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Education Through Social and Cultural Transmission

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EDUCATION THROUGH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

by

GEORGE TRIVINO

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York.

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Education through Social and Cultural Transmission

by

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In the United States, low-income Latino immigrant students of all ages struggle to find equal educational opportunities due to structural social, economic and cultural barriers. Educational inequality in American urban areas remains as a consequence of socioeconomic constructed structural barriers and strong social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and underrepresented low-income minority social groups. Social, cultural and educational disconnections and inequalities can be challenged by creating third spaces to encourage the development of marginalized students' voices for participation and discourse, as well as creating cooperation and collaboration between educators and learners. Educational institutions have not been able to fully develop the voices of marginalized Latino students for social and educational participation, or to empower their communities with significant social and educational leadership. This thesis paper argues that public and private educational institutions can learn from community nonprofit organizations committed to social justice that integrate marginalized students through educational spaces for their social and educational development. The present research suggests that underrepresented Latino immigrant students improve their social and educational development in educational spaces where they find opportunities to participate in the discourses and debates on education.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The structural educational inequality in the educational system of the United States is detrimental for American democracy. In the United States urban areas, there is still major social and educational inequality that benefits the elite advantaged social and economic groups and marginalizes the underrepresented minority social groups in society. Race, gender, as well as socioeconomic and immigration status represent important structural barriers that maintain social and educational inequality in society. Today, the social and educational inequality that especially affect the low-income immigrant population living in urban areas is more challenging than ever. Low-income immigrant students with different cultures and backgrounds struggle to find equal opportunities in the oppressive and hierarchical educational system of the United States (Orfield, 2014).

Education reform has failed to reduce the educational gap, integrate marginalized students and improve the educational achievement levels for underrepresented minority social groups. Poverty, unequal educational funding and distribution, immigration status, as well as social, economic and cultural disconnections between the educational system and low-income minority social groups increase educational inequality and social discrimination. Education reform and policy that ignore these social and economic constructed barriers fail to reduce educational inequality and to improve educational achievement levels for underrepresented low-income minority social groups (Ravitch, 2010).

Education reform policies like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) did not to achieve its goals in reducing the educational achievement gap, and improving educational performance because it ignores the social, economic and cultural structural barriers that affect the educational development of underrepresented low-income minority social groups. By prioritizing
accountability and high-stakes testing, and ignoring poverty, unequal educational funding, school segregation, and language barriers, education reform and policy increase structural educational disparities in urban areas. In New York City, low-income Latino immigrant students are the most affected minority group by the failure of education policy to reduce the structural educational inequality. The problem is that education policies ignore the social and economic conditions of low-income Latino communities, and the strong social, economic, and cultural disconnections between the educational system and marginalized Latino students. Social and economic disparity as well as cultural disconnections between the educational system and underrepresented social groups affect the educational development of Latino immigrant students and maintain structural social and educational inequality in urban areas.

It would be important that education reform focuses on the incorporation of educational practice to approach social and cultural disconnections and inequalities in the educational environment. Educational institutions, social researchers and educators can seek alternative social, political and educational paths to challenge social and educational disparities for the search of a more equal democratic society. This thesis research paper finds that critical ethnography and sociocritical pedagogical praxis can help to reduce the social, economic and cultural disconnections between the educational system of the United States and underrepresented low-income Latino minority students. Though critical ethnography, educational institutions and educators can inquire about the culture, and the struggles of low-income immigrant students and their communities to develop more effective educational practices for the improvement their social, educational and human development.

Educational institutions should place poverty, language barriers, discrimination and all the different factors that affect the social, economic and educational development of low-income
Latino immigrant students at the center of educational inquiry and practice. Latino immigrant students develop in neighborhoods that are negated of equal governmental educational funding, and in educational institutions that do not understand their socioeconomic conditions and culture. Although today urban public schools are reaching a larger percentage of minority groups, and the graduation rate for minority social groups are on the rise, urban areas still struggle with a large education achievement gap and school segregation as a result of social cultural disconnections between the educational system and low-income immigrant students. In urban areas, there is not only a strong social and cultural disconnection between the educational system and underrepresented low-income students, but also a teachers and learners’ disconnection in the educational environment of public and private schools (Rubel, 2017).

Public and private educational institutions have formed invisible cultural and educational barriers due to the lack of understanding the challenges and struggles of low-income immigrant communities to develop and succeed in the educational system of the United States. Educational institutions and educators struggle to connect class material and curriculum with marginalized Latino immigrant students in the educational environment. Teachers from dominant social groups have difficulties connecting class material with the culture and experiences of low-income immigrant students (Rubel, 2017).

To approach these educational barriers and disconnections, it is extremely important that educational institutions and educators approach the macro level social and cultural variables that affect the educational development of low-income immigrant students by creating spaces to encourage the voices of marginalized students for participation that can challenge their personal and educational struggles. Educators in public and private schools can create third spaces and promote class discourse to encourage students’ voices, and participation, educational interests, as
well as critical thinking in students to form effective citizens seeking for a more equal and democratic society (Gutierrez, 2008).

Today, there is a strong need for educational reform focused on sociocultural and pedagogical approach in classrooms aimed to reduce social and educational disconnections and inequality. In urban areas, low-income Latino immigrant students struggle to find equal quality education opportunity, and educational inequality can be challenged by the transformation of educational reform and the pedagogical praxis focused on prioritizing the educational development of marginalized students. According to Orfield (2014), "The policy reversals and transformation of U.S. demography require a new civil rights strategy" (p. 273). Public and private educational institutions can learn from nonprofit organizations working in low-income neighborhoods committed to social justice that challenge social and cultural disconnections by integrating marginalized students to the educational environment. In the following steps, education reform and practice can confront the educational inequalities that affect low-income immigrant groups, and the social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and underrepresented Latino students: First, through critical ethnography, educational institutions and educators can inquire about the macro level and cultural variables that affect the performance of low-income immigrant students to challenge social and cultural disconnections in the educational environment. Second, through situated learning in community of practice, students, educators and public and private institutions can integrate marginalized students into educational subjects and the educational environment. Finally, educational institutions and educators can learn from non-profit community centers committed to social justice that confront social and cultural barriers through the creation of educational spaces for class interaction, participation and discussion.
The aim of this paper is to propose educational practice centered on the reduction of social and cultural disconnections in the educational environment. Empirical evidence collected through educational data and experience in the educational environment of nonprofit organizations based on low-income communities can help in the development of sociocritical educational practice focused on social justice, and the creation of third spaces to encourage students’ voices for participation and mutual collaboration.

The importance of this paper brings attention to the lack of data on the educational development of English as a Second Language learners, the social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and low-income minority communities, as well as the function of community non-profit organizations that integrate marginalized Latino students to educational subjects. This thesis paper inquiries about significant information and data to connect the issue of social, cultural and educational disconnection between the educational system and underrepresented Latino minority groups for the creation of more effective and efficient educational practices for the educational integration and development of marginalized Latino immigrant students. In this paper, I will discuss the issue of educational inequality in the United States, the social and cultural disconnections between the educational system, and low-income Latino immigrant students, and the incorporation of pedagogical practice focused on the creation of hybrid third spaces to integrate marginalized Latino students into the educational environment.
Research Methods

The research methods in this thesis paper include literature review on social, cultural and educational disconnections and inequality between the educational system of the United States, as well as personal observations and illustrations as part of my own experience as English as second language instructor for non-profit organization in low-income communities. The literature review focuses on the theme of the social constructed barriers that affect educational development for underrepresented students, and social and critical pedagogy that allows the creation of educational third spaces and situated learning in communities of practices to develop marginalized Latino students’ voices and participation. Additionally, observations and notes on the testimonies of a student and an instructor developing in the educational environment of a nonprofit community center located in the South Bronx form part of this thesis paper. Educators and students can expose the characteristics and nuances of the social, cultural and educational disruptions between the educational system and underrepresented Latino immigrant social groups. These illustrations and observations among English as a Second Language students and educators living in low-income neighborhoods can show new personal perspectives on education dynamics in the inner-city urban areas. This research paper collects and analyzes information and testimonies regarding the learning experience and teaching process in public schools as well as nonprofit community organizations that aim to improve the social and educational development of underrepresented Latino students. This literature review and empirical educational data can represent the social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and low-income Latino communities for the development of more effective educational practice aimed for the integration of marginalized students into the educational environment.
Educational Inequality in the United States Urban Areas

Educational inequality in the United States remains as a consequence of the failure of education reform to reduce the achievement gap and the social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and underrepresented social groups. The United States urban areas population and demography have drastically changed and transformed in the past years. Looking for economic and educational opportunities, a large majority of immigrants from different nationalities, race and culture settle in the urban areas of large metropolises like New York City. Today, urban areas in the United States are diverse and multicultural with a large population of immigrant residents and students from all over the world. People from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds immigrate to New York City seeking for better social, economic and educational opportunities. According to the Census Bureau (2017), “Hispanics and Latinos represent approximately 29% of the total population of New York City becoming the largest ethnic social group”. The large percentage of Latino immigrant students demand equal quality education in public and private educational institutions to improve their social and economic conditions. According to Pew Research (2016), “Hispanics are making big inroads in college enrollment. In 2014, 35% of Hispanics ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in a two- or four-year college, up from 22% in 1993 – a 13- percentage- point increase”. Despite the fact that there is a significant increase in the necessity of equal quality education, social, economic and cultural barriers reduce educational opportunities for the Hispanic Latino social group. Social, economic, and cultural macro level structures such as socioeconomic status and language barriers affect the educational development of underrepresented Latino immigrant students living in urban areas. According to Pew Research (2016), “Yet, for many Hispanics, economic factors remain an obstacle to college enrollment. In a 2014 National Journal poll, 66% of Hispanics who got a job
or entered the military directly after high school cited the need to help support their family as a reason for not enrolling in college, compared with 39% of whites”. Socioeconomic status and culture influence school enrollment and the educational development of low-income Latino students living in urban areas. Low-income Latino immigrant students have a long history of social discrimination and struggle to obtain equal educational opportunities in the United States urban areas (Murillo & Villenas, 2010).

Low-income Latino immigrant English Language Learners live in highly segregated neighborhoods where educational institutions deal with unequal educational funding, as well as strong social and cultural disconnections between educators and marginalized Latino students. Although many education policies in urban areas have helped to reduce many educational inequalities, there is still a large achievement gap between racial social groups and increasing educational discrimination against marginalized Latino immigrant students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), “In 2011, the achievement gaps between English Language Learners and non-ELL students in the NAEP reading assessment were 36 points at the 4th-grade level and 44 points at the 8th grade level” (p.1). Social constructed barriers like poverty, school segregation, and language barriers reduce equal educational opportunities for low-income Latino immigrant students. Latino English learners living in urban areas struggle with low standardized testing scores due to the lack of equal and quality educational opportunities. Socioeconomic status and language barriers strongly affect school attendance and educational achievement levels for low-income Latino immigrant students of all ages.

Although the civil rights movements in the 1960s opened many doors for the fight in the reduction of social and educational inequality for underrepresented minority social groups, still low-income immigrant Latino students do not find equal quality education opportunity due to
structural social, economic and cultural barriers. Demographic changes of the population in urban areas scream for the implementation of educational reform that can confront the different social and educational inequalities that affect marginalized Latino immigrant social groups. Immigrant communities in urban areas of cities like New York City not only need continuous educational reform and policy, but also changes in the pedagogical approach to confront social and cultural disconnections as well as discrimination in the educational environment. The transformation of urban areas with a larger population of low-income Latino immigrant students requires school reform and educational institutions committed for social justice. Orfield (2014) argues, "There has been very little discussion of what rights are truly central now in a society that has been transformed in a half century since the civil right era by immigration and huge changes in demography and that faces profound inequality directed linked to schooling opportunities and educational outcomes" (p.273).

While there is a need for equal educational opportunity for low-income immigrants, policymakers and educational institutions have failed to provide equal educational opportunity to reduce the achievement gap and the wide social and educational inequality between socioeconomic groups (Ravitch, 2010). The issue is that the educational system and educational institutions do not understand the different social and cultural realities, and the educational needs of low-income Latino immigrant students. Poverty and sociocultural disconnections between the educational system and underrepresented social groups influence school performance and maintain the educational inequality.

Education reform and policy that prioritize accountability and high-stakes testing have been taken advantage by dominant social groups and relegated underrepresented minority students. SanMiguel and Donato (2010) write, “Although there has been an improvement in their
social, economic, and political status over time, Latinos are and continue to be subordinate and marginalized population in the United States and are treated as such by mainstream institutions, including public schools” (p.37). Policymakers, educational institutions and educators have not been able to confront the macro-level social and economic constructed barriers and inequalities that affect the educational performance of disadvantaged low-income immigrant students. Poverty and language barriers represent the most important social and cultural obstacles that affect the educational development of marginalized Latino immigrant students living in low-income communities.

Due to the rapid demographic transformation in the United States urban areas, education reform, educational institutions and teachers can engage in critical ethnography, and social and pedagogical practices in favor of the disadvantaged and underrepresented social groups to challenge social and educational disconnections and inequality. Accommodating the needs of underrepresented students from different social and cultural backgrounds require education reform and educational practice that encourage marginalized students’ voices and participation to reduce social, and educational disconnections and inequalities. This research paper finds that it is extremely important that education reform focus on the social and cultural barriers that affect the educational development of Latino students for the implementation of educational practice that can reduce social and educational disparities. Contreras (2010) writes, “The high-stakes accountability framework, while design to address the gaps in achievement, has served to exacerbate the problem of uneven access by creating an outcomes-oriented model, one rooted in a deficit model paradigm” (p. 206) Education reform and policy that focus on accountability and high-stake testing, and ignore the social, economic and cultural barriers and disconnections that affect marginalized students enlarge educational inequality in urban areas.
Educational Reform Failure

Many scholars have referred to the failure of current education policies and reform in integrating underrepresented low-income minority students to the educational system. For example, in the book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (2010), Diane Ravitch is very critical of neo-liberal public education policies implemented in the United States that emphasize choice, standardized testing and accountability, ignoring the social and economic constructed structures that affect the educational development of underrepresented low-income students. Although different education policies have been implemented through the years to reduce the achievement gap and the inequality in the American educational system, low-income immigrant students still do not find equal education opportunity due to social, economic and cultural structural barriers. Education reform and policies have been taken advantage of elite social and economic groups and have maintained the educational and achievement gap that affect underrepresented minority social groups. According to Ravitch (2010), “In this new era, school reform was characterized as accountability, high-stakes testing, data driven decision making, choice, charter schools, privatization, deregulation, merit pay, and competition among schools. Whatever could not be measured did not count” (p. 24). Neoliberal educational reforms like No Child Left Behind emphasize standardized testing and accountability, ignoring the socioeconomic conditions and culture of marginalized low-income social groups living in urban areas.

Ravitch (2010) who was originally a supporter of this kind of education reform argues, “I came to realize that the law bypassed curriculum and standards, and worse, that it ignored the social and economic circumstances of children's lives, pretending that they didn’t matter. They do” (p. 18). Education reform and policies that prioritize accountability and ignore the social and
economic conditions of underrepresented social groups deliver unequal educational opportunity for marginalized students developing in low-income neighborhoods. With students living in extreme poverty, and households struggling to afford the most basic economic expenses and utilities, low-income students stand in a disadvantaged place to compete in a standardized test system, compared to upper class elite students with more social and economic resources. Market based neoliberal policies originally aimed to reduce the achievement gap by prioritizing standardized testing and accountability ignoring the social, economic and cultural barriers that influence the educational development of underrepresented students, fail to provide equal opportunity for marginalized social groups. Instead of reducing the achievement gap and creating equal opportunity for low-income students, these education reforms and policies have been taken advantage of mostly by the upper social and economic classes with higher social and economic resources who place their children in elite schools and send them to costly preparation test programs.

Ravitch (2010) writes:

Its central thesis was that schools must live up to the ideal of equality of educational opportunity. It warned that the nation would be harmed economically and socially unless education was dramatically improved for all children. But it failed to address the causes of equality of opportunity. (p.28)

The failure of educational policy and reform to reduce the achievement gap is strictly related to the avoidance of the social, cultural and economic conditions, and the educational developmental needs of underrepresented students. Ravitch (2010) argues, “The free-market approach does not promote equality of educational opportunity; nor does improve education. It fosters increased segregation along racial, economic, religious and class lines” (p. 240). Education reform and
policy that promote standardized testing, school choice, and accountability allow the influence of social and economic resources for the advantage of elite social groups. Wealthy students have more resources for school preparation and school choice than low-income students living and developing in segregated neighborhoods. In the words of Ravitch (2010), "Accountability makes no sense when it undermines the larger goals of education. Accountability makes no sense when it ignores the context in which children live" (p. 18). Standardized testing and accountability education system where upper-class students take advantage of resources for testing preparation and school choice do not provide equal quality education opportunity for disadvantaged low-income immigrant students, but instead increases the social and educational inequality gap. Accountability for low-income Latino immigrant students living in segregated neighborhoods who struggle with different social, economic and language barriers does not produce equal opportunity, and increases segregation and discrimination for their marginalized social group.

Educational policies that ignore the social, economic and cultural conditions of marginalized students, and the implementation of effective educational practices will continue to fail to reduce the achievement gap for underrepresented low-income social groups. This reveals the strong social and cultural disconnection between the educational system and unrepresented low-income social groups. Socioeconomic status and cultural barriers represent the most important obstacles that affect the educational development of low-income Latino immigrant students living in the inner-city urban areas.

Jean Anyon (2010) expands on the influence of social and economic inequality in the educational development of low-income minority social groups developing in the inner-city urban areas. Anyon (2010) explains on social and economic constructed barriers such as the concentration of poverty, as well as unequal educational funding in low-income neighborhoods
that affect the educational performance and achievement of marginalized students living in low-income neighborhoods. According to Anyon (2010), “These inequitable regional arrangements and policies exacerbate federal wage and job mandates and contribute in important ways to joblessness and poverty in cities and urbanized suburbs, and to the low quality of investment in services such as education there” (p. 73). Social and economic struggles, such as the lack of resources of low-income minority students and their communities, reduce their chances to compete for quality education opportunities with privileged social and economic groups.

Concentration of poverty and school segregation are important factors that influence equal education opportunity and affect the educational development and performance of marginalized Latino immigrant students living in low-income areas. For Anyon (2010), "These findings empirically support the argument that for the urban poor, even with the right educational policies in place school achievement may await a family’s economic access" (p.74). In urban areas, social and economic constructed barriers like poverty and school segregation impede low-income marginalized students from obtaining equal opportunity to compete for quality education. Low-income families living in low-income neighborhoods and their educational institutions do not possess enough resources to provide quality and more efficient educational services in their communities. Anyon (2010) emphasizes that school segregation as well as family income have strong impact in the educational development of low-income students living in urban areas.

Instead of ignoring social, economic and cultural barriers, educational change and reform can involve the engagement of social, economic, and political forces to develop educational strategies to reduce disparities in the educational environment. Educational research must inquire about the social and economic constructed barriers that affect equal educational opportunity and achievement rates for low-income minority students. Moreover, policymakers, educational
institutions, and educators must consider the low-income students' social and economic conditions such as extreme poverty and housing segregation that negatively affect educational development and performance for the implementation of more efficient education policies, and pedagogical practice that can reduce the achievement gap in urban areas. Educational institutions ignore the continuous changes of the demographics of the inner-city neighborhoods, the social, economic, and cultural barriers that affect the educational development of marginalized students, and the educational needs of low-income Latino immigrant students depending on their socioeconomic status and culture.

Lesly Bartlett and Ofelia Garcia’s study on the educational development in public high schools with a large percentage of Latino immigrant students argues that education reform considers underrepresented students’ home language as a problem and a deficit for standardized testing system. According to Bartlett and Garcia (2011), “In education policymaking the language of immigrant students is considered to be a problem that affect academic indicators such as achievement tests, dropout rates, and school enrollment for underrepresented Latino social groups”. Education reform that prioritizes standardized testing and accountability, ignoring the effects of socioeconomic status and language barriers of low-income Latino immigrant students, fail to reduce the achievement gap that particularly affects marginalized Latino immigrant social groups. Latin American immigrant students to whom Spanish is the dominant language in their households and communities struggle to adopt the English language for communication and participation in the educational environment. When this language adoption process is longer than expected, it places Latino immigrant students in an educationally disadvantaged position compared to students form privileged social groups. The education reform’s failure to close the achievement gap that affects marginalized students is related to the
lack of understanding of the socioeconomic status and culture of underrepresented low-income immigrant students and their communities.

David C. Berliner also argues about the effects of poverty and school segregation, as well as the failure of educational policy to reduce the achievement gap, and the structural educational inequality in the urban areas of the United States. Berliner’s (2013) study writes:

These theories of triumph by individuals who were born poor, or success by educators who changed the lives of their students, good to be American. These stories of success reflect real events, and thus they are certainly worth studying and celebrating so we might learn more about how they occur (cf. Casanova, 2010). But the general case is that poor people stay poor and that teachers and schools serving impoverished youth do not often succeed in changing the life chances for their students. (p.2)

The large low-income Latino immigrant communities living in segregated poor neighborhoods do not accomplish significant educational achievement levels to compete with elite social groups for social and economic mobility. Low achievement and graduation rates affect social and economic mobility for low-income immigrant students and represent the failure of the educational system to provide equal educational opportunity for marginalized low-income minority social groups. Social and cultural barriers, and disconnections in the educational system of the United Stated impede equal educational opportunity for underrepresented low-income Latino immigrant students, and the improvement of educational performance and graduation rate of low-income social groups.

Berliner (2013) argues that low educational achievement and graduation rates of low-income minority students living in poor neighborhoods calls for the need of a change in the
social and educational approach. Berliner argues on the notions of educational success for low-income minority social groups living in segregated neighborhoods. Berliner (2013) emphasizes:

So, it seems foolish assiduously to continue trying to affect student achievement with the most popular contemporary educational policies, mostly oriented toward teachers and schools, while assiduously ignoring the power of the outside-of-school factors. Perhaps it is more than foolish. If one believes that doing the same thing over and over and getting not results is a reasonable definition of madness, then what we are doing is not merely foolish: it is insane. (p. 6)

Poverty, race and school segregation strongly impact educational achievement and graduation rate for low-income students. The educational system and education reform have failed to reduce the achievement gap, and to integrate marginalized low-income social groups. For the Latino community, the problem is that low-income Latino immigrant students living in urban areas develop and perform in highly segregated neighborhoods and schools that reproduce poverty and maintain the large social and educational inequality. According to Orfield (2009) “Currently, white students attend schools that are between 90% and 100% minority at a rate that is under 1%. Both about 40% of both Hispanic and Black students attend schools that are 90% to 100% minority”. Latino immigrant students who live in low-income neighborhoods develop in segregated educational institutions that lack the necessary educational funding, as well as an adequate educator's labor force to compete with privileged elite social groups. Instead of imposing standardized testing and accountability for marginalized students, educational reform can focus on the social and constructed barriers like poverty, school segregation, and language barriers that influence the educational development of marginalized students to implement educational practice that can integrate them in the educational environment.
As a result of high unemployment and poverty, school segregation affects equal quality educational opportunity and educational performance for low-income Latino households compared to students from wealthy families who develop in privileged elite neighborhoods and schools. Low-income Latino immigrant students develop in highly segregated neighborhoods and educational institutions that lack social, economic and educational resources to compete with elite schools. The lack of understanding of the social, economic and cultural realities of low-income Latino immigrant students maintain the strong structural social and cultural disconnections between the educational system of the United States and underrepresented students living in inner-city neighborhoods.

In addition to extreme poverty, the isolation of low-income neighborhoods, and school segregation as a result of unequal governmental education distribution, and the lack of educational resources, increase social and racial prejudice and discrimination for marginalized Latino immigrant students living in low-income neighborhoods. Social, economic and cultural structural disconnections between the educational system and underrepresented social groups increase prejudice and discrimination for marginalized Latino students. Instead of ignoring the social, economic and cultural conditions of underrepresented students, the educational system and public and private institutions must promote education reform and pedagogical practices for inclusion, social justice and quality education for all students. Education reform must focus on providing equal and quality education for all social groups, especially to marginalized social minority groups. As Diane Ravitch (2010) emphasizes, “They must educate all children, including those with profound disabilities and those who do not read or speak English” (p.237). Education should not only be a privilege for the upper-class, but a right for all students, and especially for marginalized immigrant students living in urban areas. Education reform and
educational institutions must provide equal quality education opportunity for underrepresented social groups as part of the basic foundations of a democratic society.

Urban public policy and education reform must invest and promote the integration of educational practices to provide equal opportunity for marginalized immigrant students living in low-income neighborhoods. Low-income ESL students require equal quality education, and adequate educational practice for their social and educational development. Educational institutions can develop educational practice to fully integrate marginalized immigrant students into educational subjects. By understanding the social, cultural and economic barriers, educational institutions can approach social and cultural disconnections that affect the educational development of marginalized minority students. Educational inequality, and the strong social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and low-income underrepresented minority social groups, not only affect the social and educational development of marginalized Latino immigrant students, but also the development of their entire communities.
Social and Cultural Disconnection

Socio-cultural disconnections between the educational system of the United States and low-income immigrant students widen social and educational inequality. In urban areas, there is a strong social disconnection between the educational system and the low-income underrepresented social groups, and cultural disconnection between educators and marginalized immigrant students. Educational institutions and educators’ lack of understanding about the social, economic and cultural barriers that affect the educational development and performance of minority racial groups maintain the educational inequality and discrimination against marginalized low-income Latino students. Colorblind school practices that ignore the social and economic conditions, as well as the culture of immigrant communities, strongly affect the educational development and performance of low-income Latino immigrant students. Students of color are perceived to have lower educational performance compared to students from dominant ethnic and social groups because of standardized testing levels. Prejudice and negative attitudes towards students of color in the educational environment discourage participation and education performance of marginalized immigrant Latino students living in low-income neighborhoods. Colorblindness in educational policy and practice that affect the educational development of Latino immigrant students represent the strong social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and racial minority students. The lack of understanding of the social, economic and cultural barriers follows the stigmatization of underperformance of Latino immigrant students and affect educational development of the entire low-income the Latino immigrant community. Culture, race, and social and economic status play important roles in the educational development and performance of low-income Latino immigrant students. Educational institutions and educators should inquire into immigrant student’s culture to
understand the social and educational conditions that affect school performance for the Latino immigrant social group. Gloria Ladson-Billing’s (2017) argues:

We know little about things like the faith commitments of students. We know little about the way family structure and relations affect students- here I am not merely talking about things like one- versus two-parent households or number of siblings. Rather, I am talking about the things like family cohesion and fictive and actual kin networks. (p.118)

The constant change of the demographics of urban areas where low-income Latino immigrants represent the largest community in most of the inner-city neighborhoods justifies the inquiry on the influence of culture for their social and educational development. It is extremely important to place culture and the social struggles of ethnic minority groups at the center of the analysis for the development of adequate education practice. Social and cultural disconnections not only between the educational system, but also between educators and underrepresented social groups impede the educational development and integration of marginalized students in the educational environment. Social and cultural disconnections between educators and marginalized students coupled with colorblindness affect the educational development and performance for marginalized low-income Latino students living in urban areas. Many educators from racially dominant social groups do not understand low-income immigrant communities, and struggle to connect educational material to students from these underrepresented ethnic minority social groups.

Laurie H. Rubel (2017) argues that colorblindness in the educational system create and maintain social structural and institutional barriers that influence education dynamics and development for underrepresented students living in segregated low-income neighborhoods. Low-income Latino immigrant students living in highly segregated neighborhoods perform in
educational institutions that struggle with social, economic and cultural barriers such as the notion of the principle of meritocracy that leads to colorblindness in the educational environment and racial dominance in the educational system. According to Rubel (2017):

This principle functions as a tool of whiteness in how it ignores "systemic barriers and institutional structures that prevent opportunity of success (Milner, 2012, p. 704) as well as institutional structures that facilitate opportunities and the distribution of rewards not according to merit but instead according to race and social background (p. 68).

Rubel argues that colorblindness leads to the lack of understanding, negative attitudes, and prejudice towards underperforming racial minority groups, and affects the educational development and performance of marginalized students. Colorblindness in the educational environment maintains the notion of white racial domination and reproduces the prejudice and discrimination towards minority racial groups, which affect the educational development and performance of marginalized low-income immigrant students.

Social and cultural disconnections between educators and racial minority students, such as colorblindness, preproduce racial stigmatization on educational achievement and affect the educational development and performance of minority marginalized social groups. Rubel (2017) argues that many white American teachers working in the inner-city struggle to connect educational practices with the experiences of marginalized low-income immigrant students due to strong social and cultural disconnections between teachers and the culture of underrepresented minority social groups. Rubel conducted an observation research to analyze educational progress and the interaction between math teachers in ethnically diverse educational environments. The study shows that although teachers from dominant racial groups followed equity directed practices, they struggled to connect educational practices to underrepresented students’ personal
experiences because of social and cultural disconnections, and the lack of understanding of the social conditions and culture of low-income nondominant racial social groups (Rubel, 2017).

(Rubel, 2017, p. 79)

Rubel (2017) documented the experiences and the interactions in the educational environment between math teachers from racial dominant social groups and students of underrepresented racial minorities. In this table, Rubel’s study represents race and gender variables of the math teachers observed in this study. Female white math teachers struggled to connect school material with the personal experiences of students from different cultures living in low-income communities. Many teachers do not understand the socioeconomic conditions that affect the educational development of marginalized Latino immigrant students. The results of Rubel’s (2017) study show:

Indeed, Molly noted and reflected a sense of inadequacy in connecting to her students’ experiences that she explained in terms of feeling like an outsider relative to her students and their communities: As a young, White teacher, who does not live in my school’s
neighborhood or in the neighborhood where my students live, and who didn’t grow up in a city, what position am I in to connect to my students’ experiences? (p.86).

The findings of this study suggest the teachers’ lack of understanding of the social and cultural realities of underrepresented minority groups. Teachers become aware of these social and cultural disconnections because they struggle to connect educational practices to the experiences and culture of marginalized students in the educational environment.

Rubel (2017) argues that although teachers follow equity related instructional practices, social and cultural disconnections produce struggles in white teachers to introduce educational practices to marginalized social groups. Colorblindness creates low expectations of educational success for underrepresented students, and the struggle of white teachers to connect educational practices to marginalized students developing in segregated neighborhoods (Rubel, 2017). Colorblindness that lead the struggle of teachers connecting school material further marginalizes underrepresented students to their classrooms. Teachers’ lack of understanding of the socioeconomic conditions and the culture of low-income minority students and the struggles to connect educational material to students’ personal experiences marginalize low-income communities even more. To connect with their educational experiences and practices, educational institutions as well as educators can engage in critical ethnography to understand the social, economic and cultural barriers that affect the educational development of marginalized low-income immigrant students.
Educational Change

Education reform focused on critical ethnography and socio-critical pedagogical practice can challenge social and educational disconnections and inequalities in the educational environment. Educational reformers, researchers, educational institutions and educators must involve critical ethnography to find ways to confront social, cultural and educational disconnections, and narrow the education achievement gap that mostly affect underrepresented low-income Latino immigrant students. Through critical ethnography, as well as educational and pedagogical practice, educational institutions and educators can approach the social and cultural disconnections that widen the educational gap in the educational system of the United States.

Henry Giroux (2004) writes:

Educators and other cultural workers need a new political and pedagogical language for addressing the changing contexts and issues facing a world in which capital draws upon an unprecedented converge of resource-cultural, political, economic, scientific, military, and technological to exercise powerful and diverse forms of hegemony. (p.31)

Today, more than ever, educational institutions, and educators must be involved as active participants seeking social justice that includes political activist involvement, and the development of effective educational practices to challenge social and cultural disconnections, inequalities and discrimination that especially affect underrepresented minority students. Schools and educators in low-income urban areas must function as agencies for social justice and educational development to reduce social and educational inequality. Active communities, educational institutions, educators and students must challenge social, cultural and educational disconnections and inequalities for the pursuit of a more fair and democratic society.
In Democracy and Education John Dewey (1916) argues that educational freedom is closely connected with the values of any democratic society, and that education allows for the integral development of individuals. Dewey writes (1916), “Hence, a democratic society must, in consistency with its deal, allow for intellectual freedom and the play of diverse gifts and interests in its educational measures” (p. 357). The function of educational institutions and educators is fundamental for the equal social and educational development of all social and ethnic groups in society. It is extremely important that schools and educators must function as agencies that can deliver knowledge and encourage the voices and participation of underrepresented students for their social and educational development. Educational institutions and educators can challenge the social and educational injustices that affect the educational development of underrepresented minority students by promoting educational practices for intellectual freedom in educational spaces that encourage students’ voices for social participation and collaboration.

Educational institutions and educators are fundamental for the social, economic and educational development of underrepresented low-income Latino minority students as well as their communities. Orfield (2014) emphasizes, "Educators must be part of that enterprise, and their vision must reach beyond the schools to consider the forces outside the schools that limit the changes of millions of students" (p. 278). Equal quality education is extremely important for all groups in a society, particularly for underrepresented students as it allows opportunities for their social, economic and educational growth. Schools and educators in low-income communities represent important agencies that can improve the opportunities for the educational development of underrepresented students living in low-income neighborhoods. Educational institutions and educators can function as active social agencies to integrate students into educational practices by developing their students’ educational interests through learning.
experience, participation and collaboration. By encouraging interest in education subjects, and experience in communities of practice, educators can integrate marginalized students into the educational environment.

Educational institutions and educators can challenge the social, economic, and cultural disconnections and barriers that affect the educational development of marginalized students by promoting educational spaces to encourage students’ voices and participation in developing their own educational interests. Through participation, collaboration and experience in the educational environment, marginalized students not only can develop educational interests and knowledge, but also can develop critical thinking skills to challenge the social and educational struggles that affect them. According to Banks (1993), "Teachers should help students to become critical thinkers who have the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and commitments needed to participate in democratic action to help the nation close the gap between its ideals and its realities" (p. 5). The influence of educators is extremely important for the engagement of marginalized students with academic subjects, their educational development and social participation in their communities. As Contreras (2009) recommends, “Provide teachers with the necessary support and resources to modify curriculum and adhere to state content standards” (p. 206). Education reform should allow teachers create educational opportunities for underrepresented minority social groups. Teachers must become facilitators of knowledge, participation and collaboration in the educational environment to improve the social and educational conditions of marginalized students. By creating spaces for marginalized students’ participation, educational institutions and educators can incentivize knowledge as well as social and political participation for underrepresented social groups.
Critical Ethnography

Educational research based on critical ethnography that situates marginalized and underrepresented students as central actors rather than passive subjects can help to develop pedagogical praxis to reduce social, cultural and educational disconnections in the educational environment. Due to the large social and economic disparities, as well as the constant migration influx in urban areas, educational institutions and researchers must inquire the characteristics that shape the relationships between marginalized immigrant students and educational agencies.

According to Angela Calabrese Barton (2001):

Critical ethnography is situated within the belief that all education and research is intrinsically political and steeped in cultural beliefs and values. Embedded in this political view of education and research is a renewed understanding of culture as a complex circuit of production that includes a myriad of dialectically reinitiating and mutually informing sets of activities... both discursive and material. (p.906)

Educational research can place the customs and culture of underrepresented low-income Latino students at the center function of inquiry for the development of effective educational praxis for their educational development. Although the multi-diverse Latino immigrant community represent one of the largest social groups, English as a Second Language Latino immigrant students struggle with different socioeconomic and cultural barriers that prevents them from obtaining equal quality education and educational success.

Research based on critical ethnography is extremely important for the understanding of the dynamics of the social and educational development of underrepresented Latino immigrant students living in low-income urban areas. ESL Latino immigrant students who come from
different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds develop and perform differently in the educational environment. While some immigrant students are very participative and successful, others feel more oppressed and less encouraged to participate in their classrooms. Critical ethnography focused on testimonies about the educational experiences of marginalized students can help educational institutions and educators understand the social and cultural barriers that affect the educational development and performance of marginalized Latino students. According to Bernal and Burciaga, “Testimonios are a critical tool for understanding the educational experiences of communities of color in general and Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in particular” (p.360). Through the inquiry of the students’ personal experiences, educational researchers and educators can learn about the social, economic and cultural struggles, as well as the negative attitudes that affect the educational development and performance of marginalized students. The lack of engagement and enthusiasm of marginalized minority students in school subjects which affect their educational performance can be the result of many different internal and social barriers. Calabrese Barton’s (2001) argues:

This principle of agency draws strength from catalytic validity (in which the actions of the researcher "must be premised upon the development of research approaches which both empower the researched and contribute to the generation of change enhancing social theory") and reflexivity (with all research participants become increasingly critically conscious of their situations in the world and the impact this has on relationships and knowledge construction). (p. 907)

Through the inquiry of individual and social traits, educational institutions and educators can understand underrepresented students to develop effective educational praxis that encourages marginalized students’ voices for participation and collaboration in the educational environment.
Critical ethnography research on underrepresented Latino immigrant students should cover the next steps: First, education researchers can investigate the social constructed characteristics depending on culture that influence and affect marginalized Latino immigrant students’ educational performance. Second, researchers and educators can inquiry about the impact of Latino immigrant students’ voices and participation in their educational performance. Finally, educational researchers, educational institutions and educators must function as agencies that assure the voices of marginalized Latino immigrant students are heard for school reform and practice.

Critical ethnography based on understanding marginalized low-income Latino immigrant students and their communities are fundamental for the development of educational practice to reduce educational disconnections and inequalities. According to Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003), “Thus, individuals’ and groups experience and activities- not their traits- becomes the focus” (p. 19). Through critical ethnography, educational institutions and educators can promote educational practice in third spaces to encourage marginalized students’ voices and educational interest through participation and experience in the educational environment. Lilia Fernandez (2002) finds that critical ethnography research is extremely helpful for the understanding of the educational patterns and the development of educational praxis directed to Latino immigrant students living in urban areas.

Fernandez argues that marginalized immigrant students are affected by the lack of understanding and encouragement and motivation of educators for their educational development. Though qualitative research inquiring the perspectives and testimony of a successful Latino immigrant student, Fernandez argues about the impact of the motivation of educators to underrepresented students. Fernandez (2002) writes, “By exploring this student’s
narrative, we gain insight into how he understood his own personal educational experience as well as that of his fellow Latino/Latino classmates” (p. 46) In this study, a Latino immigrant student living Chicago believes that teachers do not motivate and encourage marginalized Latino students to succeed in their classrooms. According to Fernandez (2002), “Pablo thought many of them behaved as if “they got stuck with the job. “They seemed to care little about students’ learning, and students in turn cared even less. They did not motivate or encourage students who, as a result, saw little reason to stay in class” (p.52) The study of the experiences of this Latino immigrant college student develop important traits about the educational process and the strong disconnections between the public educational system of Chicago and marginalized low-income Latino immigrant students. Fernandez (2002) illustrates the importance of critical race theories and the testimonies of immigrant students to understand the social and cultural barriers that affect their educational development. Fernandez (2002) argues, “Some students were also leaving school for other reasons such as to support the family in various ways, including working a job and bringing in an income (p.55) In Chicago, with a large Latino population and a majority of white teachers, marginalized Latino students living in segregated urban areas struggle with educational success. Fernandez argues (2002), “By placing Latino/Latino educational experiences at the center of educational research about them, we gain a richer understanding of urban public schooling (p.59) In order to achieve educational change, it is extremely important that educational institutions situate the experiences of marginalized Latino students as a core function for their educational development. The intervention of the experiences and testimonios of marginalized Latino students in communities of practice can engage and motivate students to educational interests and subjects.
Situated Learning in Communities of Practices

In order to approach educational disconnections and inequalities, institutions and educators can create educational spaces and practices that encourage underrepresented students’ voices and social participation for the improvement of their social and educational development. Situated learning in community of practice is the function of students’ learning process and development through social interaction and participation in the educational environment. Individuals’ learning process is influenced by social interaction, the zone of proximal development and the legitimate peripheral participation. Jean Lave (1996) argues that situated learning in communities of practice are learning functions in individuals that are impacted by social interaction and activities, which help to develop knowledge and skills. Through social participation and collaboration in the educational environment, marginalized students can learn educational skills and develop educational interests and their identity. According to Lave (1996), “A reconsideration of learning as a social, collective, rather than individual, psychological phenomenon offers the only way beyond the current state of affairs that I can envision at the present time” (p. 149). Learning process is influenced by social contact and interaction, educational activities and collaborative participation of students in their educational environment. Social interaction in the educational environment through activities and participation influence the learning process, and the engagement of students with educational subjects. Situated learning in community of practice can help the cultivation of students' interests, the development of their voices, as well as social participation for the social and educational development and performance of marginalized students. Leave (1996) writes, "Learning is an aspect of changing participation in changing “communities of practice” everywhere” (p.149). Through social interaction, participation and apprenticeship in educational
spaces, students can develop learning skills, knowledge and values that can influence academic interests connected to their identity. For Lave (1996), "School teaching is a special kind of learning practice that must become part of the identity-changing communities of children's practices if it is to have a relationship with the learning" (p. 161). Through learning practice and socialization, not only can students acquire knowledge, and engage in class participation, but also through collaboration teachers can develop a better understanding of their classrooms, as well as the social and cultural conditions of their students. Situated learning in communities of practices can also reduce the social and cultural disconnections between educators and underrepresented students living in low-income communities. Collaboration between teachers and students can develop in mutual understanding of the social and educational conditions, as well as the environment where underrepresented students perform.

Educational practice focused on situated learning in community of practice connects students with academic interests, and engages learners and educators through participation, cooperation and collaboration in a mutual learning transmission. Effective educational practices focused on cultivating students' interests, participation and experience in the educational environment can improve the students’ learning process for their social and educational development. Moreover, participation and collaboration between teachers and students can reduce the social, cultural and educational disconnections between the educational system and marginalized students. The dynamics of the interaction and collaboration between teachers and students through the learning process can help to narrow cultural disconnections and create the opportunity for educational action and social change to confront educational inequalities.

According to Anna Stetsenko (2009), "Collaborative transformative practices aimed at social change (always entailing particular vision and commitment) represent the core grounding for
human development” (p. 18). Active participation and cooperation in the educational environment can improve the learning process and educational development of underrepresented social groups through engaging marginalized students into the classrooms’ dynamics and educational subjects. The development of educational practices that involve collaboration between teachers, students and the community can lead to the improvement of students’ educational engagement, as well as teachers’ understanding of the individual and social conditions of marginalized students living in underrepresented low-income communities. By encouraging the participation of underrepresented students in situated learning in communities of practices, and mutual collaboration between learners and educators, educational institutions can reduce social, cultural and educational disconnections, and improve the learning process and educational development of marginalized students. Education through social and cultural transmission can be beneficial for educators, learners and their entire communities. In these steps, situated learning in communities of practice can help to reduce social and cultural disconnections in the educational environment: First, through critical ethnography educational institutions and educators can investigate underrepresented Latino students' experiences to develop effective educational practice and spaces to improve their learning conditions. Second, educational institutions and educators can create and develop educational hybrid third spaces where situated learning in community of practices encourage marginalized students' voices, educational interests, class participation, along with the fostering mutual collaboration between educators and learners in the educational environment. Finally, educational institutions, education researchers and educators must assure that the voices of underrepresented students are heard for their social and educational development.
Hybrid Third Space

The creation of hybrid third spaces where students can develop their voices, as well as learn abilities through participation and classroom discourse engagement, can help to reduce social and educational disconnections and disparities in the educational environment (Calabrese Barton, 2008). Marginalized students can develop educational skills, interests and educational opportunities through participation and collaboration in third spaces that connect life experiences with educational subjects. Calabrese Barton (2008) emphasizes in the importance of hybrid third spaces to develop students’ voices, as well as learning skills for marginalized students. Calabrese Barton studied the use of innovative pedagogical practices in third spaces for the educational development of female students in different science classrooms. Through the creation of hybrid third spaces in the educational environment, educators and educational institutions encourage students’ academic interests, and identity through class participation, and collaboration. Calabrese Barton (2008) writes:

This third space is described as a hybrid space because it brings together the different knowledges, discourses, and relationships one encounters in ways the collapse oppositional binaries, allowing them to work together to generate new knowledge, discourses, and identities. (Moje et al., 2004) (p.73).

The research conducted by Calabrese Barton on female science students focused in the dynamics of educational practices for the encouragement of students’ voices, and the improvement of the learning process of marginalized students through class discussion, participation and collaboration in hybrid third spaces. Calabrese Barton (2008) argues, “One view defines the third space as a bridge between academic and traditionally marginalized knowledges and discourses” (p. 73). Through their own input, and by entering in class discourse in the educational
environment, and situated learning of community of practice, marginalized students develop their own voices, interests, and identity engaging with the tasks of the science class.

Calabrese Burton’s (2008) argues:

The science classroom, as a community-of-practice, offers many different spaces where students can author identities, including whole class settings, small group work, and individual locations, among others. These identities in practice that are manifested when a student is asked to speak during whole-class discussion may differ from those manifested when she is engaged in a small-group activity, and so on. (p. 75)

The creation of third spaces where class discourse, participation and experience allow students to develop their own ideas to approach educational practices can engage in their educational interests to increase the chances of succeeding in classrooms related matters. Opening opportunities in the third space for class discourse engage marginalized students to create their own voices and ideas to compromise with the class subjects. Through group participation and collaboration, students can find different interests in class subjects and develop new skills and opportunities to improve their social and educational development. Calabrese Burton’ (2008) argues:

New opportunities to participate in different ways present themselves when a new topic that may interests the student is introduced, when a girl is partnered with a new small group from whom she can learn, or when the teacher assigns a project that allows the student to leverage on and showcase her unique skills and talents. (p.76)

By allowing the development of third spaces in situated learning where students can fulfill their learning capacities, and connect with the community of practices, marginalized students develop their own voices, identity and new social and educational skills. Through participation, the
construction of their identity and leadership, marginalized students change their learning experiences, and the educational experience of the entire classroom. Calabrese Burton (2008) writes, “Official student positioning by the science teacher into roles such as group leader or group reporter also accords students power that can transform learning experiences and affect identity formation in the science class” (p. 76). Despite the lack of social, cultural and economic resources, class discourse, participation and collaboration in the third space engage marginalized students towards educational subjects and create different educational opportunities. Calabrese Burton (2008) states, "Successful participation in school science, despite a lack of resources in the home environment, can be better facilitated when students have a science-related identity they can draw upon” (p. 76). Class discussion and participation about school subjects allows opportunities for the development of educational identity, new academic interests as well as provide encouragement to investigate different unexplored educational fields.

Critical pedagogy practice focused on the development of marginalized students’ identity and voices though class discourse and participation in third spaces can challenge the different social and educational struggles that affect them. Classroom participation and discourse in third spaces develop students’ voices, engage marginalized students to achieve academic interests, and connect them to educational subjects in their classrooms. Participation in the educational environment can grow different educational interests and skills in students based on their identity and personality. Class discourse in the educational setting transforms the learning process and improves students’ skills to maximize the educational development and capacity of marginalized students. According to Kris Gutierrez (2008), “By exploiting the dialectic between the individual and the social, between the world as it is and the world as it could be, we see that institutions of learning can be transformed” (p. 160). Class discussion and participation that encourage the
educational and social engagement can liberate students from social and educational forms of oppression that impede their integral educational development. Gutierrez (2008) states, "As a critical form of classroom discourse critical social theory cultivates students' ability to critique institutional as well conceptual dilemmas, particularly those that lead to domination or oppression" (p. 11). The practice of critical and socio-cultural pedagogy through class discussion in the educational environment is fundamental to emancipate the development of knowledge in students, and to challenge the struggles and oppressions that affect them and their communities. Educational institutions and educators can function as social agents to cultivate knowledge through students’ participation and the emancipation of ideas for the educational development of marginalized students.

Hybrid third spaces can engage students in educational subjects through the encouragement of students’ voices, opinions and interests in the educational environment. Calabrese Burton (2008) documented the learning experiences of urban middle school girls where teachers encouraged and promoted their learning strategies, and then applied to the entire classroom. Calabrese Burton (2008) writes, "The girls in our study engaged in the merging practice of making signature science artifacts that they strategically used to position themselves as legitimate participants in their science classrooms" (p. 82). Teachers from these science classrooms encouraged students and considered the learning techniques that were being used by unrepresented students improve the overall class participation and collaboration. This study documents the experience and dynamics between educators and students in hybrid third spaces where the ideas and opinions of students are encouraged and promoted by teachers for the improvement and development of knowledge and learning skills.
For example, in one of the classrooms, an urban middle school student used a pop song to memorize and learn human bones of the human skeleton. Her teacher encouraged this technique of learning and disseminated song to other students. The teacher’s sentiments are revealed by the study of Calabrese Burton (2008):

Her teacher also appeared to enjoy the bone song, based on his encouraging comments to Ginny. He asked her for a copy of the song and that night typed it up and posted it on the board outside of his classroom. He also distributed copies to all students in his five sections of 6th-grade science (p. 82).

In classrooms where teachers encourage students to participate and take their opinion on the strategies used for personal learning of school subjects, underrepresented and marginalized students can find new opportunities to develop different interests in classroom subject matters. Another student created a rabbit magnet for school science project that aimed to develop Internet research skills in students. Calabrese Barton’s (2008) finds, “In the whole-class discussion following the presentations, the teacher specifically singled out Pat’s magnet as an example of a model that offered scientific information in a way that was interesting and useful” (p. 84). When teachers encourage students’ voices to develop their own learning practices to cultivate their interests, the results not only transform the individual educational development of marginalized students, but also the participation and collaboration of the entire classroom. Calabrese Barton (2008) states, “Both the bone song and the magnet impacted the learning community in that they became part of the classroom discourse as models for the ways to engage in science activity” (p. 85).

Sociocritical practice and the creation of third spaces to share educational practices and experience for situated learning in communities of practices can not only improve the learning
process of underrepresented students, but also reduce the social and cultural disconnections between teachers and marginalized students. According to Kris Gutierrez (2008), “The design of a particular social environment of development, a collective Third Space, in which students begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (p. 148). Through participation and collaboration in third spaces, students can improve their educational development, and teachers can learn about the socioeconomic conditions and culture of underrepresented students. Educational change and reform must come not only from policymaking, but also from teachers, students and classrooms practices. In urban areas, educators can follow educational curriculum, and confront social and cultural barriers through connected learning, class discussion, and the development of critical thinking in students. Situated learning in communities of practice and the creation of hybrid third spaces can help to integrate marginalized immigrant students to the educational environment. Educational institutions can learn from non-profit community organizations that stimulate the participation and engagement of underrepresented Latino immigrant groups by creating different educational opportunities for marginalized students. These organizations committed in social justice place marginalized Latino immigrant students as central actors and understand the social and educational conditions that impact their educational development.
Nonprofit Communities of Practice

Community nonprofit organizations in low-income urban areas integrate marginalized Latino immigrant students into educational subjects for their social, cultural and educational development. Active nonprofit organizations are able to transform the educational dynamics in low-income communities, as well as the educational procedures and strategies applied by in school reform. Educational leadership of non-profit organizations is fundamental for the creation of education reform that benefit underrepresented social groups. According to Shipps, “School reform requires the participation of nongovernment actors because many essential and highly related educational activities are carried on outside government” (p. 845).

Today, nongovernmental for profit and nonprofit organizations represent important forces that shape the educational development of marginalized minority students. According to Shipps, “The nongovernment parties can include business association, foundations, academics, and voluntary civic and neighborhood groups, among others” (p. 845) Community center nonprofit organizations in low-income communities committed to social justice are aware about social and economic disconnections, the lack of understanding of educational institutions of the culture of immigrant students and the educational needs for the underrepresented Latino social groups. These community nonprofit organizations engage community members, and teachers to provide different social and educational services for the social, economic and educational development of the low-income Latino community. Guillermo Cantor’s (2008) writes that:

The most prevalent type of Latino-serving organization focuses on some form of education. Representing 17 percent of all nonprofits, these include programs in English as a second language, literacy, computer training, U.S. citizenship classes, tutoring, preschool and after-school programs, and safety training among others. (p.3)
In this study, community nonprofit organizations in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area, provide programs and services that are extremely important for the social, economic and educational development of the low-income Latino community. By understanding the needs of low-income communities, community nonprofit organizations in urban areas engage and connect with marginalized low-income Latino students for their social, economic and educational development.

Community centers and nonprofit organizations committed to social justice allow educational opportunities by creating third spaces in the educational environment to encourage marginalized students’ voices for social participation to empower their communities. In these community centers, students have the freedom to speak freely with administrators and educators about their social and educational concerns and attend the educational levels where they feel more comfortable and productive for their learning process. Buckley and Burch argue (2010), “In recent years, the role outside actors has shifted in important ways, as outside organizations have become more closely intertwined with the daily operations and provisions of public education” (p. 237).

By doing so, non-for-profit organizations are able to change structural and institutional educational procedures that influence educational change and school reform. Buckley and Burch (2017) write, “Looking across these organizations, we can see that their role is shifting to becoming central to the overall strategies that districts are taking to improve schools” (p.243). Educational programs in community centers and nonprofit organizations integrate marginalized students and engage educators committed to social justice to understand the social and economic conditions, as well as the culture of underrepresented social groups. Nonprofit organizations function as social and educational agencies for the social and educational development of
marginalized social groups and assure that unrepresented students’ voices are taken into account for social and political consideration. Bukley and Burch (2011) argue that:

Both for-profit and nonprofit organizations are engaging politically at both the national and local level. What needs to be understood better is not only the nature of such political activity but also how this activity is altering the role of long-standing political actors from unions to civic groups. Who is being empowered? Whose voices are being silenced? (p. 247).

In urban areas, non-profit organizations show educational leadership to empower underrepresented immigrant social groups. Community nonprofit organizations committed to social justice allow the creation of educational spaces and practices for the encouragement of marginalized student’s voices for social participation. Nonprofit organizations that provide educational programs and social services for underrepresented immigrant students represent an important part in the structure of neighborhoods and the grassroot movements of the low-income Latino community. These institutions and educators are dedicated to improving the educational development and performance of marginalized students, and the cohesive and integral social, economic and educational development of Latino immigrant social group. According to Bukley and Burch (2011), “Other important categories of nonprofits include organizations that support (but do not necessarily manage schools, such as New Visions for Public Schools in New York, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools” (p. 241). New Visions for Public Schools in New York is an example of a nonprofit organization focused on educational leadership to improve graduation rate for underrepresented social groups. These nonprofit organizations stimulate equal educational opportunity, and the educational achievement rate for low-income immigrant students. Due to the success in educational
achievement, nonprofit organizations like this one based in urban areas obtain support from both public and private institutions. Accordingly, many students benefit from these services as well as the entire educational system. Bukley and Burch (2011) argue:

A significant number of these nonprofits (which have largely emerged over the past 20 years) receive support from foundations that are interested in promoting entrepreneurial activity in public education, especially in terms of urban schools serving low-income, predominantly minority students (p. 242).

Today, there is an important shift in education that is turning nonprofit organizations into main actors for educational change in the United States. Nonprofit organizations committed to social justice have shown important leadership in creating spaces of opportunity for underrepresented minority students. These educational opportunities given by nonprofit organizations are extremely important for minority students and especially for English as a second language learners. As Contreras (2010) recommends, “Provide English Learners with the resources and strong curricular offerings to raise achievement” (p. 206). Public and private educational institutions should learn from community nonprofit organizations that provide educational programs and services for marginalized English learners students aimed for the integration and development of their entire communities. Free English as a second language classes with focus on grammar and where underrepresented students have the opportunity to participate while learning language skills, as well as different training courses are extremely valuable programs that nonprofit community centers offer to low-income minority communities.
Ethnographic Reflections

I have worked as an English as a Second Language instructor for many years at a Latino nonprofit organization called Hospitalidad y Ayuda para el Necesitado para su Desarrollo y Superacion (H.A.N.D.S) Community Center located in Mott Haven, South Bronx. The community center which name translated into English means hospitality and help for the underprivileged for their development and overcoming, is committed to social justice and provides social and educational services for low-income residents. HANDS aim to integrate marginalized low-income immigrant students into academic subjects in the educational environment. My teaching experience in this community center have brought observations and evaluations regarding the educational development and achievement of my students. This data can help to bring different perspectives about the traits and nuances that influence the educational development of underrepresented Latino students living in urban areas. Many immigrant students who lack grammar foundation and basic literacy proficiency find that this type of community nonprofit organizations and their educational programs are an important option to improve their English language skills. A large percentage of low-income Latino immigrant students lack of basic educational instruction due to the high illiteracy rates in their countries of origin. For many years, HANDS Community Center has been successful integrating these marginalized low-income immigrant students to academic subjects and the educational environment. The educational programs of nonprofit organizations like HANDS are focused on inclusion and learning development for the social and cultural integration of marginalized immigrant social groups. The organization creates programs and events that are centered on the culture of underrepresented immigrant Latino students. Students’ voices and opinions about their preferred educational practices and schedules are strongly considered by the administrators and
educators. The commitment of social justice of HANDS Community Center allows administrators and teachers create their own educational practices depending of the interests of low-income Latino immigrant students. Although, students, educators and administrators working in this community center perform in an adverse social and economic environment, the desire of equity and social justice empower their commitment for equal and quality education.

Mott Haven in the South Bronx is one the poorest, but also most diverse neighborhoods in New York City. Through the years, the area has created and maintained a large concentration of poverty due to high unemployment, blockbusting and social and economic segregation. Today, Mott Haven is the home of a multi-diverse community including a large majority of low-income Latino immigrants and other underrepresented minority groups. HANDS Community Center as part of the Roman Catholic Church integrates students and educators from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds, for the social and educational development of the underrepresented Latino community living in Mott Haven. The mission statement of this nonprofit organization emphasizes the power of education as a foundation to promote a better future. The classes and events provided by HANDS are scheduled depending on the convenience of students work hours, and the educational practices are centered to the needs of marginalized immigrant Latino students. Basic grammar skills as well as English conversation classes are part of the most important services provided for this nonprofit organization.

One day after class I talked to one of my students and a coworker about classroom dynamics focused on the importance of the encouragement of students' voices for participation, and the function of nonprofit community centers as agencies for social and educational development. As Bernal and Burciaga (2012) recall, “Testimonios are a critical tool for understanding the educational experiences of communities of color in general and Chicano/o and
Latina/o communities in particular” (p. 370). The student in this testimony is an adult immigrant from Mexico who has lived in the area for eighteen years and attends class every week. The student enjoyed talking about his experiences in the classrooms of the community center because he feels that teachers and the institution care about his struggles. The student states that there is good communication between students, teachers and the administrators because they can speak in Spanish, and that this is different in private English as a Second Language schools. He emphasizes that in this community center students have the opportunity and space to express how they feel because community nonprofit organizations understand the social, cultural and educational needs of immigrant Latino students. About his learning experience, the student suggests that class repetition is positive in improving his English proficiency, and that teachers should understand the struggles and culture of immigrant students. In the classrooms of this community center, the improvement of the learning skills of marginalized student are placed in the center of their learning experience. Class repetition, group participation and apprenticeship are successful educational techniques for the integration of marginalized Latino immigrant students in this community center. Grammar lessons are constantly repeated depending on the needs of the classrooms. Also, students who are in more advanced levels can teach other leaners who are behind in their learning process. These educational techniques and the learning experience help all students improve their English language skills. In third spaces, students can speak freely in Spanish to explain more efficiently their struggles and preferred educational practices. This process is significant because it engages marginalized students in the educational practice and process. The student developing in this community center feels that these are extremely beneficial educational techniques to integrate immigrant students into the classrooms. By understanding the struggles and culture of immigrant students, educational institutions and
educators improve the educational development of underrepresented social groups. The student adds that the problem is that many American teachers and educational institutions do not know about immigrant’s culture, and that they care more about class curriculum than understanding the struggles and culture of immigrant students. Our conservation lasted about an hour and afterwards the student had to leave for work.

My student’s testimony reminds me of the experiences of Pablo in Chicago and the struggles of English learners for school achievement. Fernandez (2010) writes, “Pablo felt that teachers often underestimated the abilities of Spanish-speaking students who were not yet fluent in English (p. 51). The lack of understanding of the culture of immigrant students and the low encouragement and motivation of teachers strongly affect the educational development and performance of marginalized immigrant students living in urban areas. Fernandez argues, “Pablo saw White teachers who for the most part had low expectations and little hope for Latino/Latino and African American students” (p. 57). Underrepresented immigrant students perform better in educational spaces where they feel supported and more comfortable talking about their struggles and culture. According to Castellanos and Gloria, “Latina/o students who engage in learning settings that are consistent with their cultural values and practices would have an increased sense of connection, well-being, and persistence toward graduation” (p. 385). Non-profit community centers where students find cultural connections and educational support create spaces of educational opportunities that are beneficial for the educational process of marginalized Latino students. As Castellanos and Gloria (2007) suggest, “Use of a culture-specific strength-based approach for Latino/o students can increase positive experiences and daily educational successes” (p. 387). Because of the educational environment, students developing in this nonprofit organization feel more engaged to improve their language skills.
The same day I talked to Mary, one of the ESL teachers for the beginner level, as well as a citizenship preparation instructor in the community center. We started talking about the demographics and culture of students. Mary argued that some teachers who work in public and private schools have a lack of cultural competence of immigrants and the communities in the inner-city neighborhood. We talked about teachers creating spaces for the opportunity of marginalized students to encourage their opinions for social and educational participation. The educator creates spaces where students can express their emotions to understand the struggles and culture of her students. Mary states that she usually asks students about their personal interests and dreams. After one of her classes, an immigrant student told her that he wanted to become a doctor when he was younger. Mary’s student got very emotional and proud when he confessed her that although he did not approach higher education, his daughter became a doctor in the United States. The story of Mary’s student reflects that the struggles of migration and effort for hard work is worth it, and the importance to encourage students’ voices and opinions to express their valuable immigrant experiences. By listening to students’ testimonies, educators can understand underrepresented students, and integrate them to the educational environment. Mary encourages students to come to class to participate instead of staying home, and she explains them that it is extremely important for their social, educational and human development. These testimonies show important perspectives about the struggles of the underrepresented immigrant community, and that students who feel understood by teachers and institutions are more comfortable and perform better in the educational environment. English language learners and educators in this community center believe that the encouragement of class participation, and repetition of the class material can help improve English proficiency and skills for marginalized students.
Discussion

Underrepresented immigrant Latino social groups living in low-income urban areas struggle for equal educational opportunity due to the large social, economic and educational inequality, and strong social and cultural disconnections between the educational system and marginalized students. Social and cultural disconnections between educational institutions, educators and marginalized low-income Latino immigrant students widen the social and educational inequality gap that affects the United States urban areas. Educational reform and educational institutions that ignore the social, economic conditions of underrepresented low-income communities, and social and cultural disconnections between educators and marginalized students fail to improve the educational development of underrepresented social groups. Poverty, school segregation and language barriers represent important factors that influence the social and educational development and performance of low-income Latino immigrant students living in urban areas. Latino English as a Second Language students living in low-income neighborhoods are the most affected by the social, economic and educational inequality because of the lack of understanding of their culture and language barriers, which strongly affect their social and educational development and performance. Language barriers reduce equal education opportunities for low-income Latino immigrant students developing in low-income urban areas.

This thesis research paper suggests that public and private educational institutions can learn about the philosophy and educational practice of community non-profit organizations committed to social justice that have positive results in the integration and improvement of the educational development of marginalized Latino immigrant students. Community nonprofit organizations encourage marginalized students’ voices for social participation. Educational institutions and educators can engage in critical ethnography, and learn from nonprofit
organizations to understand the social, economic and cultural barriers that affect the educational development of underrepresented immigrant groups to develop educational practice that integrate marginalized students in classrooms. Socio-critical pedagogical practice is fundamental for the inclusion and integration of marginalized and underrepresented minority social groups into education subjects, and the educational system and institutions of urban areas. Educational third spaces can help educational institutions to improve the educational development of marginalized students and educators understand the socioeconomic conditions and culture of underrepresented social groups living in urban areas. Public and private educational institutions, as well as educators, can learn from community nonprofit organizations committed to social justice that encourage marginalized students’ voices and participation for their social and educational development. It is extremely important for educational institutions to fully integrate marginalized Latino English learners of all ages into educational practices and their educational environment for the improvement of their social, economic and educational development. Situated learning in communities of practices in third spaces can promote education through social and cultural transmission for the connection and integration of underrepresented minority social groups in the educational environment. Education reform and institutions must prioritize educational practice focused on the creation of educational hybrid third spaces that promote marginalized students’ voices and participation to improve the social, economic and educational conditions of underrepresented minority social groups and their communities.
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