

Controlling Images of School District Space and its Influence on Latina Teacher Practices

Glenda Flores, Ph.D.

Associate Professor & Director of Undergraduate Studies
School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine

Monday, November 19, 2018
12:00 – 1:15 pm, Education 2010

Abstract: Latinas are the fastest growing non-white group entering the teaching occupation, far outnumbering African American and Asian American women in California. I use a comparative study design to examine dramatic contrasts between the experiences of Latina teachers in Rosemead, a predominantly working-class Latino and Chinese community in the west San Gabriel Valley, and those of Latina teachers in Compton, a formerly African American community that is now predominantly Latino. I draw upon 50 in-depth interviews with teachers of various racial/ethnic backgrounds, over 450 hours of copious ethnographic and participant observations, focus groups with parents, and analysis of discussions at district school meetings to demonstrate how differing regional racial/ethnic hierarchies influence workplace culture and how bureaucratic rules regarding high stakes testing drastically hamper and undermine the efforts of Latina teachers to improve learning and life outcomes among Latino children. Latina teachers socially distance themselves from poor Black students and parents in Compton, associating them with the “urban underclass” as a strategy for keeping Latino students afloat academically. Latina teachers in Rosemead, on the other hand, associate in various ways with Asian American teachers and students because they see community resources provided by the larger Asian American immigrant community as also providing opportunities for themselves and Latino students. Ultimately, state and local school district policies compel Latina teachers to exhibit anti-black sentiments, seek proximity to Asians, and to focus much of their teaching efforts to reaching the children of immigrant Latinos whom they perceive to need more aid due to their precarious and stigmatizing status in the racial hierarchy.



Bio: Glenda M. Flores is a trained qualitative sociologist. As an intersectional feminist, her research revolves around three interrelated lines: 1) the ways college educated Latinas/os narrate or explain their pathways into professional occupations; 2) their impact on workplace climate; and 3) race relations and interactions with members of various racial/ethnic categories. These areas are united by her overarching theoretical interest in the social mobility patterns of working class Latinas/os into the middle class, and their workplace experiences in the white-collar world, especially teaching and medicine. Recently, she has added an interest in understanding the often contradicting gendered dynamics within Latina/o families. Flores holds B.A.'s in Chicano/Latino Studies and Spanish Language and Culture (with an Education Emphasis) from UCI, and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Southern California. She also holds a Gender Studies certificate.