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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

We are pleased to introduce the 2012 AMAE open issue. This issue includes five featured scholarly articles, an essay, a book review and a poem. The published manuscripts deal with a wide variety of topics that directly impact the education of Mexican-American/Latino communities.

We provide a short synopsis of each featured manuscript. First, Machado-Casas and Ruiz explores the digital divide that often times is present at home, creating a multigenerational gap between parents and their children, a border that children have crossed and their families have not. Second, Powers and Williams provide an analysis of the state laws that have influenced the educational experiences of immigrants in Arizona passed during this period: Proposition 203 and HB 2064 (Bilingual Education), HB 2281 (Ethnic Studies Courses), and Proposition 300 (Higher Education and Adult Education). Third, Bejarano and Valverde use a “community cultural wealth” framework [CCW] explore factors contributing to students’ entrance into the university and their persistence thereafter. Fourth, McGinnis and Garcia use narrative theory to analyze and discuss how one Salvadoran youth, Thomas, constructed three different yet overlapping narratives, including a digital story, on his family’s movement across borders. Last, Morgan et al. examine barriers social, individual or environmental phenomena, which hinder or restrict normal developmental achievement and educational attainment in the lives of six, first-generation Mexican immigrants.

This issue also includes an essay by Jimenez-Castellanos who argues that the Coleman Report helped give credence to contemporary deficit ideologies in education by finding that schools do not make much of a difference in the educational outcomes of students in poverty. Armando Garza wrote a book review on *Decolonizing Literacy: Mexican Lives in the Era of Global Capitalism* by Gregorio Hernández-Zamora and poet Martha Alicia Reyes wrote an inspiring poem “Neltiliztli.

Thanks,

Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Co-editor  
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Patricia Sánchez, Associate editor

# Globalized Students vs. Unglobalized Families: Limiting Family Participation in Education

Margarita Machado-Casas

Elsa Ruiz

University of Texas—San Antonio

## Abstract

In today's society, the use technology is no longer a luxury but a need (Machado-Casas, 2009; Sánchez, 2010). Considering this, countless education stakeholders have explored the concept of the *digital divide*, the gap that exists between people who have access to digital technology and those who do not. Oftentimes, this divide exists between parents, particularly, Latino parents who lack access to technology and their children who have more access to it via school technology-based curriculum and the creation of afterschool technology programs. Countless afterschool technology literacy programs have been created to help students improve technology literacy skills; however, many do not offer families the same opportunity. Therefore, expanding the digital divide that exists between students and families. Based on a three year qualitative and quantitative research study, this manuscript raises questions about the ways schools continue to develop technology programs aimed at schooling ("globalized") students, yet they do not take into account that while schools are globalizing students their families continue to be less technologically developed ("unglobalized"). This study explores the digital divide that often times is present at home, creating a multigenerational gap between parents and their children, a border that children have crossed and their families have not. The study looks at the example of *La Clase Mágica*, a technology literacy afterschool program for student and their families, in which parent workshops were used to explore the technology needs of family members to create a program that was culturally, linguistically, and technologically diverse. The program not only helped parents forge connections with their children, but also facilitated their successful participation in society as they use technological tools to perform everyday tasks and strive to create a "*familia global*" (globalized family).

## Introduction

Technology is no longer a luxury, but a basic need (Machado-Casas, 2009; Sánchez, & Salazar, 2012), and increasingly, educators are creating innovative ways of working with students to enhance their technology skills, including offering afterschool technology programs. Although these programs are necessary in order to enhance and better educate our student population, often they do not consider the issue of technology literacy among Latino families (Tartakov et al., 2003). Research has shown that student performance and academic achievement can be positively influenced by the effective use of technology (Cradler, McNabb, Freeman, & Burchett, 2002). Hence, technological tools designed for the Web 2.0 such as computers, iPads, iPhones, and tablets have become a central focus of academic curricula and have been integrated into everyday tasks. This article focuses on the growing technological disconnect between Latino parents and their children.

Numerous school districts have created technology education standards that stipulate what students should know and be able to do with technology. Overall, technology education is a program of studies that leads to students' technological literacy. Yet, although technology education has become standard in many schools, a major assault occurs when administrators often fail to recognize the need to work with families and community members to address their technological needs in terms of skills/training, labor, social, familial and economy. During a time when inequalities are still rampant, not working with families has led to a major technological generational and multilayered gap between students and family members, particularly among marginalized Latino and immigrant families, exacerbating an existing generational and cultural divide that affects family dynamics. And as schools aim at "globalizing" students by providing them with the technological tools to be globally competitive (Machado-Casas, 2011), many ignore the fact that without incorporating students' home lives and families, their

efforts may remain static. In many ways, ignoring the family members of students enrolled in K-12 schools has created a contrast between developed (“globalized”) students and less developed (“unglobalized”) family members. The use of the term unglobalized here does not mean families do not have ways or don’t necessarily take the steps to use technology to engage in globalization or even to be transnational. Rather, the use of the term brings to light the fact that only fragmented parts of the family (those enrolled K-12 schools) are learning the new ways of being global. This is especially true for Latinos, since many do not have access to computers and are likely to be computer illiterate, thus rendering them unqualified for many jobs (Pruitt-Mentle, 2002).

In a recent report titled *Latinos and Digital Technologies, 2010*, Livingston (2011) asserted that Latinos tend to utilize technology (except cell phones) at lower rates than their Whites counterparts. Additionally, although Internet use among Latinos increased about 10% from 2006 to 2008 (Livingston, Parker, & Fox, 2009), usage rates continue to lag behind those of whites and African Americans. Just 80% of Latinos in the United States use the Internet, compared to 94% whites and 87% of African Americans (Livingston et al., 2009). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2000), only 7% of Latino students in first through sixth grades reported using a computer at home compared to 31% of white students. In fact, Latino families are half as likely to own a computer as white families, and they are 2.5 times less likely to use the Internet. Of all races, Latinos have the fewest number of years of experience with computers (Badagliacco, 1990).

### Challenges in Technology Education

Research has consistently shown that children learn well when their parents are actively involved in their learning (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). Further, parental support and modeling helps to enhance and secure student achievement and provides long-lasting educational gains (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Although many Latino parents express a desire to be involved in their children’s schoolwork (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006), they often show little or no school involvement (Bauch, 1992; Costa, 1991; Ferrer, 2007) this is because they are expected to follow traditional involvement methods (volunteer at PTA, go to field trips, donate money or goods, etc). And Latino families engage in non-traditional school involvement practices that are more difficult to quantify and observe (Valdés, 1996). Thus, some teachers perceive that Latino parents do not care about their children’s education (c.f., Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Nevertheless, Valdés (1996) explained that Latino parents may not understand the concept of involvement, while Bauch (1992) confirmed other obstacles encountered by Latino parents in their children’s schools, including a language barrier, failure to understand school operations, and their own lack of formal education. These hurdles and computer literacy challenges make school involvement difficult for Latino parents, particularly when the subject is technology.

Politicians, professionals, and scholars alike have explored the concept of the *digital divide*, the gap that exists between people who have access to digital technology and those who do not. The digital divide exists at work, in schools, and most importantly, at home, creating a multigenerational rift between parents and their children. Not having the opportunity to co-learn with their children often creates a digital divide between Latino parents who lack access to technology and their children who have availability to technology. This divide exacerbates the sense of separation many Latino immigrant parents already feel when communicating with their children and leads to decreased family communication and closeness, and anxiety about child rearing practices (Machado-Casas, 2009b). Although understanding the impacts of this divide is important, it is even more beneficial to explore how it can be bridged, so families can begin to see technology as a resource, not an obstacle.

**Afterschool technology programs.** One way schools attempt to bridge this digital divide is by providing afterschool technology programs for parents. In one study, Duran (2001) assessed an afterschool technology program for low-income Latino immigrant families in terms of computer awareness, computer basics, word processing skills, and multimedia and telecommunications familiarity. As parents and children wrote together using computers, they engaged in focused problem solving about language content, language organization, and language form as mediated by the computer and its software. Further, through working together with their children, parents began to show evidence that they understood the importance of desktop publishing in

computer communication. By exchanging the role of expert and novice, parents and children were able to explore a range of dimensions relevant to literacy and literacy practice (Duran, 2001). Latino parents showed significant gains in every area of assessment over the course of the project, especially in Internet knowledge and multimedia and telecommunications familiarity. Overall computer literacy for parents in the program rose from 32% to 73%.

Afterschool computer learning programs for immigrant Latino parents and children are beneficial because they interconnect family members, teachers, university students and faculty, and community members (Duran, 2001). Such programs help familiarize parents with the use of computers and information technology by utilizing their children's knowledge (Duran, 2001). Valdés (1996) also suggested that Latino immigrant families may benefit from exposure to school personnel who potentially can help parents understand schooling practices and expectations.

In another afterschool program called Learning Together, three university professors and teacher educators recruited seven elementary school students and their parents (Tartakov, Leigh, & Phillips, 2003). Participants were low-income families of various ethnic backgrounds, including Latinos. The aim of the program was to improve literacy and technology skills, and parents committed to actively engage in the literacy programs with their children. As a result of the program, students experienced increased self-efficacy with computers, and were excited to be able to work independently and experiment with new programs.

As the aforementioned studies show, afterschool technology programs can be pivotal educational tools for Latino parents and children. Not only do afterschool technology programs allow Latinos to gain technology skills, but they facilitate increased interaction between Latino parents and their children as they contribute to each other's development. By participating in the parent meetings offered by *La Clase Mágica* (LCM), families had opportunities to engage in a political act, a movement that enable them to find better and less dangerous ways of incorporating into society by using technology tools for everyday tasks, and in the process they begin to dismantle the rapidly growing *muro tecnológico digital* (technological digital gap) among Latino and minority families.

## Methodology

This study explored the impact of workshops (*talleres*) offered to parents and/or family members during LCM, an afterschool technology program in the computer literacy and skills of the program participants. The term *family members* was used in addition to parents, as it is more inclusive and representative of the reality of our Latino students who are often raised not just by parents but by grandparents or other relatives (Valdes, 1996). The study sought to identify the technology needs of family members and provide them with technological skills as needed to develop or enhance their technology literacy. Thus, the research question(s) addressed in this study were:

- 1) What are the technology needs of the parents and/or family members of the participants in the LCM afterschool program?
- 2) What is the impact of the *talleres* in enhancing and developing technology literacy to the parents and/or other family members?
- 3) How did the afterschool program help parents forge connections with their children, and facilitate their successful participation in society as they use technological tools to perform everyday tasks and strive to create a "*familia global*" (globalized family)?

The *La Clase Mágica* (LCM) afterschool program which was held at Los Árboles Elementary School was created as part of two courses for undergraduate bilingual teacher candidates at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). As part of the classes requirements the teacher candidates attended *Los Árboles* Elementary



school every Tuesday afternoon for 3 hours over a 14-week period. Each teacher candidate was paired with a young elementary student in grades K-5, called *amigas/os*. Funded through the Academy for Teaching Excellence (ATE), teacher candidates were provided with netbooks and iPhones/iPods to use with the elementary school students. Adult-child pairs were organized to create an opportunity structure in which each learner collaborated with a more experienced peer (Vygotsky, 1978). This approach provided the researchers and participants alike with opportunities to test technology's potential to create innovative learning environments and to study its effect on language, literacy, and cultural development.

As the teacher candidates and their *amigas/os* worked together during LCM, parents and/or family members were invited to attend technology workshops (*talleres*) on the third Tuesday of every month in. Between 18 and 30 family members ranging in age from 18 to 80 years old, including young mothers and fathers as well as grandparents, participated in the *talleres* offered each month. Most families were Mexican nationals or Mexican Americans, one family was from Honduras and one was from El Salvador. Each family had one or two children enrolled in the program whose ages ranged from 5 to 10 years old. In an effort to increase family participation, free childcare was provided.

In Spanish, the term *talleres* conveys something beyond the simple top-down approach utilized in most workshops; they require what Vásquez (2003) calls a participatory approach, where researchers are mediators and families are full participants in their learning processes, determining what they would like to learn and how they would like to learn it. Because all participants were immigrants, families were invited to reflect on their own journeys as immigrants in the United States and how using technology would help them in their new lives. During the *talleres* families worked on a series of technology activities ranging from the most basic (turning the computer on) to more difficult tasks (sending an email or creating a powerpoint or a movie). Family participants took a communal approach to learning, sharing, and teaching based on the knowledge they found most useful and necessary for their everyday lives (Machado-Casas, 2010). During the workshops family members were asked about the importance of technology in school, at work, and with their families.

Family members were asked which specific skills they would like to learn and once there was consensus on the desired technology task to learn about, that was what was taught that day. First, they wanted to learn computer and iPod basics, because those were the technologies being used by their children in the LCM afterschool program. In addition, participants' created utility knowledge lists (Machado-Casas, 2009a) of skills that would be useful in their everyday lives, such as sending money home online. The use of the utility knowledge list came about because as busy adults they must not only learn new skills but also skills that have utility to their realities. They named and listed the most important components of their everyday lives and how technology can help do these in a more efficient ways. Through this activity, LCM families were asked to become researchers, observers, and users of technology in multi-situational spaces in everyday life.

As participants in the LCM after school technology and literacy program, the families engaged in monthly in-class discussions. These discussions focused on their experiences and thoughts about the need to include families in the development of a globalized population. Fifteen to 20 parents were given pre- and post- open-ended surveys and were interviewed twice about the afterschool program. Families were asked about what they felt their technology needs were, whether the *talleres* were helping in developing and/or enhancing their technology literacy, and whether they felt they were connecting more with their children, especially in regards to technology.

## Analysis of Data

The data collected included surveys, interviews, researcher field notes, and in-class discussion notes. All data collected were transcript, coded and analyzed for themes and patterns. Two major themes emerged from the data: (a) the existence of a digital divide within families, and (b) challenges encountered in adult technology education programs.

## Findings

Participants in the LCM afterschool technology program took part in a pre-program survey. Our

findings reveal that while schools work toward globalizing students, many home environments continue to be unglobalized, creating a wider gap between schools and families.

## A Digital Divide

Afterschool technology education programs are available for children, but many do not include families. Thus, families have become global invisibles. Global invisibles in this context mean those who do not have equal access or any access to technology as an everyday tool. Yet, technology is a growing presence all around them. When these families' needs to learn about technology are not taken into consideration in any setting but particularly in academic educational settings, they are left out, without access, and virtually invisible to our ever growing globalized world. One mother, Juana, explained:

*Si han hecho programas para nuestros hijos. Y si queremos que aprendan... claro que sí! Pero el problema es que pues cuando ya ellos aprenden, nosotros nos estamos quedando atrás. Ellos si pueden mandar correos, y meterse a la computadora pero nosotros no.*

[Yes, they have developed programs for our children. And yes we want them to learn... of course, yes! But the problem is that when they learn we stay behind. They can send emails and get into the computer but not us.]

Echoing these thoughts, Martina, a mother from Mexico, said:

*Si han hecho programas para nuestros hijos. Y si queremos que aprendan... claro que sí! Pero el problema es que pues cuando ya ellos aprenden, nosotros nos estamos quedando atrás. Ellos si pueden mandar correos, y meterse a la computadora pero nosotros no.*

[Yes, they have developed programs for our children. And yes we want them to learn... of course, yes! But the problem is that when they learn we stay behind. They can send emails and get into the computer but not us.]

Fernanda also worried about limiting her children's technological abilities at home because she and her husband lacked the proper knowledge:

*En la escuela le enseñaron a mis hijos a hacer absolutamente todo. Hasta se pueden comunicar con otros países ocupando una aplicación que se llama esquipe [Skype]. Mi hijos se pueden comunicar con cualquier parte del mundo en la escuela pero al llegar a la casa siento que estamos limitados porque ni yo su papa podemos hacer eso. Y pues me gusta que aprendan pero—ya en la casa como que nos quedamos atrás.*

[In school they teach my children how to do absolutely everything. They can even communicate with other countries utilizing an application called Skype. My children can communicate with any part of the world in school, but when they get home I feel that we are limiting them because neither I nor their father can do this. And I like for them to learn, but at home it's as if we are staying behind.]

Thus, for parents, simply understanding the *importance* of technology is not enough. When parents do not have the technology skills to help their children, technology can become another *muro a muro tecnológico digital* (a digital technological wall) that divides families. Ruby reflected:



*En la escuela le enseñaron a mis hijos a hacer absolutamente todo. Hasta se pueden comunicar con otros países ocupando una aplicación que se llama esquipe [Skype]. Mi hijos se pueden comunicar con cualquier parte del mundo en la escuela pero al llegar a la casa siento que estamos limitados porque ni yo su papa podemos hacer eso. Y pues me gusta que aprendan pero—ya en la casa como que nos quedamos atrás.*

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Martina understood the importance of technology, but partly blamed technology for a lack of communication within her family:

*A mi hija le encanta todo que ha aprendido de la tecnología. Y le he pedido que me enseñe pero no me tiene paciencia. Ahora creo que la tecnología cuando un padre de familia no la sabe ocupar— nos afecta porque no sabemos de algo que es tan importante para ellos—no lo tenemos en común. Entre mas tecnología menos nos hablan y mas nos separamos mas.*

[My daughter loves learning about technology. I have asked her to teach me but she does not have patience with me. Now I believe that when a parent does not know how to use technology it does affect us because we do not know something that is very important for our children... we do not share this knowledge. The more technology they have available the less they talk to us and the more distant we become].

Marta spoke of being torn between wanting her children to develop the technology skills and feeling isolated from them because of it:

*Desde que la tecnología llego a mi casa – ya casi ni conozco a mis hijos. Pero no se que hacer porque si lo quito también les hago mal. Yo como no se – no puedo meterme como ellos a eso.*

[Since technology came into my home, I barely recognize my children. However, I don't know what to do because if I get rid of it, I am doing a disservice to them. Since I don't know, I cannot get involved with it like they do.]

### **Challenges Associated with Adult Technology Education Programs**

It seems as though adult technology education programs could provide a simple solution to the digital divide problem. However, Latino and immigrant families face challenges associated with such programs. Eloisa said:

*A mi hijo mayor lo llevaba a la biblioteca donde le enseñaban de las computadoras, y por eso compramos una computadora. El curso era en ingles y pues no pude tomarlo, ademas no tenia cuidados de niños. Todos los cursos en la escuela son para los niños y muy pocos para mamas como yo.*

[My oldest son was taken to the library where they would teach him about computers and that is why we bought a computer. The class was in English and I could not take it. In addition, I had to care for the other children. All the courses at school are for the children and very few for mothers like me.]get involved with it like they do.]

Opportunities for family members like Eloisa's are seldom available, particularly with childcare, which is another limiting factor. Many programs also fail to consider language or cultural barriers. However, as Eloisa shared, even when accessible, participating in such programs does not always solve the problem.

*Creo que como papas tenemos que ser proactivos. Creo que lo sigo. He tomado clases de tecnología pero siempre cuando pienso que ya—ya los alcance ellos me demuestran que no... porque ya lo que yo estoy haciendo ya es algo que ellos ya aprendieron y ahora ya están en otras casas. Siempre estoy tratando de alcanzarlos.*

[Parents need to be proactive. I think I am because I have taken technology classes, but when I feel like I am caught up with my children, I am doing something and the children are doing something different. I am always trying to catch up to them.]

When the content of parent education programs does not include what students are learning in schools or the skills students already know, parents may feel that they do not understand or know how to help their children. In many ways this disempowers parents, and they may not know how to guide their children through this learning process. Thus, leaving parents with a feeling of constantly falling behind. Fernanda said:

*Yo fui a a una clase de computación, pero no en la escuela de mis hijos, pero en un Cyber cerca de mi casa. Y si aprendí algo, pero no lo que mis hijos están haciendo en la escuela. Y por eso se me hace difícil, ya que a mi me enseñaron como manejar la computadora básica, y a mis hijos ya les están enseñando otra cosa. Y pues aunque trate—ellos ya iban mucho mas adelantados que yo.*

[I attended a class on computers but not in my children's school but in another cyber place near my home. And I did learn something, but not what my children are doing in school. And because of that it has been difficult since I was taught basic computing and my children are already learning something else. And even if late, they are way ahead of me.]

In addition, many existing programs are designed for advanced users, but really are not very beneficial for family members with little technology knowledge. Marta shared her experience as a student in a technology class:

*Creo que si hay programas para padres en la comunidad. Yo fui a dos ya, pero al llegar ya esperan que sepamos algo de la tecnología. Y a las dos clases que fui, no me tenían paciencia. Ya esperaban que yo supiera como usar la computadora pero yo no los sabia.*

[I believe there are programs for parents in the community. I attended two already, but when I arrived there they expected us to know something about technology. And in both classes I attended, they were not patient with me. They already expected that I knew how to use the computer, but I did not know.]

It is easy to forget that some family members may not have had the opportunity to work with computers before. Some participants sit in front of a computer for the very first time in these programs.

### **Towards a “Familia Global” (Globalized Family)**

Although the literature shows that technology is increasingly becoming a major component of school curricula, our findings show that technology education fails to include families. Studies have shown that when parents are actively involved (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990), supportive, and model for their children what is being taught in schools, student achievement and educational gains increase (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Other studies have shown that Latino parents want to be involved and want to help their children at home (Quiocho & Daoud,



2006). Ortiz, Green, and Lim (2011) surveyed a large number of minority parents to assess the importance they place on computer usage for themselves as well as for their children. In their study, most parents (82%;  $N = 486$ ) felt that technology training is critical and should be offered in school along with other content subjects; participants in our study also agreed that technology skills are important.

Ortiz et al. (2011) similarly found that fewer minority parents (73%;  $N = 437$ ) reported participating in their children's education with the help of a computer. Findings from our study may help provide an explanation. First, parents in our study found it difficult to help because they lacked technology knowledge compared to their children, which created digital divides in their families. Second, when parents tried to bridge this divide by participating in technology education programs, they faced other challenges such as limited availability, language or cultural barriers, a lack of childcare, and discontinuity in technology curricula for parents and children. Lastly, parents in our study understand that they are in a constant state of surveillance and assault not only from societal discrimination and oppression but also from schools who fail to recognize that they play a critical role in the development of tomorrow's society.

### Implications

These findings have several implications for educators and administrators who serve Latino and immigrant populations. First, schools must make an effort to bring technology curricula into the home. Technology training workshops for parents can help mitigate this problem. When workshops are made available to parents, childcare for younger children should be provided, local language and cultural norms should be considered, and family members should be asked about their needs before a program is designed. According to Clark (2005), "there needs to be an increased focus on the needs of people as learners – finding out why, when, what, and how people prefer to learn, discovering new learning methods, and identifying the basic skills that people need to learn better" (p. 431). Instructors must be prepared to teach students with a wide range of abilities, from those who are technology literate to those who have never used a computer.

Principals can support these efforts by ensuring that parent technology curricula mirror student curricula. Principals also can provide teachers with resources such as equipment and access to wireless Internet connections, which allow teachers to feel comfortable without fear of technical difficulties during a lesson. Additionally, principals can ensure that teachers have time and space to collaborate on lesson plans and discuss how they are taking advantage of technology as a teaching and learning tool.

### Conclusion

Today, technology skills are critical for survival and success. This requires an education perspective which arises from the fact that contemporary people live and interact in an increasingly globalized world. This makes it crucial for education to give learners the opportunity and competences to reflect and share their own point of view and role within a global, interconnected society, as well as to understand and discuss complex relationships of common social, ecological, political and economic issues, so as to derive new ways of thinking and acting (Maastricht Global Education Declaration, 2002).

Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) explain that, particularly in schools, two domains must be considered as the greatest challenges for education and globalization: "the domain of difference, and the domain of complexity" (p. 3). The differences and complexities of technology knowledge also must be considered as factors influencing education. As children in schools continue to build technology skills, they become more global. Their worlds open to possibilities, both present and local, and future and global. In this way, children nurture the skills necessary to "fully engage the larger world and master its greatest challenges, transforming it for the betterment of humanity – regardless of national origin or cultural upbringing" (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004, p. 6). Yet, students' families often are not provided with the same opportunities to learn about technology, which creates a digital divide between technology savvy children and their less knowledgeable family members.

Bringing the digital divide requires more than helping parents recognize the importance of technology or

providing access to technology training. Here, we presented findings from a study of the LCM technology and literacy afterschool program, in which *talleres* were used to explore the technology needs of family members to create a program that was culturally, linguistically, and technologically diverse.

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# State of Outrage: Immigrant-Related Legislation and Education in Arizona

Jeanne M. Powers  
Tiffany R. Williams  
Arizona State University

## Abstract

In April 2010, Arizona made national headlines when Governor Jan Brewer signed SB 1070, the “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” which was aimed at deterring illegal immigration to Arizona. SB 1070 is the most prominent of a series of laws and other state policies targeting immigrants in Arizona that date back to the late 1990s. This period of active legislating coincides with a dramatic increase in the state’s Hispanic population. In this paper, we provide an analysis of the state laws that have influenced the educational experiences of immigrants in Arizona passed during this period: Proposition 203 and HB 2064 (Bilingual Education), HB 2281 (Ethnic Studies Courses), and Proposition 300 (Higher Education and Adult Education).

## Introduction

In April 2010, Arizona made national headlines when Governor Jan Brewer signed SB 1070, the “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” which was aimed at deterring illegal immigration to Arizona. As enacted, the bill’s most controversial provisions: a) require immigrants to carry documentation of their legal status; b) criminalizes the work activities of illegal immigrants; and c) empowers law enforcement officials to detain anyone they suspect is an illegal immigrant (Archibold, 2010; Order, 2010). In July 2010, these provisions were enjoined by a federal court and have not taken effect.<sup>1</sup> Yet SB 1070 is best understood as the latest, and arguably the most prominent of a series of laws and other state policies targeting immigrants in Arizona that date back to the late 1990s.<sup>2</sup>

This period coincides with a dramatic increase in the state’s Hispanic population. Population estimates from the 2010 Census indicate that between 2000 and 2010 the Hispanic population in Arizona has increased 46 percent; 30 percent of Arizona’s residents in 2010 were Hispanic (Passell, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). The vast majority of Arizona’s Hispanic residents (87 percent) reported that they were Mexican (U.S Census Bureau, 2010a).<sup>3</sup> While Census data does not allow cross-tabulations across categories, other Census estimates indicate that thirteen percent of the state’s residents are foreign-born; of these 64 percent are not United States citizens, and 68 percent were born in Latin America (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010b). Additionally, while most Arizona residents ages five and older (73 percent) speak English at home, 76 percent of those that do not speak English at home are Spanish speakers (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010b).

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<sup>1</sup> The lower court’s ruling was affirmed by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on the merits of the injunction in April 2012.

<sup>2</sup> After SB 1070 was passed in Arizona, similar laws were proposed in other states. In September 2011, a federal district court upheld provisions in the Alabama law that: a) requires law enforcement officials to check a person’s immigration status during routine traffic stops; b) nullifies contracts entered into by illegal immigrants; c) forbids illegal immigrants from engaging in transactions with state agencies; and d) requires public elementary and secondary schools to assess the immigration status of their students. Emboldened by their success, some Arizona lawmakers attempted to pass more drastic laws aimed at illegal immigrants, including a law that denied automatic citizenship to children born in the United States, and laws requiring hospitals and schools to report illegal immigrants seeking their services (“Arizona Senate Rejects,” 2011). We discuss one of these, SB 1611, in more detail below. Subsequent political developments have been mixed. In June 2011 the Alabama legislature approved legislation widely considered tougher than Arizona’s SB 1070 (Robertson, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> While they do not provide figures for individual states, Passell and Cohn (2010) estimate that 60% of all of the unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2009 were from Mexico. Passell and Cohn’s estimates also indicate that the vast majority of foreign-born residents of the United States (72 percent) are legal immigrants.

In this paper, we focus on the state laws that have influenced the educational experiences of immigrants in Arizona passed during this period because a large percentage of the state's Hispanic population are children under the age of 18 (Lacey, 2011) and public education is a central institution in young people's lives. To frame our discussion we begin with a brief historical overview of the racialization of illegal immigration and language.

### Conceptual Framework and Historical Context

We use Omi's (2001) conceptualization of racialization, the process by which social groups come to be understood in racial terms, as a starting point for our analysis. We also draw from Critical Race Theory analyses that highlight how policies and practices that are neutral on their face perpetuate existing patterns of racial inequality (Gunter & Torres, 2002). In the United States, race and immigration have been deeply intertwined and must be understood against a backdrop of white domination. That is, immigrant experiences reveal both the malleability and stability of whiteness as a social category, the centrality of whiteness to American national identity, and the privileges associated with whiteness (Haney López, 2006; Pérez Huber et al., 2008). The Naturalization Act of 1790 limited the right to naturalization to "free white person[s]" and thus citizenship to whites. Over time, the linked categories of white and citizen came to include European immigrants, not all of whom were considered white at first arrival (Jacobsen, 1998). When immigrants from Asia and India challenged naturalization laws in the early twentieth century by arguing that they were white and eligible for citizenship, the courts rejected both claims (Haney López, 2006).

The experiences of Mexican immigrants complicate the immigrant story in a number of ways. First, Mexican citizens living in the former Mexican territories that were incorporated into the United States under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase retained their property rights and were granted the right to United States citizenship. Despite these provisions, in the racial Anglo-Saxonism that fueled Manifest Destiny and continued to shape the American West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mexicans were viewed as racially inferior and unassimilable (Acuña, 2000; Camarillo, 1979; Horsman, 1981; Montejano, 1987; Perea, 2003). Second, in the decades after World War I, immigration laws and policies created a new social category, the illegal immigrant (Benton-Cohen, 2009; Ngai, 2003). Immigration restrictions passed in 1921 and 1924 included provisions for deporting immigrants who entered the United States without a visa and created the Border Patrol. In 1929, Congress passed legislation that criminalized unlawful entry to the United States.

In this context, the United States-Mexico border posed a dilemma for immigration officials. In first decades of the twentieth century, Mexican migration to the United States grew dramatically, fueled by the economic policies of the Porfirio Diaz regime, the Mexican Revolution, and the employment opportunities created by economic development in the U.S. Southwest (Gutierrez, 1995). Many politicians from border states viewed Mexican migration as a public problem, but immigration officials had no legal grounds to deny Mexicans citizenship (Ngai, 2004). As a result, federal officials began to use administrative polices including deportation, head taxes, visa fees, literacy tests, and humiliating delousing and medical line inspection procedures to control Mexican immigration and construct "a barrier where, in a practical sense, none had existed before" (Ngai, 2003, p. 85; see also Sanchez, 1993).

Other administrative policies fostered the racialization of the illegal immigrant as non-white. When policies criminalizing illegal entry began to penalize illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe and Canada, federal officials who viewed the deportation of Europeans as unjust instituted administrative reforms that allowed these immigrants to legalize their status and become citizens. According to Ngai (2004) in the period between 1925 and 1965, as lower status European groups came to be viewed as white and citizens, and the boundaries of whiteness were expanded and reinforced. Ngai (2004) observed, "[b]y contrast, [for Mexicans] walking (or wading) across the border emerged as the essential act of illegal immigration, the outermost point in a relativist ordering of illegal immigration" (p. 89).

Like immigrant status, language is another racialized social category,<sup>4</sup> and, as Sanchez (1997) points out,

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of how language and national origins were used to denote racial boundaries in mid-twentieth century Arizona, see Powers and Patton (2008).

has been a perennial element of anti-immigrant debates. Perea (1992) argued that a key strain in American political thought has been a demand for cultural homogeneity and assimilation to the beliefs, values, and practices of white, Protestant, English-speaking, Anglo-Saxons. Throughout American history, laws and legal rules have been potent tools used by the majority to promote and enforce the dominant culture. A key example of this phenomenon are laws aimed at declaring English the official language of the state or, as we discuss below, the primary language of instruction in public schools. Likewise, as we noted above, literacy tests were one of the administrative measures used by immigration officials to regulate entry into the United States at the U.S.-Mexico border.

If we consider the demographic trends we described at the outset of the paper in the context of this brief historical overview of the assumptions, rhetoric, and policies aimed at containing Mexican migration in the early twentieth century, it suggests that immigration policies and language policies are forms of racist nativism that target Latina/os regardless of citizenship status (Pérez Huber, et al., 2008). In the section that follows, we turn to contemporary immigration related policies in Arizona. The first of these, Proposition 203, was passed by voters in 2000. We analyze the texts of state statutes, other government documents, and newspaper articles when relevant.

### **Anti-Immigrant Legislation in Arizona**

We begin our analysis in 2000 when Proposition 203, English for the Children, was passed by voters. According to Zatz and Rodriguez (2009), between 2000 and 2009, the Arizona legislature enacted 65 bills related to immigration or targeted at immigrants. Among these bills were changes in state statutes that: required individuals applying for driver licenses to provide proof of citizenship or legal residency, expanded the definition of human trafficking, increased the power of law enforcement agencies to ascertain the citizenship status of detainees, empowered the National Guard to enforce immigration laws, created penalties for employers that hire undocumented workers, and prohibited cities from establishing day labor centers that assist undocumented immigrants. Seventy-eight percent of these bills were signed into law; Governor Napolitano (a Democrat) used her authority to veto 14 of the 65. Governor Jan Brewer, a Republican, has approved all of the immigration-related bills passed by the legislature during her tenure. Brewer's support for SB 1070 was widely understood as the key to her re-election in November 2010.

According to *The Arizona Republic*, the 2004 election was a key turning point in this period ("Immigration and Arizona", 2010). Moderate Republicans lost primary elections to their more conservative counterparts. As a result, the Republican-controlled legislature became more conservative and was able to pass a greater number of immigration-related laws. In addition, between 2000 and 2009, Arizona voters considered eight ballot propositions related to immigration (Zatz & Rodriguez, 2009). Only one—a law requiring employers to verify the immigration status of their employees—was not passed by voters. In addition to the education-related ballot propositions we discuss below, Arizona voters approved measures that made undocumented immigrants ineligible for public benefits or services, bail, and punitive damages in civil cases.<sup>5</sup>

We highlight the broader political climate for immigrants because there is some evidence that the policy context for immigrants is associated with educational outcomes for the children of immigrants. Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia Coll (2011) found that the graduation rates of the children of immigrants were higher in states where immigrants had access to the welfare system and where Democrats were in control of the state political system. About the latter, Filindra et al. (2011) suggest that Republicans tend to promote anti-immigrant policies and "this hostility may have affected immigrant families' sense of belonging in states dominated by the Republican party" (p. 430). In the sections that follow, we detail the legislation, ballot propositions, and Arizona Department of Education policies that have shaped the educational experiences of immigrant students in Arizona. Our primary goal is to analyze the key provisions of these laws, although we also address some of the outcomes of these laws when relevant.

<sup>5</sup> These long-term trends in Arizona are consistent with the national trends documented by the Immigrant Policy Project of the National Conference of State Legislatures ([www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)).



## K-12 Education

Unlike higher education, immigration-related laws and policies aimed at K-12 education in Arizona tend to be focused on the curricula offered in K-12 schools. We also address some of the possible spillover effects of other immigration-related laws on public schools.

**Bilingual education.** In 2000, Arizona's voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 203, entitled English for Children, which fundamentally changed the educational experiences of English language learners in Arizona public schools. According to the 2000 Census, when Proposition 203 was passed, 26 percent of the population five years and older spoke a language other than English at home. Approximately 75 percent of this group was Spanish speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). While 86 percent of Arizona's residents in 2000 were born in the United States, 70 percent of the foreign-born residents were not citizens. As we explain below, while the title and provisions of Proposition 203 do not address a specific group, the demographics of the state's population and the proposition's statement of purpose suggest that the bill was aimed at Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Proposition 203 was part of a multi-state campaign against bilingual education spearheaded by multi-millionaire Ron Unz in the late 1990s and early 2000s. After California voters passed Proposition 227 by a wide margin (Wiley, 2004), Unz and his supporters began a similar campaign in Arizona. Proposition 203's findings and declarations raised the specter of uneducated immigrant children who have not learned English: "The public schools of Arizona do an inadequate job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out rates and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children" (Arizona Secretary of State, 2000, p. 1).<sup>6</sup> Proposition 203 required students who were classified as English language learners to participate in English immersion, a educational program designed for English language learners but taught in English, "for a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year" (Arizona Secretary of State, 2000, p. 1). All of the books and instructional materials used in immersion classrooms have to be in English; teachers can use only minimal amounts of the students' native language while speaking with students.

A parent who does not want her child to participate in the English immersion program can request a waiver for one of three reasons: a) her child is proficient enough in English that she/he did not need the immersion program, b) her child is 10 years old or older and would learn English more effectively in an another educational program, or c) her child has special needs. The law also stipulates that teachers and school districts could reject waiver requests without explanation. Proposition 203 also contains provisions that grant parents or legal guardians the legal right to sue their local schools if the schools do not comply with Proposition 203. School officials found to be out of compliance with Proposition 203 can be removed from office and prohibited from holding positions in the public school system for five years. While Proposition 203 did not completely remove bilingual programs from public schools, it made English immersion programs the default choice for families unless parents requested waivers and their waivers were approved.<sup>7</sup>

In 2006, the Arizona legislature passed House Bill 2064 which expanded the provisions of Proposition 203.<sup>8</sup> HB 2064 requires school districts to assess the English proficiency of students whose primary or home language was not English. Students whose test results indicate that they are not proficient in English must be classified as "English language learners" and enrolled in a "research-based" structured English immersion (SEI) program (Arizona Revised Statutes, § 15-756). HB 2064 also requires school districts and charter schools to reassess the English proficiency of students classified as English language learners annually. Students whose test results indicate that they are English proficient must be transferred from the immersion program to mainstream

<sup>6</sup> Wright (2005) noted that at the time Proposition 203 was passed, more than 70 percent of ELL students in Arizona were being educated in English-only programs, which suggests that bilingual education was not the cause of these problems. Likewise, this sweeping statement is not supported by the findings of meta-analyses evaluating the effectiveness of bilingual programs (i.e. Greene, 1998; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005a, 2005b).

<sup>7</sup> See Wright and Choi (2006) for some evidence that suggests that students' access to bilingual classrooms declined precipitously after Proposition 203 was implemented.

<sup>8</sup> While beyond the scope of the discussion, HB 2064 was passed by the legislature in an effort to comply with the federal district court's 2000 decision in *Flores v. Arizona* (Wightman, 2010).

classrooms. Reclassified students must be re-assessed a year after their exit from the immersion program. If reclassified students fail to test as proficient, they can be re-enrolled in the immersion program with parental consent.

HB 2064 also created the Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, charged with identifying the “research-based” SEI models that districts could implement. The law also outlined parameters for the models the Task Force was charged with developing: students should only be placed in an SEI classroom for one year and instruction in SEI classrooms must include a minimum of four hours of English language development. In September 2007, the Task Force developed a model for the four-hour block based on the STAR English Language Acquisition program which is primarily focused on developing discrete language skills with little emphasis on academic content (Gándara & Orfield, 2010; for a detailed analysis of the academic content of SEI classes, see Martinez, 2010). ELL students placed in the four-hour block receive instruction largely separate from their English-speaking peers for a year or more.

Gándara and Orfield (2010) argued that the four-hour ELD block is a form of within-school segregation and highlighted some of the negative outcomes of segregating language learners from native English speakers documented in the research literature. First, English language learners placed in separate classrooms often feel stigmatized as less intelligent and inferior compared to their English-speaking peers (see also Benz, 2009). Second, English language learners are often tracked into remedial or non-college preparatory courses. Finally, some preliminary evidence from Arizona suggested that large percentages of students were not exiting SEI classrooms after one year; the longer students remained in the SEI classroom, the less likely they were exposed to academic content that would allow them to catch up to their peers in mainstream classrooms (Gándara & Orfield, 2010).

**Ethnic studies courses in high schools.** In May 2010, a few weeks after it passed SB 1070, the Arizona legislature passed HB 2281. HB 2281 was the culmination of a three-year campaign by State Superintendent of Education Tom Horne. School districts and charter schools are prohibited from offering courses that “1. Promote the overthrow of the United States Government. 2. Promote resentment toward a race or a class of people. 3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group. 4. advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals” (Arizona Revised Statutes, § 15-112). School districts that are out of compliance with the law can have up to 10 percent of their state aid withheld each month until they comply, after which their funding will be restored.

While the law is framed in largely race-neutral terms, Horne’s efforts were specifically aimed at the Mexican-American history courses offered by the Tucson Unified School District (Pitzl, 2010). We discuss HB 2281 here because the period this bill was moving through the legislature overlaps with SB 1070. Moreover, Horne’s public statements about the TUSD program have highlighted the immigrant status of teachers and students involved with the program and political debates about border control. One of the features of these courses is that they use texts written by prominent Chicano historians as part of an effort to place Chicano/Latino experiences and history at the center of the curriculum (TUSD website). The TUSD Mexican American Studies Department described its educational model as consistent with the work of prominent Latino/a educational scholars including Sonia Nieto, Angela Valenzuela, and Luis Moll, to name a few.

Horne viewed the classes as racially divisive because they teach “a radical ideology in Raza, including that Arizona and other states were stolen from Mexico and should be given back” (Lewin, 2010, p. A13). While the law drafted by Horne that was passed by the Senate does not specifically mention immigration, Horne has invoked political debates about immigration in his public statements. For example, in a 2007 open letter to the Tucson Unified School District, Horne described being troubled by a statement in one of the textbooks used in the course “paid for by American taxpayers used in American public schools” that he read as “gloating over the difficulty we are having in controlling the border” (Horne, 2007). He also raised questions about the legal status of some of the students’ family members (and perhaps by extension, the students themselves) noting that “[m]ost of these students parents’ and grandparents came to this country, legally, because this is the land of

opportunity.”<sup>9</sup> Finally, the length and vehemence of Horne’s campaign and the national and local news coverage it has engendered might suggest that a large proportion of TUSD high school students are participating in these courses. In 2010, 1,400 students enrolled in these courses, an increase of 45% from the 781 enrolled the prior academic year (Zehr, 2010). By way of comparison in 2008-2009, approximately 15,000 students were enrolled in the district’s regular high schools.<sup>10</sup> These figures suggest that approximately five to 10 percent of TUSD high school students took these courses. The new State Superintendent of Instruction, John Huppenthal, found that the program was out of compliance with state law, although an audit commissioned by the ADE reviewed the program favorably (Gersema, 2011). The district unsuccessfully appealed Huppenthal’s decision. As a result, the school board voted to suspend the program in January 2012 and removed all of the texts taught in the program from classrooms (“Tucson School District,” 2012).

**Spillover effects.** In addition to the policies described above, we believe that a compelling case can be made that other immigration-related legislation, coupled with the state’s economic downturn, can have a spillover effect on public schools. Since 2007, metropolitan Phoenix school districts with large Hispanic populations have experienced decreases in enrollment. While this could be due to the decline in the construction and tourist industries, school district officials attributed some of the decline in student enrollment to SB 1070 and a 2007 law that penalized employers that hired undocumented workers (McCullough, 2011). The drops in enrollment resulted in a loss of state and federal dollars for these districts, which in turn led to cuts in staffing and services. One of the unintended consequences of these policies may be an increase in the class sizes for English speakers in these districts. The English Language Learners Task Force requires classes for English language learners to be capped at 23 or 28 students, depending on students’ English proficiency. When districts do not have the funds to hire extra teachers, they have to increase the class size of the classes for English-speaking students. Moreover, all students in these districts—fluent English speakers and English language learners—are affected by programmatic cuts that result from revenue shortfalls. Some projections of the financial impact of SB 1070 suggested a net savings to public education in the aggregate if substantial percentages of undocumented students leave public schools (“Arizona Immigration Law,” 2010). Yet these projections do not account for the possibility that in districts with declining enrollment, the fixed costs of providing services to their remaining students may not decrease as sharply as the reduction in state and federal dollars they receive that are tied to enrollment.

Likewise, one of the policies in the omnibus immigration bill rejected by the Arizona legislature in March 2011 would have created significant additional administrative costs for K-12 schools if the bill had passed and the policy had gone into effect. SB 1611 would have required parents enrolling their children in public schools to provide a birth certificate from the United States or one of its territories, a United States passport, or a certificate of naturalization; schools would have been required to notify immigration authorities if parents could not produce documentation of their children’s legal presence. Some administrators expressed concern that if school officials had to implement this law, these requirements would burden school employees already struggling with staffing and budget cuts and turn schools into enforcement agencies (Doan, 2011; Stephenson, 2011).

## Higher Education

In contrast to K-12 education, anti-immigrant legislation in Arizona focused on higher education is aimed at restricting undocumented students’ access to higher education and other educational services. In the early 2000s, the Arizona legislature made several unsuccessful attempts to limit undocumented immigrants access to state-funded educational services outside of K-12 education. For example, HB 2030, which restricted undocumented immigrants’ access to adult education classes, ESL instruction, in-state tuition, and financial aid was passed by the legislature in 2005 and vetoed by then-Governor Napolitano (Dougherty, Neinhusser, & Vega, 2010). In 2006, Arizona voters approved Proposition 300, which contained many of the same provisions

<sup>9</sup> While Horne used the term “legally,” the punctuation draws attention to the term and indexes debates about illegal immigration in a way that a more neutral term such as second or third generation immigrants might not. Horne makes a similar statement in Lewin (2010).

<sup>10</sup> Authors’ calculations from CCD data.



as HB 2030. To be eligible for in-state tuition, or receive access to adult education (which includes ESL classes for adults), and child care services, students have to provide documentation that they are legal residents of the United States. While Proposition 300 did not formally restrict undocumented students' access to higher education institutions, students who cannot provide documentation of legal residency must pay out-of-state tuition to attend Arizona's community colleges and state universities, making the cost of higher education prohibitive for many (McKinley, 2008). Approximately one year after Proposition 300 was enacted, Arizona's colleges and universities reported that 3,850 students did not receive in-state tuition because they could not prove they were legal residents (Ryman, 2008). Likewise, as of December 2010, over the four years since Proposition 300 was enacted, approximately 4.5 percent of the applicants for Adult Education Services classes were denied instruction because they could not document their legal status.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, some state lawmakers view Proposition 300 as insufficient because it does not prevent undocumented students from enrolling in state colleges and universities (Fischer, 2011). SB 1611, the omnibus immigration bill rejected by the Arizona Senate in March 2011, also contained a provision that would accomplish this goal.

### Conclusion

As Census figures suggest, this period of active lawmaking coincides with a dramatic expansion of the Hispanic population in Arizona. This ongoing legislative activity has contributed to a climate where the public debates about immigration in Arizona have focused largely on the negative costs of illegal immigration. Research that suggests that immigrants regardless of status contribute substantially to the state economy through the taxes they pay net of the cost of the services they use (e.g., education, health care, and law enforcement) has had very little traction (Gans, 2008). A recent national survey of Latino adults suggests that what is now a national campaign fueled by the success of Arizona lawmakers has had a collateral effect on the Latino population well beyond Arizona's borders (Lopez, Morin, & Taylor, 2010). Sixty-one percent of the Latinos surveyed by the Pew Hispanic Center in 2010 reported that discrimination against Latinos was a "major problem," an increase of 14 percent since 2002.

Our goal in this paper was to highlight the policies that have had a direct impact on Arizona's public educational institutions. While we see some striking parallels between the early twentieth century immigration debates and policies described at the outset of the paper and the contemporary period, there are also some important differences. While symbolically important, these early immigration policies were often sporadically enforced and focused largely on the border region (Benton-Cohen, 2009). In contrast, these contemporary policies can be viewed as part of a sustained campaign to continually expand border enforcement well beyond the geographic site of the U.S.-Mexico Border and into immigrants' communities and the public institutions that serve them. While the education policies described here are one part of a broader array of policies, they are significant because young people comprise the largest segment of Latino immigrant communities and public education is a central part of their daily lives and a key influence on their life chances. We hope that the tide will shift and that political debates and our state policies will begin to reflect a more welcoming and expansive rather than exclusionary vision of community and the contributions of immigrants, legal or otherwise.

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<sup>11</sup> Authors' calculations based on information reported in Liersch (2011).

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# From the Fields to the University: Charting Educational Access and Success for Farmworker Students Using a Community Cultural Wealth Framework

Cynthia Bejarano

Michelle Valverde

New Mexico State University

## Abstract

In 2002, the New Mexico State University College Assistance Migrant Program (NMSU CAMP) was created to increase the number of baccalaureate degrees held by students from farmworker backgrounds by mediating structural impediments that typically normalize post-secondary inequities for this population. Migrant and seasonal farmworker students are significantly marginalized and underserved in the United States. There is also a notable lack of research exploring their success in higher education. This article addresses this gap through an exploratory analysis of quantitative and qualitative data spanning years 2006-2011 that include 130 self-administered questionnaires, six key informant interviews, and numerous observations. A “community cultural wealth” framework [CCW] (Yosso, 2005) is utilized to explore factors contributing to students’ entrance into the university and their persistence thereafter. The findings suggest that farmworker students utilized the notions of *familia* and ‘pedagogies of the home’ (Delgado Bernal, 2001) to navigate their transition inside an unfamiliar terrain, while the CAMP program itself utilized similar notions of *familia* to break the practice of ‘manufacturing sameness’ typically experienced by students in the freshmen year.

## Introduction

Migrant and seasonal farmworker students are some of the most marginalized and under-served students in the United States. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (1998), between 169,000 and 200,000 youth ages 14 to 17 work in migrant agricultural jobs (as cited in Cranston-Gingras, 2003). Farmworkers have one of the highest dropout rates and encounter tremendous obstacles in completing high school and pursuing a postsecondary education, resulting in only 50.7% of migrant students graduating from high school (BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center, 2009; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998). In response, the Department of Education awarded funds in 2002 to the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at New Mexico State University (NMSU), a research extensive, land grant Hispanic-serving institution. The program’s goal is twofold: to serve the educational needs of migrant/seasonal farm workers and to increase their numbers and graduation rates in post-secondary education.

There is a significant lack of educational literature on farmworker students in post-secondary education. Aside from the work of Cranston-Gingras (2003), who explores the High School Equivalency program, a CAMP affiliate that emphasizes GED completion, or Araujo’s (2006) ‘pedagogies of the fields,’ that describes farmworkers’ lessons learned in the fields and their perseverance to succeed in college, few scholars have studied farmworkers’ educational experiences in university settings. Most research has centered on farmworker students in high school and their educational struggles or networks of support. The work of Lopez (2001), for example, focuses on parental involvement of migrant/immigrant families and how parents expose their children to fieldwork for ‘real-life lessons’ that fall outside of traditional school-related parental models. Salinas and Reyes (2004) examine high school migrant students’ educational struggles, but mainly focus on their advocate educators as ‘agents of change.’ Still, the most robust body of research on farmworkers remains outside of educational frameworks and instead focuses on health disparities and pesticide exposure. This article is an attempt to address the literature gap on farmworkers’ post-secondary educational experiences with postsecondary retention data collected through NMSU CAMP.

Relying on qualitative and quantitative data collected from 130 freshman CAMP students spanning five years (2006-2011), interviews with six students in 2009, and observations from 2008 through 2011, this research

utilizes a “community cultural wealth” framework [CCW] (Yosso, 2005) to explore factors contributing to students’ entrance into the university and their persistence thereafter. Building upon Yosso’s (2005) CCW framework, where familial and navigational capital are just two of the many strengths that non-traditional students bring to the university, we contend that familial and navigational capital are key to farmworker students’ access to, and persistence in, college. In confluence with CCW, we also assert that Delgado-Bernal’s (2001) ‘pedagogies of the home’ is actively at play in increasing access and persistence for students.

## The Context at the National Level

NMSU CAMP is one of 47 federally funded CAMP programs serving the postsecondary educational needs of children of migrant/seasonal farmworkers.<sup>12</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), CAMP serves 2,000 students annually through competitive grants to institutions of higher education or non-profit organizations. Since 1972, CAMP nationwide has helped to improve access and completion rates for many migrant and seasonal farmworker students from secondary to postsecondary education.<sup>13</sup> The national High School Equivalency Program and College Assistance Migrant Program (HEP/CAMP) Association states that approximately three quarters of CAMP freshmen complete their baccalaureate degree (<http://www.hepcamp.org/>).

Across the U.S., children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers often move frequently as a result of their parents’ or their own employment, which greatly obstructs their access to consistent and concentrated formal education. Adding to this challenge is the geographical marginality of farmworkers, especially in communities along the U.S.-Mexico border, one of the poorest regions in the nation (Johnson & Strange, 2009).

## The Context in Southern New Mexico

The Border Agricultural Worker Project reports more than 12,000 farmworkers work in El Paso and southern New Mexico (Carmona & Rice, 2010). Most of these farmworkers live in *colonias*, which are communities that lack basic infrastructure, adequate housing, and improved roads (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2003). The median household income in Doña Ana County is 69% of the national median household income (Colonias Development Council, 2010); even worse, farmworkers from the area picking green chile, a major crop in the region, earn fifty cents per bucket, which amounts to roughly \$20 a day (Carmona & Rice, 2010). Poverty dictates the quality of life for farmworkers and their access to higher education, despite the presence nearby of a land-grant, Research One Institution.

NMSU CAMP is located merely 40 miles from the border in a southern New Mexico county that includes 1,691 farms (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2005), with the primary labor intensive crops being pecan orchards, green and red chiles, and onions (New Mexico Department of Agriculture, 2005). This region is one of the most densely Hispanic populated areas in the U.S., one that also experiences severe education problems. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 46.3% of New Mexico’s citizens are Hispanic and only 25.3% of New Mexicans have a Bachelor’s degree or higher. In terms of high school graduation rates, the state ranks 46th in the nation; only 55% of New Mexico Hispanic students graduated from high school in 2007 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009).

## The NMSU CAMP Program

NMSU CAMP was designed as a social justice program to mediate structural impediments that normalize inequities at the university. CAMP’s primary goal has been to increase the number of baccalaureate degrees held by students from farmworker backgrounds. Program objectives include: 1) bridging educational outreach issues for farmworkers; 2) providing assistance with housing and meal costs, book stipends and monthly stipends, art and cultural activities, tutoring and mentoring, and leadership training workshops; and 3) providing overall

<sup>12</sup> When available, the program receives State funds.

<sup>13</sup> These programs are authorized under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 5 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. §1070d-2).

educational support and communication with family, community members, and university administrators who serve as the support network for students to successfully complete their education.

Since its inception, the concept of *familia* has been the central principle NMSU CAMP uses in its educational programming and retention efforts with students from farmworker backgrounds. The concept of *familia* serves as a retention tool, one typically eschewed by mainstream interpretations of university success and belonging. Thus, NMSU CAMP breaks from hegemonic patterns of “manufacturing sameness” in higher education. We use the concept “manufacturing sameness” to refer to educational institutions’ approaches to the standard freshmen year experiences that often work to undo familial and cultural rootedness.<sup>14</sup> Under a conventional approach, the expectation is that students will break away from the family and become independent, in spite of the fact that these same students informally rely on family members, friends of the family, or institutional representatives to guide them through the higher education labyrinth.

Following a common interpretation of the White, mainstream, middle-class rite of passage, turning 18 years of age symbolizes independence from the family. Through breaking from the family, youth can forge their own identity while taking on new responsibilities to succeed. In using a CCW framework, we argue against this convention, offering, instead, insight into alternative logics of higher education access and retention by identifying familial and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) and ‘pedagogies of the home’ (Delgado Bernal, 2001). NMSU CAMP is an example of the confluence and praxis of these two asset based theoretical perspectives in supporting non-traditional student success. Rooted in NMSU CAMP programming is the idea that first generation farmworker students are more likely to succeed within a familiar and family-like educational setting. A supportive, comfortable, and academically driven setting is provided to students where they can seek guidance without judgment about their institutional knowledge of the university.

Each year, NMSU CAMP recruits 30-35 full-time freshmen students. Students range from first-generation immigrant to fourth generation New Mexicans working on small family subsistence farms to large-scale dairy and agricultural operations. A small number of students also come from rural educational settings in Texas or elsewhere. CAMP usually serves students from K-12 Bilingual and Migrant Education programs who are not traditionally recruited to the university. In addition to financial support, CAMP provides academic and emotional support – all elements that have been documented to help retain historically underserved students in higher education (Attinasi, 1989; Hurtado, 1996; Ornelas-González, 2010; Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). CAMP includes an intensive advising model whereby all freshmen have an Individualized Educational Plan, and freshmen attend a CAMP course that focuses on study skills and navigating the University. Students also participate in Saturday morning workshops with their parents three times each semester to strengthen retention efforts and parental knowledge of the university.

A critical component of CAMP is the *Compas* Peer Mentoring Program<sup>15</sup> in which upper-class students are hired to assist freshmen with academic guidance and mentorship. This component is designed based on the idea of *compadrazco*<sup>16</sup> whereby CAMP alumni students take freshmen students under their care and guide them through the educational process. Upper class students (a female and a male) are also hired annually as Living Learning Community Cluster Leaders to live with freshmen in the dorms and to serve as a big brother or sister. Overall, this intensive support model allows staff and alumni students to form bonds with freshman beyond the lecture hall or advising office, to not only provides educational guidance, but to create an environment based on the notion of *compadrazco*.

Since 2002, 263 students have participated in CAMP, with 59 completing Bachelor degrees, eight completing Master’s degrees, eleven completing an Associate degree, and a student completing his Ph.D. The retention rate for students is 71%, including those who have graduated and those who continue their studies at NMSU. CAMP students represent many disciplines including electrical engineering, biology, business and

<sup>14</sup> Manufacturing sameness”, first introduced here, was developed by the first author.

<sup>15</sup> This program was designed by Martha Estrada and Jose Montoya.

<sup>16</sup> *Compadrazco* refers literally to the bond created between godparents who baptize a child within the Catholic tradition. The term is also used loosely to refer to the bonds between good friends. Here we use it to mean the bond formed between students who share a similar life and work background within an educational setting. Students from similar backgrounds learn to look out for one another emotionally, and within this educational environment forging relationships that oftentimes run deeper than being school peers, and more akin to *compadres* (godparents) looking out for younger students, or like *hermanal/os* (relationships like brothers/sisters), and *familia* (family) overall.



education to criminal justice, social work, government, and animal range sciences.

## Methodology and Participant Description

A mixed method research approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) involving self-administered questionnaires, observations, and key informant interviews is utilized as part of the ongoing evaluation of the CAMP program. In this process, quantitative and qualitative data are gathered from CAMP Advisory Council members, students, and staff. For the purpose of this study, quantitative data collected from 130 freshman CAMP students spanning cohorts five through nine (academic years 2006-2007 through 2010-2011<sup>17</sup>) were descriptively analyzed using Predictive Analytics Software. In addition, qualitative data from six CAMP students representing a cross section of the participants (freshmen and alumni) who volunteered to be interviewed in 2009, and observations of CAMP workshops, graduation ceremonies, annual banquets, and student presentations between 2008 and 2011 were explored in the analysis. Using qualitative data to augment quantitative descriptive results allows researchers to dig deeper into the complexities of human behavior that are not readily revealed through quantitative data alone (Morse, 2003).

The self-administered entrance questionnaire distributed to all freshman CAMP students at the beginning of every academic year includes 39 closed and open-ended questions. In addition to capturing basic socio-demographic information, students have an opportunity to express their anxieties and worries about college. The data explored herein comprises a subset of a larger research effort, however, for the scope of this paper, this data set specifically examines a) the student's and their family's experiences doing farm work, b) the kinds of problems, if any, the students experienced from their involvement or their family's involvement in field/seasonal work, c) what they gained from the experiences that will help them succeed in college, and d) their thoughts about the NMSU CAMP program.

## Results

### Basic Demographics

Of the 130 CAMP students surveyed,<sup>17</sup> slightly more females participated than males (53% vs. 47% respectively). The majority, 80% of the CAMP students were 17 or 18 years old at the time of the survey, while 20% were 19 or 20. Of the 128 that responded, 59% were born in the U.S. while 41% were born in Mexico. When asked where they grew up, 73% of the students identified only the U.S., 20% identified only Mexico, and 7% identified both the U.S. and Mexico. The average family income of the students surveyed was \$16,500 compared to \$74,000, as the median parental income of entering freshman in 2006 (Higher Education Research Institute, 2008).

### Occupation Related Challenges

For 64% of the participants, they and at least one parent had worked in the fields or done seasonal work; for 26% of the students it was one or more parent who worked in this arena; in the case of 10%, only the student had worked seasonally or in the fields. When asked about the types of problems they experienced from their or their family's involvement in field/seasonal work, four themes emerged: long hours (36%), financial challenges (34%), hard work environment (26%), and stressful work (20%).

### Social and Cultural Factors Impacting the Educational Context and Experience

When asked how their farm work experience may have helped them succeed at the university, nearly half of the students surveyed (45%) felt the early challenges in their lives taught them to work hard in college

<sup>17</sup> Data were not included from the first four years since several key questions were not yet on the questionnaire. Missing responses were not included in the analyses and some questions allowed multiple responses.

and/or in the workplace. Close to a third (31%) desired to be/live better as a result of these challenges and 14% believed they were more determined. One student explained, “it pushes me and reminds [me] to keep working and trying my best to get a degree,” while another indicated, “seeing the hard work that my parents did and all the financial problems they had made me more determined to continue my education not only to help myself but them as well.” Araujo’s (2006) concept of ‘pedagogies of the fields’ is important here as her work is based on NMSU CAMP students’ farm work experiences which revealed how students learned strategies of transformative resistance as “the memories of working in the fields are motivation to continue with school... the participants were able to see their marginalization and transform it into the motivation to finish high school and enroll in college” (p.143). Students’ memory of struggle kept them focused on their studies as did witnessing their parents’ performing laborious fieldwork.

In addition to the surveys, observations at CAMP functions confirmed over and over again that students were thankful that their parents taught them the values of hard work, perseverance, and responsibility. “Working this hard made me realize that life can be pretty hard if you don’t have an education,” one student commented, while another said, “working there [agricultural fields] showed me how to be responsible.”

For the CAMP students’ parents, their own life lessons learned through fieldwork, a necessary means for survival, harvested a desire for a better future for their children and an investment in their education despite not knowing university systems. In spite of their lack of familiarity with higher education, parents emphasized to their children the need to break the cycle of fieldwork. Although these parents’ responses are similar to Lopez’s (2001) work on farmworker parents’ instilling “real-life lessons” onto their high school children, CAMP parents were negotiating completely unfamiliar University terrain, its institutional policies and its limited access besides new student orientation that farmworkers parents were often unable to attend because of working in the fields. CAMP parents literally entrusted the program staff to become “*encargados de sus hijas/hijos*” (responsible for their children) once their young adult sons/daughters entered the University to live in the dormitories, to study disciplines that were very technical, and oftentimes to see their children’s transformation into adulthood.

During workshops, parents discussed their own fears of engaging the University, and their fears and anxieties for their own children. Yet, they encouraged their children to obtain an education in order to avoid the fieldwork they themselves endured due to the lack of a formal U.S. education. As mentioned above, it is within the family context that the students developed aspirational capital, which refers to their ability to retain hopes and dreams for the future despite facing real and perceived barriers. One student indicated, “I want to be someone that can help others since I know what it feels [like] to have been living a life where things that others have, my family can’t afford to buy them.” Family often served as the inspiration for educational perseverance and the support and encouragement family gave is what drove students to do well academically. Despite tremendous financial and work difficulties, over half of the CAMP students surveyed (59%), aspired before they were 15 to occupations that require a post-secondary degree, with those requiring a bachelor’s or above most frequently cited.

At annual retreats and through written responses in questionnaires, students repeatedly explained that they want to support their families and to make them proud. One student writes, “The reason I’m here [school] is because I want them [parents] to feel proud of me.” In her ethnographic work on a California immigrant community, Delgado-Gaitan (2001) found that “Latino parents confronted distress in their households and workplaces, but they adapted wholly to the strident changes, learned to think differently about themselves and others, and overcame hardships. People’s belief system is the foundation of their transformation” (p. 105). For the above-mentioned student wanting to make his parents proud reinforced building on stronger values and actually holding more tightly to his dreams.

When asked what interested students about participating in CAMP, one student responded that “... [CAMP] students were going through the same experiences as me, they were also Hispanic, spoke two languages like me. It felt like they were a great family I would be welcomed to.” Another person said, “well, CAMP is an awesome program. It really interested me because it seemed more like a new family than just a program.” Another student recognized the program as, “CAMP is, like the staff say, ‘a new family for us,’... [by] helping each camper ... [and] pay for almost all your first year of college, [so] it’s really good to be part of the program.” At the end of the freshmen year, one student interviewed said, “the staff cares for you. They don’t leave you

alone.” Most of the interviewees also mentioned the advantages of having a CAMP peer mentor because they already knew how the system worked.

## Discussion

A descriptive analysis of the CAMP students surveyed reveals that although as children most of them experienced a variety of challenges related to agricultural work, these challenges may have actually helped prepare them for their transition into and success at the University. The findings also speak to two of the six interrelated forms of cultural capital, familial and navigational, defined by Critical Race theorists (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Faulstich Orellana, 2003). The remaining four forms of cultural capital – aspirational, linguistic, social, and resistant – also surfaced in the analysis but were typically in relationship to familial and navigational capital. The six dimensions of capital comprise community cultural wealth which, according to Yosso (2005), is a set of “knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts present in and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77).

### Familial Capital

Familial capital can be described as community history, memory, and cultural intuition; in essence, the cultural knowledge that is nurtured in the *familia* (Delgado Bernal, 2001). The notion of being *bien educado* as described by Valenzuela (1996), among others, is another dimension of familial capital involving the teaching of morals, character, and proper behavior. Delgado Bernal (2002) takes this notion a step further with the concept of “pedagogies of the home” which offers “culturally specific ways of teaching and learning and embrace[s] ways of knowing that extend beyond the public realm of formal schooling” (p. 110).

Familial knowledge rooted in CAMP students leads to their culturally entrenched ways of celebrating culture and their pride in their farmworker families and backgrounds that make them more determined to graduate. This strong foundation stems from their families’ teachings and work ethic and exemplifies familial capital and ‘pedagogies of the home.’ For the CAMP students in this study whose families faced challenges related to working in the fields, all of them listed at least one example of how their family’s experiences will help them succeed at the university.

### Navigational Capital

Navigational capital refers to the skills of moving successfully through social institutions, especially those that were not designed by or for communities of color, while social capital refers to networks of people and community resources (Yosso, 2005). Numerous avenues for networking and receiving social and emotional support were created by CAMP staff and the students themselves. Students enter the program knowing each other from high school or they quickly create bonds through their shared immigrant, fieldwork or educational experiences. This helps them navigate the university along with the assistance from staff who facilitate access to the university.

Other students rely on farmworker community members such as Cesario Moran, a former science teacher from Zacatecas, Mexico, known to locals as “El Profe,” who loans books to farmworker students and adults from his personal library. El Profe and his wife are farmworkers/labor contractors who encourage farmworker youth to attend NMSU CAMP, the way three of their six children did. Thus far, 84 siblings from 39 families have participated in the CAMP program, which speaks to both social and navigational forms of capital. Older siblings serve as a support mechanism as do other CAMP alumni who are mentors, tutors, and dorm leaders for freshmen.

In addition, CAMP alumni take their cue from the staff and serve as peer mentors, providing advice to students on study skills, job opportunities, and simply “learning the ropes.” As students began graduating from the university, they became part of the *compadrazco* network, letting younger CAMP students know of jobs, housing openings, and carpooling opportunities. CAMP students come to view each other, broadly speaking, as



siblings.

## Conclusion

As suggested in this brief discussion, past and present sociocultural factors appear to have contributed to the entry and persistence of CAMP students at NMSU. Using aspects of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and 'pedagogies of the home' (Delgado Bernal, 2001), this analysis presents descriptive quantitative and qualitative data revealing clear examples of cultural capital. The students experienced a variety of challenges related to migrant and seasonal farmwork, nonetheless they maintained high aspirations and seized the opportunity to enter the university through NMSU CAMP. Such strategies are clearly aligned with the inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies documented by previous researchers (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

### **CAMP as Family, Lessons from CCW and 'pedagogies of the home'**

It is clear from our analysis that students gained strength and perseverance from their experiences working in the fields, as well as from the memories of witnessing their parents' labor in the fields. Critical lessons of endurance were taught. Consequently, since CAMP's inception, the program recognized the value in creating an atmosphere of support, culture and a sense of *familia* for students' access and persistence. These alternate epistemologies challenge the traditional forms of institutional knowledge about access and student persistence. By recreating a sense of familial capital (Yosso, 2005) through programming reflecting concepts of *familia* (support, cultural and familiar sustenance, guidance and caring), students were able to acclimate to the university knowing that an academic and emotionally supportive space existed for them within the larger institution. Students also understood that their parents had given program staff the responsibility to look after and guide them in their parents' absence, a culturally significant responsibility for staff, whose Latino backgrounds and cultural knowledge allowed for this informal understanding between parent, child, and staff person. This cultural understanding helped facilitate academic success for these nontraditional college students.

Furthermore, the idea of *familia* as epistemology and programmatic structure challenged the practice of 'manufacturing sameness.' Students attended classes, received academic advising, and navigated financial aid systems with the guidance and support of CAMP staff who informed them of who to talk to, where to obtain information, and where they could "come home to within the academic setting (i.e. CAMP office)." Students felt comfortable with the guidance they received from CAMP staff who understood their backgrounds and culture and who recognized the novelty of the university bureaucracy that was daunting for them.

The guidance provided by staff which created a familial and familiar setting for students facilitated students' maneuvering of the larger institution and its intricate systems, thus becoming a form of Yosso's (2005) navigational capital. Students revealed that CAMP's familial approach toward them was critical in helping them to academically persist. In light of these findings, the idea of *familia* as an epistemological tool can be broadly incorporated into first-generation students' programming and used as an educational model to break the practice of 'manufacturing sameness' for other nontraditional students.

## Research Implications

Students utilized the notions of *familia* to navigate their transition inside an unfamiliar terrain, while CAMP utilized similar notions of *familia* to break the practice of 'manufacturing sameness' typically experienced in the freshmen year. As noted by Delgado-Gaitan (2001), "empowerment of individuals, families, and the Latino community at large evolves as individuals emerge from isolation into connectedness" (p. 5). The challenge from this point forward is to continue to research and document the various ways in which, for non-traditional students such as those with farmworker backgrounds, familial and navigational capital intersect with 'pedagogies of the home' prior to and after entry into the higher education arena. Accomplishing this will require a continued commitment to question and dismantle the status quo of 'manufacturing sameness,' and while it is a slow and difficult process, it is the only way we will be able to institutionalize alternative educational paradigms that result in greater educational success for non-traditional students.

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# “The Road to Freedom”: How One Salvadoran Youth Takes an Agentive Stance to Narrate the Self Across Time and Space

Theresa Ann McGinnis  
Andrea Garcia  
Hofstra University

## Abstract

In this article, we use narrative theory to analyze and discuss how one Salvadoran youth, Thomas, constructed three different yet overlapping narratives, including a digital story, on his family’s movement across borders. We describe how each telling of his narratives is situated in time and space, where Thomas reveals his understandings of current social, political and hegemonic forces. Further, we demonstrate how Thomas is taking an agentive stance countering U.S. national anti-immigrant narratives that position Latino immigrants unfavorably. We suggest that narratives and digital technology offer Latino youth a vehicle to become theorists of, and change agents of their own and of others’ worldviews.

## Introduction

It was ten to two in the morning and I just couldn’t drag myself anymore. Cuts and scrapes embodied my tattered torso, arms and legs. The lack of food and water had taken a serious toll on me. I couldn’t climb another barbed wire fence. Helicopters desperately searched for any remnant of us... (Thomas<sup>18</sup>)

So writes Thomas in his journal as preparation for the making of his digital story entitled, “*The Road to Freedom*.” Thomas, a Salvadoran and Bilingual Spanish/English youth, created his digital story, “*The Road to Freedom*,” as part of the Young Men’s Writing Project established in 2009 by the authors of this article. This after-school writing workshop focuses on supporting culturally and linguistically diverse young men, who attend middle schools in a New York suburban community, in writing practices and in the use of new digital technologies for multimodal composition. Thomas’ narrative of migration, described in closer detail in this article, evokes a situated interplay among his family’s experiences, history and culture, and the larger Salvadoran American community.

Thomas, like other immigrant youth or children of immigrants, whose histories and experiences involve migration, tells narratives that reveal transnational stories. These transnational biographies or testimonial narratives (testimonios) can be entangled with political discourse. More specifically, Latino youth, both from documented and undocumented families, are often positioned unfavorably by U. S. local and national politics. These national anti-immigration sentiments, which position Latino youth and their families, as “outsiders’ to the dominant national identity, cannot be separated from the identity construction or narratives of Latino youth (McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Costa-Saliani, 2007). Thus, in this article we discuss how narratives allow Thomas a space to define himself and his family, and also to make visible the sociopolitical structures that surround him.

More specifically, in this article we describe how Thomas constructed three different yet overlapping narratives on his family’s movement across borders. Thomas’ main narrative, the digital story “*The Road to Freedom*,” is a first person account of an immigrant’s border crossing. We view his digital story as a symbolic resource, and share an analysis of how Thomas constructs two more narratives around his digital story to describe its context and purpose. Drawing upon narrative theory (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Wortham, 2000; 2001), we reveal how each telling of his narratives is situated in time and space, where Thomas

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<sup>18</sup> Pseudonym has been used for the participant to ensure anonymity.



considers his particular audience with critical understanding of his positioning in the world.

Further, we discuss how these narratives surrounding his family's movement across borders become a civic dialogue; they demonstrate an agentive stance on Thomas' part, because each are situated in local and global contexts revealing his understandings of current social, political, and hegemonic forces. In addition, we raise new pedagogical possibilities and questions about Latino youth as producers of digital texts in the context of their multilayered and multimodal world, where they often encounter complicated and contradictory experiences in today's transnational processes.

### **Narratives as Socially Situated Activity and Identity Work**

We situate this research within the theoretical framework of the New Literacy Studies (NLS). Work within the New Literacy Studies examines the ways literacy and discourse practices, like narratives, are situated in social, cultural, and political contexts, and the ways these practices and contexts play a role in identity construction (Moje & Luke, 2009; Street, 2003). More recently, NLS scholars have recognized the intersection of local and global contexts and the effects of that intersection on literacy practices (Street, 2003). Therefore, we consider how Thomas' narratives, including his digital story, produced within a local setting of an out-of-school-time program are connected to larger sociopolitical influences and to transnational processes.

With a view of narratives as socially situated practice mediated by context, audience, purpose and power, our study is informed by research in the field of sociolinguistics (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Hymes, 1996), linguistics and anthropology (Ochs & Capps, 1996; Wortham, 2000), and Latina/o critical race theory/testimonios (Gutiérrez, 2008; Huber, 2009). In addition, we consider the role of digital storytelling as a multimedia hybrid narrative form, which blends narrative with multimodal composing. Many researchers have discussed both the narrative power of digital storytelling (Davis, 2009; Hull & Nelson, 2005) and the power of the multimodal compositions of digital storytelling (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010). Hence, we also draw on the research in these areas to frame our discussion of Thomas's digital text.

Generally, narratives are viewed as stories where experience is shared and the experience itself is "storied" (Mishler, 1986), or as "small stories" occurring in ordinary conversational contexts (Georgakopoulou, 2007). Wortham (2000) conceptualized the self as narrated through mediated interactions with others, while Georgakopoulou (2007) suggests that narrative mediates between self and world so that narratives can be a way of making sense of one's world. Both Wortham (2000) and Georgakopoulou (2007) argue therefore, that narratives can link the micro with the macro, or connect local experience with global events.

In addition, Anh (2011) explains that youth "weave life experiences into coherent stories, or narratives, in ways that reconstruct images of themselves and the groups or communities with which they affiliate" (p. 416). Thus, narratives can be considered a way for how one constructs, deconstructs and reconstructs one's identity in relation to others and within social relations - how one narrates the self across time and space (Anh, 2011; Hall, 1997). Transnational social spaces and experiences shape the narratives and identities of immigrant Latino youth (Sánchez, 2007). As transnational biographies that span time frames and geographical space, Thomas' narratives are inextricably related to wider social and cultural formations (Giroux, 1997), and to the Salvadoran community with which he affiliates (Anh, 2011). Therefore, we specifically examine how Thomas' narratives are socially constructed through the ways he, as a Salvadoran youth, is situated and positioned in relation to others, and how his narratives are in dialogue with, and sometimes in struggle against wider, longer term social and political forces.

### **Digital Storytelling as Political Commentary**

Digital storytelling is considered to be the modern art of oral narrative telling through which people make sense of their world, construct a sense-of-self, and/or narrate the self (Davis, 2009; Hull & Katz, 2006). The affordances of digital storytelling have been noted to include the youth's ability to develop an "authorial stance" or the "practice of taking on literate identities and claiming a presence as an author and narrator of one's own experiences" (Vasudevan et al., 2010, p. 461). Hull and Katz (2006) extend this idea in their discussion of the

potential for authorial agency, or the ways their case study participants "borrowed and repurposed texts, images, photographs, and music in their multimodal compositions" (p. 52). That is, they found that their participants took an agentive stance toward themselves and their social worlds through their multimodal compositions, which did not simply reflect social life, but also commented critically on that life.

The narrative power of digital storytelling is therefore seen in its ability to afford youth a space to mediate their experiences of the world, or to shape their interpretations of life in relation to broader sociopolitical contexts (Davis, 2009; Hull & Nelson, 2005). Thus, there can be a political aspect to digital storytelling where the producer can position himself in order to shape and tell his story (Davis, 2009). It is this relational nature of digital storytelling, the interpretation Thomas makes on the Salvadoran transnational story in relation to the broader sociopolitical issues of U.S. immigration, we consider in this paper. We view digital storytelling as a literate practice that plays a role in Thomas's identifications and positioning - as a means for enacting a self in relation to others (Hull & Katz, 2006). More specifically, we explore how Thomas uses the art of digital storytelling to counter official narratives about Latino immigrants and their families, and analyze Thomas's narratives within a framework that recognizes the relationship between textual production and its wider sociopolitical context.

## The Salvadoran Community

The civil war of 1979-1992 in El Salvador produced massive migration of the Salvadoran people, who were fleeing for political and economic reasons (Baker-Cristales, 2004; Coutin, 2003). Many of the Salvadorans who left El Salvador did so without the necessary immigration status to enter the United States legally. These Salvadoran migrants hired smugglers or coyotes to help them move through Guatemala, Mexico, and into the United States (Coutin, 2003). The nature of these transnational movements was not easy, and the effects contributed to the personhood of the Salvadorans. Once settled in the United States, many Salvadorans made the effort to obtain refugee status. In the 1980's, humanitarian movement within the receiving states supported these efforts of the Salvadorans to be viewed as asylum seekers who were fleeing from persecution and violence (Menjívar, 2000). During the 1990's, however, there was a turn in the context of reception, and U.S. immigration laws made it more difficult for Salvadorans to seek refugee status.

Immigration law played, and continues to play, a powerful role in the identities and challenges for many Salvadorans living in the United States (Coutin, 2003). Within many Salvadoran families, like Thomas' family, members have differing immigration status, which often carry crucial invisible characteristics that shape their everyday experiences (Yoshikawa, 2011). In addition, the differences in family legal status remain as "hidden stories" (Yoshikawa, 2011), and can result in conflict and turmoil within families due to both social and legal factors.

Baker-Cristales (2004) indicates that Salvadorans continue to migrate to the United States. With a steady flow of immigration to the Northeast, data from the 2005-2009 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey indicate that Salvadorans constitute the largest foreign-born population in the New York suburban community where our work is located, and where Thomas and his family live (Winslow, 2010). Within this suburb, a Salvadoran community has been developed creating a new designation of space with many Salvadoran small businesses lining the main street of the town. Life in the suburbs has not been easy, however. The Salvadorans have experienced issues of poverty, discrimination, segregation, and anti-immigrant sentiments (Garland, 2009). In addition, the schools in this suburban community, are labeled as "high needs," and the experiences of the students in school and their educational outcomes mimic those of their low performing urban counterparts (Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005).

Because this Salvadoran community and its youth are an under researched population, educators often have access to information that is inaccurate or inadequate at best. What has been written about the community focuses on youth gang involvement (Garland, 2009), or on the nature of undocumented families living in crowded conditions (Berger, 2008). We believe, therefore, our research is a small contribution that offers an alternative view of the lived experiences of one Salvadoran youth and his family, who shares his understandings of complex sociopolitical and global influences on his life in this suburban community of New York.

## Context and Methodology

Thomas' case study is part of a larger project conducted in an after-school writing workshop that met in a University-based literacy clinic in a suburb of New York City. The overarching goals for the project, co-directed by the authors of this paper, included developing a writing workshop for youth, specifically male middle school students. The project focused on supporting culturally and linguistically diverse youth in their development of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies through participation in a digital storytelling workshop, where the young men would be introduced to multimodal composition.

Participating youth were enrolled in four local middle schools from three different school districts and were recommended to the project by their guidance counselors. Participation in the writing workshop entitled, *Young Men's Writing Project*, was voluntary and a total of twenty African American, Caribbean American, and Latino young men accepted the invitation to attend the program during the summers of 2009, 2010 and 2011. In the program, they used technology and writing for self-expression, as spaces to explore identities and as a way to consider issues they faced as adolescent males of color

The youth in this project lived in communities with a long history of changing demographics due to shifts in local immigration patterns, thus resulting in communities with rich cultural and linguistic diversity. Thomas, the focal student in this paper, attended a middle school that reported the following demographic composition in the 2009-2010 academic year: 39% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino and 63% as African American. Other socioeconomic indicators of his community revealed that 80% of the students qualified for free lunch, while 12% were eligible for reduced lunch. In terms of language, 13% of the students in his school were English language learners, identified by the school as limited English proficient students.

Since we view narratives as situated within the social and cultural contexts of activity in everyday practices and in relation to audiences, the ethnographic approaches of the New Literacy Studies were adopted. This approach allowed for an investigation of the intersection of the youth's identities with their hybrid narrative and discourse practices across time and space. We combined several data collection methods: in-depth and ongoing interviews, observational data obtained during the project hours, and review of their textual productions. In particular, the use of ongoing interviewing provided information on the youth's production and story choices, and provided more of an understanding of the youth's experiences. Our data analysis was informed by narrative theory (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Wortham, 2001), and by the concept of "design," or how the maker of the digital story combines multimodal forms to express and convey meanings, and to enact and maintain socially situated identities (Hull & Nelson, 2005).

### "The Road to Freedom": Thomas's Digital Story

Moje and Luke (2009) state, "the access youth have to particular kinds of space shape the texts they consume and produce, which in turn shape the ways they choose to identify or are identified" (p. 431). We believe we had created the Young Men's Writing Project as this kind of space - where the young men could "communicate critically, aesthetically, lovingly, and agentively" (Hull, 2003, p. 230). Therefore, when Thomas, a quiet, serious 13 year-old Salvadoran American male entered the Young Men's Writing Project, he was provided choice in topic and language, and did not hesitate to write what he called an "immigrational story from El Salvador." Thomas' digital story, becomes his main narrative, and serves as an anchor narrative for the telling of the other two narratives.

Thomas titled his immigration story, "*The Road to Freedom*," which is an approximately two-minute digital story. To explain his topic and his use of a first person narrative for his digital story, Thomas told us, "This is not my story, but my family's story." We consider this a "small story" occurring within the conversational context of the after-school program (Georgakopoulou, 2007). Through this "small story," Thomas positioned himself as knowledgeable of his family's history, of the use of first person as a narrative tool for his digital story, and of the fact that we were a respectful audience to whom he could make such a "hidden story" public. Thus his narrative of how he came to write his digital story begins to show his critical understandings of larger sociopolitical influences on transnational biographies, and reveals his agentive stance as the teller of the story.



Thomas narrates his digital story, *The Road to Freedom*, from a first person account, authoring himself into the narrative, or aligning himself with the immigrant story. Thomas has an artful command of the English language, using expressive language that depicts the feeling, or event he wants to convey. The images are downloaded from Google-images and are mostly literal representations of his words, however through the juxtaposition of the images with his authorial stance, Thomas has orchestrated a personal history of the immigrant experience of border crossing. His complex linking of narrative, imagery, transitions, and music evokes emotion in the viewer similar to a documentary portrayal of a transnational crossing. Through his digital story, Thomas aesthetically constructs a rendering of the transnational processes that are part of his identity as a Salvadoran American youth.

### **The Road to Freedom**

(Thomas' formatting of his story frames for his digital story.)

It was ten to two in the morning and I just couldn't drag myself anymore.

Cuts and scrapes embodied my tattered torso, arms and legs.

I couldn't climb another barbed wire fence.

Helicopters desperately searched for any remnant for us.

The lack of food and water had taken a serious toll on me.

Dog barks could be heard in the distance. They had picked up our scent.

In a frantic moment, I stumbled upon a dead branch and fell, scraping my hands and face.

I knew it was over and as footsteps rapidly approached the dream of a better life faded with the moonlight.

In a futile attempt to avoid being discovered I rolled into a small shrub unfortunately possessing thorns.

Luckily the search man took a different route than the one I had previously taken.

It was pitch black and I couldn't see my bleeding hand in front of my face.

As I arose from the prickled bush, I found myself with a strange object.

And much to my surprise grass under my feet instead of sand.

My eyes had been sore from so many days of force vision through painful sand storms.

And violent winds

I tried to make out the words on the strange object. I approached it and it said, "Welcome to Arizona."

Incredulous, I couldn't believe I had made it.

Thomas carefully crafts every detail of his story of the Salvadoran experience of border crossing. He begins with the light of the moon as his title page; "*The Road to Freedom*" plays on the screen. His descriptions and images of crossing the desert and the heat clearly depict one's movement through, while not named, Mexico. His penultimate image, a sign stating "Welcome to Arizona!" does name his entry point into the U.S. And, his last frame of "incredulous I had made it" brings the story full circle as the shadow of a figure jumps into the air with the sun rising behind him.

Thomas's knowledge of multimodal composition is revealed through his complementary use of image with each line of his text. He engages in critical analysis and selection of images that would not only communicate his message, but would extend the meaning of his words to evoke emotions. Thomas invites the viewer into a multisensory experience, where the dust of the desert and the pain from the thorns pushed against his skin become vivid images of someone's lived-through-experience. This ability to narrate himself into the story adds to the power of his multimodal expression.

It is therefore, not only through the appropriation of images and music through which Thomas reflects on the immigrant's story, but also through his appropriation of the immigrant narrative (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robinson, 2006). This appropriation, a "process that involves both analysis and commentary" (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 33), signifies Thomas's authorial agency (Hull & Katz, 2006), his self-identification with the Salvadoran immigrant's experience, and his self-positioning within the larger Latino immigrant struggle.

### **Presentation to Families and Community Members**

It has been noted that once a digital story is complete, "its 'telling' does not require the participation of the storyteller: it stands as a work of art, a representation apart from the teller, an 'object' for reflection and critique" (Davis, 2009, p. 3). While we accept this as true, and assert that Thomas's digital story can stand alone as an artful representation of an immigrant narrative, Thomas's presentation of his digital story to an audience composed of the youth's families and of community members was critical to the positioning of his digital story, of his message, and of himself.

At the presentation in which we celebrated the digital productions of the project's participants, each youth gave a brief introduction to his story. Prior to the showing of his story *The Road to Freedom*, Thomas stood up and explained to the audience, "I made this story as a way to share the immigrant's story and as a way to honor the immigrant's story" (fieldnotes, July 2009). Through this third narrative in action, Thomas decenters himself and his family from the story of border crossing. As a "testimonio," he tells the events as he sees significant and as "an expression of a collective experience, rather than the individual" (Huber, 2009, p. 644).

We were struck by how in this context, Thomas is conscious of his self-positioning within the sociopolitical climate, and enacts a self of authority, a political commentator on the issue of immigration. Within this space, his digital story becomes a shared narrative of perseverance, strength, and survival as the immigrant searches for freedom. He positions the audience as viewers to the experiences and struggles of the immigrant as a story to be proud of, countering the national narratives that position Latino immigrants unfavorably, and more specifically, that position undocumented Latinos as lawbreakers and fugitives (Rodriguez, 2010).

We view this act as an agentic social critique on the way Latino immigrants are positioned by current national politics. Thomas was able to define and redefine his positioning within the Salvadoran immigrant story, enacting two different stances through his narratives. His dual stances involved one where he authored himself into the story, becoming the central character, and one where he enacted an authorial self, an expert on this immigrant experience. Thus, we consider his digital story a sociopolitical narrative/testimonio (Gutiérrez, 2008), and a political commentary on the Salvadoran immigrant experience.

## Conclusion

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, where youth's social worlds are influenced by transnational processes, we believe that narratives can be a powerful research methodological tool and a pedagogical tool for understanding the lived experiences of Latino youth and their families. As we have learned from Thomas' experience, narratives are constructed in relation to family transnational histories, to local audiences, and to broader sociopolitical issues. Narratives offer a vehicle for a transformative practice where Latino youth become theorists of and change agents of their own and of others' worldviews.

We also know that in the context of today's world, youth actively transform content and recreate their realities through the use of digital tools. We believe that Thomas's digital hybrid narrative exemplifies the nature of participatory culture, described as not only individuals consuming information but actively participating in the creation of content (Jenkins et al., 2006). In this digital writing workshop, new media literacies afforded Thomas the space to compose a counter-narrative about the Salvadoran immigration experience, thus exercising his agentic stance. He makes use of digital tools to represent, recreate, repurpose, and to retell a transnational experience that is not his own, but related to his family's history and to the history of the larger Salvadoran community. In essence, he authors himself into the shared experiences of the Salvadoran community while at the same time, counters larger anti-immigration sentiments.

Thomas's stance as a multimodal composer helps to ratify the idea that Latino youth living in transnational communities have access to complex sets of everyday knowledge that crosses boundaries, even if they have not themselves experienced that border-crossing. Their narratives are shaped by their understanding of the larger global experience as they live in communities where the flow of people, knowledge, and experiences across borders, both physical and imagined, is a source of knowledge. In the case of Thomas's narrative and political commentary made through his digital story, we believe these transnational funds of knowledge (Sánchez, 2007) provide him the ability to take an authorial stance that is intrinsically shaped by local, national, and global knowledge and understandings.

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# **Barriers Experienced by Mexican Immigrants: Implications for Educational Achievement and Mental Health**

**Melissa L. Morgan Consoli**

University of California, Santa Barbara

**Andrés J. Consoli**

San Francisco State University

**Graciela León Orozco**

San Francisco State University

**Rufus R. Gonzales**

DePaul University

**Elizabeth M. Vera**

Loyola University Chicago

## **Abstract**

The adversities faced by Latina/o individuals and their families in the U.S. negatively impact educational outcomes as well as their mental and physical health. These adversities are often related to immigration status and acculturation and include difficulties with immigration, language barriers, and discrimination. Given that recent immigrants often experience many barriers, it is important to understand their perceptions of these barriers and their impacts on their lives and educational opportunities. We investigated barriers (social, individual or environmental phenomena which hinder or restrict normal developmental achievement and educational attainment) in the lives of six, first-generation Mexican immigrants. Participants engaged in one to two hour semi-structured interviews reflecting on their perceptions of stressors, motivation and success in life. Using thematic analysis and grounded theory, the barriers identified include cultural, sociopolitical and social factors such as: life circumstances or cognitive barriers, barriers caused by safety concerns, acculturation or the immigration process, language barriers, and lack of resources. Implications for educators and mental health professionals are discussed.

## **Introduction**

Mexican immigrants to the U.S. make up 32% of all foreign-born residents of the U.S. and 66% of all Latina/o immigrants. Compared to other immigrant groups in the U.S., Mexican immigrants are younger, have lower education levels, and have higher poverty and unemployment rates (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). There were approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. as of 2012 with 6.3 million being of Mexican origin. Children constitute approximately one in six of the undocumented immigrant population (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Almost half of the undocumented immigrants in the U.S. do not have a high school diploma (Fortuny, Capps, & Passel, 2007). Immigrant populations encounter multiple adversities, including immigration itself, markedly limited educational opportunities, discrimination, acculturation difficulties, language barriers, cultural obstacles, economic insecurity, and other systemic oppression (Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1991).

Immigrant individuals experience discrimination at school, at work, with friends and neighbors, and in public settings. Encounters with discrimination have been found to be emotionally, psychologically, and physically harmful in multiple studies (Alamilla, Kim, & Lam, 2010) and to affect daily life such that adults may not want to go to work or pursue an education, or children may avoid school. Acculturative stressors involve stress in adjusting



to schools, neighborhoods, religious communities, and/or work places, as well as possible intergenerational conflicts (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). Language barriers can affect access to education, communication with children's school personnel, range of job opportunities or job advancement possibilities, and access to healthcare services. A shortage of trained bilingual school personnel and mental health service providers contributes to the difficulties experienced by monolingual immigrants (Partida, 2007). In addition, more Latina/o immigrants (18.6%) live in poverty than U.S. natives (12.5%) (U.S. Census, 2009); living at the poverty level entails financial stress, limited educational opportunities, less time to spend with family or attending to personal needs, lacking insurance, and living in communities with high crime rates (Dohrenwend, 2000).

Stressors encountered in the U.S. are often different than those faced in the immigrant's native country. Efforts to cope with these stressors while simultaneously dealing with everyday life challenges may create a very high level of strain, which has been associated with depression, anxiety disorders, and suicide (Lefcourt, 1989). Such stress and illness inevitably impacts educational outcomes. Specifically, studies investigating Latina/o dropout have found it associated with lower socioeconomic status, school disengagement, and early pregnancy (Feliciano, 2001). School dropout has been linked to later life problems, including increased adult violence, higher unemployment, and lower wages (Laird, DeBell, & Chapman, 2006). Given the marked negative impact, it is beneficial for educators and mental health professionals alike to better understand the barriers faced by Mexican immigrants to the U.S., so these stressors can be addressed preventively, before they take a toll on educational achievement or lead to psychological problems.

This qualitative study explores the barriers faced by six Mexican immigrants to a large city in the Midwestern U.S. Through analysis of semi-structured interviews, themes of shared and unique barriers relevant to education and mental health emerged.

## Method

### Participants

**Selection.** Dependable community contacts (i.e., individuals respected in their communities and holding positions of leadership) referred potential participants for the study. Potential participants had to be first-generation immigrants to the U.S. from Mexico, at least 18 years of age, not currently experiencing severe psychological disorders, and successfully meeting developmental gains that were expected within their communities in at least one of three domains (i.e., work, family, or community) (see Morgan, 2007). Consistent with grounded theory methodology, participants were recruited until saturation was reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Description.** Participants were six Mexican immigrants raised in various Mexican states, four men and two women, ranging in age from 22 to 35 years old. Time since immigration ranged from 2 to 17 years. All names were changed to protect the participants' identities.

**Daniel.** Daniel is a 22-year-old seminarian who came to the United States the first time through the services of a *coyote*, but returned two years prior to the interview with a student visa and studied theology and English in a Catholic program that trains Spanish speaking priests to serve the local Latina/o population.

**Alice.** Alice was in her early twenties and a recent graduate of a large, urban Catholic university. She was born in the United States but moved to Mexico (her parents' homeland) at age two. She and her parents returned to the U.S. when she was a teenager so that her father could earn money toward retirement. The family stayed so that she could attend college. She was unemployed and lived with her parents at the time of the interview.

**Andrés.** Andrés was a 20-year old seminarian participating in the same program as Daniel and living in the same residential facility. He moved to the U.S. from central Mexico three and a half years before to participate

in the religious training program. He also initially traveled to the U.S. illegally, but then studied under a student visa. He had older brothers living in the U.S., but most of his family members remained in Mexico.

**Pablo.** Pablo was a 22-year-old seminarian who moved to the United States four years before. He had no family in the U.S. and stated that he moved as a way to “learn about life.”

**Geraldo.** Geraldo was a 29-year-old who came to the U.S. for the first time without documentation 11 years ago, and who moved permanently to the U.S. eight years before the interview. He migrated to raise money and send it home to his family who lived in a small rural town. He lived with his male partner of five years and worked as a cook in a restaurant. He lived near a large extended network of family members from his Mexican hometown.

**Sandra.** Sandra was a 35-year old woman who moved to the U.S. 17 years before the interview. She left Mexico as a single mother of two sons, to escape an abusive relationship. At the time of the interview, she was married to another Mexican immigrant and had a third son. She worked as a waitress, and planned to move back to Mexico with her husband once retired.

## Instruments

Qualitative data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation conducted by the researchers.

**Semi-structured interview.** The interview consisted of open-ended questions on daily life and the difficulties encountered and descriptions of critical incidents where participants were able to overcome adversity.

**Observation notes.** The Researchers made participant observation notes as journal entries after attending public events in the environments of the participants. Notes were used both to develop cases and to provide context for interpretation of results.

## Procedures

Potential participants were contacted after referral by the community contact. Individuals who agreed to participate were given information about the study and scheduled for a one to two hour interview.

Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending upon preference, at a convenient community location chosen by the participant. Trained translators were used for Spanish interviews, when needed. Written materials in Spanish were translated and then back translated to ensure accuracy of meaning (Marin & Marin, 1991).

Researcher observations included visiting a parish and watching one of the seminarians conduct his work. Observations were also made in and around the work or home environments of other participants.

**Transcription of interviews.** Interview sessions were audio-taped with participants' consent (all agreed) and then transcribed. Spanish interviews were translated into English by one of three translators. If there was uncertainty on the part of a translator, a second translator was consulted to reach consensus (McGorry, 2000).

**Data analysis.** Interviews, transcriptions, and researcher observations provided data triangulation and served to increase the quality of the inquiry (Creswell, 1998), while using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) and grounded theory methodology (Straus & Corbin, 1998). Two researchers independently reviewed the data, and then came together to reach consensus on themes and their definitions. The Barriers identified in each case were noted and recorded in the database. Barriers were related to any life achievement, education, and/or mental

health. When a case was determined to exemplify Barriers but did not fit into previously determined categories, subcategories, or tertiary categories, the categories were adapted until all identified cases of Barriers were accommodated. The end result was a coding scheme broad enough to encompass all cases from all participants.

## Results

Themes of Barriers emerged as several categories: Individual Barriers (life circumstances and daily routines) Systemic Barriers (micro-systems, government, and threats to safety), Cross-cultural Barriers (acculturation, immigration process), and Economic Barriers (lack of money or resources) (See Appendix A for definitions). Each type of Barrier is discussed below with examples.

### Individual Barriers

Individual Barriers, or those barriers related to life circumstances, often created situations that made it difficult to consider or continue education. For example, Sandra, who wished to find new opportunities in the U.S., including furthering her education, discussed the following Life Circumstance when asked about experiences she had had where she found the strength to survive or “keep going”:

Sandra: *El coyote trato también* (the coyote tried also) and I say, you know, “Hey, I’m gonna pay. Why are you like... I mean, like what do you want?” (laughs nervously). And he tried, to like “Hey, stay with me here in California.” “Stay with me and my sisters.” And of course they tried to take ... aa...

Interviewer: Advantage?

Sandra: Exactly. And I’m not stupid, you know. Come on, I was like 17 years old, so I don’t think that I was...

Sandra stated that she thought about this experience frequently and the memory disturbed her, at the same time as it reminded her of her own strength.

Three participants described instances of Daily Routine Barriers. All reflected tedious jobs and problematic schedules, which particularly interfered with materializing educational aspirations. For example, Daniel discussed his life when he first immigrated to the U.S. and took two jobs. He attempted to go to school, but encountered great difficulties:

I tried to arrange like a student visa to try to get into school again, through the university, but I didn’t get any help on that. None of the universities would even recognize any of the requisite courses I had taken, I wasn’t even able to get the preliminary exams to even get into school... I realized that I needed to get a job just to survive so I attained a job at this company (company name) where I was a cashier there and worked for several months.

Daniel further described his daily schedule, which made it impossible for him to attend school:

I tried to arrange like a student visa to try to get into school again, through the university, but I didn’t get any help on that. None of the universities would even recognize any of the requisite courses I had taken, I wasn’t even able to get the preliminary exams to even get into school... I realized that I needed to get a job just to survive so I attained a job at this company (company name) where I was a cashier there and worked for several months.

### Systemic Barriers

Half of the participants discussed systemic barriers that were due to Micro-Systems such as work, gangs,

or family. For example, Geraldo discussed the expectation that when he moved to the U.S., with the help of several cousins, he would live with them and contribute to the rent so that money could be saved and sent back to their family in Mexico. He also planned to attend classes and work. However, he found that the cousins often drank too much alcohol and that he did not like living in that type of environment. He was faced with the conflict of the familial expectation to contribute to the rent while at the same time taking care of his own needs. In this case, the necessity of living in crowded quarters with his family became the barrier to his achievements.

Three participants discussed examples that involved Societal Conventions, which got in the way of an individual receiving help, support, or education. One example is the societal stigma of seeing a psychologist. Geraldo described feeling he needed to see someone for help when he arrived in the U.S. He felt that seeing a psychologist might give him the support he needed to pursue his goals. Yet having to deal with his friends' and families' negative reactions was a major deterrent: "...they think that going to see a psychologist is for people that are crazy. And that is not true." Another case of Societal Conventions as barriers involved an immigrant not being initially open to customs in his new culture. Andrés describes this feeling and subsequent realization:

Ah, so it is likely many of us (immigrants) don't sympathize sharing with other types of people ... but then I realized that it was a matter of little by little entering to the (U.S.) culture and knowing about the different activities that are available here.

As Andrés was able to become more "open" to different types of people, he felt he could avail himself better of the job and education possibilities in the U.S.

Government Restrictions were illustrated in an instance where the U.S. government did not accept professional training received at a Mexican institution. This affected how a hard-earned education was valued in the new culture and exemplifies another challenge within education for immigrants.

Threats to Safety were discussed by two participants. The threats involved neighborhood gangs affecting family safety. Yolanda described being afraid that her son would join gangs in her neighborhood and worrying about "not knowing what he is doing" when he is out at night. She was afraid that his involvement in gangs would hamper his education and ability to "make something" of himself. On a related note, Pablo indicated fear of gangs and drug activity and the tendency to isolate himself as protection: "Who knows, there's too much... One comes from over there and does not know many things. When one arrives here, we are fearful because there are too many gangs, and lots of drugs. So one is fearful. One arrives and has a tendency to enclose oneself." This also hindered his activities and possibilities for self-advancement such as extra classes, friendships and other social connections.

## **Cross-Cultural Barriers**

Cross-Cultural barriers concerned mostly the stress associated with acculturation, or the difficulties that result from attempting to interact within two systems that have competing values and/or cultures. Others were about discrimination faced by immigrants, and the process of realizing this, such as Alice discussing an event that she did not want to disclose but saw as racism:

I just remember once at school it was something that happened to me and I didn't want to see it as racism, but a friend told me, "You know what? I don't want to be mean or sound bad, but I do think that it was some type of racism." I didn't take it too personally, because what could I do anyway?

Pablo also discussed a feeling of being discriminated against at some workplaces: "Because in other places where I have worked before, there is sort of an oppression over Mexicans, there is something against the



Hispanic, even if it is from a Hispanic toward a Hispanic.”

Other cases were specifically about acculturation-related difficulties in not knowing the dominant language, for example, when Alice discussed her parents not knowing English:

So, yeah, I think the language barrier is (there)...and I see it with my parents. My Mom, she's willing to learn the language. She takes classes and listens to the radio or the T.V., but my Dad is the opposite to her. He really doesn't want to learn the language. He's always like Spanish channels, Spanish radio, talking to people. He understands the language but he sometimes doesn't quite really understand everything. He's like, "No, I don't need to learn it, I'm going back to Mexico. I don't need it." That's the way he puts it, "I don't need it." But yeah, he does need it. But on the other side, he has my brother, he has me, he's like, "You go, you do it. You tell them." So that's the reason he doesn't want to do it. But I know it can be stressful to him because sometimes when he gets mail and he doesn't understand or when people talk to him he gets a little nervous maybe. And I've seen it in people on the street, you will see like people talking to a Hispanic woman or man... and both sides get really stressed because one is trying to explain and the other is not understanding. So that's something that keeps people really stressed, like, "What should I do now?"

Alice further discusses the language barrier and how it affects her: "Like even now, I'm sure you can notice that my accent is still there and sometimes I have troubles with the language. So sometimes I'm like, oh, how can I say it?" Similarly, Pablo discussed this idea and how it became a barrier to his education:

What causes me stress is, there are too many things that I don't understand about the U.S. ... When I am studying, there are too many things that I don't understand, and that stresses me because there are too many complexities in English.

Other specific stressors of acculturation, such as lack of family time due to having to work a lot to make ends meet in the new culture, were also identified. Alice discussed the difference in American and Mexican work values and the stress involved with this:

I don't know if they really have the time to socialize a lot. I think that is really difficult. I know back home in Mexico, the people socialize a lot more than they do here, so that's something that is different from here. Because even though we're Hispanics and we're coming from the same country, we don't do the same activities that we do back there. I think that the social life is suffering a bit more here compared to back in Mexico, my country of origin... I think that [immigrants] are more concentrated [on] just working hard. And then their social life will be just at the end of the week. Just spend some time with the family. That's something that we are always looking for – trying to spend time with the family. I think that here time has been reduced – a lot.

Four participants discussed barriers involving the Immigration Process itself. Most of these cases had to do with difficulties associated with one's legal status, and a few had to do with lack of support in the immigration process. For example, one participant described the difficulties of crossing the U.S.-Mexican border:

There were thirty people. And it was true that there were a lot of problems, there were many risks. It rained a river at night and in the day we could not walk. We would use the morning, like six in the morning to nine in the morning. Then day would come and we had to camp or cover ourselves because of so many helicopters that were flying around... And you can hear when they pass by in front and you... and you simply sleep in the day and in the afternoon. When the sun is down, again you walk until ten, twelve at night and then sleep... And also the animals were

a problem, snakes... You would talk amongst yourselves or would stay quiet. The person who helped us cross would tell you to be quiet. Maybe because immigration was near or could hear us if we were talking. So, you had to go with caution. And it was an experience that I dealt with twice.

Such experiences were endured with the hope of securing a better life for one's self and family, but many times the reality of the experience had to be dealt with physically and psychologically before the person could even hope to begin to achieve what he/she migrated to attain.

## **Economic Barriers**

Economic Barriers were discussed by most participants and were all associated with not having money or resources to achieve goals, such as Geraldo discussing his living conditions upon arrival in the United States: "When I got here ah...I came with a dream to make money. When I got here we lived in an apartment with two bedrooms and twelve people." He noted how this interfered with his aspirations of being an educated businessman. Often such accommodations disrupted his studying and advancing his English skills. For example, Pablo described the primary objective of working to raise money in order to attain his goals of "having and being more." He acknowledged a significant strain: "you won't find anything for free here... you will have to be fighting constantly in order to make ends meet." He further discussed the general lack of opportunities and the effect on immigrant individuals: "I think they are motivated, but sometimes there is no time, all is not available and also the opportunities are not there. Sometimes there is no other way, the only thing left is to struggle."

## **Discussion**

The stories of the Mexican immigrant participants interviewed in this study illustrate many of the barriers faced on a daily basis by individuals in this population. These barriers clearly interfere with educational goals and employment aspirations, as well as with general wellbeing. Acculturation barriers were the most frequently cited type of barriers, which reflects the prevalence that the issue of adjustment to another culture takes in the lives of immigrants. Other barriers had to do with the immigration process, and reflected, in many cases, difficulties associated with being undocumented, including various mental health results, which underscores the psychological impact of immigration and the importance of the coping strategies used for maintaining mental health. As seen in the examples from participants, such mental health impact can interfere greatly with accomplishing desired goals or "dreams." This is consistent with literature showing the relation between stressors and various mental health disorders (Lefcourt, 1989). In turn, such mental health issues can have great impact on educational achievement (Bradley, Doolittle, & Bartolotta, 2008; Carbonell, 2005; Constantine, Gloria, & Barón, 2006).

Discussion of language barriers by participants emphasized the limitation placed on individuals once they arrive in the U.S. if he/she is not fluent in English. These barriers can be particularly important in educational settings and society at large, where, given dwindling resources for public education and initiatives against bilingual education, children or adults can be limited in their achievement possibilities, thus curtailing further opportunities and social mobility (Partida, 2007; Tashakkori, Ochoa, & Kemper, 1999). During early education, limited English proficiency in many U.S. schools may lead to school drop out and being held back academically (Abedi, 2002; Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004), and may have emotional ramifications such as feelings of inadequacy, lack of acceptance, and social isolation due to discrimination and stigmatization (Dawson & Williams, 2008). In fact, language proficiency has been found to be a major determinant in academic difficulty as well as in teacher perception of the student's social, behavioral and academic abilities (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilles, 2005).

Participants' experiences of discrimination and racism reported in this study echo findings for immigrant populations in general, where discrimination and racism are ever-present stressors in everyday life. Reports by study participants parallel findings in the extant literature of discrimination's detrimental effect on educational achievement (Benner & Graham, 2011; Dawson & Williams, 2008). Economic Barriers discussed by participants reflect the findings in the literature on poverty and low socioeconomic status as one of the significant challenges for Mexican immigrants (Census, 2009; Dohrenwend, 2000).

In many accounts, the barriers discussed by participants led to a temporary or complete halt in their educational processes. Participant stories underscored the impact that this type of educational discontinuation has had on later life options, a finding corroborated by correlational studies of dropout with later negative life outcomes (Laird, DeBell, & Chapman, 2006).

Given the links of many barriers to external or internalized oppression, it remains important for educators and mental health professionals who wish to promote educational achievement, resilience, and mental health in the face of such barriers to continue to advocate for social justice, or “Full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (Bell, 1997, p. 3) (e.g., see Life Circumstances barriers in Table 1).

Several factors have been shown to be linked to mediation of such barriers. For example, social support (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Fairbrother, 2008) and problem-focused coping (Pascoe & Richman, 2009), academic motivation (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bamaca, & Zeiders, 2009), the ability to create meaning in adversity, and contribution to the community (Eccles & Appleton, 2002) help foster greater wellbeing despite adversities. Educators are in a unique role to facilitate some of these conditions, either directly, as advocates (Bailey, Getch, & Chen-Hayes, 2003; Toporek, 2008), or by helping students to become connected with necessary resources. Helping to facilitate such skills and conditions helps to “even the playing field” for the students and thus contributes to the achievement of social justice.

Understanding more thoroughly the personal and societal impact of the barriers like those highlighted in this study is crucial in designing educational opportunities, mental health services, and policy concerning this growing segment of our population. It also seems important to recognize that in many cases this is a group of individuals self-selected to face hardships “head-on,” in that they often chose to immigrate, knowing the hardships it can entail. As not everyone is able to make this decision, it could be that this group of individuals is better able to deal with barriers than most. Although not the focus of this article, participants often mentioned methods of dealing with the adversities that exemplified their resilience. For example, it was common to rely on familial support or hope to get through hardships. Knowing possible ways of coping commonly utilized by Mexican immigrants may help educators to facilitate strengths in the Mexican immigrant students that they work with.

### **Limitations and Implications**

One limitation of this study was the cultural and linguistic differences between the researchers and the participants. It is important to note that these differences may have influenced the creation of the coding scheme as well as its application. While the researchers tried to be aware of such influences to the highest degree possible, it is impossible that all such influences were removed from the study design, data collection, or data analysis and interpretation. The researchers believe, however, that the benefit obtained by the richness of the data resulting from this methodology far outweighs its limitations.

The authors believe that results from this study may be used to inform education, general service programs, mental health services, and public policy and advocacy initiatives for Mexican immigrants. For example, schools must welcome and orient newcomers, facilitate English skills of students in need, connect families with neighborhood resources, and celebrate the unique contributions made by newcomers. Schools should also utilize various programs designed to address environmental concerns (e.g., discrimination and racism) (Leos & Saavedra, 2010) and prepare school personnel to attend to the distinct needs experienced by Mexican immigrants. This may entail individualized training or group dynamics training on diversity and social justice advocacy. Additionally, Mexican immigrant students and families should be made aware of any community resources or support systems that may aid them in coping with the challenges they have, and will continue to experience in navigating their adjustment to a new culture. Detailed and specific knowledge about the barriers faced by this population highlights the need for continued efforts in alleviating barriers, or, at least, helping to foster means to cope with the challenges of migrating to a new land. In this “Nation of Immigrants,” such an endeavor is paramount.

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## Appendix A

### Coding Scheme for Barriers

Primary Category

Subcategory

*Tertiary Category*

**Barriers** – A social, individual or environmental phenomenon that hinders or restricts normal developmental achievement

**Individual** – Idiosyncratic conditions that affect only a few people or individuals

*Life circumstances* – Specific experiences or life event unique to an individual

*Daily routines* – Tedious or repetitive actions specific to an individual

*Cognitive* – Internal judgment causing distress, general stress

**Systemic** – Rules, regulations or circumstances that affect groups of individuals operating within the same society

*Societal Convention* – Values, practices or role expectations perceived to be held of a broad social environment

*Micro-systems* – Systems which perpetuate role expectations for a small group or organization, such as a family, community, school, or work environment

*Threat to Safety* – Perceived or actual endangerment in the environment, either physical or psychological (drugs, violence, gang activity, etc.)

**Cross-cultural** – Rules, regulations or circumstances that affect groups of individuals operating within or between multiple societies

*Acculturation* – Difficulties that result from attempting to interact within two systems that have competing values and/or cultures, including racism and discrimination

*Immigration Process* – Difficulties arising from the experiences of exiting one country and entering another, with the intention to live and/or work for an extended period of time (includes illegal work status)

**Economic** – Production, development or management of material wealth that is either actual or perceived to be inadequate

*Resources* – Lack or difficulty in accessing goods, services, or information

*Money* – General depression of monetary resources, impoverished environment, or difficulty meeting basic needs. This includes the inability to find a way to make money or wages that are perceived as insufficient.

# Revisiting the Coleman Report: Deficit Ideologies and Federal Compensatory Funding in Low-Income Latino School Communities

Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos  
Arizona State University

## Abstract

The essay argues that the Coleman Report helped give credence to contemporary deficit ideologies in education by proclaiming that schools do not make much of a difference in the educational outcomes of students in poverty including Latino communities. Furthermore, the author explores how deficit ideologies influence compensatory funding, in particular Title I, and concludes with recommendations to improve compensatory allotments that reject deficit views for low-income Latino students.

## Introduction

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) was founded in 1867 to collect information on schools with the goal of helping states establish effective school systems. A century later, in the midst of progressive “Great Society Initiatives” and civil rights legislation, the U.S. Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965<sup>19</sup> (ESEA), a comprehensive set of K-12 programs that includes the Title I and Title VII (now Title III) program of federal financial support for students in poverty and English Language Learners (ELLs), respectively. During the same time period, James Coleman and colleagues conducted an educational study on schools and inequality commissioned under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and sponsored by the USDOE entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966). More commonly known as “The Coleman Report,” this study still has implications on how we view our public K-12 education system.

The author argues that the Coleman Report helped give credence to contemporary deficit ideologies in education by proclaiming that schools do not make much of a difference in the educational outcomes of students in poverty including Latino students. Deficit ideologies focus on how biological, cultural, and/or environmental factors explain the underachievement of Latino students in poverty (Valencia, 1997). These ideologies aim to remedy academic deficiencies of Latino children and families in poverty by changing their cultural behaviors and beliefs that are seen as the cause of their low academic attainment (Gorksi, 2008; Olivos, 2006). Furthermore, the author explores how deficit ideologies influence compensatory funding, in particular Title I, and concludes with recommendations to improve compensatory allotments that reject deficit views for low-income Latino students.

## The Coleman Report

The Coleman Report was monumental in its scope, findings, and impact on education. It drew on data from surveys of 600,000 students, 60,000 educators including several thousand principals and hundreds of school superintendents, and over 3,000 schools across the country, making it the second largest social science research study ever done in the U.S. at the time. Many politicians, educators, and education scholars thought that the study would reveal significant school resource inequalities, but it did not. Instead, Coleman and his colleagues claimed that their findings indicated that a student’s background and socioeconomic status are much more important than measured differences in school resources (such as per pupil spending) in determining educational outcomes. Consequently, the Coleman Report was met with a strong academic and political backlash (see Bowels & Leven, 1968; Moynihan, 1968). In particular, Bowels and Leven (1968) severely critiqued the study’s methodology including the sampling and response rate of the survey, pointing to an overrepresentation of suburban schools and an underrepresentation of schools in large cities. They pointed, as well, to statistical flaws

<sup>19</sup> Currently titled “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB)

in the research design and analysis.

Regardless of the early criticisms, the Coleman Report has persevered and continues to affect the public policy in education in significant ways. As Borman and Dowling (2010) lamented, “Despite past re-analyses of the Coleman data and decades of research on the effects of schools as organizations, the report’s fundamental finding—that a student’s family background is far more important than school social composition and school resources for understanding student outcomes—still retains much of its currency” (p. 1202). Ravich (1981) further articulated the effect of the Coleman Report:

...its most pervasive effect was to encourage the feeling that the schools were unable to affect student achievement very greatly...Whether students did well or poorly in schools seemed determined for the most part by their human resources, and little, if at all, by anything that teachers or schools did...[therefore] it becomes difficult to argue on behalf of any given curriculum, requirement, or policy” (p. 719)

In addition, Espinosa (1985) explained that one reason the issue of school resources (e.g., finances, facilities) had been largely ignored is that:

[p]roponents of [Coleman’s] philosophy believed that future investigation into resource distribution and possible educational disparities would not provide answers on how to improve the opportunities or achievement of educationally deprived students. This helps to explain why attempts to extract information pertaining to school inequality and resource disparities were neglected by many researchers. (p. 3)

Consequently, federal funding for education research has tended toward studies focused on examining individual students’ locus of control, motivation, and behaviors as malleable factors to improve student learning. Significantly less education funding has gone to examining the structural issues that contribute to unequal educational outcomes, allowing the Coleman Report and its findings to gain momentum. If educators take to heart the Coleman report that school resources do not make a difference, but student characteristics do, the implication are to focus on changing the culture and behaviors of Latino students and families in poverty so that they can resemble that of affluent families. Consider, as an example, this analysis from Goldsmith (2010):

Most studies of peer effects use... a normative model because they theorize that students become like their peers. The peer-effect explanation dates back at least to the seminal work of Coleman and his colleagues, who argued that middle-class students often have beliefs and behaviors that associate with greater achievement and that in schools with many of these students, the students create a normative climate that promotes achievement. (p. 509)

### **Deficit Ideologies and Title I Funding**

The two primary federal funding sources earmarked to support Latino students in poverty are Title I and Title III (previously Title VII), which are related to poverty and English Language Acquisition. There is no direct funding source designed for Latino students in K-12 schools. The Title III funding is designed for Latino (and non-Latino) students who are learning English as a second language and Title I funding is designed for Latino (and non-Latino) students who are in poverty. Even though Title III seems to be more specific to Latino students since some Latinos are second language learners; there are still more Latino students who are in poverty than there are Latino students learning English as a second language. In fact, most Latino students are English speaking. In addition, Title I is a significantly larger allotment than Title III. For these two reasons, I have chosen to focus on Title I funding instead of Title III funding in this paper. Arguing that Title I has equally if not a more significant impact on Latino communities than Title III. However, both are targeting different needs.

Title I was originally conceived as a compensatory vehicle for distributing federal funding to school



districts based on the number of low-income children enrolled (6,500 or 15%). The intent of Title I funds is to “supplement not supplant” the resources provided to children in poverty to support their education. In other words, Title I funds should specifically target students in poverty, but not replace general education funds. Because Title I funds are allocated to local educational agencies (LEAs)—school districts—state educational agencies are in charge of distributing the funds to districts, monitoring district programs for compliance, providing technical assistance and administering special state programs. The United States Department of Education most recent data on participation in the Title I program from school year (SY) 2009-10 show that more than 56,000 public schools across the country received Title I funding. That same year, Title I served more than 21 million children, many of which are Latino students. Of these students, approximately 59 percent were in kindergarten through fifth grade, 21 percent in grades 6-8 and 17 percent in grades 9-12.

A critical perspective on the rationale for compensatory education illuminates how deficit ideologies influence the design and perception of Title I and other similar compensatory funding programs such as Title III. According to Stickney and Fitzpatrick (1987, p. 4) the original rationale for compensatory education funding was based on the following premises:

1. The total environment has a profound influence on measured intelligence and scholastic achievement.
2. Schools are an important part of the total environment.
3. Improved schooling for disadvantaged children could compensate for inadequacies in measured intelligence and scholastic achievement caused by inadequacies in the total environment.

Therefore, deficit ideologies inform the rationale for compensatory education by believing that Latino (and non-Latino) students in poverty are “disadvantaged” and there is a need to “compensate” for the “inadequacies” of these students. Ironically, the majority of Title I and Title III proponents are well-intentioned educators advocating on behalf of student in poverty in the name of fairness. Again, Stickney and Fitzpatrick (1987) express this sentiment as well,

...if the inequalities in the environment are principally responsible for the inequalities in achievement, then probably the only way to significantly reduce the inequalities in achievement is to significantly reduce the inequalities in the environment. In the meantime, in the field of education, that part of the environment that is compensatory schooling may be one of our most important, though modest egalitarian strategies. (p. 55)

However, the original 1965 legislation did not specify the types of services that districts should provide to students leading to abuses and misuses (e.g., tutoring, remedial programs). School districts are responsible for designing and running Title I programs, and allocating funding to schools to support educational services for children in poverty. Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of children from low-income families are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs designed to upgrade their entire educational programs to improve achievement for all students, particularly the lowest-achieving students. One of the major challenges school leaders face in designing and implementing Title I programs is the lack of knowledge about what works to improve the achievement of students in poverty including Latino students. Without this knowledge, providing districts and schools with more resources will be ineffective unless those resources are used in ways that actually meet the needs of students in poverty and enable them to succeed academically.

Regrettably, Title I allotments are too commonly expended to provide a school wide remedial education in high poverty schools helping to create a culture of low expectations and low rigor (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2008) for low-income Latino students. For instance, Title I funds are commonly used to purchase test prep materials, grammar programs such as “Breaking the Code”, and reading intervention programs such as “Success for All”. These interventions are in addition to pre-packaged basal reading and math curriculums, such as “Open Court” and “Saxon Math,” that stress skills and drills instead of critical thinking and culturally relevant pedagogy. Furthermore, most high poverty schools provide minimal history, science, art, music and physical education, since these subjects are seen as non-essential to improve standardized test scores. Ironically, this compensatory

approach to improving standardized test scores does not properly prepare low-income Latino students to meet the minimum standards, much less prepare them to learn complex, high order problem solving skills. Ultimately, compensatory education is operationalized through low expectations of children and selecting low rigor programs, curriculums and interventions to address their deficiencies (Jimenez-Castellanos & Rodriguez, 2009; Rodriguez, 2007). Thus, Title I represents an interesting paradox. On the one hand, Title I funding attempts to counter the Coleman Report's findings that school resources matter yet at the same time are designed and implemented based on deficit ideology.

Given the deficit based compensatory approach used to serve students in poverty especially Latino students, it should not be surprising that Title I is not producing the desired results for Latino and other traditionally marginalized communities. Yet the author argues that low achievement is *not* caused by a student's culture, behavior or characteristics but instead the low quality instructional program provided. Why should we expect low quality programs to produce high academic outcomes? Some suggest that a lack of or negative correlation between Title I funds and achievement means money does not matter (Hanushek, 1986). However, there is *no* data to suggest that *less* funding including reduced Title I funds produce better results for Latino students in poverty (Baker, 2012). In the end, low expectations via compensatory education for Latino (and non-Latino) students in poverty, and not the Title I funding itself, helps to predict low achievement for students in poverty (Espinosa 1985; Espinosa & Ochoa, 1992; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010).

While there is a great need for additional research on what uses of Title I funds are most effective, a growing body of evidence on the educational approaches and programs that are proven to increase achievement among students in poverty can provide a basis for how to better invest Title I dollars. However, many districts and schools do not have adequate information about which programs actually work. Without such information, districts have been slow to adopt proven, evidence-based practices with their Title I funds, particularly when implementing such practices requires a substantial departure from what the district is currently doing. There are several examples of promising practices for spending Title I funds that are supported by research and proven to improve the achievement of students in poverty.

*Expanding quality preschool opportunities:* Districts can use Title I funds to support preschool services for young Latino children in poverty by increasing access to reach more children or raising the quality of existing programs.

*Implementing early literacy interventions:* Title I can fund well-designed early interventions to address the reading challenges facing elementary school low-income Latino students. Intervening earlier can be more successful and cost-effective than providing remedial services in later years.

*Engaging parents in a meaningful way:* Districts can use Title I parent involvement funds to develop strategies that more deeply engage Latino parents in their child's education and address the particular challenges, needs and aspirations of parents in Latino communities.

*Creating a culture of high expectations and college-readiness:* Title I funds can support efforts to cultivate a college-going culture that focuses on ensuring that all low-income Latino students are held to high standards and provided with the support they need to succeed academically.

*Extending quality instructional time:* Title I can fund efforts to extend the school day or the school year to provide additional instructional time to help Latino student in poverty accelerate academically.

*Maximizing Title I per pupil allocations:* Emerging research suggests that focusing available district Title I resources in ways that maximize the per pupil allocation provided to schools may facilitate more effective Title I programming by ensuring that funds are not diluted.

## Conclusion

Even though, many scholars have repudiated the Coleman Report over the years, it continues to have direct impact on how we view and fund public schools, especially high poverty Latino school communities. This essay examined the interrelationship among the Coleman Report, deficit ideologies and Title I funding in high poverty Latino school communities. The Coleman Report to some extent has given credence to deficit ideologies by asserting that a student's background and socioeconomic status are much more important in determining educational outcomes than are measured differences in school effects, leading many educators and policy makers to believe that the remedy to improving the educational attainment of students in poverty lies primarily in modifying their cultural behaviors and beliefs. Title I funding for high poverty Latino schools have been influenced by deficit ideologies, which use remedial education to compensate for students' academic deficiencies instead of providing high quality educational programs to eliminate the achievement gap (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2008).

To conclude this paper, a couple of anti-deficit recommendations are provided to help improve Title I funding and the education of Latino students in poverty. The hope is that these recommendations serve to improve the way we educate high poverty Latino schools, children and families.

*Believe schools can make an impact*—It is paramount for policy-makers, researchers and educators to believe that schools can make a difference in the lives of children especially Latino students in poverty. They must go beyond the Coleman Report to continuously examine how school structures and resources can be enhanced to improve the learning of students in poverty. Without this belief, it is too easy to become cynical, complacent and/or frustrated with the process of transforming education and begin to blame students and families. It is equally important for educators to hold high expectations for students. We need to make sure not to accept the achievement gap as normal. We need to provide an enriched not remedial curriculum for Latino students in poverty.

*Keep and Reform Title I funds*— Title I funds should and can have a positive impact on student lives, their learning and outcomes. Title I funds should not be eliminated since data suggests that less money will not solve the achievement gap between students in poverty and affluent students. However Title I reform should focus on how these funds are used to enrich the curriculum for Latino students in poverty to eliminate the achievement gap. To this end, there should be improved guidelines on how to support schools in effectively utilizing Title I funds based on anti-deficit research-based literature.

*Improve Transparency and Accountability*—Another opportunity to reform Title I, is to require district and school level expenditure reporting. Funding allocations should not only be reported annually but be publically available in a clear manner to increase transparency and communication to local and external stakeholders. At the same time, the accountability should improve to assure that these funds supplement not supplant general funds. The consequences should not be reducing funds, since students are the ones being primarily affected, but instead work with those educational leaders responsible in managing fiscal allotment such as administrators/school boards to improve use of funds.

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## Decolonizing Literacy: Mexican Lives in the Era of Global Capitalism.

Gregorio Hernández-Zamora, *England: Multilingual Matters*,  
2010, 232 pages

**Armando Garza**

University of Texas – San Antonio

Hernández-Zamora challenges the present-day assumptions of how literacy and illiteracy are measured among post-colonial Mexican adults who live either in Mexico or the United States. By doing so, he states that literacy should be situated within the society rather than the individual. He frames his research by drawing from sociocultural, dialogical, and postcolonial research and theories. Since Hernández-Zamora's main thesis is that the development of literacy is promoted or hindered by social conditions, he methodologically uses the "study of communities and the study of individual trajectories of literacy practices across time and space" (p. 31) to describe and understand how those trajectories are marked by social, cultural, and postcolonial factors. This book provides valuable contributions to the sometimes overlooked body of research on literacy and language experiences of poor Mexicans on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

*Decolonizing Literacy* is divided into three large parts. In the first part, the author portrays and defines colonialism and globalization as the socio-historical context/s in which the center focus of the research study, literacy, is located. In this part, Hernández-Zamora also describes the theoretical frames that support his research. Part two is composed of case studies of main participants subdivided into three main categories based on the research subjects: (1) agentive—participants engage and appropriate practices to exert a sense of belonging; (2) mainstream or survivors—participants who grow up and live locally in extreme cases of poverty; and (3) transnational Mexican people—these participants at present live in the U.S. but engage in transnational literacy practices. Finally, part three encompasses two chapters in which the first one synthesizes key concepts or patterns among participants and locates them within current discussion/s on language and literacy policies and politics in both Mexico and the United States. The second chapter of this concluding part describes closing reflections on issues discussed in the whole book—issues pertaining to decolonizing literacy.

Hernández-Zamora includes long case studies of Mexican individuals who have experienced socioeconomic and/or educational marginalization most of their lives. These case studies stem from an ongoing research project carried out between the years of 2001 and 2009 in Mexico and the United States—this book presents only eight case studies obtained mainly through "in-depth life-history interviews" (p. 43). All research-subjects were native Spanish speakers—five females and three males, with an age range of 34 to early 60s, and with different work experiences (such as factory workers, naturist healer, construction, cleaning, car repair, among others). It is interesting to note where Hernández-Zamora found his participants. The participants in Mexico were residents of large districts of Mexico City such as Iztapalapa—a 1.8 million-person district in Mexico City which is considered "the most chaotic, problematic, and dangerous area of the city" (p. 15). On the other hand, the research subjects in the United States were found in Mexican "barrios or ghettos" (p. 14)—words that Hernández-Zamora used to describe the poor and politically-abandoned areas where his participants resided. It is important to note that the Mexican and U.S. sites do not share transnational connections among the selected research participants; however, the two locations were precisely what Hernández-Zamora wanted to portray—sites populated with poor individuals whose voices do not matter to the post-colonial world.

Hernández-Zamora's main research question intended to portray the meaning of literacy development of Mexicans who were/are marginalized and, as he put it, they "are not yet full citizens in either nation: Mexico and the U.S." (p. 10). To achieve this goal, besides the central research question, the author formulates some focus questions that address such themes as: availability of cultural resources for learning; access to different kinds of literate communities; how access to literacy-mediated dialogues and practices are expanded or constrained; ideas and theories about literacy and being literate; and types of learning and cultural resources aiming to make a difference on individual literacy development experiences.

Hernández-Zamora asserts that in order to become literate, we need to appropriate the meanings and all discourse practices that are socially created—which, according to him, are indispensable to understand and shape the place and role that we have in our world. In addition, he believes that the action of becoming literate is not “just a psycholinguistic process” (p. 32); instead, it is the adoption and assimilation of the culture, language, and ideologies of the “dominant other” (p. 32).

Since the focus of Hernández-Zamora’s research is on learning and literacy in marginalized contexts, according to him, he needed to observe how education and literacy is socially distributed and shared in a particular community. He relies on narratives because he strongly believes that the voices of marginalized people are rich descriptions of both their current social realities and personal experiences entangled with their available learning and literacy practices. For Hernández-Zamora, participants’ narratives matter because he believes that their voices were lost in many social institutions such as schools, media, workplaces, governmental offices, etc. His positionality is marked by his personal experiences as a marginalized man, native of *Ciudad Neza*, in Mexico City. Although he, throughout his book, defines and uses the term *narrative* as a valid tool to portray his research findings, he is very aware that every text is subject to interpretation and he leaves the final judgment to his readers.

Hernández-Zamora conducted lengthy interviews over the course of several months. Sometimes he carried out anywhere from two to five 2-hour-long interviews per person that were digitally recorded. These interviews contained semi-structured and open-ended questions on topics about participants’ family backgrounds, their past and current activities, their education, work, social participation in either Mexico or the United States, their schooling experiences, and perceptions on literacy acquisition and practices. The physical sites where these interviews took place varied according to each participant—from homes to community centers and public places. Hernández-Zamora built on data in the form of *self-authoring literacy practices*, which he defines as “practices involving print and multimodal texts that have significantly influenced people’s sense of identity, as well as their dis/engagement with particular discourses and communities” (pp. 51-52). He used these kinds of data since he believes that literacy has to be understood as a basic practice of people’s voices. Consequently, he aimed to examine the barriers faced by contemporary, but poor and lower castes of Mexicans.

Hernández-Zamora elaborates on his data by asserting that his marginalized participants and their practices are truly portraits of how poor people can get access to “broader conversations, intellectual sponsors, powerful discourses, and decolonizing literacy practices for voice and agency” (p. 180). By doing so, he allowed his participants to present to us, as an audience, powerful forces (social, political, economic) that, at present, shape ideas about literacy, language, and learning practices.

Since literacy is a socially-contested term, Hernández-Zamora affirms that researchers and scholars on learning and literacy need to re-conceive the role that language and literacy take in our social global era. He suggests, drawing from his data, that old postcolonial thoughts and actions are still present in the twenty-first century—in both Mexico and the United States. In addition, he states that even if Mexicans have access to the modern world of a new knowledge-based economy, they are still part of lower castes and silent citizens—if they are considered citizens at all. As he put it, “in the U.S. most Mexicans are not citizens but illegal aliens; in Mexico they are not full citizens but second- or third-class citizens; in our globalized world they (we) appear to be global outcasts” (p. 183). These assertions lead Hernández-Zamora to contend that many policies and norms within both countries promote “literacy genocide” (p. 183). However, since many contemporary scholars working from sociocultural, postcolonial, linguistic, and other fields are constantly challenging the ideas of having unified and unquestionable language and/or literacy practices, Hernández-Zamora asserts that the paradigm of acquiring an elite type of language or literacies— which belongs to the dominant other—is being attacked and “in crisis” (p. 187).

Based on his findings, Hernández-Zamora concludes by suggesting that in order for poor people to become literate, they have to challenge the official models of education that, according to him, “restrict their sense of intelligence, agency, and competence” (p. 196). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Hernández-Zamora asserts that the process of decolonizing colonized people encompasses the utilization of postcolonial theories and *the colonizer’s language* as instruments to write their histories and counteract traces of colonialism. Thus, we cannot completely escape the grasp of colonization though we may engage in more liberatory practices.

Hernández-Zamora's book is an important contribution to the small, but growing, research field on Mexicans and their language and literacy experiences on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Students, educators, and scholars in this particular field will find this book to be an excellent starting point; just as we know that the Mexican population will continue to grow in the U.S. (and in Mexico)—and that globalization will not cease to produce vast amounts of poverty. Therefore, work in literacy studies with marginalized Spanish-speakers is ever so important.

**Neltiliztli****Martha Alicia Reyes**

Poeta/Poet

Libre . . . yo quiero ser libre, tú quires ser libre,  
ellos quieren ser libres,  
Pues ¡ya liberémonos! de ese yugo invisible.  
Luchemos por romper esa cadena que no vemos,  
pero que pesa, cadena que arrastramos hace años,  
que nos ha dejado huellas tan profundas  
y nos evita el avance rápido y el ser felices totalmente  
en nuestra propia tierra, en nuestra querida América.

¡ Neltiliztli! Busquemos la raíz de la verdad . . .  
Descubramos la verdad y encontremos  
los tesoros escondidos en el pasado, busquemos la verdad  
en las antiguas ruinas, en la voz de los ancianos,  
en lugares inexplorados y en nuestra olvidada biblioteca . . .  
en los libros empolvados.  
La verdad romperá la cadena de la ignorancia  
que nos ata. Es con la verdad que se derrumban barreras . . .  
es la verdad la que nos dará luz y fuerza.  
La verdad nos hará libres, la verdad  
alumbrará lo oscuro de nuestra existencia.  
Miremos la verdad redonda desde todas sus facetas.  
Aprendamos nuestra historia, nuestras raíces,  
nuestra cultura, mitos y leyendas . . . nuestra base.

¡ Neltiliztli! Busquemos la raíz de la verdad,  
y descubramos nuestra esencia . . .  
y ¡por qué no!, comprendamos nuestro mestizaje,  
nuestro mestizaje que nos afrenta.  
Hay enterrada en nuestra tierra toda la sabiduría olmeca,  
maya, inca, azteca, española, árabe, portuguesa, etcétera.  
Somos una mezcla perfecta de culturas antiguas,  
de incas sabios, de mayas científicos, de fuertes aztecas,  
de aventureros y arrogantes europeos,  
de extravagantes árabes, de españoles renacentistas.

¡No!, no nos perdamos en esta continua conquista  
por un poder asqueroso, frío y capitalista.  
Lo que tenemos en nuestra sangre, en nuestro corazón,  
y en nuestro espíritu es innato y nadie nos lo quita . . .  
Ningún conquistador puede quitarnos nuestra historia  
y sabiduría, y nuestro orgullo de ser fruto  
de esta tierra, de la tierra prometida.  
No olvidemos que tenemos las raíces más profundas.  
No olvidemos que oriundos somos de la América divina.



¡ Neltiliztli! Busquemos la raíz de la verdad.  
Investiguemos, cuestionemos, exploremos, estudiemos,  
descubramos, aprendamos, escuchemos, busquemos y  
encontremos la raíz de la verdad de todo cuanto nos rodea.  
Sobre todo indaguemos el origen de nuestra existencia,  
y no olvidemos de que seguiremos siendo  
los primeros aquí, en esta tierra tan amada,  
en nuestra preciosa América.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Cynthia Bejarano** is an associate professor in the Criminal Justice department at New Mexico State University. Her publications and research interests focus on border violence, youth cultures, immigration issues, and gender violence at the U.S.-Mexico border. She is the author of the book “*Qué Onda?*” *Urban Youth Cultures and Border Identity*, published by the University of Arizona Press in 2005. She is also the co-editor of an interdisciplinary anthology with Rosa-Linda Fregoso entitled *Terrorizing Women: A Cartography of Femicide in the Américas* published by Duke University Press in 2010 and in Spanish by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in 2012. Bejarano is also the principal investigator for the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) that has helped students from farmworker backgrounds attend college.

**Andrés J. Consoli** is a professor and associate chair in the Department of Counseling at San Francisco State University and visiting professor in the Department of Psychology at the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala. His professional and research interests involve international collaborations, multicultural supervision, psychotherapy integration and training, values in psychotherapy, access and utilization of mental health services within a social justice framework, and the development of a bilingual mental health workforce.

**Andrea García** is an associate professor in the Teaching, Literacy and Leadership Department at Hofstra University, where she serves as director of the Reading/Writing Learning Clinic. She earned a Ph.D. in Language, Reading and Culture from the University of Arizona. Her scholarly work is dedicated to supporting language and literacy development of individuals who are living in multilingual and transnational communities. Dr. García’s research interests include sociocultural and psycholinguistic perspectives of literacy, and she is interested in promoting dialogue with teachers about sociopolitical issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity in literacy learning inside and outside of schools.

**Armando Garza** is from Monterrey, Mexico, where he obtained his bachelor’s degree in Music and Architecture. He worked as a bilingual educator in Mexico teaching mathematics in middle school. He moved to LaGrange, Georgia to study his master’s degree in education in curriculum and instruction, in which he conducted a case study looking at how music education influences a Mexican immigrant teenager in his academic and social life. In 2008, Mr. Garza went back to Mexico and taught EFL in high school and bilingual education classes at a local college. He started his Ph.D in Culture, Literacy, and Language at the University of Texas at San Antonio in the fall of 2011.

**Rufus R. Gonzales** is a training director at DePaul University counseling services. He teaches counseling practicum at Loyola University Chicago and has research interests in the area of Latino/a resilience.

**Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos** is an assistant professor in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. He is currently co-editor of the Association of Mexican-American Educators (AMAE) Journal. He has published extensively in the area of Latino education as it relates to education finance and parent engagement and its impact on opportunity and outcomes. He is a 2012-13 Ford Post-Doctoral Fellow administered by the National Academies.

**Graciela León Orozco** is an associate professor and coordinator of the School Counseling program at San Francisco State University. She has published and presented on multicultural issues, parenting, and in community radio. She co-authored a book entitled, *An Introduction to Multicultural Counseling for Helping Professionals*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, soon to be 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. She has served as a school counselor, counselor educator, and as a consultant to schools and community organizations.

**Margarita Machado-Casas** is an associate professor at University of Texas—San Antonio. Dr. Machado-Casas has taught elementary school, graduate and undergraduate education courses. She is a board member of

several prestigious academic journals and is currently a co-editor for the *Handbook of Latinos in Education*. She has worked with national and international governments and non-profit organizations. She works closely with assessment/evaluation methods in bilingual/multilingual settings, particularly around teacher education, and the assessment for minority student populations in the U.S.

**Theresa McGinnis** is an associate professor in the Teaching, Literacy and Leadership Department at Hofstra University. She received her doctorate in Reading, Writing and Literacy from the University of Pennsylvania where she worked with Cambodian American youth in an afterschool migrant education program. Her teaching and research interests include sociocultural theories of literacy and discourses, the ways immigrant and urban youth integrate language with other semiotic modes, and digital spaces as sites for identity construction. Her work has been published in: *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *Linguistics and Education*, and *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*.

**Melissa L. Morgan Consoli** is an assistant professor in the Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she teaches courses in multicultural issues. Her research interests focus on resilience in Latino/as, social justice, and immigration issues.

**Jeanne M. Powers** is an associate professor in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. She conducts research on school choice, school segregation, and school finance litigation. One of Dr. Powers' ongoing projects is a historical analysis of Mexican American school segregation cases in the Southwest. For an example of this line of research, see "Between Mendez and Brown: *Gonzales v. Sheely* (1951) and the Legal Campaign Against Segregation" (with Lirio Patton), an analysis of the legal arguments in Mexican American school segregation cases, published in *Law and Social Inquiry*. Dr. Powers' research has been published in *American Educational Research Journal*, *Equity and Excellence in Education*, and *The Journal of School Choice*. She is currently an Editor of *Education Policy Analysis Archives*.

**Elsa Cantú Ruiz** is an assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education and Human Development with emphases in middle and secondary mathematics education at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). Her research focuses on the motivation of Hispanic/Latina/o students in secondary mathematics courses, pre-service and in-service teachers' notions of motivational strategies, and the impact of teachers' content and pedagogy knowledge on student motivation and mathematical achievement in the STEM fields. Her research focus also includes the development of culturally relevant competent pre-service and in-service teachers and the teaching of mathematics with a social justice lens.

**Michelle Valverde** is the Engagement and Research Coordinator for the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Borderlands Center for Educational Studies (BoCES) in the College of Education. While earning a Ph.D. in Educational Management and Development at NMSU she was a W.K. Kellogg Fellow in the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute. Since graduating in 2000 Dr. Valverde has been providing support to local non profit and government entities as an independent participatory evaluator.

**Elizabeth M. Vera** is Professor at Loyola University Chicago in the School of Education. Her recent publications are in the areas of prevention, urban adolescents, and social justice issues. She teaches classes in prevention, human development, adolescence, family therapy, and multicultural Issues. Dr. Vera is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association.

**Tiffany R. Williams** is a PhD student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. She received her MA in Justice Studies in December 2010 from Arizona State University. Her research interests include the impact of socio-cultural, financial, and policy-related factors on students' higher educational experiences.

## 2013 CALL FOR PAPERS THEME ISSUE

### Latin@ Students and the School-Prison-Pipeline

Guest Editors: **Lilia Bartolomé** – University of Massachusetts Boston, **Donaldo Macedo** – University of Massachusetts Boston, **Victor Rios** – University of California Santa Barbara, and **Anthony Peguero** – Virginia Tech

It is evident that youth who are disciplined at school can begin a downward path toward academic and social exclusion, educational failure, and economic depression. The conceptualization of the school-to-prison pipeline has emerged from a number of research studies that focused on the effects of the disproportionate punishment of racial and ethnic minority students. Zero-tolerance school discipline policies rose to prominence in the early 1990s, due to the perception that crime in schools was an ever-increasing and unending problem. It is estimated that over three million students are suspended at some point during each school year. This rate is nearly twice the annual number of suspensions that occurred in the 1970s. Although literature on the school-to-prison pipeline has primarily focused on the effect of school discipline, fewer studies have broadened their research scope, especially for a rapidly growing Latina/o youth population.

The consequences of the school-to-prison pipeline are serious for a growing Latina/o youth population. It is argued that the school-to-prison pipeline is an institutionalized mechanism of discrimination that can perpetuate Latina/o inequalities the US. The school-to-prison pipeline is marginalizing schools, communities, and families by derailing the educational success and progress, restricting and excluding Latina/o youth from the labor market, and promoting the continuation of the historical sense of mistrust and resentment toward authority, the criminal justice system, and all forms of social control. As the United States becomes increasingly immersed in a global competitive market, addressing a school system fraught with inequities, such as the school-to-prison pipeline, becomes imperative. Insuring and improving educational achievement and attainment of this nation's Latina/o youth is vital for the United States' progress and growth.

We expect this call for papers to continue to build collective knowledge and highlight the various ways that the school-to-prison pipeline, in the broadest understanding, is related to and impacting Latina/o youth. It is also our hope for this issue to provide a forum for scholarship that addresses the urgency of addressing the school-to-prison pipeline for Latina/o youth, families, and the community. We welcome manuscripts that offer theoretical perspectives; research findings; innovative methodologies; pedagogical reflections; and implications associated with the school-to-prison pipeline for Latina/o youth. We propose and solicit more scholarly work on this topic for this theme issue that include but not limited to:

- Parental arrest and incarceration;
- Teacher and administration discrimination;
- Community segregation and marginalization;
- Immigration;
- School resource officers and securitization; and,
- Law enforcement and deportation policies.
- Drop out and/or graduation rates
- Juvenile incarceration

Submissions suitable for publication in this special issue include empirical papers, theoretical/conceptual papers, essays, book reviews, and poems. It is important to note that the special issue is interested in the broader



Latina/o experience and not solely focused on the experiences of Mexican Americans (per the title of the journal).

**The selection of manuscripts will be conducted as follows:**

1. Manuscripts will be judged on strength and relevance to the theme of the special issue.
2. Manuscripts should not have been previously published in another journal, nor should they be under consideration by another journal at the time of submission.
3. Each manuscript will be subjected to a blind review by a panel of reviewers with expertise in the area treated by the manuscript. Those manuscripts recommended by the panel of experts will then be considered by the AMAE guest editors and editorial board, which will make the final selections.

**Manuscripts should be submitted as follows:**

1. Submit via email both a cover letter and copy of the manuscript in Microsoft Word to Victor Rios ([vrrios@soc.ucsb.edu](mailto:vrrios@soc.ucsb.edu)).
2. Cover letters should include name, title, short author bio, and institutional affiliation; indicate the type of manuscript submitted and the number of words, including references. Also, please indicate how your manuscript addresses the call for papers.
3. Manuscripts should be no longer than 5000-6000 words (including references). The standard format of the American Psychological Association (APA) should be followed. All illustrations, charts, and graphs should be included within the text. Manuscripts may also be submitted in Spanish.

**Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2013.** Please address questions to Victor M. Rios ([vrrios@soc.ucsb.edu](mailto:vrrios@soc.ucsb.edu)) and Anthony Peguero ([anthony.peguero@vt.edu](mailto:anthony.peguero@vt.edu)). This special issue is due to be published in December 2013. Consequently, authors will be asked to address revisions to their manuscripts during the summer months of 2013.

## Reviewer Form

The following is the rubric to be used for the evaluation of manuscripts considered for the AMAE Journal.

To the Reviewer/Evaluator: please feel free to make embedded changes to the article to improve the quality and/or the delivery of the message. Please do not change the message that the author intended, however. The edited piece will be forwarded to the original author for feedback. The name of the reviewer/evaluator will remain anonymous to the original author.

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Article addresses the general scope of the Association of Mexican-American Educators Journal	1	2	3	4	5
Timeliness and relevance to current Latino/Mexican-American scholarship and issues	1	2	3	4	5
Theoretical framework/review of the literature is well grounded, focused, and is aligned to the topic/methods of manuscript	1	2	3	4	5
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Article is accessible and valuable to researchers and practitioners.	1	2	3	4	5
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Overall Score on the Rubric: \_\_\_\_\_/30

Do you recommend inclusion of this article in the AMAE journal?

Yes, as submitted

Yes, but with minor revisions

Yes, but would need significant revisions and another review

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc. is to insure equal access to a quality education at all levels for the Mexican American/Latino students where cultural and linguistic diversity is recognized and respected. We advise state/local boards and legislators, administrators and faculty and work in partnership with the community and parents for the benefit of our students. We advocate the immediate recruitment, training, retention, support, and professional development of Mexican American/Latino educators and others committed to the education of our students.

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