1999

Bridges to college success : Latino's in the MESA program at SJSU

Mark Mayol
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Mayol, Mark, "Bridges to college success : Latino's in the MESA program at SJSU" (1999). *Master's Theses*. 1885.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.r592-cx46>

https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/1885

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI[®]

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

**BRIDGES TO COLLEGE SUCCESS:
LATINO'S IN THE MESA PROGRAM AT SJSU**

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of Division of Teacher Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Mark Mayol

August 1999

UMI Number: 1396186

**Copyright 1999 by
Mayol, mark**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 1396186
Copyright 1999, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

© 1999

Mark Mayol

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED FOR THE DIVISION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Dr. Victoria Harper

Dr. Carolyn Nelson

Dr. Judith Lessow-Hurley

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

William Fish

ABSTRACT

BRIDGES TO COLLEGE SUCCESS: LATINO'S IN THE MESA PROGRAM AT SJSU

by Mark Mayol

This study suggests that parental presence, support and expectation in students' lives were major factors in preparing the participants for college. It also suggests the crucial role schools and teachers have in setting expectations, designing curriculum, and making explicit strategies for achieving academic success. This study is grounded in the theoretical work of Paulo Freire, Paul Willis and Peter McLaren and followed participatory research methodology. Five MESA graduates, originally from San Jose, California, were engaged in conversational interviews during their first semester of college to uncover the factors they identified as supporting them in their path towards college readiness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. Judith Lessow-Hurley for her suggestion and referral to a special graduate credential program: the Critical Research Academy emphasizing on issues in culture, language, and society. Her referral towards graduate work opened a door of significant growth for me. From my program through my thesis development my professors continued to encourage and support me. Dr. Carolyn Nelson acknowledged my different learning style and life experience making the transition into graduate work a safe environment in which to further develop my communicative competence and confidence as a student. Dr. Victoria Harper gave relentlessly her time and effort throughout my forming and shaping of my research questions and writing.

I'm also grateful for the MESA program at San José State University, its director, Luisa Priddy, and her staff for providing me access to a population of students that I am personally connected to and I was deeply interested in working with. I'm grateful to my participants—graduates of the MESA program—for sharing their stories. Their stories provided me with a greater understanding of Latino experiences.

I appreciate my colleagues Rebecca Caffrey and Meg Van Buren for dialoging with me as I was coming to understand the data. Their consistent support and interest in my work gave me opportunities to develop my ideas and sparked renewed interest.

I'd like to give a special thanks to Ingrid Dumas for sharing and exchanging ideas at any hour and for supporting me during my roughest moments. Ingrid's

unconditional love and assistance helped me remember my goals and remind me of my accomplishments.

Finally, I dedicate my work to my mother, Gloria Maria Cartagena Betancourt de Mayol, who always dreamed I would find success.

CONTENTS

Page Number

I.	CHAPTER ONE	
	CRITICAL RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
	Introduction.....	1
	My Personal History	3
	Getting to College	10
	The Evolution of MESA	11
	MESA: A Network of Programs	12
	San José State University MESA Chapter	14
	Research Questions	15
II.	CHAPTER TWO	
	LITERATURE REVIEW	16
	Theories of Underachievement.....	16
	Cultural Invasion through Antidialogic Actions.....	18
	Critical Consciousness and Dialogue.....	19
	The Role of Socioeconomic Status	20
	Defining Social Class.....	21
	Social Class and School Work.....	22
	Student Involvement in School.....	24
	Empowerment: Critical Awareness and Action through Dialogic Practice.....	25
III.	CHAPTER THREE	
	CRITICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
	Introduction.....	29

	Critical Participatory Ethnographic Research	29
	Dialogic Retrospection.....	31
	Data Gathering.....	31
	Dialogue Interviews	31
	Ethnographic Observational Journal / Field log	32
	Document Analysis.....	32
	Research Context	33
	The Research Participants.....	34
	About the Researcher.....	41
IV.	CHAPTER FOUR	
	PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS A CRUCIAL ROLE TOWARDS	
	REACHING COLLEGE.....	42
	My Story Revisited	42
	Family Presence and Expectations.....	43
	Parental Support.....	46
	Families Relocating for Better Opportunities: Revealing a Hidden	
	Curriculum	50
	Supportive Peer Networks	54
	Involvement in Institutional Support Programs: A Track to Success...	56
	Teacher Expectations	58
V.	CHAPTER FIVE	
	TOWARDS FACILITATING FAMILY SUPPORT AND ENGENDERING	
	CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS DEVELOPMENT	60
	Findings about MESA.....	62
	Recommendations for Educators	63
	EPILOGUE	65
	SELECTED REFERENCES	67
	RELATED WORKS.....	70

CHAPTER ONE:

CRITICAL RESEARCH PROBLEM

“...there is a common educational fallacy that opportunities can be made by education, that upward mobility is basically a matter of individual push, that qualifications make their own openings” (Paul Willis 1977, 127).

“Rarely discussed—or even considered—in proposed solutions to the plight of students in our nation’s schools are the many invidious myths that underlie current approaches to urban education...One of the most dangerous of these is the myth of *equal opportunity*, which maintains that the educational system is the glorious equalizer of our free society. Success can be achieved by intelligence, hard work, and creativity. Like many myths, this one forms part of our everyday perception, even though it has been continually proven untrue” (Peter McLaren 1998, 214).

Introduction

The first time I read the above quotes from Paul Willis and Peter McLaren, I recognized the truth in their statements as my lived experience. As a New York-born Puerto Rican, my own story attests to the problem of many minorities not achieving “upward mobility” and financial and academic success. Even though education is compulsory through the twelfth grade for all children, many minority students and

children of low socioeconomic backgrounds still do not climb out of a working class status.

As a teacher-researcher my quest is to understand how to help students overcome possible barriers interfering in their upward climb through school. To gain a better insight into this issue I have focused my inquiry on both the reasons for underachievement of minority students *and the achievement* of the few minority students who do “climb upward.”

In their exploration of underrepresentation of Latinos in science, Steven J. Rakow and Andrea Bermudez succinctly state the problem: “A smaller percentage of Hispanics enter higher education than other ethnic groups” (in Carey 1993, 35). Rakow and Bermudez note that in 1979, only 4.3 percent of Mexican Americans and 4.2 percent of Puerto Ricans completed college (35). Almost twenty years later, San José State University, the college I currently attend, reports a mere fourteen percent of the student population identifying themselves as Hispanic (San Jose State University 1997). Despite greater awareness and research conducted on minority underachievement, there has been little change in the numbers of Latinos being prepared for and completing college.

I am a Latino who has struggled to get into and through higher education, I have read many articles identifying the lower achievement levels of Latinos in education and have wondered what factors do support Latino students into and through college? Since so many Latinos fail to even reach college, I wonder what factors are making college a reality for the few who do get there?

My own personal history corroborates the minority, “disadvantaged” student experience Willis (1977), McLaren (1989), and Rakow and Bermudez (in Carey 1993) describe. I even went to a college preparatory school and yet I had problems getting into college. Coming from a family on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, neither of my parents had a college education. My mother was a secretary and my father was a truck driver.

My story is yet another piece of evidence that adds to a greater understanding of the larger problem Paul Willis (1977), Peter McLaren (1998), and Jean Anyon (1980) and Paulo Freire (1970) identify as social class reproduction. I am living proof of how going to a college preparatory school didn’t negate my family’s socioeconomic and cultural background. Academically, I performed poorly throughout school and initially learned a trade instead of earning a degree after high school.

My Personal History

I was born in New York and lived on the upper west side of Manhattan near the George Washington Bridge that connects New York and New Jersey. I grew up in a Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Jewish and Greek community in Washington Heights.

My father, a New York-born Puerto Rican, only finished seventh grade. Because he did not complete his education, he only held blue-collar jobs. My mother was born in Utuado, a small mountain town in Puerto Rico, and moved to New York at the age of five. When her grandmother relocated to New York, she took my mother along since her family was too poor to take care of her. Since her grandmother did not speak English, my mother negotiated learning a new language and going through the school system on

her own. She obediently followed her grandmother's orders to go to school, stay in school, and do what they say. In the end, she graduated from high school with a secretarial certificate.

As a child I hung out in front of my apartment building and around our neighborhood in my spare time. Parks were too dangerous and far away for a youngster to travel unaccompanied. The parks were built like prisons with the grounds made of metal and pavement, mostly black and white, surrounded by fifteen to twenty foot metal fences. There was neither grass nor sand under the monkey bars or swings, just rubber mats for protection in case you fell. The park basketball courts came with metal rims, no stringed nets, and maybe a red brick building for a bathroom, with a fountain on the side.

My school resembled a prison, with large black steel gated doors at the main entrance. The school was only kept open when students were either entering the building in the morning or leaving at the end of the school day (with the exception of recess and lunch). Early morning line-ups were reminiscent of the yard call for prison inmates getting ready to go to their cells after they have been exercised.

The school, Incarnation, was a private Catholic school for grades one through eight located on 174th Street, approximately five blocks from where I lived. Both its name and our uniforms were solemn and rigid, gray linen pants, a dark blue jacket or sweater, black shoes, a tie, and underneath a bright white shirt unseen to anyone. Our space was limited to one big building with the street as our playground. During recess and lunch time wooden barricades were placed at the head of the one way street to block off street traffic. We could walk, play tag, or whiffle ball, but never stick ball because of

the possibility of hitting a ball through someone's window across the street. It was not bad playing in the streets. During the winter the only alternative was staying inside, so we learned how to appreciate the milder temperatures during the beginning of fall and spring.

While living in New York at an early age I was given a key to our apartment. I never thought much of it, nor did I think much about the responsibility that goes along with having a key to your house at such a young age. This key however, was given to me out of necessity.

Back then, I either stayed indoors locked up after school until someone came home or I took a long scary bus ride downtown to where my mom worked, remembering all the while never to talk to strangers, not on the way home from school, not at the bus stop, not even on the bus.

As early as second or third grade, I'd walk up our stoop and perform the same routine daily until I was finally safe inside our apartment. I would put the key through the apartment main entrance front doors and focus on checking the empty space under the stairwell for strangers or bums who might have wandered into our building. This was a routine that I continued until I was old enough to ride the bus on my own to go to my mother's secretarial job until she was done with her work.

Things, however, changed once we moved from New York to California. When I was twelve years old my parents and I moved to La Crescenta, a small town nestled in the San Gabriel Mountains. The commute to either of my parent's jobs prevented me from being with them as much as I could in Manhattan, where it was but fifteen minutes by bus

from my school on 174th Street to my mother's office at The National Council of Churches. There, I could do my homework by her desk until she was finished with her work.

In southern California support from my parents changed. It was about an hour to my mom's office in Los Angeles. I spent a lot of time alone. So, when I came home from school I could do whatever I wanted and I did. I invited friends home after school, watched television, went to the apartment pool, and went to the park to skateboard or ride my bike. From two-thirty to six in the evening, I was on my own. It seemed as if I had all the time in the world to run and play.

Since things felt safer, I was allowed to play outside. Oddly enough, things were considered safe because there was nobody around. I no longer feared city life because our new environment was very different. It was so quiet I could hear the crickets at night and the birds chirping in the day. I felt like we were living in a ghost town. In this new environment, I still had my own key to let myself in our apartment. This became my routine all the way through high school.

At six o'clock or so, my parents would return home from work. Most of the time my mom would cook dinner for us then. As I got older, I began to cook occasionally for them. By doing so I had a little more time to talk with mom in the evenings. Shortly after dinner, before my parents settled in to watch television, unwinding from their workday, my mother would casually inquire whether I had homework to do or had finished it. She never asked to see it, however, and frequently I hadn't done much.

Working so far away from home meant that my parents often were too tired to take part in and assist me with homework when they came home. They assumed that attending a private Catholic school would provide me a solid foundation in reading, writing, and arithmetic. That was a “fallacy,” however, a painful one, I would come to realize much later.

In addition, my parents’ limited education and lack of exposure to college contributed to my lack of understanding of what would be needed for me to be ready for college. I had never walked around a university campus to get a feel for what being on a college campus was like. I had never talked about GPA's with my parents or thought about what I needed to do if I was going to consider attending a University of California school (U.C.) versus a state college. My parents lacked experience with higher education. They had no idea that there might even be different systems. It was only when my friends started receiving acceptance notices from other universities that I realized that most of my classmates were going to college after graduation.

My mother had mentioned the word “college” on occasion. At times she said that I should try to get good grades so I could get into college. How I would achieve those goals, however, was never very clear to me. I had never really envisioned myself attending college; I had no idea of what “college” was all about. The word “college” was an abstraction with which I couldn’t relate. I wasn’t brought up with the assumption that going to college was what people, at least in our family, did. I envisioned “college” being somewhere else, “over there,” beyond my reach. My personal experience was consistent with what, Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco (1993), and

Sonia Nieto (1998) describe as the experience of most mainland Puerto Ricans. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco claim Puerto Ricans have lower levels of education and “the poorest economic condition of all Hispanic groups” (1993, 109).

Aware of our culturally impoverished surroundings, my mother sent my brother and me to Puerto Rico on occasional summers to keep us close to our distant family and friends, as well as close to our Puerto Rican culture and Spanish language. She did not, however, encourage speaking Spanish while attending school. She and my father had faced second language biases as students in American schools where Spanish was a marked language. She talked about how students were physically reprimanded for speaking Spanish in the classroom. My parents spoke less and less Spanish with me as I grew up. After a while the only Spanish I heard of was when they argued in Spanish thinking I’d lost my Spanish language skills and wouldn’t be able to understand them.

Our move from New York to California was initiated out of my father’s need for work. Since my father’s childhood friends emphasized their “reaping the benefits” of California, off we went. Interestingly, I was allowed to attend public school for six months when we first arrived. I had the time of my life playing many sports and learning to dance—something drastically different from the New York Catholic schools I had attended. I don’t even remember doing academic work, first because the work seemed easy then, and also because I had never “played” so much in school before. That’s what I focussed on. Daily reports of such fun quickly motivated my mother to re-enroll me in the local Catholic schools until I graduated from high school. This relocation reveals a

glimpse of her belief that the private schools would ensure I had a good education.

Beyond this, my parents did not “interfere” in my studies.

Within a few years of acclimating to California life I enrolled in Saint Francis High School, a Catholic preparatory high school for boys. A private college preparatory high school meant that there were no college readiness programs available; after all, we were all meant to automatically be “prepped” for college.

Football was an important part of the Saint Francis tradition. Since I had previously played football in junior league, I soon proved to be an ideal candidate for the high school’s varsity team. I did well and the coaches encouraged me further. All this attention and praise on athletics supplied an excuse for decreasing attention to schoolwork and academic performance, but my parents never asked. They were glad to see my time filled “productively” and “safely.”

Two years of football and two years of summer school to repeat courses I failed, made me evaluate how much playing sports interfered with my grades. So, at the end of my sophomore year I decided to quit and focus on academics not knowing exactly how to get started.

I tried reaching out for academic help after my sophomore year in high school by quitting the football team. I remember talking with one of the football coaches who was my algebra teacher. He was a New Yorker like myself who encouraged me to do what I wanted even if it meant quitting the football team to concentrate on my grades, but beyond that there was no specific help or guidance offered after that conversation.

Again, I was on my own trying to figure out the system. It was as if no one seemed to care.

For the next two years I worked alone trying to figure out “the system” on my own. Despite failing grades, not one teacher, counselor, or administrator pulled me aside wondering what might be interfering in my performance. Since it was a private college prep school, there weren’t support services available through the school.

My lowered performance meant I didn’t take advanced placement courses or enrichment seminars. Previously my time was filled with football practice and remediation. After quitting the team, I found myself returning to an empty house, struggling to just get by on my own. Asking any one else for help was embarrassing to me. On top of that, I lived nowhere near students from Saint Francis that I knew.

Getting to College

Directly out of high school, I attended a junior college out of academic necessity, not choice. I was unprepared for college. I found myself taking remedial courses in algebra. What I learned in high school was not sufficient for success in anatomy and physics courses. I was struggling with C’s and wondered why.

After leaving junior college I enrolled in the California Culinary Academy. I saw it as quick training for a career and a way out of my parents’ house. I enjoyed aspects of being a Chef, but learned my place in the field was to be the laborer. Although I enjoyed the creative side to cooking, making ice carvings for banquets, setting tables and creating cheese platters, I soon noticed that the people involved in creating menus and getting to do the creative culinary tasks were white, European males.

Dissatisfied with my work and the long hours, I was challenged to go back to school. For a second time I returned to school, City College of San Francisco. There I decided to explore my interests—something many high school students do. In the meantime I needed remedial writing courses and a review of English, reading, and vocabulary, to bring my writing skills to the basic college level. After much work I was ready.

When I transferred to San José State University (SJSU), I realized the extent to which my academic problem would impede my progress. The racial composition of the student population in my courses was predominantly white males and females. There were few Latinos; in fact, fewer minorities attended SJSU than I expected. As I progressed into graduate credential coursework the number of Latino faces diminished. Even the college administration and faculty seemed to have few Latinos in tenured positions. The longer I stayed in college, the more I became aware of my minority status in higher education.

Looking at the very few minority faces in higher education, I have wondered what has helped them achieve their success since I want to know what will help foster this success especially for other minority students. In my quest to understand this I learned of various programs designed to encourage and assist students in getting into college.

The Evolution of MESA

Even though the 1997 San José State University Fact Sheet shows actual levels of enrollment for Latino students are slightly improving, and studies by *Ed Source* (1995) show dropout rates continuing to decrease, historically, as Somerton states, “The Federal

Manpower Commission data showed relatively few minority professionals worked in technical/scientific fields” in the 1960’s through the present (Somerton et al. 1994, 13).

In the early 1960s the United States was lagging behind other industrialized countries in educating engineers and scientists. Government employers and industry leaders, worried about Japanese and German advances in the fields of science and mathematics, began to recognize the lack of minorities in these fields. It was suggested that this was a result of a failure to steer minority students towards calculus-based careers in college (Somerton et al. 1994).

With affirmative action in place, and assistance from Federal funding and corporate sponsors, private programs were established to recruit and retain minorities in college. Many of these programs failed, however, “because they either addressed the wrong problem or based their approaches on misunderstood causes of the problem” (Somerton et al. 1994, 14).

The need for technical workers prompted an increasing awareness of the potential of a growing minority population. In an effort to stem the high failure rate of minority students, programs such as the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) and Math, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) were designed to encourage women and ethnic and linguistic minority students to pursue careers in science and mathematics. These programs provided special academic support for Latino and other minority students.

MESA: A Network of Programs

MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement) is a nationwide high school intervention program designed to assist disadvantaged youths, ethnic minorities,

and women entering four-year colleges to gain entrance into fields related to math and science. Founded in 1970 at the University of California at Berkeley, School of Engineering, MESA provides individualized advisement and academic support, facilitated parental involvement, and develops partnerships with businesses, funds from private sources, and State of California resources, to assist minority students to matriculate in math and science related majors (Somerton et al. 1994, viii).

One of the key components of the MESA program today is the group study model proposed and developed in 1978 by Dr. Uri Treisman at the University of California at Berkeley. Treisman found that successful students in group study tend to succeed in academic studies (in Somerton et al. 1994). Treisman also found this technique was used less by African-Americans and Mexican-Americans than by Asian-American groups in predominantly white schools.

The MESA Schools Program (MSP) oversees nineteen centers serving approximately 300 elementary, junior and senior high schools nationally providing an array of support programs for K-12, community colleges, and comprehensive college students. MESA brings its Success Through Collaboration (STC) program to nine sites offering MESA services to rural and urban-based American Indian students, and to community colleges through MESA California Community College Programs (CCCCP), with locations on eleven campuses. These programs are geared toward increasing the number of math, engineering and science majors who successfully enroll and transfer to four-year institutions. At four-year colleges MESA students receive support in engineering and computer science from The MESA Engineering Program (MEP)

division, a program that serves students at twenty-three California colleges and universities.

With financial support for MESA coming from various grants and funding from the California State legislature and corporate sponsors such as Bank of America, Chevron, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, Pacific Telesis, Toshiba America, and Toyota, MESA offers scholarships, internships and summer jobs for minority students. Many of the participating corporations also serve as members of various MESA advisory groups.

San Jose State University MESA Chapter

The San José State University MESA program is part of the California and National MESA organization. Throughout California, MESA works with over 21,000 students ranging from the elementary grades through the university. Students involved in MESA receive academic support that includes: 1) group study, 2) academic advising, 3) study assistance, 4) extra study bonuses, 5) incentive awards, 6) parental involvement, 7) field trips, and 8) summer jobs through MESA classes and services.

One of the significant and important elements of the MESA program comes from Triesman's (Somerton et al. 1994) research on group interaction. The foundation of the MESA program rests on research showing that students who work in groups perform better in college than those that do not. Students involved in the MESA program participate in creating their own projects and in organizing their own student groups. Such group participation provides opportunities to gain a sense of competence that supports their access to higher levels of education.

Research Questions

Many of the MESA students originate from low socioeconomic contexts where parents are not knowledgeable about how to support their children in getting into college. Additionally, the lack of financial backing and cultural acceptance for children going away to college are issues former MESA students said they struggled with.

My concern with why minority groups do not advance academically in school coupled with their lack of success if they get to college has led me to explore the role MESA plays in the academic lives of Latino students at San José State University.

In this study I interviewed MESA students entering college to gather their stories of experiences getting to college and their perspectives about SJSU. I examined these conversations for insight into what has helped MESA students get into college. Further I examined the MESA program to gain an understanding of how MESA academic and personal support is experienced by Latino students at San José State University.

In the following chapter I explore the literature on underachievement, equity, and minority student support among minority students. The literature provides further grounding into the many barriers successful students overcome on their road to college and introduces theories for the rampant underachievement of minority students.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories of Underachievement

Linguistic and cultural theorists offer various explanations for the academic underachievement of some minority students. These explanations include cultural deficit or deprivation theory, cultural mismatch theory, as well as John Ogbu's (1978) three classifications of minority status: autonomous minorities, immigrant minorities and caste-like minorities.

First, cultural deficit or deprivation theory contends that some minorities may underachieve academically because their cultures are deficient in some way. This view became popular during the 1960s when Bereiter and Englemann (1966) suggested that black children suffered from language deprivation as a result of inadequate language exposure (in Lessow-Hurley, 1996). These researchers believed that minorities were deprived of "culture" because they had not studied "the Western classics" in literature and the arts.

Cultural mismatch theory proposes that members from minority groups underachieve in school because the characteristics of their cultures are incompatible or incongruent with those of the mainstream group. This opinion was supported by researchers who examined learning styles (Lessow-Hurley 1996). This position rests on the assumption that minority children come to school with behaviors and values that do not match the school environment. Susan Phillips (1983), for example, noted that in a classroom where a teacher dictates structures, children she observed from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, when given the option to control their interaction in

conversations, may not speak because their style of interaction does not match the expectations of the teacher.

Ogbu (1978) on the other hand, claims it is the political and social status of minorities that causes them to do poorly in school. Believing a link exists between schooling, socio-cultural forces and the type of minority status one holds, he classifies students into three groups, 1) non-language autonomous minorities, 2) immigrant minorities and 3) caste-like minorities.

Ogbu identifies Amish, Jews and Mormons as autonomous minorities. Although these groups are minorities in a strictly numerical sense, they are not necessarily subordinate to the majority culture. They are not viewed as second class citizens and are not therefore, socially or politically isolated (Ogbu 1978).

Immigrant minorities, Ogbu claims, fare better in the society because they view their disadvantaged situation as temporary, thereby maintaining a positive image of themselves and their potential. Even though they may face discrimination, they haven't internalized it and therefore envision themselves rising above this temporary situation. These groups might include Chinese, Cuban, Filipino, and Vietnamese immigrants—generally first generation immigrants.

The last group, Ogbu's caste-like minorities (also known as indigenous or traditional minorities), are individuals who have been incorporated into the mainstream via slavery or by conquest (Ogbu 1978). Ogbu suggests these groups do not do well in school because they have been incorporated into society involuntarily. In this sense, their cultures were conquered and replaced, or colonized by the dominant culture's values. Asked to take on new values and rid themselves of old ones, if they are to succeed, this group has lost its sense of power. Furthermore, education is compulsory. Because curriculum and governance of schools are overseen by the dominant culture, these

minorities have little choice but to be socialized in the dominant culture's beliefs and interaction styles or to resist which places them in jeopardy of failure, or punishment. Ogbu contributes to the explanation of why groups such as Native-Americans, Mexican-Americans, African-Americans, and Puerto Ricans often underachieve.

Cultural Invasion through Antidiologic Actions

Paulo Freire (1970) frames the socialization process with the phenomenon of colonization or what he labels *cultural invasion*. Freire describes cultural invasion as involving one group conquering another group and forcing their own values and beliefs upon the conquered group. Over time, memories of conquest fade and the values and beliefs of the dominant culture become internalized as part of the conquered groups values and beliefs.

Colonization is often achieved through the socialization process of schooling where students are encouraged to behave in certain ways, receiving reinforcement for each choice, thought or action. Since schools are typically controlled, designed and maintained by the mainstream dominant group, they become instruments for socializing and colonizing oppressed groups into the dominant group's beliefs and customs.

Freire identifies four antidiologic actions that together work to conquer and maintain colonization through *conquest, divide and rule, manipulation and cultural invasion*. *Conquest* is the first antidiologic action. It is present and operating at all times for it is the eventual desired end—to subdue and rule over the people.

Conquest is achieved, Freire states, through various methods such as *divide and rule*. To maintain control it is important to isolate and weaken the masses and create rifts between them. Dividing the masses from each other into small, manageable communities serves to prevent the unity of the people, which can lead to liberation from oppressive rule. This division, Freire claims, is accomplished by various means such as false charity

which gives the people the illusion of being helped or by bureaucratic gatekeeping, setting standards, for example, to “allow” certain members to achieve higher levels of income and education. One example of such divisive tactics is to select persons for “leadership training courses.” On the return of these “leaders” to their origins, these newly educated leaders attempt to use the “resources” they did not formerly possess to dominate, re-educate and socialize “their” people to this new understanding of the world.

Manipulation is another method for maintaining the status quo or to initially dominate others. Freire describes this dimension of antidiologic action as including the mythicizing of the world to ultimately conform the oppressed to the dominant group’s value system. To achieve this the dominant group presents communiqués or media communications which present myths such as the possibility for financial ascent.

The final dimension of antidiologic action is *cultural invasion*. As Freire describes, cultural invasion is both the instrument for dominating others and the result of domination (Freire 1970, 135). The dominant group deliberately invades the cultural context of another group to impose a perceived “superior” value system and reality. As members of the oppressed accept and conform to the culturally invading socialization, they too become active socializing agents, as parents, community leaders and teachers, for instance, continuing the cultural invasion for the oppressors.

Critical Consciousness and Dialogue

The antithesis of these culturally invading actions, Freire maintains, is the stimulation of a person’s “conscientização”—an awareness of their reality. Opposite of antidiologic actions which manipulate people’s thinking and socialize them into a silent, passive existence, dialogic action involves “the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world” (Freire 1970, 69). He continues to state that “naming the world” is to exist humanly and to change it. According to Freire,

Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (1970, 69)

In the act of considering the world, a person “sees” her place in it and describes her reality. As she then shares with another the specifics of this reality, her previously spoken dialogue becomes a text, a reality to re-consider and re-name as she negotiates her understanding of her world.

The Role of Socioeconomic Status

Anyon (1980), Kozol (1991), McLaren (1998), and Willis (1977), claim the greatest determinants of academic and economic success are parental income levels and socioeconomic status. McLaren (1998) offers a glimpse of the problems he faced in teaching in an inner city school in Toronto. Through his journal, he systematically unveils the daily struggles both teachers and students face in a school environment unconducive to learning, where students bring to school experiences of abuse, foul language, incarcerated family members and issues of safety from their own environment. Like many other teachers in inner city schools, McLaren grapples with the issues and concerns that arise from overcrowded classrooms, large immigrant populations, and limited funding and resources.

McLaren argues that the pedagogical styles of schools fail to help working class students succeed in which a hidden curriculum in school helps students from affluent families. Building on education as social reconstruction, Anyon (1980), McLaren (1998), and Bowers (1987) claim a child raised in a working class family is likely to remain a

member of the working class because his education will likely have socialized him expressly for only that role in society.

Defining Social Class

Anyon (1980) defines *working class schools* as having parents that typically come from the unskilled or semiskilled labor force. The fathers' occupations in her research usually included working in stockrooms, storerooms or as gas station attendants. Mothers in this group usually worked part time as waitresses, barmaids and sales clerks. Fifteen percent of the families in Anyon's research in New Jersey were below the federal poverty level.

Middle class school families, according to Anyon, fell into three social categories and occupations. Employment varied from blue collar, well paid skilled jobs (carpenters, plumbers, and construction workers) to white collar jobs. For instance, women worked in office jobs, as technicians or had a civil service position such as, firefighter, police officer or schoolteachers. On the higher end of the middle class scale, jobs ranged from personnel directors in local firms to accountants, even though there were even a few small capitalists in this category.

The *upper middle* class level was predominantly professional. Anyon refers to these affluent professionals as having jobs as cardiologists, corporate lawyers, engineers or executives. Ninety percent of the families in this category were white.

Families falling under the *executive elite class* defined by Anyon, were economically based primarily on the father's employment status. Most fathers were highly paid Wall Street executives or presidents and vice presidents in major U.S.

multinational corporations. Their wives volunteered in groups such as Junior League or were employed in well paid occupations themselves. There were no minority children at the school site Anyon identified as “elite”. Less than one percent of the population was represented in this category in 1980, when Anyon conducted her study.

Social Class and School Work

Following the social reproduction thesis, Anyon (1980) expands on the issues of socioeconomic status and schools who serve to reproduce social classes. In her research, schools serving students from various socioeconomic groups present distinctly different concepts and curriculum and employ different pedagogical approaches. Anyon unveils the hidden curriculum provided to children relative to each school’s social class.

Observing five different elementary schools at the fifth grade level, Anyon noted that the students’ work tasks, and the forms of interaction between teachers and students differed dramatically. Schools in poorer socioeconomic areas (working class) received less money for materials. Teachers within these schools exerted a higher degree of control over students’ school lives.

Anyon goes on to report that teachers in working class schools, for the most part, didn’t think their students could handle challenging work and that they believed the students they were teaching would not be in positions that required critical thinking. For these students, working-class jobs would be:

characterized by work that is routine and mechanical and that is a small fragmented part of a larger process with which workers are not usually acquainted (Anyon 1980, 70).

Here she links the teacher's pedagogical approaches and scope of curriculum as mirroring students' future societal status as it is faithfully reproduced within the school. The perception is, as one teacher stated, "simple punctuation is all they'll ever use" (Anyon 1980, 74).

Anyon observed that students' work in working class schools involved mechanically following procedures with very little decision-making or choice. Further, students' work involved little exploration or connection to larger contexts. Teachers evaluated assignments primarily by whether students followed the prescribed steps correctly, not whether their work was right or wrong. Teachers in such classrooms attempted to control classroom time and space by making unilateral decisions without consulting the children and without explaining the basis for their decisions (Anyon 1980, 73).

On the other hand, teachers in elite schools taught differently than their counterparts in working class schools. Teachers felt that students' opinions were valuable. In math, teachers encouraged children to speak up if they were in disagreement with the teacher's or classmate's solution to a math problem. Anyon noted in fact, that the class as a whole did not refer to peers' answers as either right or wrong answers; rather, students were in agreement or disagreement.

Teacher's expectations of students in elite schools were greater; fifth graders learning in the elite schools were cognitively challenged. Students were encouraged to work on developing their analytical skills. Emphasis was placed on reasoning to produce answers that were logically sound and of top academic quality. For instance, one goal

was that students were expected to conceptualize rules and apply their rules to solving problems. When teaching the mathematical concepts of area and perimeter one teacher had children derive a formula for perimeter before giving out the rules for the formula. When discussing social studies concepts, teachers in elite contexts asked students to consider ideas like, "Compare the way Athens chose its leaders with the way we choose ours" (Anyon 1980, 84).

In social studies, teachers at the elite schools regularly initiated classroom discussions that analyzed realistic, current concrete social issues and problems. For instance,

Why do workers strike? Is that right or wrong? Why do we have inflation and what can be done to stop it? Why do companies put chemicals in food when the natural ingredients are available? (Anyon 1980, 84).

Evaluation of students differed as well. Teachers in elite schools were just as interested in how a student set up a math problem as how they arrived at an answer. They reasoned that if a problem is set up properly, then it makes it easier to find the answer.

Student Involvement in School

In addition to issues related to socio-cultural, socioeconomic and social class the literature produced evidence that the student's involvement as a member of the community may also contribute to school success. Involvement was seen as a way to keep students from feeling alienated in school and to support overall success in achieving higher education. Astin claims, "the themes of involvement on campus and in one's education surface repeatedly in the literature" (in Smith 1997, 15). Smith (1997) defines

“involvement,” as the collection of behaviors and activities in which students are engaged that increases their interaction with other students and with the institution.

Researchers have used a wide variety of indicators to assess student involvement including participation in student organizations and clubs as leaders or members; attendance at academic, cultural, or social activities; employment on campus in a student job; participation in a varsity or intramural sport; or use of the library, athletic facilities, and labs. Other studies have also included out-of-class interaction with faculty as a form of involvement (Smith 1997, 15).

Empowerment: Critical Awareness and Action through Dialogic Practice

“The battle to save our children will never be won as long as we sit back comfortably and let history take its course instead of actively taking part in creating history” (McLaren 1989, 154).

Going to college is often seen as the doorway to success and personal empowerment. Although a desired result of going to college is success and empowerment, attitudes of empowerment are critical to getting there.

At the heart of critical pedagogy and critical research methodologies lie the issues of agency and empowerment. Critical educational theorists Shor (1992), Freire (1970), McLaren (1998), and Delgado-Gaitan (1991) claim that critical pedagogies are essential to providing minority students an opportunity for academic success, liberation and empowerment. Through critical examination of the received power structure, the factors relating to one’s position in society, and possible skills and tools that may change and advance a person’s social status, students or citizens are better able and willing to take action for themselves to transform their reality.

Concha-Delgado Gaitan (1991) eloquently defines empowerment as

...an ongoing intentional process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. People become aware of their social conditions and their strengths; they determine their choices and goals. Action is taken to unveil one's potential as a step to act on one's own behalf. Implicit here is consciousness of and responsibility for one's behavior and willingness to take action to shape it as desired through a social process. (23)

Empowerment is defined as an ongoing process that involves critical reflection, active group participation, and mutual respect for self and others. Through this process people gain access to valuable community resources and opportunities to acquire skills and an understanding themselves.

Shor (1992) claims empowerment "is a critical democratic pedagogy for self and social change" (15). An empowering pedagogy, according to Shor, is an active cooperative and social process. The goals of critical pedagogy are to relate individual growth to society through the development of "skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality and change" (Shor 1992, 15).

To Shor, increasing participation in school activities is an important place to begin because not only is student involvement low in traditional classrooms, but also taking action is essential to gaining knowledge and developing intelligence (1992, 17). Participation, the pathway to empowerment, is an essential element of an interactive pedagogy.

Empowerment and participation can lower students' resistance to learning, since the participatory or co-developed curriculum is relevant to their experience, involves cooperation in developing themes to investigate and enhances their learning process. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) defines empowerment as a consciousness of one's behavior and a sense of responsibility for designing one's own goals and making them happen, and a sense of empowerment seems critical throughout a student's educational experience prior to getting to college.

In contrast to conventional education, an empowering critical education includes dialogue among peers. In Freire's words, "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (1970, 68). To Freire, empowerment involves dialogue. Dialogue is a mutual interaction between two or more people and true dialogue involves each person's ability to name the world. The ability and opportunity to "name the world" is important in empowerment, which Freire calls liberation. Freire's pedagogy of liberation is a pedagogy for empowerment. He sees liberation developing from a consciousness of a person's position in the world, the power structure, how knowledge is formed, and how society is organized. Dialogue among people is essential to accessing this liberating consciousness. To Freire, participating in one's world is simultaneously the pathway to empowerment and empowering.

Building on the work of Freire, Shor (1992) proposes that a critical dialogic pedagogy is necessary to empower students living in oppressive environments. Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of teaching concerned with social injustices and the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how schools work (McLaren 1998).

Critical pedagogy is aimed at empowering students (and society) and transforming social inequalities and injustices. The critical teacher's role is to encourage and develop critical and active students-citizens in society (McLaren 1998). This pedagogical approach offers students opportunities to question and critically examine the current state of society, why society is the way it is, thereby enabling students to construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world, and over time, to take action toward transforming this reality.

CHAPTER THREE:

CRITICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“The challenge for teachers is to recognize and attempt to transform those undemocratic and oppressive features of hegemonic control that often structure everyday classroom existence in ways not readily apparent” (Peter McLaren 1989, 176).

Introduction

The underlying initiating force that drives me to this research is to better understand what specific barriers limit Latino students' success and what these students believe has helped them succeed in college. As a critical researcher I seek to address McLaren's challenge to change hegemonic control by investigating the oppressive structures experienced in the lives of the students. As a teacher-researcher, it is my intention to transform these structures in my classroom. McLaren (1998) argues that “the oppressed unknowingly participate in their own oppression” (178) by unquestioningly accepting the benefits of going to school. Hegemonic control is perpetuated as teachers fail to challenge students to question the values, attitudes and social practices of the dominant society. By taking a critical hermeneutic approach, collaboration with my participants will enable me to take part in re-creating history along with my participants.

Critical Participatory Ethnographic Research

Within a critical and participatory research model, research participants are actively engaged in the research process as fully acting subjects rather than as mere

objects of study. To the fullest extent, participants are included in as many aspects of the research process as possible including the interpretation of the data. Important to this process is the participant's role in critical reflection and ownership of their own data. Freire (1970) argues that participants' naming their own experiences activates the reflection process.

Critical and participatory ethnographic research enables the researcher to better understand, from the participant's own words, what have been the barriers to and supports for success in their journey toward and through college. This is important not only because it changes the way participants are traditionally treated in the act of being researched, but also because it allows for a more equal distribution of power to exist between researcher and the researched. Ethnographic methodology provides the opportunity for the researcher to capture and examine each participant's own language as they describe their experiences. Critical participatory ethnography also provides a balance against personal bias, as participants engage in dialogue with the researcher regarding the accuracy and completeness of their texts and the researcher's understanding of those texts.

Kieffer (1981) and Mishler (1986) also hold that a key aspect of participatory research is dialogue. Mishler argues that dialogue helps reduce the imbalance of power that traditional research reinforces. Predetermined procedures, schedules, and questions of traditional research serve to restrict the range of possibilities and responses participants give while a dialogic approach helps to establish intimate relationships with participants.

This allows for deeper reflection to occur. Borrowing from Burbules (1993), “dialogue is an activity directed toward discovery and new understanding” (8).

Dialogic Retrospection

I engaged the participants in this study in a process of “dialogic retrospection” as outlined by Kieffer (1981). This process involved electronically recording, transcribing, and returning to the participant for review and reflection each conversation prior to scheduling a second interview. Second interviews consisted of reviewing the first interview texts with the participants. Participants were asked to correct misinterpretations as they arose. Such a process fostered reflection.

Data Gathering

Data collection included following ethnographic methods of participant observations, dialogue interviewing, dialogue analysis based on Kieffer’s model of dialogic retrospection, and document analysis.

Dialogue Interviews

I interviewed five first-year Latino college students who were attending San Jose State University (SJSU), Santa Clara University and UCLA in their first full semester following their completion of the MESA program. I approached each of my research participants, inviting them to share their experiences preparing for and getting into college. I met each participant individually at a mutually convenient location. These conversational interviews were electronically tape recorded and systematically transcribed. Before meeting each participant a second time I gave each one a copy of the text to review prior to the next conversation. The second conversations with the

participants were guided by our reflection on and discussion clarifying and expanding on my thoughts from our first conversations.

Ethnographic Observational Journal / Field log

To understand the context in which MESA students are immersed, I initially visited a MESA day gathering to observe their program and connect with current participating MESA students, graduated MESA students, administrators and parents. This ethnographic approach enabled me to become familiar with the organizational working of each participant's experiences in MESA as they transitioned to college. This process enabled me to get to know "MESA." Observations increased my familiarity with the activities MESA students participated in and provided access needed to invite students to participate in the regular conversational-interviews.

Following qualitative research methodology outlined by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), and Mishler (1986) for each observation and each conversational interview I recorded within twenty-four hours my notes of what I observed through the course of my interactions with the participants. These notes later served to remind me of details about the environment and what I thought about directly after an interview.

I also used my field log-journal to record my reflections on my own experiences compared to that of the research participants. The field-log served as a note-taking log as I reviewed previous conversations and began to make initial analysis.

Document Analysis

As part of the data-collection process I reviewed and analyzed MESA literature and informational pamphlets. This literature provided insight into the program's

assumptions and goals. I later referred to these documents in making conclusions and recommendations.

Each transcribed interview presented a text for analysis as evidence of factors MESA students identify as helping them gain admission to college. I reviewed each first transcription and presented my thoughts during my second contact with each participant. I then reviewed both texts for each participant for themes and patterns of factors supporting these participants in their quest to reach college.

Research Context

The students interviewed are affiliated with the San José State University chapter of MESA. San José State University is located in the Silicon Valley, known initially as an agricultural community and transforming in the last thirty years to a center for innovation and creativity in the realm of high technology research and development. San José State University is located in the city of San Jose, the third largest city in California.

San José State University (SJSU) is located in the newly renovated downtown San Jose area, a focus for important financial, commercial and arts communities. The community is home to major industrial research giants including: Lockheed, IBM, Hewlett Packard, NASA-Ames Research Center, Advanced Micro Devices, Intel, Loral FMC, Amdahl, Pacific Bell and GTE Government Systems. The community around and near the university is quite diverse including a longstanding Latino community along with new immigrant communities largely emerging with recent Southeast Asian immigration. Downtown San Jose is also home to many from established affluent professionals, middle-class, and working-class families.

Though its student population comes from ninety-six countries, SJSU's primary service area encompasses four counties, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito. More than seventy-one percent of the SJSU student body comes from the San Francisco Bay area; fifty-one percent from Santa Clara county alone. A majority of San José State University graduates remain in the area. The average age of undergraduate students is twenty-five and graduate students age average is about thirty-three (San José State University Catalog 1995-1998).

Despite a large and longstanding Latino community presence, very few Latinos are represented at San José State University. About two-thirds are non-white with Asians constituting more than twenty-five percent of the population. The remaining students are divided among Mexican American, African-American, Filipino and other non-white groups. The ethnic profile for fall 1997 shows 33% of students were white, 29% were Asian, 10% were Mexican American, 4% were other Hispanic, 5% were African American, 6% Filipino, .7% American Indian, .6% Pacific Islander, and 12% not stated (San José State University 1997).

The Research Participants

The research participants were chosen initially from a list of MESA student graduates provided by the program's director. As we agreed upon, the names of the participants have been changed to protect their identities. From the list of ten students, I randomly called and connected with five students in their first year following high school graduation. The participants were students remaining in the Santa Clara county area or were readily available for conversations during frequent visits home with their families.

The participant list ultimately included four females and one male student all originally from San José, California.

Michael Garcia

When I met Michael Garcia, he did not have a preference for meeting places so ultimately we met once at the San José State University student union after his classes and once at my home at the end of his school day. Michael is fluent in both Spanish and English. Michael's parents are from Mexico. His father has a high school degree and his mother about a first grade education. His parents always tried to help him with his studies. His father was primarily involved in the MESA program as his mother was not as fluent in English. He also has a sixteen-year old brother.

Michael lives in a small house located on the eastside of San Jose a couple of hundred feet from the freeway. Most homes in Michael's neighborhood have fences around them and have little landscaping. The surrounding walls and freeway signs reveal frequent gang "tagging." His neighborhood is saturated by an abundance of cars. There are many older cars parked in the street and cars parked on cemented front lawns. There are also many used cars listed as for sale.

While growing up, Michael enjoyed reading children's books. Michael mentioned that early in his education he didn't go out during the weekdays much. If anything he would always finish his studying before going out to play. Later, while in high school he might have stayed out until midnight, but that only occurred on weekends.

Michael attended McHenry High School in south San Jose and took a few advanced placement courses such as calculus and advanced placement Spanish. Michael

was not involved in sports, but was a member of his high school band. Michael first joined MESA in his junior year of high school. Michael was treasurer for his chapter at McHenry High School and credits the MESA program for helping him to take on more leadership roles, and helping him get involved in study groups. Later he became treasurer for the San Jose State chapter.

Now, Michael is a first generation college student and is majoring in computer science at San José State University. He takes the bus to and from school from his family's home where Michael continues to live.

Patricia Ochoa

Patricia is the youngest behind two older brothers. Her parents arrived from Mexico in 1963. As she was growing up, her mother worked for the Del Monte Cannery in the summers and stayed home during the school year while Patricia's father worked for the railroad service.

When I first called Patricia for an interview, she was enthusiastic, saying that she would happily help out in "any way" that she could. Patricia and I met for our first conversation at her home by her preference and then once at my classroom where I teach so we could have more private, quiet time for our conversations. Our previous conversation was lively and rich and included many family interruptions. Patricia is currently attending the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), so we arranged our second interview for a weekend she came home to visit.

Patricia acknowledged that early in school, in eighth grade, she hung out with the "bad crowd," but later decided to make a change for the better in her sophomore year in

high school. Patricia's earlier most memorable experiences in school included a "white friend" being surprised she could receive an "A" in a class. On the opposite spectrum, some of her other struggles included being labeled "white washed" and having to overcome peer pressure for not "being" a Chicana.

Patricia attended Washington High School and was introduced into MESA through the example of her oldest brother who attended San José State University as an electrical engineering major. Her other older brother attends Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. She credits her older, twenty-eight year old brother as a role model as he was the first to join MESA early on in his education.

While in MESA she started off as vice president and later ran for another officer position in MESA. Patricia also took advantage of some of her high school opportunities. She went to Yucatan, Mexico and later she traveled to Europe visiting Switzerland and Austria to dance and represent the Folklorico dance group from San Jose. With Upward Bound she went to Hawaii. She took advanced placement courses and was involved in two college readiness programs, Upward Bound and MESA.

Sylvia Mendoza

Sylvia's family owns a home in southeast San Jose. There she lives with both of her parents, a younger sister in high school, and a younger brother. Sylvia's parents both immigrated from Jalisco, Mexico to the United States as adults. Her father holds an accounting degree from Mexico. Today he works as a manager for a supermarket store, and her mother works for a home health care service. The family has always spoken

Spanish together and as her parents' English fluency increased, they began to speak more English with each other.

In sixth grade, Sylvia was bused to a local junior high school for advanced math courses. Sylvia was on the honors roll and on the principal's list early on in her education. She recalls being exposed to college beginning in elementary school. Sylvia also expressed a love of reading.

Sylvia mentioned how early on she had to be home all the time. She was not allowed to go to the movies as much as her friends were. The only time she went out was when it involved visiting other relatives. Sylvia mentioned that her parents were always involved in her education one way or another. Both parents worked split shifts so one could always be home when the children were home. Her father always made sure they had dictionaries or encyclopedias for them to use. He also was involved in her high school's Parent-Teacher's Association (PTA).

At Creekside High School she began to join clubs such as the California Scholarship Federation (CSF), the National Honor Society (NHS), a multicultural club, the Students Association Committee and MESA. Sylvia was not consistently involved in sports, but she mentioned that she joined the swimming team for a short time. It was during her second year in high school that she increased her involvement with MESA as she became President of her group.

Starting in the fall of 1998 she began her coursework at San José State University as a computer science major. I met Sylvia once at the San José State University student union amphitheater with her sister and another time in my classroom to improve the

quality of the interview environment as her school or public places often proved to be too loud for tape recording.

Maria Ramos

Originally from Guatemala, Maria came to the United States when she was about eight or nine years old. She is a first generation college student and the oldest of six siblings, ages sixteen, fourteen, nine, eight and five. Her stepfather had a third or fourth grade education and her mother was training to be a secretary before she moved to the United States. Not living with her, it was her birth father that had some college experience. He was an interior decorator.

Maria Ramos recalls one of her goals early on in elementary school was to be student of the month. She mentions that she received a lot of support from her parents and was self motivated to succeed early on in life. Maria's family encouraged the importance of studying and set up the environment where she was not allowed to go out.

Maria attended McHenry High School and graduated Magma Cum Laude. Maria was a member of many clubs such as the tennis club, the National Honor Society (NHS), California Scholarship Federation (CSF), Associate Student Body (ASB) and MESA. Maria began her first semester at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in fall 1998. There Maria is studying computer science.

Jennifer Flores

Jennifer attended Forresthill High School in the Almaden Valley in a predominantly upper middle class neighborhood. Both of Jennifer's parents are from Mexico. Her father is a doctor, a general practitioner, and her mother is a full time

caregiver and parent. Jennifer has two younger sisters, one in junior high and the other a freshmen in high school. Their house is in a newly developed neighborhood nestled along the Almaden Valley Mountains along the Los Gatos and south San Jose borders. Compared to the other participants Jennifer's house was the largest house I visited. Neighboring homes have large beautifully landscaped front lawns along wide, newly paved, empty streets. Jennifer recalls moving from Evergreen because they wanted a bigger house. Her parents also moved to access better schools and better programs for students.

Even though as a child she was active in sports such as t-ball and karate, as Jennifer explained, her parents did not want sports to interfere with her studies and they kept tabs on her at all times. Later, Jennifer spent time in academic enrichment courses at San José State University every summer. At Forresthill High School she took many advanced placement courses such as physics, biology and English honors. Jennifer was involved in MESA for five years. She was secretary her junior year and President her senior year.

Jennifer transferred to Santa Clara University in the fall of 1998. Her major is computer science. Jennifer did not apply for financial aid for her family income exceeds the maximum requirements. She travels to and from Santa Clara University in a new sports car that she received, a combination birthday and graduation gift, for staying close to home for her college years.

About the Researcher

My interest in this topic stems from my personal desire to help Latino students from disadvantaged backgrounds develop the skills and interest needed to achieve their educational and personal goals. I am a Puerto Rican graduate student at San José State University as well as a third grade Spanish bilingual teacher in the Campbell Union School District. My brother and I were the first to attend college from my family. As a Latino teacher I am interested in what ways I might create an environment to assist students towards reaching college and how I might foster family-school relationships that may help more Latino students be prepared for and attend college.

My background, as I have described more completely in chapter one, reveals an experience lacking support systems and parents who understood how to help me become prepared for college. The outcome has been a long road through remedial course work to make up for the gaps in my college prep high school education. In the following chapter I will present excerpts from my participants' experiences to unveil what aided their readiness for and entrance into college.

CHAPTER FOUR:
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS A CRUCIAL ROLE
TOWARDS REACHING COLLEGE

My Story Revisited

As I began dialoguing with my participants I began to see how my experiences with school differed vastly from theirs. To begin with, my parents were not involved in my education in the way my participants said their parents were. As I have described, there wasn't anyone home after school reminding me that homework comes first. I had little guidance from my family overall. In the event I needed or wanted particular supplies and I asked for them, my mother would provide them.

My parents didn't relocate for my educational benefit. Once we moved from New York, there wasn't even any extended family to reach out to since they lived on the East Coast and we lived on the West Coast. It was not obvious that school was important because my parents didn't sit down with me daily to review my work or even ask questions about it to express an interest.

The major theme the participants identified as what supported their academic success was articulated well by Jennifer. Jennifer began her story of success in school describing the role of her parents. Jennifer shared, "It probably all started with my parents...without them there is no way I could have gone to college."

Like Jennifer, the other research participants give a lot of credit to their parents for their academic success. Maria described a similar feeling saying, “my parents had so much to do with it...they were always there to support me in whatever I would do...they were always there.”

Michael’s response to describe getting to college also started with the help of his parents. He said,

my parents really helped me to get motivated because. . . neither. . . of them went to college. And they really wanted me to go to college. . . they wanted me to get a better education than what they had.

Besides their families’ presence in their lives, receiving parental help, love and support from their parents and extended family, the participants also discussed the role of changing schools and neighborhoods and the benefits of institutional support through advanced placement courses and workshops offered by clubs and other college readiness programs.

Family Presence and Expectations

Interestingly, in naming factors that supported their success in school my participants first stressed that they always had someone to “go home to.” Maria had her grandmother, Jennifer had her mother, Sylvia had her mother, Michael had his mother and Patricia had her mother at home. For Maria, her grandmother’s supervising role in her homework time placed importance on school. Maria shared how this expectation contributed to feeling cared for:

My grandmother would take care of us. . . [she] would help us with our penmanship, that was mainly it. She told us that our homework should be nice and neat.

Maria later emphasized “there was always somebody at home. That’s another great thing.” The consistent presence of her family made her feel important. Her grandmother expected homework to be “nice and neat.” Although Maria’s grandmother, she shared, wasn’t able to evaluate beyond neat penmanship, the expectation included for Maria to do her best work period.

Similarly, Sylvia recalled that,

. . . my parents always put us first which means that they never saw each other. One would work one shift and the other would work another shift. So, one would always be there. We were never alone. For example, one would work the morning shift and the other would work the day shift or night shift. . . they still do it that way. . . they have always arranged it that way. So I guess that’s another thing, we’ve never really been alone. They have always made sure that there is always someone there.

Sylvia’s parents worked split shifts; they never saw each other so that someone would be home to make sure they were studying and were being taken care of. Sylvia’s parents’ act of putting her first sent her a message that her well-being and success is important to them. Sylvia’s family also made sure she knew where they expected her to go. In our initial conversation I mused at her flippant description of her parents’ verbal guiding and expectations to reach college. She shared,

They have always. . . said when they had talked about my life when I was young. . . when you grow up, you know you are going to college and getting a job. . . a lot of blah, blah.

Ironically, what Sylvia described as her parents repetitious “blah” that she would, without a doubt, go to college, arose as the very first response to what helped her get into college. What she dismisses “as a lot of talk” in those days has become a memory of significant

verbal encouragement and support towards reaching college. There was no other option or room for doubt for Sylvia.

In Jennifer's situation, she remembered her "mom was always at home."

Jennifer's mom was always physically present in her school. In elementary school Jennifer's mom volunteered in her class. Later, when she was in middle school, her mother's in-class participation decreased, but she would still "be there" to "pick her up from high school." The attention her mother paid towards being there and interested in school events or where she was interpreted by Jennifer as love. Her mother's presence meant school must be worth paying attention to.

The participants named their families' or caregiver's presence and implicit or explicit expectations as factors supporting their continued drive towards excellence in school. Their willingness to do so suggests a possible belief that success arises out of hard work in and completion of formal education. Their attitudes towards schooling and working hard further suggests a minimum of what Freire (1970) describes as culturally invading socialization towards passivity. The participants' families took an active role in anyway they could manage: *providing* time, materials, and words of encouragement; *expecting* great work and involvement in school activities; and *being present* as much as possible to ensure their children could achieve all this. Regardless of their initial levels of income and proficiency with English and school culture, the participants' families held high standards for success.

The participants' stories reveal a low level of the internalized oppression Freire says influences how families may perceive their role as agents in helping their children in

school. Ogbu's theories add to this discussion on internalized oppression. All the participants' families would fall under Ogbu's category, "immigrant minorities." Each of these participants' families voluntarily moved from their homeland to the United States. According to Ogbu, as immigrants the participants maintain a positive self-concept linked to limited socialization to believe otherwise. They may also hold onto the belief that their situation has improved from their homeland and view everything in their new home as an opportunity.

Parental Support

One way my participants felt their parents supported them in their educational experience was how they demonstrated love and affection as they talked to their children.

Maria mentioned that her parents were "there for her" in many ways.

They would always tell me to be proud of everything I did and all the work I did [and]. . . They would always try and help me whenever they could. They would try and get me whatever I needed.

The moral support and encouragement to "be proud" of everything she did motivated Maria to do her best in school. Maria became self-motivated to make her parents proud by maintaining some interest and active involvement with school because of the encouragement she received from her parents. This positive support served to reciprocate itself. Maria states:

My parents had so much to do with it. Well actually when I was going to school like third, fourth and fifth it was not that they would help me with my school work because my parents during this time they really did not know that much English so I . . . basically had to go ahead and look for the ways to find help. But they were always there to support me in whatever I would do: Any function that I had, they were always there . . .

Although Maria claims she did not receive the educational help she needed to go to college from her parents, she believes that she benefited from the positive encouragement and support from both of her parents. As a result of the positive encouragement from her parents, Maria feels compelled to reciprocate and says, "...well now I have to make them happy even though they weren't asking for that... I thought the biggest reward to give them is this: being in school."

An interesting pattern of family support that emerged from the data was the amount of involvement fathers had in directing their children toward the path to academia. During my second interview with Sylvia, she described the extent her father played in supporting her goals. She shared,

. . . My dad has always been supportive . . . my father has been a key influence in like my schooling . . . whatever I needed school-wise, like books . . . whenever I needed to get the things done, my dad would make sure I had it. He made sure I understood things too.

It was specifically her father, Sylvia recalls, influencing her drive to succeed. Her father set aside time making school feel important. He bought needed supplies to make school feel important. Sylvia's father made sure she had books and made sure she understood her homework. Sylvia is benefiting from her father's interest in her academic success.

In another example, Sylvia reveals how her father sought information for his daughter's academic success. She described how he would talk to people.

He would be like, "what do you need for this? . . . how many units are you supposed to take?" . . . and he would talk to people at work whose kids have gone to college. So he informed himself pretty well on what's going on.

Sylvia's father actively inquired to gain knowledge of the system and to find out what his daughter would need in order to get to college. Her father's persistence in acquiring the necessary information and tools is reminiscent of what Freire (1970) describes as taking action to transform his world. His actions do not depict a culturally invaded, passive actor in the world. The power of Sylvia's father's active role in her life emphasizes the need to disrupt the antidialogic actions holding back the many students who are not reaching college readiness.

As she described further the strong role her father had in her life, Sylvia stated how her father also made suggestions. He told her which classes to take. She recounts how her dad would say, "I think you should take that class...he has always had an influence on what classes I take..."

With similar references, Maria discussed her father's strictness and firm guidance claiming the strictness on her father's part contributed towards her success.

. . . My dad was really, really strict and that was kind of good you know, I kind of thank him now for it . . . it's good to have fun and whatever, but up to a point and my dad knew where that point was.

She continues, "...my bedtime was like nine o'clock. It sort of still is...you know I'm eighteen, but that's okay." Maria claims the structure and guiding "rules" supported her into doing the right thing. In her household, Maria's father insisted on rest and focus on school and their family culture supported those directives.

Likewise, Sylvia revealed her parent's "strict" attitude stating,

I could not go out with my friends . . . I had no choice. I had to do my homework or watch television which I did a lot.

Sylvia believed

They [my parents] were very overprotective . . . they knew where I was all the time, what I was doing . . . I think that had a lot to do with my staying on the right path and that I did not veer off to other places.

Although Sylvia's inability to go out restricted her in some way she knew this strictness grew out of love. Her family's guidelines provided the supporting structure she feels was necessary in order to maintain focussed on her educational success.

According to Shor, "kids reflect the culture and values around them. They give back the kind of treatment they get" (1992, 250). Although Shor refers to a negative context where disadvantaged students deal with crowded houses, violent atmospheres, loud environments and so on, the opposite seems to have operated in the participants' experiences. The participants reflect striving for educational success and wanting to have "a better life," the attributes they described their families as having.

Contradictory to Shor's description of the disadvantaged student's family life, my participants did not describe home life interfering with their intellectual space and development (1992, 222). Quite the opposite appeared in their stories of parents sacrificing their own relationship time, parents setting aside homework and study time, parents providing necessary materials, and parents attending functions and driving the participants to programs to assist them in their studies.

The level of family involvement from which the participants benefited reflects aspects of what McLaren (1998) calls *cultural capital*. This concept refers to a person's "cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills passed on from one generation to another" (McLaren 1998, 183). Cultural capital represents a family's ways of being, knowing, behaving and socializing new members, language practices, value systems, and

styles of dress. These traits may be linked to social class status as well as historical imbedded cultural transmission (passing on of culture).

Whether the participants' parents were educated beyond primary levels of grammar school or completed college, their families' cultural capital reflects beliefs about education and understanding of how to achieve in school. The participants all revealed family support that included everything from purchasing materials and setting aside a study time and location to actively seeking out further what would help their children in school. Overlapping with Freire's theories, McLaren (1998) suggests that schools tend to reward and encourage a student whose cultural capital more closely matches the values held by the dominant class (193). Students who reveal knowledge and compliance to the dominant group's values and standards are encouraged and molded further.

Families Relocating for Better Opportunities: Revealing a Hidden Curriculum

. . . the following increased as the social class of the community increased . . . higher expectations of student ability on the part of parents, teachers, and administrators; higher expectations and demands regarding student achievement on the part of teachers, parents, and administrators . . . (Jean Anyon 1980, 87).

Anyon (1980) maintains schools of different classes have different curriculums. She further suggests that public schools make available different types of educational experiences and curriculum knowledge to students in different social classes (Anyon 1980, 67). In our conversations about the factors supporting their reaching college, my participants voiced issues of different educational experiences and approaches to school

as they relocated. The participants' experiences relocating revealed different levels of expectations for students between two areas or two schools.

Sylvia and Jennifer's parents moved specifically to what they believed to be "better areas" so that their children would be presented more academic opportunities. Maria's experience moving from one school to another directly corroborates the differences in expectations that Anyon describes. As she recalled the change in schools, Maria shared how she sensed in elementary school that schools differ in each community as she moved from one area to another. Explaining her early experiences in schools she said,

. . . we moved from Randall and [my parents] . . . put us in Franklin, which was a Hispanic school . . . It was just that I didn't get as much support as I did in my old school.

She goes on to say later, "at Franklin...they were like, well, we're getting by and I started thinking that they might be right." Maria had noticed a difference in expectations when she moved from one school to another and how easy it would have been to get sucked into being satisfied with just getting by. The "Hispanic" school differed not only culturally, but also in the presence of support systems and the expectation that "getting by" is all that was important.

In Sylvia's case, her parents originally relocated to improve their child's environment. Sylvia described her first neighborhood:

. . . [it] was bad. It was like not as drug infested as it is now, but it was barely starting back then . . . my dad moved because he did not want that for us . . .

Sylvia went on,

My house is in the center of the division of, I think, social classes . . . it's like a bad neighborhood, kind of rundown houses and a lot of kids . . . And the other side has nice houses, . . . nice cars, . . . [and it's] really, really quiet and . . . that's where I live . . . I think it's the fact that my dad always made sure that we were not living somewhere like our first neighborhood. I think he knew that the environment had something to do with it and I don't think he wanted to deal with anything that the environment brought on.

Sylvia's family deliberately moved away from a low socioeconomic area because it would have "something to do with" future limited possibilities for a good life. Sylvia's family demonstrated an awareness that remaining in a particular environment may interfere with their goals. Her description of the two neighborhoods reveals a sense of cultural invasion as her Sylvia has come to believe that old, "rundown" neighborhoods with lots of kids are "bad." Her standards of "good" reflect media advertisement that manipulates us into believing nice houses, nice cars, a quiet life, and a few kids are ideal. And although Sylvia's family has recognized their discontent for their reality, they do not reflect a level of critical awareness that Freire maintains truly liberates people from the oppressive system that helps to create the "bad" neighborhoods in the first place.

In our discussion of her family's relocation, Jennifer articulated specifically her parents' awareness that individual schools and school districts offer different educational opportunities. She stated,

. . . [my parents] heard that McLaughlin, Saint Francis, . . . and Forresthill [High Schools] . . . had better programs for the students . . . they wanted us to go to Los Gatos and Cupertino schools, but that was too expensive and so San Jose was the best that you could get. So, that's why we came over here . . .

Jennifer's experience was influenced from a deliberate choice to have an education as close to the Los Gatos and Cupertino schools as possible. The curriculum differences

between schools were not so “hidden” for Jennifer’s family. That the area of the “better” programs was “too expensive” to move into corroborates Anyon’s claim that schools in upper social class areas provide superior levels of programs.

Freire’s theories of antidiologic action shed light on how the differences in each area of school shaped the participants’ thought processes. As Maria noted, responding to lowered expectations in moving from Randall school to a “Hispanic” school called, Franklin, she recalled beginning to believe that “just getting by” was all that was necessary.

Freire says the attitudes and the messages communicated in particular schools are potentially manipulating and conquering actions that subdue, or anesthetize people from thinking for themselves. The outcome becomes a community of people culturally invaded to accept the dominant, ruling class prescription for what reality is or can be. This is another dimension to the “hidden curriculum” Anyon describes.

All the participants’ families relocated to new homes and schools in order to take advantage of better opportunities made available to students attending “better” schools. Their knowledge of this system reflects an awareness of a supposed “hidden curriculum.” What is crucial to note is that families to whom curriculum differences remain cloaked, are unable to strive for better advantages and cannot demand these opportunities be made available where they are or go seek them. The data suggests a critical need to examine curriculum and attitudes in schools to determine the purposes behind such differences and the awareness, if any, behind the disparity in opportunities and resources in different schools.

Supportive Peer Networks

Participants identified their peers as significant providers of supportive help and encouragement. Maria credits her friend Christina who encouraged her to participate in women's tennis. It was her varsity teammates that motivated her to continue with her studies. "The whole line up of varsity were all going away to college and I was like well, if they can do it, so can I." Team effort, example, and encouragement opened a window of new possibilities for Maria. The dialogue quality of membership in a team provided Maria opportunities to grapple with her reality and ways of knowing. It was in contact with other perspectives through dialogue, Maria began to develop her own consciousness.

Patricia also indicated how her peer group study was a factor in her success when she said,

. . . I had people helping me do my homework, which I had never had before. My parents never helped me with my homework because they were never able to do that. Not only with math, but understanding English . . . So I had my friends to help me and they were helping me and things progressed . . .

Patricia attributes her success in school to a network of friends. This friend-study group provided Patricia the assistance her parents would have trouble providing. Patricia's group of friends became her socializing "circle" in which to learn study habits and discuss assignments.

Like Patricia, Maria mentioned how she had her friends to help her. She shared, "...when we had projects to do, we would like get together..." Maria was able to go over to a friend's house to borrow a computer to complete her assignments. Her circle of friends bridged the gaps that existed in her family support systems.

I later found out that Maria hung out with people who she thought were motivated to go to college. Specifically, she credits many Asian and Filipino students she met on the tennis team and the effect switching schools had on her. “That also rubbed off because they were really so motivated...” Meeting and interacting with students who held different views and spent their time differently than her “old” group of friends stirred her consciousness and ultimately motivated her to try out new strategies for success.

In Michael’s case, he described surrounding himself with peers who helped him with homework and who were interested in going to college. “They help you with all you need...and you find a lot of people who are interested in going to college,” he explained. Michael viewed having friends who are interested in similar goals as the key to making it. Michael’s parents, too, had little to offer in the way of study tips and homework help. His friendship group filled his needs and simultaneously acted to reinforce each other towards reaching their goals.

The participants’ stories of peer networks resonates with Treisman’s research on the benefits of group study for college freshman. In his research Treisman found that successful college students frequently used group study as a technique for academic achievement (in Somerton et al. 1994). Burbules’ description of dialogue as instruction offers a glimpse of how these groups assist students towards success (1993, 9). Citing Dave Bridges’ work, Burbules notes that

through dialogical classroom discussion participants can learn not only about the subject matter at hand, but also about expressing themselves clearly to others; learning to regulate their discussions through such conventions as taking turns, listening, and so on; and learning about other people (Burbules 1993, 9).

For the participants, the opportunity for dialogue with their peers over schoolwork concerns and making plans supported their drive to continue towards college. Although the participants often described gaps in their families' abilities to provide support, they were not stifled or socialized to stop there. These participants demonstrated a certain level of motivation or drive to transform their reality. They, like many of their parents, sought the necessary tools and developed relationships with peers striving for college. Their actions reveal a low level of internalized passivity.

Involvement in Institutional Support Programs: A Track to Success

The support participants received did not stop at family presence and expectations, and peer groups, many of the participants cited institutional programs such as advanced placement courses, workshops, MESA and Upward Bound as yet another dimension of support from which they benefited.

Jennifer revealed how early her parents prepared her for college. "...You know it started in sixth grade when the school put me in regular math. [My parents said,]...no, we want you in accelerated math..." For Jennifer, this was the beginning of her advanced placement track. This led to her getting ahead of others. Her conversation continued with,

. . . have you heard of AEI before? Academic Enrichment Institute. They have it at San Jose State every summer and it's basically a six-week course from eight to four everyday in math, pure math. And I did my geometry in a summer like that. And that was another way of getting ahead . . . So when I had started high school, . . . most kids were starting Algebra 1-2, I started Algebra 3-4 and so that helped.

The confidence Jennifer displayed throughout our conversations that she was always going to go to college has its origins in early involvement in institutional support

programs. She emphasized she would be going to college with or without the help of MESA. Jennifer was academically ahead of most of her classmates. She took advantage of many education advancement opportunities. Jennifer took SAT summer courses and attended MESA career days to further inquire about careers and college expectations related to them. The only thing that Jennifer could not take advantage of were federal grants and scholarships since her family's income was too high, yet later she received a scholarship award from Bank of America because of her good grades.

Although Jennifer was at the high end of the socioeconomic spectrum from the other participants considered as disadvantaged, all the research participants still managed to take advanced placement courses. Some took AP English, AP Mathematics, and or they attended SAT workshops to increase their chances of getting into college.

In addition to the advanced placement courses and workshops participants also revealed how academic guidance through Upward Bound and peer interaction enhanced their experiences of getting into college.

Patricia received the necessary support to guide her as to why she needed certain workshops. Upward Bound explained what SAT's were about, and why they were important. They "told me what there is, you know like, there is the SAT...this is what it is, this is what you need to do, and it's for that..." She later admits, "I think Upward Bound helped me more...[than MESA]"

Upward Bound helped Patricia with college applications. In her words, "I told them which one's I wanted and they got them for me and they helped me with the fee waivers." Because Patricia was involved in Upward Bound, she received help with the

application process. The program removed the complex process of figuring out who to contact and how it removed the hassle of dealing with various universities and how to complete different application packages.

Patricia's choice in colleges continued the support opportunities. Patricia offers several reasons for choosing to attend UCLA. She said,

There is a PLUS program at the collegiate level (Program Leading to Undergraduate Success). It's just like Upward bound . . . similar to what Upward Bound does, but it's at the undergraduate level and so I'm doing that now . . . that's why I also chose UCLA because they have programs . . .

Patricia also mentioned that once you are in Upward Bound you are automatically put into the PLUS program. It's no wonder why Patricia speaks highly about Upward Bound, since Upward Bound is one of the few college readiness programs that follows through with help while *in* college.

Teacher Expectations

Not only did participants receive encouragement and help from their peers, but they also received similar encouragement/expectations from their teachers. Maria recalled, "it was mainly my teachers and my counselors...my counselor Mr. Serta and Mrs. Morales my freshman year. Both of them were like you have the potential. You can actually go." Here, Maria was supported with praise and the belief of others in her own potential.

Sylvia recalls her teacher influences. "Mr. Livingston...he was my teacher for two years...I used to talk to him and I think he gave my parents insights about what was going on... Mr. Livingston gave Sylvia's parents insights about the system. Sylvia was

also supported by someone who knew and had access to the system. This support enabled her to make a path towards college.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TOWARDS FACILITATING FAMILY SUPPORT AND ENGENDERING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS DEVELOPMENT

As I have described previously, my basis for this study was to uncover more about the effective interventions and factors that enable Latino students to overcome the many barriers that interfere with minority students being prepared for and reaching college. My dialogue with the research participants delivered rich stories of students with families speaking little English and initially knowing little of school culture, yet overcoming all this to enter universities straight out of high school.

Compared to my own experience, the role of college preparatory classes and understated expectations were alone enough for the participants to reach college. Overwhelmingly, the participants' explanations of what helped them get into college unveiled a story of personal motivation guided by family expectations, choices and support. Where their parents or families weren't able to support them, the participants gave credit to peer groups which provided information, encouragement, example and even dialogue interactions that opened window of possibilities for their visioned-futures. They then, cited institutional and teacher expectations as an important layer towards reaching the universities.

The MESA program was not specifically identified as the major supporting factor helping them towards their educational goals. The foundations of success were layered in

their homes by their parents' active role in their lives. Their families' consistent presence and expectations shaped their futures. As Sylvia stated, "I would have gone to college anyway."

My intention was to look at the role MESA played as a factor in supporting "disadvantaged" students towards education in mathematics and science. Based on these MESA students' stories, I make this conclusion: the students enrolling in and sticking with the MESA program do not fit my understanding of "disadvantaged" students. While the participants' families were immigrants to the United States, and many of them did not have English fluency enabling them to support their children on specific assignments, all the participants lived with both parents in a home they owned. I wonder if these are truly the "disadvantaged" students that need additional support systems in order to bolster "disadvantaged" students towards mathematics and science.

Although the participants have all successfully entered four-year universities, a goal they and the MESA program held, there is a troubling question left in me about the extent or nature of their "success." As Freire (1970) stresses, the dominant class defines what is success and the prescription for how to reach it.

That the participants' families recognized relocation as a viable step towards reaching their goals, suggests their acceptance that in order "to be" is "to be like" those that have a financial status and a lifestyle appealing to them. I am left wondering to what extent the participants unconsciously adopted ways of being and knowing that led to what Freire calls their cultural invasion—the imposition and eventual adoption of a "superior" value system.

McLaren discusses this same issue as he states, “For many economically disadvantaged students, success in school means a type of forced cultural suicide, and in the case of minority youth, racial suicide” (1989, 205). McLaren specifically refers to how minorities (Blacks, American Indians, Latinos) believe that in order to succeed in school academically they must “learn to think and act white” (202). He goes on further to note that schools reward behaviors called “white” which ultimately socializes minorities to either resist (and “fail”) or acculturate and succeed.

My own story reveals hints of my parents encouraging my brother and me to shed our Spanish language and learn what the teachers tell us to do. In this openly accepting, passive role we began to detach from our cultural heritage.

Findings about MESA

In light of the factors unveiled in the data, I make the following suggestions:

- The MESA program could touch a broader group of diverse, disadvantaged students, by re-evaluating their selection process and their identification of “disadvantaged” students to include more students who seem to have trouble coming to meetings and maintaining necessary academic performance.
- To encourage the positive benefits of family support systems, MESA could at an early educational point include opportunities for both parents and students to discuss in groups the barriers they face in getting to college and determine together the strategies for achieving their goals.
- For students whose parents have limited time to be physically involved in all the steps getting into college, MESA could expand opportunities for peer study groups and arrange opportunities for greater numbers of students to become exposed to college connections and strategies for achieving success. For example, I envision MESA students presenting this “new” knowledge to other students in their schools and/or providing workshops for their peers. I believe this peer outreach might alleviate the alienation some minority students feel as they separate from their cultural peer groups.

- Since the socialization process shapes families' and students' attitudes and goals early in life, MESA may want to expand their services to encourage and support *all* students in primary grades.
- To reach out to a greater number of students, MESA could inquire into the reasons various students drop from the program and lend support there.
- MESA could look into what ways the program could be "advertised" better in the community to encourage more families beyond those who are already aware of the benefits of involvement to take advantage of their support system.

Recommendations for Educators

For this particular group of students, support was helpful; but, there are many students who face a lot more lack of support. There is insufficient funding to reach all "disadvantaged" students and provide them with support or to assist their families in supporting their children. Furthermore, programs like MESA may find themselves in a "catch-22" situation having to prove success with their program in order to receive continued funding. As a result these supportive programs may be forced to limit participation to or work harder to encourage students with the potential to "make it."

Teachers and schools cannot wait for programs to intervene and support students towards college. To further support "disadvantaged" students towards academic success, I make the following recommendations:

- Based on the recognition of what Anyon calls a "hidden curriculum," differentiating opportunities, expectations and resources by social class communities, schools and teachers need to look at the curriculum we're offering students and uncover why such a curriculum is in place.
- Teachers could work closer with parents to stimulate what Freire labels liberating, critical consciousness development that will enable and motivate parents to discover ways to support their children in their education.

- Teachers and schools need to dialogue with families to discover ways parents are able to be involved and how *they* would like to learn more.
- Teachers and schools need to make explicit the strategies students need to become successful learners that leads to college preparedness.
- Teachers could develop relationships with families and students that provide the safe and trusting environment in which to ask questions and request help.

EPILOGUE

As a result of this research I have begun to think differently. I have come to understand a broader perspective of the Latino experience. I have come to realize that in the end, that I did receive love and support that motivated me to go to and helped me through college.

A few of my friends began to go back to college and encouraged me to try. Their encouragement led me into a new environment where others were interested in similar goals. Once I was enrolled, the universities and colleges contributed to my success. I was able to explore different careers that interested me. I took courses focussing on learning to learn, how to study, and how to make the most of my college experience.

The university continued to support me with filling out paper work and introducing me to key faculty and staff members in financial aid, admissions and records, my undergraduate department, and in my future credential department.

Today, I actually see myself as more capable as a student. When I first entered the Liberal Studies Program, I doubted my worth as a teacher and the potential qualities I had to offer. At the completion of this graduate coursework and project, I now recognize the strength I have in teaching.

My cultural background and lived-experience and newly achieved academic successes and experiences enable me to do what I call code-switch. I have access to two

worlds—where I may toggle between academia and a working class Puerto Rican family experience. I realize the significance of my experience as a model for students I teach.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Anyon, Jean. 1980. Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work. *Journal of Education* 162 (Winter): 67-92.
- Bereiter, C. and Engelmann, S. 1966. *Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Pre-School*. Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice-Hall.
- Beverley, Patricia. 1997. "Components of Success: Implementing MESA to serve all students in a Small Rural High School." M.S. thesis, Dominican College.
- Bowers, C. A. 1987. *The Promise of Theory: Education and the Politics of Cultural Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Burbules, Nicholas. 1993. *Dialogue in Teaching: Theory and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Carey, Shelley Johnson. 1993. *Science For All Cultures: A Collection of Articles from NSTA's Journals*. Arlington, VA: N.S.T.A.
- Delgado-Gaitan, Concha. 1991. Involving Parents in the Schools: A Process of Empowerment. *American Journal of Education* 100 (November): 20-46.
- Ed Source, Inc. 1995. *Who Are California's Students?* Menlo Park, CA: Ed Source Inc.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum Publishing.
- Glesne, Corrine and Alan Peshkin. 1992. *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Kieffer, Charles, H. 1981. *Doing "Dialogic Retrospection": Approaching Empowerment Through Participatory Research*. Paper presented at the International Meeting of The Society of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, April 15, 1981.
- Kozol, Jonathan. 1991. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: Harper Perennial.

- Lee, Terri, ed. 1996. *MESA Prospectus*. Oakland: The Regents of the University of California.
- Lessow-Hurley, Judith. 1996. *The Foundations of Dual Language Instruction*. 2nd ed. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.
- McLaren, Peter. 1998. *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Mishler, Elliot G. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nieto, Sonia. 1998. Fact and Fiction: Stories of Puerto Ricans in U.S. Schools. *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (Summer): 133-163.
- Ogbu, John U. 1978. *Minority Education and Caste: American Systems in Crosscultural Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.
- Philips, Susan, U. 1983. *The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservations*. New York: Longman.
- San José State University. 1997. "Facts about San José State University." San Jose, CA: San José State University.
- San José State University Catalog*. 1995-1998. San Jose, CA: San José State University.
- Shor, Ira. 1992. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1996. *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority In A Critical Pedagogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Suarez-Orozco, Macelo M. and Carola Suarez-Orozco. 1993. Hispanic Cultural Psychology: Implications for Educational Theory and Research. In *Renegotiating Cultural Diversity in American Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Smith, Daryl, G. 1997. *Diversity Works: The Emerging Picture of How Students Benefit*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Somerton, Wilbur, H., Marry Perry Smith, Robert Finnel, and Ted W. Fuller. 1994. *The MESA Way: A success Story of Nurturing Minorities for Math/Science Careers*. San Francisco, CA: Caddo Gap Press.

Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

RELATED WORKS

- Delgado-Gaitan. 1990. *Literacy for Empowerment: The Role of Parents in Children's Education*. New York: Talmer Press.
- Delpit, Lisa. 1995. "Skills and Other Dilemmas of a Progressive Black Educator." *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: The New York Press.
- Doll, William E., Jr. 1993. *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Freire, Paulo. 1973. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- _____. 1998. *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letter to Those Who Dare Teach*. Translated by Donaldo Macedo, Dole Korke, and Alexander Olivera. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Freire, Paulo and Donaldo Macedo. 1987. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. Westport Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey.
- Kohl, Herbert. 1994. *I won't Learn From You*. New York: The New Press.
- Melchoir-Walsh, Sylvia. 1994. "Sociocultural Alienation: Experiences of North American Indian Students in Higher Education." Ph.D. diss, Arizona State University.
- Musil, Caryen McLighe Mildred Garcia, Yolanda T. Moses, and Daryl G. Smith. 1995. *Diversity in Higher Education: A Work in Progress*. Washington: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Palmer, Parker J. 1998. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Perry, Wilhelmina. 1998. Memorias de Una Vida de Obra (Memories of a Life of Work): an Interview with Antonia Pantoja. *Harvard Educational Review*. 68 (Summer): 218-243.

- Poplin, Mary and Joseph Weeres. 1994. *Voices From the Inside: A Report on Schooling from Inside the Classroom*. Claremont, California: The Institute for Education in Transformation at the Claremeont Graduate School.
- Walsh, Catherine E. 1998. Staging Encounters: The Educational Decline of U.S. Puerto Ricans in [Post]-Colonial Perspective. *Harvard Educational Review*. 68 (Summer): 218-243.