CHAPTER 8

PREPARING TEACHERS TO WORK IN DISENFRANCHISED COMMUNITIES

Deconstructing Latina/o Historical Trauma and Internalized Racism

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Our Latino children were in pain: had seen, heard, witnessed so much in their every-
day lives, yet they had no sacred spaces to be held and heard, to share what mattered
to them. What part of their humanity was wounded, unseen and invisible to their
families, their friends, their teachers, the society that was raising them?

—Alicia Garcia[1]

LIFE LESSONS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION

When I took my first teaching job, as an elementary school teacher in inner-city Los Angeles, I knew I was unprepared. But I had no idea how unprepared I was. As a new teacher on an emergency credential with no teacher preparation classes under my belt, I thought the lack of courses on content

delivery and pedagogy would be my downfall. Now, over 20 years later, having watched teacher preparation closely as a teacher educator, I know that I was unprepared in the same ways that even those who attend top-notch credential programs often are.

Teachers who work in urban, working-class communities, if they were enrolled in a well-designed teacher preparation program, took one or two courses that are intended to introduce them to the complexities of teaching in diverse contexts (but even this is rare).[2] These courses often address the benefits of acknowledging and understanding the cultural backgrounds of non-White students. They may also consider the history of racism that has shaped the experiences and schooling of communities of color. These are critical steps in teacher preparation, and yet this training does not begin to prepare teachers for being effective in classrooms with students of color in working-class communities. The coursework may provide future teachers some understanding of the history and cultural background of students, but it does little to help them recognize how these histories shape the lives of youth in these communities, and in particular, the identities that their students learn to embody in the classroom.

What I found over the course of that first year in the classroom was that I needed something that I did not have: something that teacher preparation programs were not teaching their students and that most of my fellow teachers did not know to concern themselves with. I needed tools for understanding myself in the context of teaching in a Black and Brown working-class community. I needed ways of understanding how my students manifested the pain and trauma that they and their families had experienced for generations. I needed a means for helping them recognize their brilliance in the midst of all this, for nurturing that brilliance, and for pursuing meaningful goals that acknowledged their challenges. I needed a process for understanding and addressing the collective pain that was so much a part of our everyday experience in the classroom. I needed exactly what Alicia Garcia (quoted above, personal communication, September 17, 2011) realized she needed, teaching in a different part of the city, years later.

Having worked in the Bay Area for the last 15 years supporting raza[3] teachers in communities very similar to the one where I started teaching, I have found that these are the most pressing needs for our teachers who are committed to social justice in communities of color. In communities from inner-city Oakland to Richmond to east San José, and from Dixon to Salinas to rural Castroville, we have consistently seen our young people overwhelmed by the pain they experience and have felt at a loss for resources to help us as we work with them. As a result, a collective of raza teachers and community workers—MAESTR@S—came together to develop a model for dealing with these realities as we work for social justice with young people.[4] This chapter explains the applied theoretical work we developed to help us understand our

experiences as raza students and teachers. The next chapter in this volume explains an evolving model of walking social justice: a holistic framework and daily practice for pursuing racial and educational justice in educational communities. Both chapters offer a challenge to how we prepare future teachers for their work in the classroom and how leaders create environments in which teachers can engage in that work in transformative ways. In the next chapter, these lessons are shared from our work in two unique contexts: (1) the group itself (because this aspect of the project provides an understanding of how the model was created among a collective of teachers and youth workers); and (2) our applications in classrooms (because this allows teachers to consider how they can adapt the model to their own work in classrooms). Both chapters also include insights for school leaders to begin the process of applying this work to their efforts to pursue racial justice in schools. In this first chapter, we will consider where the current research on the Latina/o educational crisis leaves us, a theoretical framework for deconstructing racial injustice in the schools, followed by background on the MAESTR@S group and our methods for using applied theory.

FRAMING THE LATINA/O EDUCATIONAL CRISIS

The most recent body of research demonstrates that across multiple social factors, Latina/o youth in the United States are in dire jeopardy (Covarrubias, 2011; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Murrillo, Villenas, Galván, Muñoz, Martínez, & Machado-Casas, 2010; Torres & Fergus, 2012; Valencia, 2011). The data on Latinas/os in the schools reveal that 44% of Chicanas/os in the United States are not graduating from high school (Covarrubias, 2011). Just as powerful is the fact that another 29% of Chicanas/os graduate from high school but do not enter college (Covarrubias, 2011). This may be attributable to the fact that, although they are graduating from high school, Latina/o students are not prepared for college by their secondary schooling. In my own community of Santa Clara county, only 26% of the Latina/o students *who graduate high school* have completed the requirements necessary to enroll in the state universities, compared to 55% of Whites and 71% of Asians (Kids in Common, 2009). The suspension rate for students in the largest high school serving the Latina/o community on the east side of San José is .64 for each student, while the rate for both high schools in a district serving a White community only a few miles away is .04 for each student (Kids in Common, 2009). The latter district spends $11,264 per student annually, while the east side district spends $8,966 per student (Kids in Common, 2009).[5] I highlight these few data points to emphasize the severity of the issues facing raza youth in our schools.

There have been countless studies that have mapped out different facets of the Latina/o education crisis. Gandara and Contreras (2009), whose

book is titled *The Latino Education Crisis*, expose the multifaceted inequities Latinas/os experience in the schools, including a lack of preschool opportunities, inadequate school facilities, a technological divide, tracking and limited access to higher-level curriculum, a lack of quality teachers and strong school leaders, segregated schooling, a paucity of safe schools and extracurricular activities, and, perhaps the most powerful force underlying the persistence of these issues: stereotypes and self-fulfilling prophecies. Valencia (2011), now in his third edition of *Chicano School Failure and Success*, adds to this overview by including the powerful negative effects of assessment and high-stakes testing, special education, school finance, and the role of language suppression and cultural exclusion. Murrillo et al. (2010) compile another major overview of raza schooling in the *Handbook of Latinos and Education*, covering history and policy in greater depth to provide a more complex understanding of the issues underlying raza school performance, as well as highlighting resources to help those working to confront these issues. Although these compilations have provided significant advances in the understanding of raza schooling, two authors in particular have been essential to framing the core issues affecting the daily lives of raza students in United States schools: Valenzuela (1999) and Yosso (2005). Valenzuela (1999) breaks down the powerful forces underlying the issues covered in these three volumes, as she explains the ways in which United States schools engage in forms of subtractive schooling with raza youth, ignoring and even taking away the strengths Latinas/os bring into the school, and leaving them poorly prepared for post-secondary life. These forces are even more clearly understood through the lens of Yosso's (2005) analysis, whereby she explains the ways in which deficit models have led to schools ignoring the "community cultural wealth" in raza neighborhoods. Yosso highlights the insidious ways by which racism, often in the form of racial microaggressions, serves to shape and limit the schooling of raza students at every level of education. Together, these authors help us understand the ways in which race and racism today have a dramatic impact on the daily lives of raza youth. Despite the growing body of research that seeks to explain, and even challenge these realities, as Alicia Garcia demonstrates in the opening quote, teachers working in disenfranchised Latina/o communities struggle to find ways to support their students who face the issues so powerfully deconstructed by Valenzuela (1999) and Yosso (2005).

MAESTR@S: LEARNING TO "MAKE SENSE" OF RAZA SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Recognizing this reality, in 2000, I convened a gathering of Bay Area educators who were committed to addressing the issues faced by raza youth

and their families in the local schools. This session led to the formation of a group that was intended to provide immediate support for teachers and community workers looking for tools to help them in their work. Our own training in schools of education had not prepared us for what we were living in our classrooms. As we met that first day, participants described the challenges they saw their youth facing. We were seeing Latina/o youth struggle with school at every imaginable level, dealing with irrelevant and unengaging curricula; hostile peer groups; and teachers, administrators, and on-campus police with low or no expectations for them. We were seeing them struggle in their homes: trying to find ways to negotiate between the experiences and culture of their parents and the dominant culture, and between the world their parents hoped they would be able to live in and the one they actually had to face on a daily basis. We were seeing them struggle in their communities: trying to find a place that they fit and could still survive. We were seeing them struggle with the media and what it tells them they are, can be, and even what they should desire. We were seeing them struggle with themselves: working to create a sense of self that fully incorporates all of who they are as Latinas/os, as young men and women, as working class. We were seeing them struggle to envision and move toward a future they really want and feel they can attain. These are the issues that shape the lives of our students and have perhaps the greatest impact on our work in the classroom. MAESTR@S came together to develop collective ways of supporting our students as they faced these struggles.

Even after leaving our credential and graduate programs, we had read countless articles and books that considered the experiences of Latina/o youth in the schools (including many listed in the previous section), but we still found that we did not have the tools that we needed.[6] We had also attended local, state, and national conferences in education, sociology, bilingual education, social science, and Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies to seek support. We left these conferences knowing that the specific tools we sought were not provided, nor was there a clear understanding of the concrete issues we faced with youth in our communities. In short, we sought a deeper analysis than that included in most education research and conferences. We needed an analysis and classroom tools that considered the realities we were witnessing: criminalizing schools, police harassment, extreme violence, dramatic suicide rates, severe poverty rates, lack of access to healthcare and to other critical community resources—the severity of growing up in disenfranchised communities.

MAESTR@S, therefore, began its efforts by identifying people who were doing innovative work that was engaging raza youth in schooling or education (Pizarro & Montoya, 2002). We traveled to different communities and presented participatory workshops designed to give teachers and youth workers specific tools that they could immediately use in their classrooms

and communities. Over the course of five years, we organized countless *encuentros* for teachers, students, and communities, leading to the development of a model that will be described later. The first thing we recognized through our work, however, was that we needed a clear, shared analysis of what was happening to us and to our youth through the schooling process. We needed that analysis to speak of and to our students, who were currently struggling. We needed a way of "making sense" of what we and our students were experiencing on a daily basis so that we could take thoughtful steps toward addressing these realities. We sought insights that spoke to the students' and our emotional and spiritual realities.[7]

A PERSONAL NOTE ON NEEDING TO "MAKE SENSE OF ALL THIS"

When I began my work with MAESTR@S, I was tired. I was tired of reading works that provided a powerful critique of the school system and identified all of the major changes needed in that system but left me with no help for working with a group of students immediately. I was tired of attending conferences where similar critiques were made by prominent scholars who received ovations but left me wondering what we could actually do with the vast number of raza youth being broken by the schools at that very moment. I was tired of walking into classrooms driven by testing and standards that left no room for students' and teachers' humanity to be affirmed in any meaningful way. I was tired of feeling like so many of us were going through the motions without recognizing what was truly going on and how it had been going on for generations. I needed a way of dealing with the pain I saw in the eyes and spirits of the raza youth I met and worked with in countless classrooms. I needed a way to understand that pain, where it came from, and how it played itself out in raza students' lives and in our classrooms. MAESTR@S became a space for me to voice this, and our collective became a place for us to do lived theory work that we could use immediately in our classrooms and communities. The rest of this chapter explains that lived theory work.

THEORY-BUILDING FOR DECONSTRUCTING RACIAL INJUSTICE IN THE SCHOOLS[8]

One of the most significant challenges researchers have struggled with in approaching the Chicana/o community over the years is the complexity of the social forces at work in shaping the multiple manifestations of the Latina/o educational crisis. Focusing on any one of the aspects of this reality (as we typically do in writing for publication) makes our research manageable

and possible, but it also leaves us only addressing one facet of the issues involved and possibly not developing comprehensive strategies to meet the real needs of youth. This was the problem that MAESTR@S faced early on in our work. We knew we needed to confront this challenge and spent a couple of years analyzing our own experiences to help us do the work we knew our students needed. In this section, as a means of building a holistic foundation for addressing these realities, I outline a theoretical framework for addressing the complexity through an analysis of deficit models, historical trauma, the normalization of racial inequality in schools, the individualization of Latina/o school failure, and the internalization of racism among students.[9] This is an extension of the work we did in MAESTR@S. We began by analyzing the historical forces that we saw at work in our lives and classrooms and then sought to explain how these forces manifested themselves in our students' experiences. The contemporary applications we made left us on our own since there is very little research that has approached these issues. My own work with raza students at all levels of the K–20 pipeline has shown me the relevance of these approaches to framing their experiences and their power in helping students make meaning of those experiences and pursue their life goals with clarity and confidence. We end this chapter with consideration of how students apply these insights to their own experiences and also how teachers and school leaders might learn from this to assist in their work for racial justice.

Deficit Models

How are all of these issues connected? The answer to that question is complicated, but one way of answering it that allows for some clarity is simply through historical reflection. There is a strong body of research that has demonstrated the way in which deficit models define the institutional experiences (including schooling) of people of color, particularly in the early 20th century in the United States (San Miguel & Donato [2010] provide an overview of early Latina/o schooling, while Valencia [2010] exposes the sway these models had as well as their blatant inaccuracy). Deficit models were used to explain the failure of people of color to achieve in the United States compared to the success of White communities. Prominent White scholars in a number of fields during this time explained these differential outcomes by way of the alleged genetic, cultural, religious, social, and/or moral inferiority and deficiencies of the different communities of color that were being analyzed (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990; Valencia & Solorzano, 1997). In fact, the eugenics movement of the early 20th century that included scientists, psychologists, education scholars, and others reflected the desire of prominent White scholars to prove the inherent

genetic superiority of White people. These models have long since been debunked (Valencia, 2010), but it is critical to recognize that they dominated the social and educational landscape of the United States during the time in which schools and other social institutions in the U.S. were being shaped into what they are today. Furthermore, these popular understandings became embedded in the genetic blueprint of schooling as an institution, leaving an impact that lasts to this day, as explained in the subsequent section on normalization.

Historical Trauma

Critical research has challenged the deficit models for a number of years (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997)[10] and so this is not a theme that will be explored here. Still, there has been very little analysis of the cumulative effects of these models on communities of color today. A few Indigenous, Chicana/o, Pacific Islander, and African American thinkers and researchers have suggested that many of the issues we see facing disenfranchised communities of color (including cyclical poverty, dissociative behaviors, substance abuse, and violence) reflect the ongoing and unaddressed impacts of historical trauma. Scholars investigating the contemporary effects of these historical legacies on people of color agree that the violent acts of slavery and conquest impacted entire communities in ways that have shaped the lives of each future generation.[11] These scholars explain that acts of cultural genocide created a soul wound in the survivors because their entire understanding of who they were as a people (their educational systems, philosophy, religion, and life ways) was deemed both inferior and amoral. This left these communities with nothing to hold onto, creating a psychological, emotional, and spiritual wound that, because it never healed, was passed on to each subsequent generation. As Sousan Abadian explains in reflecting on this process, "Defeating a people has as much to do with destroying their sense of purpose—their confidence in their world-view and meaning system—as it does with physical conquest" (Lambert, 2008, p. 42). Abadian's analysis demonstrates how the processes of conquest and colonization had impacts on communities of color that were felt long after these specific events. The devaluing and attempted replacement of their worldview was intellectually and socially debilitating for many. Susan Yellow Horse and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (2005) provide a specific definition: "Historical Trauma is cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (p. 39). They go on to describe the impact of this trauma on individuals that "includes depression, self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts and gestures, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and difficulty recognizing and

expressing emotions" (p. 39). Yellow Horse and Brave Heart explain how the processes of conquest and colonization, and the destroyed sense of purpose that Abadian describes, have a host of cultural impacts that affect the psyches and behaviors of those who experience these attacks on their lifeways and knowledge systems. Eduardo Duran (2006) links these processes directly to internalized oppression through his research, explaining that "the pain and learned helplessness of internalized oppression continue to plague our relatives despite massive amounts of interventions that have been provided to treat the *symptoms* of individuals. Eventually, what is needed is a preventive intervention that addresses these issues at the source" (p. 23, my emphasis). Duran points us to the key problem that we see with teaching and other services in many disenfranchised communities: interventions designed to "help" these communities do not deal with the core issues but instead focus on their surface level manifestations.

In considering the era of the deficit model, this analysis is particularly important because these deficit models are directly connected to the underlying logic used to rationalize slavery, conquest, and other acts of cultural genocide. The thinking that shaped the research conducted by White scholars in the early 20th century was the direct descendant of the reprehensible religious rationalization used to conquer peoples of color in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. And while these acts are commonly understood as atrocities today, their ongoing impact on communities of color and public schooling in the United States is little understood. Gonzales (2006) provides one example when she explains that, "our antepasados [ancestors] believed that our heart was the seat of intelligence" (n.p.). The construct of historical trauma suggests that when a central way of life is extricated from a people and replaced with its antithesis, the impact on that community is continually felt. Current research that analyzes the challenges Latina/o students face in U.S. schools, such as Valenzuela's (1999) analysis of *educación*,[12] affirm the connection between conquest and the struggles raza students experience in schools today, as she demonstrates that Mexican students still center their approach to schooling on their hearts, emphasizing the necessity of caring in their learning environments, while schools often work to subtract this lifeway from their students. A careful analysis of racism in schools today (such as Valenzuela, 1999) helps us understand these connections. Furthermore, the ongoing reliance on deficit models in framing the schooling opportunities for raza students has dramatic effects on these students as they experience a retraumatization through these processes of denying both their strengths and the possibilities for success.[13] Not only do the effects of historical trauma impact raza youth through their intergenerational aspects, but the youth actually share similar experiences with their ancestors as they face contemporary deficit

approaches to their schooling that are the offspring of the racist thinking at the time of conquest and colonization.

The research on historical trauma provides a direct connection between the impacts of early conquest/colonization and deficit models and, in our own theorizing in MAESTR@S, led us to identify the fact that current manifestations of deficit models often result in the retraumatization of raza students in the schools. We were able to connect these historical and evolving processes with the disengagement raza students exhibited in the classroom.[14]

Normalization of Latina/o School Failure

This analysis of historical trauma suggests that the many "problems" Latina/o youth face, which were outlined in the opening, are also connected to historical processes that are embedded in evolving ideologies of Latina/o inferiority imprinted on school life in the United States today. Focusing on just one issue here will demonstrate this reality. As stated in the introduction, in the county in which I work and live, only 26% percent of the Latina/o students who *graduate* from the high schools have also completed the necessary coursework to attend a public university in California. Many working in schools have standard and commonly accepted explanations of the different factors involved in this reality: student disengagement, lack of interest in and preparation for college preparatory classes, limited English abilities, lack of familial social capital, and many others. As the introduction suggests, we can also come up with a list of school-related influences, including disciplinary practices, limited resources, low expectations, and underprepared teachers. The focus of my analysis, however, is on the public reaction to the reality of persistent and dramatic inequality such as that reflected in the highlighted data. For the most part, there is no reaction. If we found similar numbers for White students in our county, where three of four White students graduated high school unable to attend a four-year state university, there would be an uproar. In contrast, we have grown comfortable with the reality of the majority of Latina/o youth. It does not surprise us, and even those of us who find it morally objectionable also learn that this is the way things are and will be. In short, we have a societal expectation of Latina/o student failure that is deeply embedded in our subconscious as a function of the historical processes described above (Pizarro, 2014, details this process).

Racial inequality is so deeply ingrained in our everyday existence that we organize our understanding of these inequities around the racist ideologies that have been used to rationalize them for hundreds of years. All of our social institutions, including schools, were founded on the understanding that people of color were/are inferior to Whites. The explanation for the

basis of this inferiority has changed over the years, but the underlying belief in the inferiority has not. This is what allows us to justify the dramatic educational inequality described in the previous section and exposed in generations of research on the Latina/o community. It allows us to maintain fundamentally unequal opportunities for people of color in the United States (through policy and practice) and to rationalize their existence. This reality reflects the fact that we have *normalized* both racial inequality and racism to the extent that dramatic inequalities and injustices are accepted on a societal and community level. The goal of this analysis is not to convince the reader of the reality of inequality and racism. The extant body of research on racism in the United States and in schools specifically does this more than convincingly. Rather, the objective here is to pinpoint the normalization of inequality, injustice, and racism as intrinsic to the organization of schooling in the United States today and to consider this as fundamental to the reality that our youth face in schools so that we can consider the impact that this has on our youth.

Latina/o youth who grow up in working-class communities and attend public schools learn to expect their own failure.[15] Even if they aspire for educational success, they still learn that there is a societal expectation that, as a community, they will not be successful in school. Raza youth are not immune to the fact that there are dramatic inequalities in United States education, and despite their dreams of success, they know that the schools they attend do not expect them to succeed. I intentionally describe the force behind this expectation as *the school*, because for the majority of their time in school, most Latina/o students do not hear this message directly from a teacher or administrator, but they feel this expectation hanging in the air and experience it through disciplinary procedures, the organization of the curriculum, and the lack of energy and resources put into their learning by the institution as an entity.[16] What is most important is that raza youth experience a culture of expected failure (or at best mediocrity) over years and years in schools. By the time they enter high school, many working-class raza youth have experienced almost a decade of low expectations. It has become normalized and expected for them.

Individualization of Latina/o School Failure

This normalization of inequality and racism is connected to the individualization process that Latina/o students experience as part of how they learn to "make sense" of inequality. The message students often hear out loud in schools from teachers and administrators is that they want these youth to be successful. They are told that they should aspire to attend college, even though there is a rarely spoken, underlying assumption that

most will not. Because of the subtlety of these processes, and because the youth rarely, if ever, have the chance to talk about any of it (as a result of the unspoken, normalization of failure), raza students blame themselves for their failure or struggles in school and do not talk about this with others. A Latina student, for example, who does poorly in math classes over the years, will hear multiple messages from teachers on the importance of school success and going to college (often despite not being provided the tools for this success), and so when she struggles, she learns to believe that she does not have the skills to be successful in math and does not have what it takes to thrive in school. Latina/o students most often lay exclusive blame on themselves and their families for their struggles. Ironically, in so many cases, these students are sitting in classrooms where large numbers of their peers are going through the same process.[17] This is ironic simply because, going back to the example of the affluent White community, if a majority of students were struggling to be successful in a class in that community, without question the community would not blame individual students for the failure, but would point the finger at the teacher or school. The public message raza students hear from their schools is one that espouses their need for success. Most of these schools, however, do not exhibit a belief in the actual possibility of success for most of these students, but rather simply make vocal their belief that the students should strive for success. Simultaneously, schools make sure that students understand that if they are not successful, it is because of their own individual lack of effort and commitment. Thus, schools shield themselves from culpability in the normalization of the failure of raza students, and most students then individualize their own failure. The process whereby, as part of normalizing racism, raza youth also individualize their failure solidifies the effect of that racism on their school lives, not just as individuals but as a community.

Internalized Racism

Over the course of their schooling, many Latina/o youth learn to internalize the racism that shapes the organization of school. This is a byproduct of the normalization and the individualization of inequality and racism because, as a result of these processes, there is usually not a conversation in schools about the causes of the inequality. There is, instead, simply an acceptance of that inequality, which is manifested in the low expectations that schools create based on historical trends in academic performance in given communities. Due to the normalization, students need to create a different explanation for their lack of success in school that does not implicate the school system at large, which is understood to be doing its best with communities that, in most cases, have too many challenges for them to

overcome. Most Latina/o students, like all students, begin school aspiring for success. However, many soon learn that to achieve success, it will require extraordinary effort, along with a strong dose of luck. They know that very few of the students who preceded them in their classrooms were successful in school. They know how few actually graduate from high school, and that even fewer go on to college, and that most of those attend a nearby community college for a few years but never transfer to a four-year university. They know the jobs that these former students, who live in their neighborhoods, end up working. Because of all this, they begin to doubt that they will be one of the very few who are successful in school. For example, through their schooling, many raza youth learn that they do not have the requisite language skills to be successful. They learn that having Spanish as a first language, for example, is a handicap that will follow them for the rest of their lives. Further, they learn that they are not expected to write well nor to be engaged by reading. This is just one aspect of Latina/o students' lives through which they begin to understand that their racial identities limit the possibilities for them to become successful students. Schools teach them that their racial identities are incongruent with strong academic identities (Pizarro, 2005). This is the internalization of racism, which is insidious because, as a byproduct of the normalization of inequality, it is typically unseen by the students due to the covert ways in which it manifests itself in their lives (individualization). Although it was much more prevalent in previous generations, it is far less common for raza youth to hear anyone explicitly tell them, "Mexican kids can't do well in school because they are inferior." And yet most learn that very idea through the subtle organization of their school lives and the mundane, persistent, covert messages that students from these communities, as a collective of individuals, are not expected to do well. As a result, many raza youth learn to apply this shared societal understanding to themselves as individuals.

The normalization of inequality and racism—working-class Latina/o students grow up from their earliest days knowing that the inequality they live is just the way it is and should be expected—leads most to anticipate their own failure. They internalize the racism that normalizes the inequality so that they blame themselves as Latinas/os for their failure in school.[18] This internalization process itself demands the individualization of inequality so that these students learn that it is their fault on an individual level. This prevents them from connecting their struggles with those of their peers and engaging in a critique of these processes. At the same time, they also learn that being Latina/o makes their failure much more likely.[19]

This is the racialized context into which teachers insert themselves, typically without any space to explore what these realities mean to their students and to their own efforts to help students achieve school success. These processes are propelled by the historical and institutional inertia behind our

understanding of the relationship between race and school performance in the United States. The manifestations of racism have changed dramatically over the past fifty years, but as this analysis explains, the impact of that racism in shaping inequality has not. Well-intending teachers, wanting to make a difference and to help raza youth, work in these communities, but without an understanding of these processes or the tools to confront them, they can do little more than hope for the best. As the data on raza school performance demonstrate, their best is often not enough.[20]

APPLICATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM: THE POWER OF APPLIED THEORY

The analysis developed in MAESTR@S was based on our own experiences as students and teachers but also on our ongoing work with students to provide them tools they could use in their efforts to negotiate school and life. As we engaged students, we took the emerging insights from the classroom and used those experiences to strengthen the model and our analysis. As a collective, we found this to be the most affirming and important work we had done as educators. We developed this evolving analysis of our work with students through engaging the youth and saw that the students experienced a sense of relief, clarity, and renewed commitment to their goals by engaging in this work with us. Our latest example provides some insights into the benefits of using these insights in our work with youth.

In the 2012–2013 school year, I worked with an 11th grade English teacher in the development and teaching of a Latina/o literature course. In our work with three periods of this class, we applied all of the concepts covered in this chapter into our approach and also shared them with the students. Introducing, analyzing, and applying deficit models, historical trauma, normalized and individualized Latina/o school failure, and internalized racism was helpful to the students. As they explained throughout the school year, these concepts became tools in their lives. They were able to reflect on past experiences and explain what had happened and why it had happened, often alleviating their feelings of guilt and self-blame. Each of the constructs came up at different times during the year when students were exploring issues (both personal and related to class work). For example, students had many experiences with low expectations from teachers. Using these constructs, students were able to identify when teachers, counselors, and administrators systematically imposed low expectations and limited opportunities on their Latina/o students, and many of the students stopped blaming themselves for their teachers' limited expectations. The high expectations we set for them helped them recognize their abilities and begin to counter the profiles that many school personnel reduced them to.[21]

This analysis and understanding was framed in the context of students seeking success in school and life, and so students were asked to think about what they could do about these issues as individuals and as a group. Students chose many different paths after they began to adopt the analyses they found helpful: some challenged the realities they had experienced simply through retelling stories using the constructs that they found applicable, while others challenged the school itself to confront the issues. Most importantly, the students began to see their own power, no longer feeling resigned to the fate that their schools seemed to have already determined for them. By the end of the year, students were engaged in projects analyzing the issues they had determined were important and considering what these projects meant for them and the school. During one class period, one of the groups was discussing the possibility of presenting their work on Latina/o student motivation to teachers. I asked what they would share with teachers about the causes of a lack of student motivation. One student, who had been struggling in her classes and had also faced discipline issues at the school during the semester, took the lead and said that she felt like it was all tied into the normalization of Latino student failure and then explained how that translates into low teacher expectations and behaviors toward students and how those messages and actions influence student attitudes and behaviors related to failure. Being able to provide a complex analysis of issues she had always seen gave her the confidence to begin to engage her teachers in discussions and advocate for herself rather than only lashing out in class, leading to greater success in all of her classes that final semester of her junior year. This one example reflects the ways in which the students in our classes were able to take our applied theoretical work and translate it into their lives in ways that they found powerful and immediately applicable.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

The objective of this chapter was to expose the forces at work in shaping Latina/o schooling. Specifically, the goal was to demonstrate the importance of addressing the most complex issues at work in schools serving disenfranchised Latina/o communities. The focus was on developing a historical, theoretical analysis that can be used to frame the dominant approaches to schooling in these communities today.

The challenge for school leaders is to create spaces and mechanisms whereby teachers can engage in an analysis of these kinds of explorations and reflect on their own experiences and understandings. Teachers and school personnel need to be able to confront their own racial-ideological upbringing and the way that is manifested in their classroom practices.

Unfortunately, with all the demands placed on schools, administrators, and teachers, this is rarely part of the dialog in schools related to meeting their objectives. MAESTR@S began this work with an understanding that it must be. We saw that the focus on testing, standards, and other policies and procedures ignored what was most profoundly affecting our youth and their families and communities. This is the work that leaders need to address in their schools. The results of our work in the high school doing exactly that paid off in all the ways that district officials push school leaders: greater student interest and engagement in school, better school attendance, and higher grades and test scores.[22] The following chapter demonstrates specifically how leaders can create counterspaces for engaging raza students in schools and the ways those spaces impact students and lead to greater individual and school success.

NOTES

1. Alicia wrote this in a reflection on teaching third grade in East Los Angeles and the challenges she faced in helping students deal with their pain (personal communication, September 17, 2011).
2. This statement is supported by a quick review of the fall 2012 course requirements of the private university and both tiers of the public university single-subject credential programs that serve the San José area, all of which are well attended and known to produce large numbers of teachers in local schools. The public university programs both require a course on language acquisition for nonnative English speakers and a course that covers educational foundations and applies aspects of that content to issues of teaching in a diverse society through historical and contemporary topics. The private university requires a course on language acquisition and one course that covers "Teaching Nonconventional Youth."
3. I use a variety of ethnic labels in this paper. Latina/o is used to refer to all Latin American descent peoples. Chicana/o is commonly used among organizers in our communities because it refers to Mexican descent Latinas/os (the vast majority of Latinas/os in many parts of California) and also because it implies a radical political analysis that many in these communities adopt, including some non-Mexican Latinas/os. I also use raza because it is an umbrella term and it is often used in communities. Chicano and Latino are used specifically to refer to males, and Chicana and Latina for females. I use these ethnic labels interchangeably because that is how they are used in our schools and communities.
4. MAESTR@S is a Bay Area-based collective of teachers and educational justice workers dedicated to addressing the needs of Latina/o communities and students. I will describe the group in more detail as the analysis evolves.
5. This is a modest difference in per pupil spending. An analysis of the annual reports released by school districts shows majority Latina/o schools in close

proximity to majority White schools have as little as 1/3 the per pupil spending as their nearby counterparts.

6. As some of us looked back at history to understand these issues more deeply, we became even more frustrated, recognizing that many of the issue we saw in the schools had been identified in research 70 or more years earlier (Manuel, 1930; Sanchez, 1939).

7. We had learned that the emotional state our students and we experienced was the most dominant and powerful force at work in the classroom. Related to this, we were feeling that the spirits of our youth, as well as our own, had been assaulted and that we all needed support to be able to develop a positive way of living and being in the classroom.

8. This analysis has been greatly informed by my teaching of these topics over the years. Some of these concepts came into much sharper focus through my work with graduate students who integrated them into their own research, building on the insights we were covering in class. Alicia Casas, Yanira Madrigal-Garcia, and Robert Unzueta are former graduate students whose work helped me develop my own understanding of the issues discussed here, particularly normalization and internalization. I am grateful to them for their hard work, complex research methods, and sharp insights.

9. As a reminder, the focus of this chapter is on working with Latinas/os in disenfranchised communities, and so this theoretical analysis is based on issues and experiences that students face in those communities. This analysis is the product of our extensive work with raza students in disenfranchised communities and demonstrates one outcome of the first phase of our model, which will be described in the next chapter.

10. Even so, every few years a new study comes out that attempts to validate deficit analyses of communities of color. Herrnstein's and Murray's *Bell Curve* of 1994 resurrected these beliefs in academic research in ways that many thought would not happen in the post-Civil Rights era. Scholarly work like this can often dominate thinking in educational institutions for years to come, especially in those contexts uninterested in more complex analyses of issues like the "achievement gap." In 2013, the power of these deficit models in academia were highlighted when excerpts from Jason Richwine's (2009) doctoral dissertation from Harvard University were reported in the media. Richwine asserts that the differences in IQ between ethnic groups are genetically caused and permanent.

11. In addition to the scholars cited in this paragraph who have analyzed the impacts of historical trauma on indigenous communities in the Americas, others have found similar effects among African Americans (DeGruy, 2010), Hawaiians (Laenui, 2010), and Australian aboriginal people (Raphael, Swan, & Martinek, 1998).

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12. Valenzuela (1999) describes *educación* as "a foundational cultural construct that provides instructions on how one should live in the world " (p. 21) and as "the family's role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility [that] serves as the foundation for all other learning" (p. 23).

13. Duran (2006), Torres (2003), and others highlight the importance of inter-generational trauma as they explain that the impact of these traumas are passed on between generations.
14. Pizarro (2014) explains these processes in greater depth through the lens of ideology, the evolution of racism, and the dominance of racial microaggres-sions in the school experiences of so many Latina/o youth.
15. My own extensive research with high school, community college, and uni-versity students in East Los Angles and rural Washington demonstrated this clearly. Pizarro (2005) provides countless examples and stories describing the realities outlined in this section, as well as a theoretical framework for ex-plaining the impact they have on student identities and school performance.
16. Gregory, Nygreen, and Moran (2006) provide a critical analysis of the way in which one high school rationalizes discriminatory, disciplinary practices due to the fact that the failure of African American students has been normalized in that school. They found that, "Whether we were talking about the achieve-ment gap or the discipline gap, the disparities among groups have become so commonplace that they are taken for granted" (p. 142).
17. This was powerfully demonstrated to me through my individual conversations with dozens of Chicana/o students in my work to understand these processes and their impacts on youth (Pizarro, 2005).
18. See Huber, Johnson, and Kohli (2006) for an overview of the internalization of racism in US schools, including an historical overview of research on this subject.
19. It is critical to distinguish these processes and their impact on raza commu-nities from the logic used to validate the deficit models. The student fail-ure described here is not the product of student deficits. The power of the ideological forces analyzed above is overwhelming for most, so that in order to maintain their psychological well-being, as shaky as it might be for some, Latinas/os are typically compelled to adapt the popular discourse that ex-plains their educational and life outcomes, and so they do individualize and internalize their own failure.
20. This analysis clearly leaves no room for raza students to fail because of their own lack of effort, for example. This is a definite possibility. This intentional omission is designed to force us to look at the systemic effects of the historical and contemporary manifestations of deficit models on raza students. Further-more, it is informed by our own experiences working with these youth and finding that those who put forth little effort, when exposed to our model and support, often begin to demonstrate significant effort, as discussed below and in the subsequent chapter.
21. We also introduced the students to the concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) as a means of countering the negative impacts of the forces we analyzed. This was linked to our own emphasis on their unique intellectual strengths.
22. The school compared students in Latina/o literature to those in other 11th grade English classes and found that the Latina/o literature students had sig-nificantly better attendance and GPAs, greater improvements in test scores, and increased levels of engagement and interest as reflected in responses to surveys.

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