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Presentado por
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Valenzuela describes subtractive schooling and the politics of caring in her award winning book, *Subtractive Schooling*. This paper addresses the following thesis: Immigrant children do better in American schools than U.S. Latino/Mexican Americans. But how is this subtractive schooling being perpetuated under current Texas Educational policy *Non-Child Left Behind*?

This opening section of this paper briefly outlines the importance of "caring" in order to increase students' positive attitudes toward education as well as their academic success. In many cases, the word "school" represents survival for the students. Valenzuela in her book *Subtractive Schooling* describes the relevance of "caring" as the framework in which positive social interactions among students, teachers, administrators, and the community in general, could set up

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a strong social and cultural foundation for educational purposes. One of her major concerns is to examine the role *care* plays in schools, the students' attitudes and interpretations about it, the analysis of *caring*, and the content curriculum in order to examine the degree to which the dominant society targets minority students' culture (Valenzuela, 1999).

According to Valenzuela (1999), the description of *caring* is derived from three sources: a) caring theory, b) Mexican culture (including the term 'educación'), and c) the relational concept of *social capital*. First, the caring theory addresses the need for a social pedagogy based on social interactions between the teacher and the student. Second, *'educación'* involves a cultural construct ruling individuals' social behaviors throughout their lives; in this view, respectful interactions, discipline and social responsibility are primary elements emphasized on individuals' growth and development. Finally, the last source refers to the importance of social networks to accomplish goals that cannot be achieved individually. Moreover, individuals could be "at risk" when they lose their social capital (*social de-capitalization*) because they barely have someone to rely on or trust in to accomplish their objectives. Lost of their social web could lead to social and cultural distance among individuals (Valenzuela, 1999).

To support this, Valenzuela (1999) suggests that establishing and promoting a policy of caring among teachers and students, throughout collaborative and cooperative relationships, foster students' academic achievement. This type of interactions, including student-student connections, is based on respect to each other's cultural background. Social interactions, then, which are based on tolerance and respect toward "the other", will set up the institutional structure to face the current challenges most schools have while serving a multicultural community.

Noddings's (1984) framework on caring is rooted in how teachers and students are oriented to each other. Valenzuela's main observation regarding the caring teacher's role is to establish rapport with students and maintain it. She points out.

A teacher's attitudinal predisposition is essential to caring, for it overtly conveys acceptance and confirmation to the *cared-for*

student. When the *cared-for* individuals responds by demonstrating a willingness to reveal her/his essential self, the reciprocal relation is complete (Valenzuela, 1999: 21).

It is observed the significance of teachers' attitudes toward students as well as the active involvement in the students' academic decisions and concerns. It seems that lack of communication and understanding between the teacher and the student, result in social misinterpretations and misconstructions of the otherness. To avoid this, reciprocal and respectful relationships could create a welcoming and open atmosphere in schools distinguished by solidarity and mutual support. In addition, acceptance and tolerance are key elements in developing a "caring" policy at schools because when we accept 'the other' and he/she reacts to it, a complete connection emerges. But what have been the most common scenarios among teachers' and students' social relationships?

As indicated by Lee and Van Pattern (2003) because instructors are authoritative knowledge transmitters, the students become their passive audience, receptive vessels into which that knowledge is poured […] Authoritative transmitter of knowledge and receptive vessels are the primary roles, respectively that instructors and students play in many traditional classrooms. For instance, the tasks that were most often associated with these roles are those of lecturing and notetaking.

Unfortunately, most of the time, the few social interactions only occur when the lecture takes place. The problem is that there is a limited or scarcely social interaction outside the classroom where teachers do not care for their students' as individuals, creating a social, cultural and psychological *gap* among teachers and students.

In contrast, Newman (1998) states that, teaching is no job for people who do not care about young people, but personal concern is not the only quality teachers need. A logician would say caring about students is a necessary but not sufficient qualification for teaching. The job involves an entire range of interpersonal skills, plus more. Teachers who enter the occupation motivated solely by their good feelings can be bitterly disappointed when students do not return their affection resulting in tension and conflict between the teacher and the student.

Furthermore, teachers in a setting in which critical social differences between a teacher and his pupils are rooted in antagonisms of cultural rather than classroom origins.

I believe that the teacher might succeed in coping more effectively with conflict and in capitalizing on his instructional efforts to recognize "the cultural diversity". As Valenzuela (1999) remarks that some teachers cannot assume the complex problems of the society can be solved by well-developed and educated individuals. Nor can teachers believe that their foresight is so keen as to enable them to predict the latent problems their students might face in an increasingly multicultural society.

The politics of caring, then, emphasizes on the type of social support provided at school to reduce students alienation from society by dealing directly with cultural ambiguity and by building socio cultural bridges between the teacher and the student (Valenzuela, 1999). To achieve this, the interactions must be directed to the development of a concept of integrity or *self* concept. In other words, any student regardless his/her ethnicity or cultural background could contribute and function in society. This fundamental relationship (man and society) will be more effective instead of pursuing notions that produce further fragmentation and segregation (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Consequently, this politics of caring could be emphasized by helping students become increasingly competent in dealing with the realities of social change. To achieve this, Valenzuela (1999) suggest schools that serve mainly the minorities should broaden their role by deliberately incorporating life orientation, self-concept, linguistic and socio cultural student's values into the curriculum. Most importantly, the teachers should exhibit positive regard for each student as a means toward the development of the self-concept.

For instance, as I was reading The South Texan paper one morning, I found in the opinion section an interesting article that caught my attention, "*Caring teachers make all the difference*". Gabriel Cruz (2005) a student at Texas A&M University Kingsville describes his professor Dr. Jaya Goswami as an involved teacher who is really there for the students. He dedicates the column to his professor and all the teachers

like Dr. Jaya Goswami in the campus because regardless ambitious and difficult schedules or tough subjects, both the student and the teacher have established a special rapport.

To sum it up, Cruz (2005) invites all students to write letters and send e-mails in order to recognize teachers on this campus who deserve praise for their outstanding job as professionals and as excellent human beings who have made an impact on the students' lives.

This is an example of how many teachers have contributed to the development of hundreds of students' self-concept and identity. By personal experience, establishing social network and generating a new social capital in a new society, would not be possible without our professors' help and support. Nowadays, we live in a multicultural society where differences due to ethnicity, race, color, social status, and language should not be considered not only in the curriculum but in the teaching-learning process itself. Teachers' cultural awareness is an essential element to promote in order to prevent high degree of bias and inequity among teachers and students.

Valenzuela (1999) addresses another major concept, subtractive schooling. She describes this as the '*wipe out*' process which attempts to eliminate and erase students' culture and identity starting from erasing their language. Richardson (1999) who considers that class and race issues still cause some problems in educational contexts. Moreover, the biggest obstacle between Mexican immigrants and Anglos seems to be the language barrier. Subtractive schooling is *the de-capitalization process* which is always being stressed and promoted in the day-to-day-running of schools. By removing minority students' identity, thousands of students are socially and academically disadvantaged (Valenzuela, 1999). For example, linguistic differences seem to be the focal gap only among Mexican immigrants (legal or illegal) and Anglos but also among Mexican immigrants and Mexican American people. Speaking another language is considered as a limitation that hinders communication and education in general. Suarez Orozco and Suarez Orozco (2001) discuss the impact of the relationship between language and power; they considered that speaking another different language than English rather than being viewed as a potential asset to be cultivated, the linguistic skills brought by newly arrived immigrants are seen by many as a threat

to the integrity of the English language and as a symbolic refusal to accommodate to American culture.

Subtractive schooling is not only reflected on the language differences but it also is implemented in the curriculum right through an English-Only policy and a cultural bias content and assessment. These are examples of some of the strategies that have been implemented in the different schools in order to weaken and erase students' identity. Another example of subtractive schooling is the lack or 'weak' bilingual programs in schools. For example, Valenzuela (2005) in her book *Leaving Children Behind* describes how subtractive schooling is implicit in the curriculum –hidden curriculum- and languages policies (English-Only, transition programs) tied to the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) which are ruining the schools; and the idea of providing an assertive and equal education to thousands of minority children is just part of political speeches. Nowadays, raising the scores implies ruining the schools.

The reality is that minority students' socio cultural background and language is not integrated; on the contrary, they are deleted and mutilated, completely condemning minority students to academic failure. Recently, the subtractive school process is perpetuated and reinforced throughout standardized tests and the current Texas Educational policy leading to a high degree of social segregation and marginalization.

In a nutshell, subtractive schooling is defined as the process of social *de-capitalization* throughout which students' cultural identities are systematically derogated and diminished undermining opportunities for cross-generational relationships. This subtractive process constitutes the ground level of how schools are organized to perpetuate social inequality. Moreover, the discussion about this issue amplifies current conceptualizations in the literature regarding the process of cultural assimilation (e.g., Vigil 1997) by highlighting the school –or more pointedly, the schooling process- as a powerful, state-sanctioned instrument of cultural de-identification, or *de-Mexicanization* (Valenzuela, 1999).

I consider that subtractive schooling may relate to a less positive self-concept, loss of cultural or ethnic identity, with possible massive alienation or social segregation. As a final point, one of the results of lack

of "caring" and subtractive schooling processes for Mexicans and Mexican American is that the first group academically outperforms the second. There are different reasons provided by Valenzuela (1999) regarding the fact than immigrant children do better in American schools than U.S. Latino/Mexican American do. First, previous schooling experiences in Mexico make the difference for Mexican immigrants to succeed in the American academic setting because by the time immigrants are enrolled in schools they have already developed academic and social skills that help them to cope with the new culture. Moreover, there is evidence that the development of cognitive skills acquired in previous schooling experiences in Mexico, for example, helps immigrant children to outperform Mexican-American youth in American schools (Valenzuela, 1999). Second, even when Mexican Students are constantly comparing the "here" and "there" situations and experiences, at least they have had contact with highly competent professionals such as lawyers, managers, doctors, engineers, and politicians, who they can relate to, allowing them to set up their social capital that provides them support and confidence; while most Mexican Americans have not had that opportunity due to the social *de-capitalization* process they have gone through since they were firstly enrolled at school. Moreover, it might be possible that a great number of Mexican American youth do not have a social network to trust in or identify with due to the high degree of segregation and discrimination they have experienced. Third, Valenzuela (1999), for instance, in her study conducted in a minority high school in Houston, found that the higher success rate of Mexican immigrants is due to their sense of respect, obedience and deferential behavior, because teachers who observe this type of social manners (called "Mexican behavior") easily reward those students. Therefore, "courtesy" "politeness" and "respect" *–respeto-* makes another difference between Mexican and Mexican American academic success (Valenzuela, 1999).

The reality is that both groups -Immigrant Mexican and Mexican-American participate in the construction of the "otherness", and the development of "we-they" distinctions in their social world, reinforcing achievement patterns and schooling orientations manifested in cross-generational analyses (Valenzuela, 1999). This confusion among different socio-cultural backgrounds and beliefs prevents the development of an integrated personality, creating inter- and intra group conflicts.

Finally, I strongly agree that regardless some social factors such as family strong ties, different social status as well as unlike socio-cultural backgrounds, the central point in order to explain why many Mexican immigrant children outperform Mexican American children is because the first ones have developed a sense of "self"; they easily identify themselves as members of one particular social group, they rely on their mother tongue, and their concept of education is based on mutual and caring dynamics among teachers and students; while the second group thinks of education as "acting white" and they neither identify themselves as member of one group nor they rely on their mother tongue (Valenzuela, 1999). In conclusion, a more comprehensive approach is required to develop positive attitudes and skills required to cope with current socio-cultural transformations.

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