agreed with her father’s role and expectations. Her father’s rules became a point of contestation. Over the course of 2011, Victoria tested her father’s rules. When the rules became too confining, she left her home. As he had said, he wanted his daughter to attain self sufficiency and independence. Higher education would provide that independence. When his daughter began to use those very skills and tools, he provided her with, he disagreed. Perhaps, he felt it was too much independence. This strife is examined by Ruiz (1998) in her book, *From Out of the Shadows*.

Ruiz (1998) writes that within the Chicano family, “...young women, perhaps more than their brothers, were expected to uphold certain standards” (p. 54). The standards that Ruiz (1998) describes are from the socialization of women in the early 20th century. Examples of parent standards for Chicana women during this time were conservative clothing, maintaining “purity,” and traveling in the company of a chaperone. While Victoria did not have these specific types of standards, she explained in her interview that her father did express concerns over boyfriends and pregnancy. Yet, as Ruiz (1998) writes, when parents “assumed” that their standards would be deemed “unquestionable” teens “rebelled” and “intergenerational tensions flared along several fronts” (p. 54). Ruiz (1998) argues that when this happened “...young women had three options: they could accept the rules set down for them; they could rebel; or they could find ways to compromise and circumvent traditional standards” (p. 59). While Victoria was a senior in high school, she accepted her father’s rules. When she graduated and entered college, she “compromised” with her father’s rules by not staying out late, consulting with him about her classes, and looking after her younger brothers. However, as she became more independent, she no longer accepted nor compromised. She rebelled by leaving her father’s home, finding a place of her own and began to work. Her decision to become “self-sufficient” sheds light into the ways that she maintained her father’s notions of *respeto*.

Mr. Hernandez’s views on respeto were: “The reflection of being a good parent is my kids grow up to be respectful people.” It may be interpreted that as long as his children abide by his rules, they are “respectful” and he is then viewed as a “good parent.” Yet, Victoria still embodies all of the ideas he has about an obedient, caring, and respectful daughter. Despite leaving her father’s home, she continues to monitor her brother, Edward’s grades, she communicates with Edward’s teachers about his academics, she volunteers at least once a week at College Éxito Program, she is still in college, she works, and she does not speak badly about her father. What remains uncertain is whether or not she will be able to manage all of this over a long period of time and still complete her goals of applying to law school and ultimately becoming an attorney. It is important to note that these aspirations were supported by the College Éxito Program and not by the students’ schools.

Mr. Hernandez explained the reasons why he felt his children’s schools did not support their educational goals. He also explained how the community based pre-college program differed from his children’s school. “Now a days...school sucks even worse than what I went through.” This statement provides a lens to understand Mr. Hernandez’s frustration with teachers and what he felt was a lack of college advising in his children’s school. It is important to note, that Mr. Hernandez and his feelings were not meant in a hateful or vengeful manner, rather, he made it a point to stress that he views teachers “as another parent” and that if his role as a parent meant raising good and “respectful” children then “...I see that and I put that same philosophy as a student. If a kid becomes a genius or is smart it’s because of what the teacher has taught them. In many ways to think outside of the box.” However, he concluded “...but nowadays you don’t have that. You don’t have that at all.”

Horizontalization

In the table below, I have created a chart that illustrates the ways that Mr. Hernandez imparts funds of knowledge to his children. My findings reflect the research on Latina/o socialization in which *consejos*, *cuentos*, and *respeto* are the main ways that children learn their place in the home and the world. The table shows that Mr. Hernandez utilizes *consejos* the most in order to motivate his children. As he stated in the interview, when he became a single father, he began to think of ways to “push” his children so that they could have opportunities he was never given. It may be inferred that *consejos* are used to “push” his children in the right direction. *Cuentos* are also important because the themes of his stories come from his personal experiences. By sharing them, he hopes that they will reinforce the *consejos*; perhaps it will concretize his words and his children will respond. Finally, *respeto* may be seen as the guiding path. By following this path, his children are more likely to make wise decisions and in turn attain the goals of becoming self sufficient.

Table 1

Hernandez Family Funds of Knowledge

Cuentos (Stories)	Consejos (Advice)	Respeto (Notion of respect)
-Growing up poor -Living in public housing -Surviving family and neighborhood violence -Struggling in school -Joining the military	-Don’t let anyone manipulate you - When you don’t study you don’t get nothing -You work hard for what you want -Set goals -Be self sufficient	-Be positive -Don’t ask anyone for money -Abide by home rules -Abide by school rules -Study hard -Work hard

-Difficulties of being a single father -Financially helping immediate and extended family members	-Be your own person -Get an education - Parent’s job is to get you from the back door to that front door and open it -Find a practical job -No body is going to do it for you -You have to be prepared for everything good and bad -Parents are here today, gone tomorrow	-Complete homework -Being helpful around the house -Respect family -Respect teachers
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Schooling Experience-Mr. Hernandez

In the table below, I have outlined the negative schooling experiences of Mr. Hernandez during the 1970s and the 1980s. Cummins (2005) model of coercive power is utilized for this analysis because it illuminates the sociohistorical context of education for Chicana/o families for this family in San Antonio. In the historical context of education for Chicana/os, racism was prevalent in schools during the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, *de jure* segregation was also prevalent in Texas and Mr. Hernandez’s experience is a testament to that discrimination. According to Mr. Hernandez’s counternarrative, his schooling experiences mirrored what the literature has outlined as the “miseducation” of Chicana/o families.

Table 2

Mr. Hernandez’s Negative Educational Experiences

Educational Experiences	Cultural Capital	Power-Coercive	Possibilities-Closed	Assumptions-Deficit
-Family violence -Neighborhood violence -Bilingual -Joined military -Flunked first grade	-Dominant -Resistant -Navigational -Inspirational	-Brothers and father abused him -Lived in public housing -Hitting, spanking, pinching by White teachers -De jure segregation -Tracked -No bilingual education	-Physical and verbal abuse made him leave mother -Mother was head of household and underpaid -Teachers did not want to speak Spanish -Education was inequitable -Never given guidance or information about college -Always in trouble in school -Teachers did not want to deal with him	-Brothers and sisters told him he would not make it -“Sink or swim” mentality by school -Chicana/o students did not care about higher education -Chicana/o students not challenged -Forced to take ASVAB while in military

Schooling Experience-Hernandez Children

In the final horizontalization table for Mr. Hernandez, I describe the experience that he had with his children’s education. In my description, I have outlined the problems between Mr. Hernandez and the school, what his expectations are concerning education, whether or not those expectations were met, and the outcome of the problem. From the table, I found that none of Mr. Hernandez’s expectations were met. I also found that there were several problems that Mr. Hernandez identified in his interview. It can be inferred from the horizontalization that Mr. Hernandez encountered no positive resolutions for any of the problems. Rather, it may be interpreted that he feels that the school views him as the problem for bringing up the issues

outlined below. Finally, it appears that although his children are making it through the “educational pipeline,” he doesn’t credit the school for their success; the success belongs to the College Éxito Program.

Table 3

Mr. Hernandez’s Experience with his Children’s Teachers

Problem	Parent Expectation	Expectation (Met or Not Met)	Outcome
-Hernandez children not challenged by curriculum	-Teachers help students learn	-Expectation not met	-Parent believes that children are not taught in a meaningful way
-Edward had four teachers in Kindergarten	-Teachers are a “second parent” and display a genuine interest in students	-Expectation not met	-Parent believes that schools today are “worse” compared to the past
-Questioning teachers’ practices	-Teachers will have a “devotion” to their job	-Expectation not met	-Parent believes that he will be seen as a “bad” or “irate” parent
-Teacher fails to communicate that child is failing	-Teacher will communicate with parent about child’s academic progress throughout the quarter	-Expectation not met	-Parent believes “no remedy” is offered -Teacher communicates failing grades one week before report cards sent home via e-mail
-Child is failing	-Teachers will assist child through tutoring or by providing extra assignments	-Expectation not met	-Parent believes that “packet” given to his child is not enough to help with failing grade -Child does not receive tutoring or challenging and meaningful extra work
-Parent’s values are different than school’s values	-School and teachers will value parent’s worldview about education and learning	-Expectation not met	-Parent believes that school perceives him as a person that does not care, does not understand, or does not “notice” problems

Essence of the Experience

In this counternarrative, Mr. Hernandez described his schooling experiences during the 1970s and 1980s in San Antonio. Like the schooling experiences described by his children, Mr. Hernandez’s experiences are also overwhelmingly negative. These negative experiences echo the literature in this study which found that schools are embedded with racism and that Chicana/os have overcome difficult obstacles in completing their education. The social structures that Mr. Hernandez encountered in his education were *de jure* segregation, racist and uncaring teachers, and neighborhood violence. The social structures of uncaring teachers, discrimination, and the school did not value his beliefs, were also present in his children’s education. Mr. Hernandez states that education is not that different from when he went to school. While explaining the problems he encountered in his children’s schools, the following emerged: uncaring teachers,

lack of efficient communication, and the notion that he was seen as the “problem.” It can be inferred that his experience with his children’s schooling is also negative.

Summary/Conclusion

This study has two overarching themes, the sociohistorical context of education for a Chicana/o family living in Texas and the ways in which Chicana/o youth are socialized through the use of funds of knowledge. The funds of knowledge explored in this paper included *consejos*, *cuentos*, and *respeto*. From the horizontalization table on funds of knowledge, funds of knowledge are imparted by Mr. Hernandez to his children as way to ensure that they stay on a good and successful path to higher education and self sufficiency. In this sense, the children are learning about *educación*. The concept of *educación* for Chicana/o families means more than just “education”; it implies that children will continue to use the values that were passed down from previous generations. Those values are the guides that will help them throughout their life when making decisions regarding school, work, and the raising of their own children. This phenomenological approach posits that the socialization process for this particular family is not without conflict between Victoria and Mr. Hernandez. This theme provides the context for understanding my research question concerning the role that gender plays into the lived experiences of Chicana youth. Further, as the essence of the phenomenon explained in this study, we are also provided insight into the ways that race, class, and language also shape those lived experiences.

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