

Buscando la Libertad: Latino Youths in Search of Freedom in School

Jason G. Irizarry

Abstract:

Drawing from a two-year ethnographic study of Latino high school students engaged in youth participatory action research (YPAR), this article describes students' quest for freedom in schools, locating their struggle within a larger effort to realize the democratic ideals of public schooling. Using Latino/a Critical Race Theory as a theoretical lens, the author demonstrates how popular discourse around the "achievement gap" often obscures the oppressive policies and practices implemented by educators that limit freedoms necessary for educational and personal development and profoundly influence the identities and life trajectories of Latino youth. The article concludes with an exploration of YPAR as a practice of educational freedom with the potential to transform the educational experiences and outcomes for Latino youth and other communities that have been traditionally underserved by schools.