



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume II Issue I

2017

AMAЕ Open Issue

Editors

Patricia Sánchez

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho

AMAЕ, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa

Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Journal Website: <http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

**Graduate School as a Site of Remembrance: *Educación* for Resistance
for Bilingual Teachers**

Blanca Caldas

University of Minnesota—Twin Cities

Deborah Palmer

University of Colorado Boulder

Abstract

This article is framed by the notion of *educación* and how it influenced the narratives of resistance of 12 seasoned bilingual teachers (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Using an oral narrative approach, we share participants' descriptions of the connections between their *educación* within their families and communities and how this *educación* has helped them navigate, resist, and even “play the game” (Urrieta, 2009) during their educational K-16 trajectories, and in their interactions with colleagues, parents, and children as seasoned bilingual teachers.

Keywords: bilingual, teacher education, community advocacy, Latinxs, oral narratives

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24974/amae.11.329>

Educación for Resistance

Education and schooling are not to be confused (Illich, 1970). Moreover, in Spanish, the word *educación* differs greatly from its counterpart in English. In Villenas' (2001) study with Latinx¹ mothers in North Carolina, *educación* “meant having the social skills of etiquette, loyalty to family and kin, and most important, respect” (p. 12-13). The worldview behind *educación* involves moral and ethical values, and beliefs, which speak to a different sense of relatedness. This sense of relatedness is connected to relationality (Wilson, 2008) as a way to think of oneself as part of a community and one's interconnections and interdependence, a sense which in turn is at odds with the hegemonic western society that generally demands individualism, disconnection, and dissociation. Therefore, this *educación* is left to stand on the sidelines in mainstream public schooling institutions. This marginalization places accepted forms of schooling at the foreground, invariably putting people at a disadvantage/advantage according to the color of their skin, their gender (identification) and their socio-cultural and economic status.

Bilingual teachers are well aware of the distinction between *educación* and schooling as they mean different things in English and Spanish even if only implicitly. Being a bilingual teacher means stepping into a controversial and disputed arena where the cultivation of *educación*—advocacy with/for minoritized language and cultures—may be seen as an attack on American values, identity and ideology, never more apparent than right now (Fitts & Weisman, 2010; Ricento, 2005). A sense of Americanness—a pride in individualism, success, nationalism—together with the neoliberal forces pervasive in public education have disenfranchised, assimilated, invisibilized, discriminated, commodified, and gentrified minoritized groups, viewing their minds and bodies relevant only in terms of productivity and profit.

In the educational arena, for example, in order to sustain and foster Americanness, the structures of schooling appear bent on homogenizing the population and on violating their right of difference. The erasure of a linguistic identity is more obvious in the policies and practices aimed to teach English to linguistically-diverse populations. Gounari and Macedo (2009) argue that regarding language, there is still “discrimination with impunity” (p. 37). This discrimination with impunity has targeted millions of Latinx children with the passing of language policies mostly inclined toward short-term support, restriction, and repression since colonial times (Wiley, 2007). The dismantling and renaming of bilingual education, the English-only movement, anti-immigrant initiatives, and poor funding and services for emergent bilingual students in public schools speak to a set of ideologies that regards

¹ To avoid the implicit gender binary and include all possible gender/sexual identities, the final gender-determining syllable was replaced with an X.

minority languages as a commodity at best, and as a liability and danger at worst (Pimentel, 2011).

Lately, the question is for whom is quality bilingual education as Latinx/immigrant/Mexican American communities are gentrified and forced to literally move to the margins of the cities, while White, monolingual middle-class families increasingly become the main beneficiaries of well-implemented dual language programs (Cervantes-Soon, 2014). As bilingual teachers are at the epicenter of this battleground, they constantly confront and/or become the target of discriminatory and exclusionary practices against brown bodies, be they students, parents, colleagues, and often themselves. Their own *educación* might be one of the forces behind their resilience to stay and survive in the educational field, and at the same time behind their resistance against daily microaggressions.

Research Questions and Methodology

This study focuses on the role of *educación* in the way bilingual teachers resist daily microaggressions. We use oral narratives as organic and holistic ways to pass down information (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Oral narratives defy the hegemony of the written word and highlight orality. Bell (2010) argues that this method allows a deeper understanding and identification with the experiences, worldviews, struggles and feelings of others experiencing oppression. The stories of resistance of bilingual educators shaped by *educación* not only exemplify daily microaggressions depicting racism, language discrimination, cultural deprivation, xenophobia, and classism, but also present the response of educators (Fernández, 2002) despite their feelings of isolation, alienation, or lack of recognition (Brayboy, 2005) in their workplace. It is urgent to provide portrayals of the agentic steps taken by individuals in the face of oppression (Chilisa, 2012). These stories are crucial in connecting the local contextualities with broader societal issues, and to the sense of relatedness with the teller, since these stories “may be read, and lived vicariously” by others seeking to be validated (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). The teller reclaims the right to be heard (Beverley, 2000) due to the urgency to tell her story as a way of healing (Cervantes-Soon, 2012) and also as a way to connect and contribute to their communities (Beverley, 2000). As an expert in their own lived experiences amidst discrimination and exclusion, these stories become “theory in the flesh” (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981, p. 23).

While it is important to create an emotional link between the teller, the story, and the listener, what is needed is the acceptance of the invitation to create more resistance stories (Beverley, 2000). Examples of resistance, survival strategies, and the teaching of how to play the game (Urrieta, 2009) are needed as legacies of trajectories marked with marginalization and hope; a dichotomous relationship at best. Even resistance stories that could be labeled as informal infrapolitics of the oppressed (Kelley, 1993) have the potential to become transformational, no matter how reactionary, self-defeating, and conforming the resistance might look (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Positionality

Author 1 is a Mestiza woman in her 40's whose first language is Spanish. She was raised in a Spanish-speaking Latin American country. As an immigrant, she obtained her Ph.D. in the US. Author 2 is a White woman in her 40's, bilingual in Spanish and English. Raised in a middle-class English speaking home in the Northeastern US, she learned Spanish as an adult. Author 1 carried out this research project under the umbrella of Author 2's larger project; these twelve selected teachers were among 53 participants in a special cohort master's degree program supported by a Title III National Professional Development Grant (2007-2013) in the Southwestern US that Author 2 directed. Both authors are committed to critical teaching and research that centers the experiences and education of Latinx in the US.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews of twelve bilingual teachers working in the same school district in Texas were used for this study (Table 1; all names are pseudonyms). All of the participants are graduates of a master's in education program for experienced bilingual educators with a focus on teacher leadership/advocacy in bilingual/bicultural education. The program took a critical socio-cultural approach. These bilingual teachers have different backgrounds, but all of them have more than five years of teaching experience and are teachers of color. Out of the twelve participants, two migrated from Latin American countries as young adults having already obtained a bachelor's degree. Five teachers were born in Texas and five teachers migrated as children from Mexico with different degrees of schooling with different immigration statuses. However, the teachers born in Mexico and the teachers born in Texas share similarities as their lives fluctuated between the US and Mexico directly or indirectly through frequent visits and/or the presence of relatives in their lives.

Table I
Participants' National Origin and Immigration Age

Name	National Origin	Age of immigration
Amanda	Mexico	9 years old
Ana	USA	n/a
Arturo	Mexico	teens
Aurora	USA	n/a
Celia	Puerto Rico ²	21 years old
Elsa	Mexico	5 years old
Fabiana	Mexico	8 years old
Luisa	USA	n/a
Maria	Mexico	12 years old
Mayra	USA	n/a
Melinda	USA	n/a
Pedro	Colombia	20's

Author I conducted semi-structured conversations (Alim, 2004), as this approach decenters the researcher and places the participants at the forefront to facilitate the flow of the interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), as well as allowing the connections between the localized experiences and wider societal structures to materialize organically (Denzin, 1989). Semistructured conversations consist of providing a group of participants with a handout with a list of topics the researcher finds relevant to the research, and it is the prerogative of the participants to develop the ones they deem relevant to them. This approach also took advantage of the fact that the participants knew each other and they were able to

² Technically Puerto Rican citizens, born with US citizenship with entry/exit privileges to the mainland, experience migration differently from citizens of other Latin American countries. However, as per her own account, Celia considered her moving from Puerto Rico to US mainland an immigrant experience because of the ways in which her cultural/linguistic upbringing in her country contrasted with her experiences as a bilingual teacher in the US.

build on each other's accounts and even allowed them to remind each other of past events, thus creating a more intimate atmosphere while enriching the data collection. The participants engaged in these conversations in pairs or threes in English and Spanish and in many cases they combined both languages to express their thoughts indistinctly.

Author I analyzed the interview transcripts through an inductive mode approach for analysis (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to identify common themes across the data in three stages. The broadening stage generates general comments on the narrators' character, values, background, and the context in which the narrative took place. The burrowing stage explores the emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities of the narratives for reconstruction. The restorying stage describes the narrator returning to the present to assign meaning to the lived events for future agency. The themes extracted from this analysis are intimately related to the discoveries and connections the participants made during their master's degree program. For the purpose of this article, we will focus solely on those themes and not the development of portraits of each of the participants. However, brief background will be added to provide context to the participants' quotes.

Findings

This study found connections between the participants' *educación* and their teaching practices, involvement within their school communities, and acts of advocacy. The participants made those connections upon reflection of their lived experiences and topics explored during their participation in the master's degree program. The main themes are: home language practices, family literacy practices, family values and *respeto*, and ethnic identification. We will discuss how each of these features of the participants' *educación* is connected to their current practices and activism.

Home Language Practices: Spanish and *EspanGLISH*

The use of Spanish and *EspanGLISH* was one of the most salient characteristics of the *educación* these participants received at home. The sense of pride regarding Spanish was evident among the bilingual teachers who migrated as young adults and those who were teenagers when they first arrived in the US. Arturo, who arrived in the US from Mexico in his teens, could not conceive of the fact that people of Hispanic descent were not able to speak Spanish, since for him speaking Spanish was never something negative: "*En mi cabeza: ¿cómo van a ser hispanos y no hablan español? Nunca vi como algo negativo [to speak Spanish], no tenia sentido.*" [In my head, how can they be Hispanic and not speak Spanish. I never saw speaking Spanish as something negative, it doesn't make sense]. For the young immigrants, not only was Spanish considered an asset, but being bilingual was a must, as it was a requirement to access higher education. For younger immigrants and those born in the US, Spanish was

the language of the household and the means by which they were able to communicate with their parents and other relatives. English was present too, especially when communicating with people of their own generation—siblings, cousins, and friends. Even though in some cases Spanish was forbidden at home due to parents' past experiences of linguistic discrimination, the participants still considered Spanish "a more tender language, with more compassion," according to Mayra who was born near the border of Mexico and the United States.

Their connection with Spanish as their first language led some of the teachers to deploy ways to make sure their students stayed in bilingual programs for as long as they could in order to keep developing their Spanish proficiency. Three of the teachers mentioned that they played *la mensa*, *el bobo*, and *el zorro*; they played dumb to outfox their colleagues and superiors in the school context. These were strategies they used to "play the game" (Urrieta, 2009) in order to get away with practices that would be frowned upon if discovered. For example, Maria stated she played *la mensa* whenever she was asked to teach only in English, since she knew Spanish would provide the scaffolding students needed to learn content:

La escuela quería que hablaran inglés afuera del salón, las clases especiales y en el recreo y en todos lados. Matemáticas las querían en inglés y lo más que se podía en inglés. Y yo pensaba que tenían que aprender español y yo me hacía la que no oía bien y yo les hablaba español casi todo el tiempo. Y sí, yo enseñaba ciertas cosas en inglés pero también pensaba que tenían que tener una buena base en español y pues yo me hacía la mensa.

[The school wanted students to speak English outside the classroom, in special, during break, and everywhere else. They wanted math in English, and everything I could in English. And I thought they needed to learn Spanish and I pretended I didn't hear and I would speak to them in Spanish all the time. And yes, I'd teach some things in English but I also thought they needed a good foundation in Spanish and well, I played dumb.]

On the other hand, Pedro did not actually play *el bobo* [dumb], but advised a parent whose children were facing early transition to mainstream classrooms to do so as a way to delay this process without putting themselves in the spotlight as troublemakers.

Me di cuenta de que pensaban hacer la transición de clases bilingües a solo inglés comenzando con el tercer grado. Recuerdo a una niña en específico y les decía "¿Por qué me la sacan a ella del programa bilingüe?" Ella tenía todas las bases académicas en las matemáticas y ciencias. Yo le dije a la mamá: "Señora hágase la boba y no firme para hacer la transición."

[I realized they would start transferring students from the bilingual class to the

mainstream starting in third grade. I specifically remember a girl and I'd say, "Why are you moving her out of the bilingual program?" She had the academic foundations in math and science. I told her mom: "Ma'am, play dumb and don't sign the acceptance of the transition."]

Playing *el zorro*, [the fox] as Arturo explained was to outfox the system by introducing more humanizing practices—such as literacy circles—and student-centered projects while still doing what he was asked to do in the classroom, such as mandated guided reading. At first glance, playing *el zorro*, *la mensa*, and *el bobo* may seem to be offering band-aids in conformist resistance to oppressive linguistic and homogenizing practices (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). However, the teachers expressed an understanding of the perils of being discovered and fired, thus, no longer able to be a positive influence at school. Playing the game" was not the only way in which the participants advocated for the right to use Spanish as a language of instruction. Luisa, for instance, voiced her concerns over hiring monolingual staff in a school with mostly Latinx and immigrant population. Her lack of allies resulted in her facing the scrutiny and accusations from her colleagues of being "racist:"

Quando estábamos escogiendo directora, yo dije, "Sería bueno si fuera bilingüe porque vienen los padres y siempre tienen que ir a buscar una maestra bilingüe para que traduzca." Me dijeron: "Tú nomás quieres alguien Latino. La directora que tenemos ahorita ha estado con nosotros ya 10 plus years y ella no es bilingüe and she's done perfect." Ser bilingües no significa ser Latino pero ellos asumieron que yo estaba tratando de contratar a alguien de piel morena.

[When we were searching for a principal I said, "It would be good if the principal were bilingual because parents always come and we always need to look for a bilingual teacher to translate." They told me, "You just want a Latino. Our principal has been with us for more than ten years; she's not bilingual and she's done perfect." Being bilingual doesn't mean to be Latino but they assumed I was trying to hire someone with brown skin.]

In the excerpt above, Luisa exemplified another home language practice of significant importance—*Espanglish*. *Espanglish* was the reflection of the upbringing and *educación* of the US-born bilingual teachers and the ones who migrated as young children. García (2009) refers to this intermeshing of Spanish and English under the umbrella of translanguaging. Due to dominant language ideologies, the participants acknowledged that they used to perceive *Espanglish* as a deficient linguistic practice they frequently engaged in, filling them either with shame and/or judgment. Reflecting on their change of view towards this stigmatized and marginalized language practice during the master's program,

Ana admitted to embracing *Espanglish* by allowing herself to use it in front of her students.

I have more purpose of what I do. *Antes me sentía muy mal cuando hacía codeswitching y me decía, “I did it again, that's bad!” Ahora ya sé por qué lo hago* and when I do it; it's just more of being aware and strategic of what I do.

[I have more purpose of what I do. Before I felt bad when I codeswitched and I'd tell myself, “I did it again, that's bad!” Now I know why I do it and when I do it; it's just more of being aware and strategic of what I do.]

This minoritized language practice was more difficult to accept for the teachers who migrated as young adults, who initially opted for instruction that reflected the separation of languages reflecting thus standard language ideologies (Martinez, Hikida, & Durán, 2015). These participants admitted that their views towards *Espanglish* shifted in a more positive direction during their master's program. Even if for some of them language separation was their personal language practice, they no longer imposed that preference on the students in their classrooms. Celia, who migrated as a young professional from Puerto Rico—described the transformation of her views towards language:

Algunos maestros bilingües nos oponíamos a que se mezclaran los idiomas. Nosotros, por haber venido de un país donde se habla español, le decíamos a nuestros estudiantes: “No los mezcles; no me dañan ni el uno ni el otro.” Nos llegamos a dar cuenta de que es injusto exigir a nuestros niños que actuaran de una manera de donde nosotros vivimos.

[Some teachers opposed to language mixing. We, because of coming from Spanish-speaking countries, would tell our students: “Don't mix them, don't damage them.” We have realized that it's unfair to demand our student to speak the way it's done where we come from.]

The teachers interviewed confronted the way negative perceptions towards *Espanglish* affected them and their students in and outside schools. The recognition of Spanish and *Espanglish* as the language of their *educación* at home, especially for the young immigrants and US-born teachers, became one of the reasons to use them as literacy tools (Martinez, 2010) in the classroom.

Family Literacy Practices

Part of the participants' *educación* was the way they became bilingual and biliterate at home. Apprenticeship, orality, and games were some of the means by which the participants became (bi)literate as they reflected on their funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992), which appeared to be less important at school. Amanda exemplified some of those literacy practices:

Yo aprendí (a leer) con la lotería. Esos eran our sight words. Mi mamá estudió hasta tercero y mi papá hasta cuarto. Mi papá nos contaba muchos cuentos y mi mamá era costurera. No nos enseñaba, nosotros mirábamos. Cuando medía, nos decía, “Escribe 45” y yo escribía 4 y 5. No era formal pero era en las actividades diarias. No teníamos libros en la casa.

[I learned to read with the lottery. Those were our sight words. My mom went to school until 3rd grade and my dad until 4th. My dad would tell us a lot of stories and my mom was a seamstress. She wouldn't teach us, we would watch her. When she'd make measurements she would tell us, "Write 45," and I would write 4 and 5. It was not formal but our daily activities. We didn't have books in the house.]

Ana admitted that she wondered how she became literate when books were non-existent in her household and how, despite this and her working at an early age, she turned out to be an outstanding student unlike some of her classmates who had access to libraries and books.

I noticed cómo era sobresaliente en comparación con mis compañeras pero como en mi casa no había libros y cuando era chiquita yo vendía tamales. Mi mamá no me llevaba a la biblioteca, but I excelled academically.

[I noticed how I stood out in comparison with my classmates but at home there weren't any books and when I was little I'd sell tamales. My mom wouldn't take me to the library but I excelled academically.]

As in these examples, the literacy practices cultivated at home were at odds with the literacy that is conventionally promoted at schools. Moreover, due to their schooling and teacher training, the participants did not regard these practices of their *educación* as valid and valuable until after they had enrolled in graduate school. Recognizing the potential of those underrated practices, Aurora described the way she had begun to advocate for orality among parents who were unable to provide a library at home:

Este año los padres en conferencias me pedían cosas para practicar en la casa. Me decían; “Maestra, no tenemos libros en la casa,” y yo les decía, “Pero no tienen que ser libros, plátíquenle y pregúntenle. No tenía que ser un libro o sentarse por media hora y escribir planas.”

[This year at conferences, parents would ask me for material to practice at home. They would tell me, “Miss, we don't have books at home,” and I would tell them, “But it doesn't have to be books, talk to them, ask them questions. It doesn't have to be a book or sitting down for half an hour to fill out worksheets.”]

Among those overlooked literacy practices was the sense of being part of a community of practice in which collaboration and feeling “*en familia*” (surrounded by family) was as important as reading a book. Celia remembered how it was to talk “*en familia*” as she tried to promote that free exchange of ideas in her classroom. Celia likened the conversation style in her pre-kinder classroom to family exchanges at the dinner table, where different conversations took place at the same time, but each member of the family was an active listener and participant. Raising hands and turn-taking, according to Celia, sometimes deterred students’ participation and the sense of community and self-worth she tried to foster in her classroom, something that was not welcomed by other teachers.

Mi salón es un poquito alborotado; como latinoamericana, en una mesa hablan cinco personas y tú entiendes al todo mundo. Les permites cierta familiaridad, de que eres parte de una familia y queremos escuchar lo que tienes que decir. Cuando llegan a kinder las maestras dicen; “Tus niños sienten que tienen mucho que aportar pero ellos tienen que callarse la boca de vez en cuando.” No les gusta que mis estudiantes que van de mi salón porque dicen que son muy atrevidos.

[My classroom is a little noisy; as a Latin American woman, five people speak at the same time at the table and I understand everybody. You give them that sense of family, that you’re part of a family and we want to hear what you have to say... when they get to Kinder, the teachers tell me; “Your kids feel that they have a lot to say but they need to be quiet from time to time.” They don’t like my students because they say they talk back.]

This last example shows that some family practices, some aspects of the *educación* people like the participants were exposed to as children, were not only disregarded/undervalued, but also misunderstood. Community building, storytelling, games, and apprenticeship are practices that exemplify values among the families of these Latinx bilingual teachers, which could be understood as contrary to a focus on individualism, written texts, and teacher-centered academic practices fostered at schools.

Family Values and Respeto: Countering Stereotypes

For all of the participants, regardless of when/if they had migrated, the values they learned at home—perseverance, resilience, connection, hard-work, family approval—had an important role for their professional success. *Educación* at home dictated that pursuing a post-secondary degree was not optional but a given. All of the participants experienced this push for higher education, whether their own parents had obtained a degree or had left school prior to that. In order to make sure their children

became professionals, the participants' parents would resort to different methods. Aurora's mother, for example, would cross the border between Juarez and El Paso to take her to school every day during elementary school as she thought US schooling would provide her daughter a better chance to succeed. In Fabiana's case, her mother promised the reward of helping her with her expenses if she decided to apply to a university away from her hometown, a city on the US/Mexico border that she felt would decrease the chances of a well-remunerated job. Mayra's parents looked for Gifted and Talented programs and magnet schools to help her escape the prevalence of gangs and teenage pregnancy.

These examples in which the participants' Latinx parents pushed for excellence in formal education contradicts the portrayal of Latinx parents as the ones to blame for their children's failure to fit in and succeed academically (Zarate, 2007). The contrast between this stereotype and their lived reality was a shock for Arturo. This shock inspired him to become a bilingual teacher in order to challenge such misconceptions:

Cuando llegué aquí fue un shock para mí ver el aspecto negativo que se tiene de nuestra propia cultura, que los niños no aprenden y los hispanos no valoran la educación. Y yo decía, “¿De quién están hablando?” Porque esa no es la realidad. Siempre fueron mis deseos de hacer algo para cambiar eso. Los niños van a la escuela y tienen muchas ganas; los padres no los dejan para que se los cuiden sino para aprender: “Escucha a la maestra, ponle ganas.”

[When I arrived it was a shock to see how our culture was perceived negatively, that children won't learn, and that parents don't value education. I would say; “Who are you talking about?” Because that's not the reality. My wish was to do something to change that. Children go to school eager to learn; their parents don't drop them off to be taken care of but to learn: “Listen to your teacher, do your best.”]

Luisa, who had witnessed her own relatives not being welcomed at school, made a conscious effort to provide a friendly environment for her students' parents. During her first year as a teacher, she realized Latinx immigrant parents were ignored at school and were not provided information pertaining to their children in Spanish so they were kept in the dark about academic opportunities, such as application procedures to access magnet schools and other services. Luisa also complained about the fact that other teachers would create an unwelcoming environment for parents to ask questions in a neighborhood with a greater population of recent immigrants. She started bi-weekly informal meetings with parents to provide orientation to navigate a new culture:

Hacíamos eso bi-weekly, y era del tópico de lo que querían saber, y a veces no era ni escolar. A veces era sobre cosas como migración, sobre la renta, cosas así. Era un lugar donde podían ir mamás que no tenían, que tenían hijos que necesitaban ayuda. Entonces implementé un

programa en el que podían agarrar ayuda y que podíamos conseguir cosas.

[We did this bi-weekly, and the topic was whatever they wanted to know. Sometimes it wasn't related to school, it was sometimes about immigration, house rentals, or something like that. It was a place for poor mothers, mothers with children who needed help. I implemented a program where you could get help and get things.]

While Luisa created opportunities to support parents' desire to learn more about how to survive in the US, and thus provide a better future for their children, Pedro's advocacy involved empowering parents to advocate for themselves. Pedro migrated as a young professional from Colombia and became a bilingual teacher in the US. The principal attempted to move the bilingual program that had been functioning for only three years to another campus in spite of showing signs of success. Pedro understood that the voices of teachers would not be enough to prevent the closure of the program so he educated parents about this issue and helped them organize a visit to the school district board to act as witnesses.

Y nos organizamos y nos fuimos hasta la junta directiva y llevamos a los padres a la junta. La junta directiva era solamente anglos y todos éramos cafecitos. Un par de padres se pararon y dieron su testimonio y la directora a regañadientes tuvo que continuar el programa bilingüe. Lo primero era hablar con los padres, hacerles saber que tienen voz y voto.

[And we got organized, went to the board meeting, and we took parents. The members of the board were all White and we all were brown. A couple of parents stood up and bore witness, and the principal reluctantly had to keep the bilingual program open. The first thing to do was to talk to the parents and let them know they have a voice and a vote.]

Having witnessed both the sacrifices their parents made to secure better educational opportunities for them, and the perceptions others had of Latinx families in US schools—first as students, then as teachers—the participants felt the need to counter the stereotypes about parents' lack of involvement and aspirations in regards to their children. In order to dispel those myths, these bilingual teachers offered opportunities to build bridges of trust and collaboration with parents.

Ethnic Identification

As mentioned before, the clash between the values at home and at school places Latinx families at a crossroad. For the teachers who experienced discrimination due to their color, language, country of origin, and social class, the memories of humiliation at the hands of their own teachers marked their

vocation to become the teachers they wished they had had. The fragmentation of cultural identities and assimilation with the delusion of finally “fitting in” (Urrieta & Quach, 2000) may also be further exacerbated by a sense of danger for the ones whose immigrant status is unclear.

My teacher didn't let me go to the bathroom until I asked in English. (Maria)

En cuarto me la pasé en lunch detention (because of language). No traía la tarea, mi mamá trabajaba, mi abuelita no me podía ayudar. [I spent 4th grade in lunch detention (because of language). I couldn't do homework, my mom was working and my grandma couldn't help me]. (Elsa)

Cuando fue mi primer día la asistenta nos apartaba en un grupo a los que hablábamos en español y nos hacía preguntas “¿Y ustedes cruzaron el río?” [On my first day of classes the assistant put the children who spoke Spanish in a group and asked us ‘so, did you come across the river?']. (Aurora)

I wanted to be White. My sister and my brother lost their Spanish. (Fabiana)

Yo no quiero que nadie trate a los papás de los niños así como trataron a mi abuelito y a mi familia. La pobreza que vivió mi familia no es aceptable, and I, yo no estoy allí como maestra sino que tengo many roles. [I don't want anyone to treat the parents of my students the way they treated my granddad and my family. The poverty in which my family lived is not acceptable and I, I'm not here to be just a teacher, but I have many roles]. (Luisa)

Luisa's determination to serve people like her family was prevalent in the other participants as well. Even for the participants who arrived as adults, their goal was to serve “children who look like me,” as Celia put it. As a recipient of a scholarship that allowed her to study in a private Catholic school, Amanda rejected the offer to teach at the same school as she thought that teaching well-off students would not allow her to make a difference. As she graduated with a Mexican American major from a university, Fabiana vowed to only work in Title I³ schools similar to the ones she attended as her way to give back to her community. Their own lives and educational trajectories might have reframed the way the participants saw their profession, extending their vision of their roles and duties beyond the classroom. All of the participants have been mentor teachers, conference presenters, curriculum designers, and facilitators either on campus and/or at district level—on top of their daily duties as bilingual teachers.

³ Title I schools are those that receive supplemental federal funding because more than 50% of their student population fall below the poverty line.

The participants identified themselves with the communities they served not only because of sharing similar racial and socioeconomic background, but also due to their similar immigration stories. Fabiana and Luisa narrated their experiences fighting xenophobia at their schools:

Tuvimos la primera marcha for immigration y todos estaban diciendo que el mayo primero no vayas a la clase. [We had the first immigration march and everybody was saying nobody should go to classes on May 1]. The school district was 'you have to come: you can't call in sick or take a day off.' Ese día yo solo tuve 5 niños. [That day only 5 children went to class]. I was so proud of my parents. (Fabiana)

En la segunda escuela me di cuenta que los padres no podían entrar a la escuela. Entonces los llevé al consulado porque pregunté en el distrito y me dijeron que sí pueden entrar con la licencia mexicana. Fuimos todos los padres porque algunos no tenían coche. [In my second school I realized the parents couldn't get into the school. So I took them to the consulate because I asked in the school district and they told me they could get in with a Mexican ID. We went to the consulate together because some didn't have car.] (Luisa)

Fabiana's background as a former undocumented child and Luisa's childhood at the border created connections with their students' parents which not only facilitated trusting relationships, but also helped them to support parents to engage in political activism and self-advocacy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The stories and trajectories of these bilingual teachers speak to the way the Latinx population in the United States is perceived. Their stories are full of examples of racism, language discrimination, xenophobia, and classism. But more importantly, their stories provide an account of the way they responded to challenges and microaggressions by drawing on their early *educación* in spite of isolation, alienation, or lack of recognition (Brayboy, 2005) at the workplace. This *educación* involved a set of moral and ethical values in which respect for others and solidarity with their kin are central. The way the participants became the advocate-teachers they are now is in large part thanks to their *educación*, which they embody as they understand and embrace the different key roles they play and take responsibility for their community. Exploring the origins of *educación* can elucidate the ways it may have shaped the work of Latinx, Mexican American, Chicano/Chicana activists and advocates and provide a point of relatedness and a sense of community in their quest for social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Urrieta, 2009).

It is important to highlight that the connections these bilingual teachers made between their *educación*, their K-12 experiences as children, and their teaching experiences could not have been

possible without the socio-cultural-historical approach (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2008; Menchaca, 2011; Ricento, 2005) adopted by the master's program in which they participated. This approach allowed them to examine their trajectories, language ideologies, teaching practices, and perceptions towards Latinx communities. Likewise, exploring historical issues that surround bilingual education and the education of Latinx/Mexican American children was something that the participants claimed to have never been exposed to during their teacher preparation programs. Restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) was possible after self-reflection, introspection and sharing as the participants looked at their *educación* with different eyes, which prompted shifts in instruction, outreach, discourse, and their growing activism in and outside the classroom.

However, the discussion surrounding *educación* also needs to be further problematized since *educación*—whether in the US or in Latin American countries—might be colored by other relevant factors, such as social class, gender/gender identification, race and colorism. The participants of this study shared their working-class background and skin color, which may have been deciding factors in the outcomes of this study. More research is needed to examine whether the *educación* framework presented here is compatible with the experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers from more affluent backgrounds, or those who can “pass” as White, or are non-Latinx bilingual teachers.

It seems especially important to examine these issues in the case of bilingual teachers who are recruited as professionals directly from Spanish-speaking countries in order to serve in US bilingual and dual language programs, a phenomenon which appears to be increasingly more common (Fee, 2011). There is evidence that many such international teachers struggle to understand US Latinx and immigrant communities, and would benefit greatly from more knowledge of their students' *educación* (Cervantes-Soon, 2014).

Taking into account teachers' own narratives of their experiences in K-12 schooling appears crucial to the project of humanizing schooling experiences for their students. We encourage the development of professional learning experiences for all teachers focused on restorying and building connection in order to understand and embrace their students' *educación*. But for Latinx bilingual teachers, we have learned that these professional learning experiences must provide emotional support and safety as they go through the often very painful process of making sense of and valuing their own *educación* in order to draw fully upon these experiences, values, and understandings as they teach and advocate for/with Latinx bilingual children and their families.

References

- Alim, H. S. (2004). *You know my steez: An ethnographic and sociolinguistic study of styleshifting in a Black American speech community*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Athanases, S. Z., & de Oliveira, L. C. (2008). Advocacy for equity in classrooms and beyond: New teachers' challenges and responses. *Teachers College Record*, 110(1), 64-104.
- Bell, L. A. (2010). *Storytelling for social justice: Connecting narrative and the arts in antiracist teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Beverly, J. (2000). Testimonio, subalternity, and narrative authority. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed) (pp. 547–558). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Transformational resistance and social justice: American Indians in ivy league universities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 36(3), 193-211.
- Cervantes-Soon, C. (2012). “Testimonios” of life and learning in the borderlands: Subaltern Juarez girls speak. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 373-391.
- Cervantes-Soon, C. (2014). A critical look at dual language immersion in the new Latin@ diaspora. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 37(1), 64-82.
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Fee, J. (2011). Latino immigrant and guest bilingual teachers: Overcoming personal, professional, and academic culture shock. *Urban Education*, 46(3), 390-407.
- Fernández, L. (2002). Telling stories about school: Using critical race and Latino critical theories to document Latina/Latino education and resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 45-65.
- Fitts, S., & Weisman, E. M. (2010). Exploring questions of social justice in bilingual/bicultural teacher education: Towards a parity of participation. *Urban Review*, 42(5), 373-393.
- García, O. (2009). Education, multilingualism and translanguaging in the 21st century. In A. Mohanty, M. Panda, R. Phillipson, & T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Eds.), *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalising the local* (128-145). New Delhi: Orient Blackswan
- Gounari, P., & Macedo, D. (2009). Language as racism: A new policy of exclusion. In C. Mitakidou (Ed.), *Beyond pedagogies of exclusion in diverse childhood contexts: Transnational challenges* (pp. 31-46). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Illich, I. (1970). *Deschooling society*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Kelley, R. D. G. (1993). We are not what we seems”: Rethinking Black working-class opposition in the Jim Crow south. *Journal of American History*, 80, 75-112.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Martinez, R. A. (2010). Spanglish as literacy tool: Toward an understanding of the potential role of Spanish-English code-switching in the development of academic literacy. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 45(2), 124-149.

- Martinez, R., Hikida, M., & Durán, L. (2015). Unpacking ideologies of linguistic purism: How dual language teachers make sense of everyday translanguaging. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 9(1), 26-42.
- Menchaca, M. (2011). *Naturalizing Mexican immigrants: A Texas history*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Moll, L. C. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31(1), 132-41.
- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (Eds.). (1981). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Pimentel, C. (2011). The color of language: The racialized educational trajectory of an emerging bilingual student. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 10(4), 335-353.
- Ricento, T. (2005). Problems with the "language-as-resource": Discourse in the promotion of heritage languages in the U.S.A. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 9(3), 348-368.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308-42.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 1, 23-44.
- Urrieta, L. (2009). *Working from within: Chicana and Chicano activist educators in whitestream schools*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Urrieta, L., & Quach, L. H. (2000). My language speaks of me: Transmutational identities in L2 acquisition. *The High School Journal*, 84(1), 26.
- Villenas, S. (2001). Latina mothers and small-town racisms: Creating narratives of dignity and moral education in North Carolina. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32(1), 3-28.
- Wiley, T. G. (2007). Accessing language rights in education: A brief history of the U.S. context. *Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 61, 89-107
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Pub.
- Zarate, M. E. (2007). *Understanding Latino Parental Involvement in Education: Perceptions, Expectations, and Recommendations*. Los Angeles, California. The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. University of Southern California.