

January 7, 2010- Cafecito

“Generation 1.5: Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Within U.S. Borders”

Introduction

- 1) (After other introductions) **Introduce** myself and interest in Gen 1.5: past teaching, current teaching and research.
- 2) **Statistics:** more than 10% of all U.S. students); Increased more than 60% from 1995-2005
- 3) More importantly- complexity- Transcend and complicate our categories. Rich stories to share. **E.g.** Gen 1.5 show at Queens Museum of Art
- 4) **Overview:**
Themes and considerations
Stories from students, staff, faculty
Discussion and further stories

Who is Generation 1.5?

- Debated term, but for sure: attended U.S. high schools (often elementary and middle)
- Immigration/residency: permanent res (or undocumented)?
- Between 1st and 2nd generation (come back to ‘between-ness’)
- Growing significantly: English Language Learners (more than 10% of all U.S. students); Increased more than 60% from 1995-2005
 - Many more coming to college
 - Movements such as Dream Act

How are they different from international students?

- Strong conversational English, but often less confident with academic English
- Often socioeconomically challenged
- Rich linguistic/cultural resources. Complex stories. Difficult to classify

Themes in literature about Generation 1.5:

BETWEEN-NESS: Gen 1.5 students often feel that they don’t easily fit into many of our societal categories for race, ethnicity, culture, language, national origin, etc. They struggle with questions such as the following:

○ Where are you from? / Is English your first language? / What is your cultural background?

E.g. What do we call students originally from Mexico? “Mexican”? Mexican-American?

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Latino? Hispanic? Chicano?

BELONGING: Because of this sense of between-ness, Gen 1.5 students often struggle to feel a sense of belonging. They often experience significant differences between their home culture and the culture of the U.S. education system. This brings to mind questions such as:

- o In what ways does my family background influence me? / Where do I “fit at school? What categories do I fall into?

E.g. Where do Somali students fit in: African American? Muslim? Very different cultural backgrounds and sociopolitical dynamics.

IDENTITY : Gen 1.5 students often develop complex “hybrid” identities within U.S. schools and society at large. As they form those identities, they often consider questions such as:

- o To what extent does my experience as an “immigrant” define me? / What does it mean to be “American”? Do I want to become this? If so, what happens to my other cultural identities? Can I be both?
- o What language(s) do I use at home? At school? In my social circles? In my personal writing?

E.g. Chinese students critiquing capitalist system, yet still desiring economic success. Generational tensions (1st language often lost by 3rd generation). Varieties of English: Chinglish. Influence of technology.

INTEGRATION: In terms of academic experiences, Gen 1.5 students often struggle with the following:

- o How does conversational English differ from academic English?
- o When is it OK to ask for help? And how do I ask?
- o What do I have to offer to my academic community? / How can I share from my experience without being expected to “represent” a particular country, culture, ethnic group, etc.?

E.g. Russian student used to authoritarian teaching style—not used to “participation.”