Rethinking Higher Education

Elizabeth P. Quintero
Larisa Callaway-Cole
Adria Taha-Resnick

Making Space for Storied Leadership in Higher Education

Learning with Migrant and Refugee Populations in Early Childhood and Teacher Education Contexts

Springer

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Multiplicities in lived experiences: Storying as a way…Forward

Quintero, Callaway-Cole, and Taha-Resnick offer us an opportunity to examine, reconsider, change, and activate a burgeoning higher education paradigm of leading in early childhood. They strongly focus on storying *with* young children, their families, and educators to purposefully influence, impact, and reshape policy, public health, and education based on peoples' lived experiences. I recognize this as a comfortable place that resonates with my own research and publication. Then, I quickly realize that my resonance leads me to wanting to write and to express some serious issues that dominate discourse and policy as tradition and as *the* continuation of the power paradigm. I believe these ideas braid well with the work herein.

Unfortunately, so many folks believe that they are making a difference and impacting change—enacting change-agency—by endangering us all with the single-story myth! Not these authors! No, they are offering us something wholly different. A reconceptualization that moves us away from current impassable mindedness. Rather, these authors recommend and show an opening to the multiplicity of stories through which we live our lives and crisscross each other's pathways. This openness offers us an abundance of consciousness that leads away from a reductionism (deduction) and the closed-down; out toward induction, to *the more.* I will explain more…

I wish to begin by addressing some important topics around the dilemma with story and policymaking as juxtaposed to the traditional ways of reducing bodies, peoples, cultures, languages, histories, and so on to numbers (Iorio & Parnell, 2018). Often, researchers have focused on the gap—gap gazing (Gorski, 2011)—as a way into problematizing what happens for young children, their learning and living, and their families inside of schools and at homelife.

The way such short stories go tend to villainize the family for forces typically outside of their control (lack of safe housing, clean water, tainted food supplies, issues of mental health, shelter, safety, and on and on). This detached and *bad thing* shadows the ecosystem that created such crushing problems. It keeps out of sight the many choices made by protagonists and people embedded in racist systems and colonizing practices along the way to cause such problems in the first place. It becomes harder to name the real villains in the storyline, but we know who they really are.

Instead, these vile and lowly problems infecting babies, children, parents, families, and wholes of society also become a way to show that we have a problem within schools with "certain populations" who are affected most. Usually, this discourse means BIPOC people. Typically, the research on people as-numbers-as-populations acts as the finger pointer and then finger wagger toward these same folks who are conveniently labeled as the downtrodden. There are so many examples of such written stories that promote the colonizers—dominate culture and privileged White folks—as the would-be saviors for those who could not pass the tests (yes, school tests as well as school-life tests built by and for Whites). And, the predicament rears its ugly head again and again, maintaining the status quo of privilege and power and keeping minoritized peoples in the margins and the borderlands of the single story.

Adichie (2009) brings to light the dangers of "a single story" and Molloy Murphy (2020) proclaims "that only by…engaging with 'a multitude of narratives,' (Moss, 2015, p. 236) can educators begin to reconceptualize the goals of early childhood education alongside children" (p. 18). I would add to Molloy Murphy's statement "alongside children" the many layers of work with families, communities, educators, and teacher educators that also respond favorably to the multiplicity of stories.

I imagine this way of braiding together many stories to be integral and interwoven with the many ways of knowing I've encountered, for example by Thao's (2006) work in Mong oral traditions, Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands theories, the many Indigenous worldviews, Aboriginal ways of knowing, and post-colonial feminisms (recently I'm reading: Cannella & Manuelito's 2008 chapter in the Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies; Kimmerer's 2013 *Braiding Sweetgrass*; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015; works from The Common Worlds Research Collective; and many more). There are so many to offer a treasure-trove of counter narratives and open windows into what Urrietta (2007) illuminates as figured worlds in education.

Time and again, stories build toward a single narrative that becomes an archetype, meme, and dastardly stereotype that entraps people in its colonizing force. If we stop and pay close attention to the layered meaning in people's living stories, we find what Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) describe as "funds of knowledge." We can also tap into Yosso's (2011) "cultural assets" way of thinking. We can begin to braid the stories into strands that offer new and strong ways toward (re)turning and reauthenticating ways of knowing.

Moss (2016) reminds us that our storying research, "Allows for, indeed desires, wonder and surprise, new thinking and new understandings, research that is suffused with a relational ethos, an ethics of care, encounter, and hospitality" (p. xiv). In order to attend to this ethic of care and ethos for hospitality as these authors' work does, we turn toward what Indigenous scholars of Canada, Todd and Violet Lee (2020), ask us to consider in reciprocal relationality. I have likened their idea to Sheldrake's (2020), who has attempted to understand fungi and their relationship to the whole of our ecosystems. Sheldrake reminds us of our interconnectedness time and again, showing us how we are enmeshed in webs of life, experience, relationality, and thus

stories, a complex multiplicity of them—situating us where we find an abundance of the more, not less. As I read this book, this reciprocity is right inside…

Portland, USA Will Parnell

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Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

Elizabeth P. Quintero, Larisa Callaway-Cole, and Adria Taha-Resnick

Abstract It is urgent to listen to and collaborate with people in our communities and schools who have experienced migration, exclusion, and desperation about their families' safety. In this book, our intention through the study of leadership in early childhood teacher education is to stress the importance of stories as both authentically participant-documented information and activist research methodology. We unapologetically, through this qualitative work, focus on leadership issues in early childhood while stressing the connections to other areas of work in higher education leadership. And we promote this collaboration with co-researchers who are wise with personal and communal experience in migration issues around the globe. In our unconventional way, we show that leadership in higher education is our goal, and the connections to this will become more explicit as we proceed both theoretically and conceptually. We engage with many different groups of learners, across time and places. The stories live like roots, woven together, deep underground. Our stories, too, are like this. We each come from different places, experiences, and backgrounds, yet our stories and paths have crossed, weaving us together as collaborators, and more often than not, as co-conspirators.

Now, more than ever, it is urgent to listen to and collaborate with people in our communities and schools who have experienced migration, exclusion, and desperation about keeping their families safe. Leadership from these co-researchers is currently in our communities and the relationships develop naturally and can flourish through leadership in early childhood education, family education, and all of us in the villages of our difficult times.

1.1 2020 Context: A Global Pandemic and a Global Outcry Against Injustice

Public health, social justice, education, and access to all of this are in crisis. What will we do? Regarding educational access for new students from migrating families in southern California in 2020, the coordinator of a tutoring program for refugee

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and immigrant children in public schools communicates her frustration about how the COVID-19 pandemic and school closings are detrimentally affecting our most vulnerable students. She says, "THE GAPS KEEP GROWING!" She's really talking about all the gaps—the achievement gap, the gap in the implementation of remote online teaching, the accessibility to equal education gap, the poverty gap, the health-care gap, and the serenity gap. She documents some of the children's comments as she visits families and tries to support them.

> The Internet isn't working, and my screen keeps freezing. I don't know my username or password. What time are my teacher's meetings? I have to wake up by 8:30am? What do you mean, 'school started?' My computer doesn't have any sound. The whole screen is in another language! I don't understand the assignments. My computer won't charge (M. Smith,[1] personal communication, 2020).

She explains to us that after beginning the tutoring program 11 years ago as a response to the educational challenges for refugee students, distance learning emphasized the challenges even more. She explained that many of the students are lost and their parents struggle to support learning online. The tutoring team members are working overtime to help solve each problem that arises. She says, "We won't give up" (M. Smith, personal communication, 2020).

And these challenges with online schooling are, of course, affecting our teacher education students studying to become early childhood and general education leaders. Many of our adult students (to be described in their own words throughout this book) are not privileged to have living situations where they can "work from home" to complete their university work. There are issues of connectivity, and by the way, how does one study from home or work from home when there is no home?

This urgent time in our history is about justice, and with the acknowledgment that many migrating families and refugees in our country languish in detention centers awaiting action on their asylum requests, many families in recent years have received permission to live in our cities and towns. They do their best to try to support their families and to integrate into our society. Yet they have mountains of obstacles to overcome—especially in a time of pandemic and social, racial unrest.

"Barad (2007), a feminist theorist, is known particularly for her theory of agential realism. In agential realism, realism is not about something substantialized and fixed or demarcated. Realism instead emphasizes that intra-active agentiality has real effects—effects that become ingredients in new and always also open-ended intra-active agencies" (Nielsen, 2020, para. 4).

Barad's conceptualization points directly to our complicated times in which we do need to breathe life into justice anew.

[1] Names changed to protect privacy.

She says:

> Justice, which entails acknowledgment, recognition, and loving attention, is not a state that can be achieved once and for all. There are no solutions; there is only the ongoing practice of being open and alive to each meeting, each intra-action, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken, to breathe life into ever new possibilities for living justly. The world and its possibilities for becoming are remade in each meeting (Barad, 2007, xi).

A small, local volunteer tutoring group in southern California is doing its best to respond to one community's urgent needs with the aim to live justly. The coordinator writes:

> Despite these challenges, we are beginning to see small victories. Older siblings are stepping up by tutoring and setting up Zoom meetings for their younger siblings.
>
> We have a fourth-grade student who is teaching his peers how to access the programs and apps they need. One of our most timid students is speaking up and asking questions at his teacher's Zoom meetings. Several students are asking for more homework packets from us. One student who has been here for less than two years has begun turning in her online assignments! These moments are what keep us going (M. Smith, personal communication, 2020).

The governor of California works to advocate justice for immigrant families and students. On June 3, he issued a proclamation declaring June 2020 as "Immigrant Heritage Month" in the State of California. The proclamation addresses the intersection of our raging needs for justice on multiple levels. The text includes:

- The ties that bind immigrant families to California are part of the fabric of our state. During Immigrant Heritage Month, we honor and celebrate the many and varied contributions of immigrants who came to this country to work hard and give a better life to their children.
- Many immigrants who call California home are working on the front lines of our fight against COVID-19—providing lifesaving care in our hospitals, teaching through distance learning, serving our most vulnerable loved ones in skilled nursing facilities, maintaining the food supply chain, and more. Tens of thousands of these essential workers are DACA recipients who are serving crucial roles throughout our communities during this unprecedented crisis. We recognize the essential contributions they make to protect our health and safety and keep life moving forward…

The governor reminds us that:

> Immigrant Heritage Month is a time to remember that nearly all of us can trace our heritage to another nation. Half of all children in California have at least one immigrant parent. We must never forget that we are here because our ancestors boldly chose to believe in the promise of this place. California will always stand up for our newest Americans and support those who are beginning their next chapter in America. During Immigrant Heritage Month and every month, let us continue to recognize and celebrate the immigrants of the past, present and future, as we live out the meaning of "e pluribus unum" – out of many, one (Newsom, 2020).

In this book, our intention through the study of leadership in early childhood teacher education is to stress the importance of stories as both authentically participant-documented information and activist research methodology. We unapologetically, through this qualitative work, focus on leadership issues in early childhood while stressing the connections to other areas of work in higher education leadership. And we promote this collaboration with co-researchers who are wise with personal and communal experience in migration issues around the globe. In our unconventional way, we show that leadership in higher education is our goal, and the connections to this will become more explicit as we proceed both theoretically and conceptually.

Through our experiences and our study with myriads of co-researchers, we have used story in order to change perspectives on the value and assets that migrant and refugee families bring to higher education and education in general. And thus, we show that this necessitates changes in our approaches to inclusivity, learning, and leadership across other fields of study as well. Refugee and migrant student experiences are critical to our perspectives overall as we work to address multiple social issues, educate students, and prepare professionals toward innovative justice approaches. We believe that our approach counters the status quo and pervasive deficit perspectives and reliance on a dominant culture worldview. In other words, this is a book about higher education, early childhood education, migrant narratives, place-based learning, and leadership in ECE. Furthermore, we see and offer stories not only as our research methodology but also as pedagogy for early childhood education and to all educators studying in higher education.

It seems that our current times have highlighted the entanglements of crises and oppression throughout the world, historically and currently. How on earth can we deal with it all? How can we not? We, authors, have related stories through our love and respect for people we've shared experiences with over time and we have entangled stories with each other as we strive to do our work. As in art and literature, stories encompass entanglement overtly and covertly. We submit that stories may be the most effective way to move forward to action.

For example, in our collaborative research, stories of fact and imagination have been shared. Telling stories and giving and receiving stories have been forms of intergenerational engagement and examples of generative collaboration. This has catapulted us to a new trajectory in our research. These webs of influence have led us to consider the necessary synergy of place and pedagogy that must be considered in the day-to-day engagements and experiences in the lives of children and adults in their worlds of living and learning. The day-to-day stories of children and their teachers show that a framework of story—personal stories, imaginary stories, historical stories, and other types of story—has promise as a way for adults and children to collaborate on teaching, learning, and research.

Furthermore, we give voice to storying because it is not only documentation and pedagogic practice, but storying gives voice to the strengths of migrant and refugee families, who in spite of their struggles in impossible circumstances are willing to share their knowledge and wisdom through participation with us in the education of their families. They are crucial to building a better and more equitable new-normal.

We hope the readers will become inspired to broaden their ideas and circles of leadership.

We are so very interconnected as this horrible pandemic continues to remind us. All through the months of April, May, and June of 2020, many national and state leaders gave us vital statistical information about how to maintain safety and protect our families, our communities, and ourselves. One of the specifics of the safety guidance has been the importance of mask-wearing. The leaders appealed to all of us to "wear the mask" to protect each other. They explained over and over again that wearing a mask protects people we meet from any germs we might have, and that others of us wearing our masks protects him from our invisible germs. "It's about respect," Governor Cuomo said (CNBC Television, 2020). This appeal and documentation of proven research about virus spread are reminiscent of Scottish educator and pioneer of children's rights, AS Neill. He always explained to children, families, and educators during decades of activism that freedom is not license (Neill, 1966). The complexity of the simple statement was communicated to young children in many free schools all over the world as… you may do whatever you choose to do as long you're not hurting or bothering anyone else.

At Neill's Summerhill School students convened in regular meetings to discuss and process possible solutions for infractions to the school rules. Over the years at a free school where I worked, I heard wise and heartfelt suggestions about what to do when a peer "is being mean." These education-in-process actions often are led by children. And, I thought of it once again recently when Mayor Brown of Compton, California discussed her constituents, which consist of over 90% people of color and essential workers, and said to her interviewer and the broader television audience, "Our affluence doesn't give us the privilege to put other people's health at risk" (MSNBC, 2020).

1.2 Dear Reader: Your Invitation to Participate

We value your stories and experience. Please think about and discuss these questions wherever you can:

- What work are you doing that makes a difference working toward a more just education system and just society, right now? (especially relating to our sisters and brothers who've come to a new home)
- What work and wisdom do people we are working with bring to the task?
- What do you see, hear, and witness that shows the importance of this work?
- Are we confident in our allies and fearless about our obstacles?
- Who are our allies?
- Is it an advantage that migrating people bring with them their home languages, their personal and family histories, and their formal education and lived experiences?
- What are our obstacles? Policy, politics, poverty, fear, or exhaustion?

Our research shows:

- Story presents new knowledge and challenges potential in complex, interrelated ways. Stories connect history, the known and the unknown, to current times
- Stories have the potential for shaping policy
- "Behind every statistic there is a story" (Quintero & Rummel, 2014)

Questions we have asked research collaborators:

- What do we learn from the people involved in this story? What makes them change and grow? (characters)
- What is the relationship of the real-world setting to the people acting in it? How does place affect what happens? (context)
- What are the opportunities and conflicts generated in these site-based stories? How are they analyzed? Are they resolved? (drama)
- In what ways are endings new beginnings (findings)?

One of our mentors, Katherine Nelson (2009) encouraged collaboration. She proved through extensive research that:

> Personal memory begins to expand from the episodic past to the unknown future…narratives lay out many of the secrets of social life, including motivations, successes, failures, deception, and generosity. Imagination is aroused by these different life stories" (p. 248).

1.3 Conceptual and Experiential Reasons that Story Makes Space for Our Voices

We continually search for ever-inclusive theoretical frameworks and the potential for new possibilities for leadership in higher education programs and research that includes participants' past knowledge and current lived experiences (Parnell & Quintero, 2019; Todd, 2016). The late poet Alarcón lauds the experiences of multinational, multilingual learners through his poetry.

> "I carry my roots with me all the time/Rolled up I use them as my pillow/
> mis raíces las cargo siempre conmigo enrolladas me sirven del almohada"
> from: Carrying our Roots/llevar a nuestras raíces (2005, p. 3)

He was born in Los Angeles, California, and considered himself "bi-national" because throughout his entire life he spent time in both Mexico and the United States with extended family, friends, and colleagues. The songs and stories he heard from his grandmother, as well as experiences he had growing up, inspired his poetry. He highlighted this bi-national life in his poem, "Carrying our Roots/llevar a nuestras raíces,"

This approach to learning, life, loved ones, and strife is reflected in the collaborators' contributions to the research included in this book. The qualitative examples are information about and analysis of stories of early childhood faculty members,

community activists, and children and the early childhood teacher education students working with them. The data from the stories problematize the neocolonial roots of our conceptions of children and families and the resulting learning experiences for them (Hérnandez-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2010; Latour, 2004; Nelson, 2009; Quintero & Rummel, 2014; Sacramento, 2015). Conceptions of children and families particularly influence the institutional systems, the pedagogies, the assessments, and daily life realities, thus affecting learners who are immigrants and those who are currently migrating through uncertain global landscapes. As stated in *Refugees' Roles in Resolving Displacement and Building Peace,* family stories at every turn expose "tensions between agency and constraint, compulsion and cruel choices" (Bradley et al., 2019). It is always clear to us that personal, family, and community histories are inextricably tied to theoretical foundations and are interdependent upon contexts.

1.4 Contexts: World Migration and Our Participants

1.4.1 Carrying Our Roots

Contexts are crucial to explaining our ongoing work with our co-researchers locally and internationally. We represent varied family histories, past and present, and through situations of place we three authors and co-researchers came together with our multiple histories, experiences, and languages. Our participants are early childhood studies faculty, student teachers in an early childhood teacher education program at a state university, community activists, and the children we work with in southern California and around the world. Many co-researchers in California are bi-national (Quintero, 2017), and their histories and current lived experiences are reflective in many ways of communities around the world where intergenerational participants of two or more cultures and language groups with different economic and political histories find themselves living and learning together. Many of the collaborators in the work described here are living and studying in the Global North and yet, they bring with them generations of family history, knowledge, linguistic perspectives, and lived experiences from the Global South. Black and Chicana, feminist scholars, have argued that we must highlight, learn from, and support the strengths of children and communities of color. Pérez and Saavedra (2017) show us that by foregrounding Global South perspectives we not only fight the deficit perspectives surrounding the education of all children but we also learn from the lived realities of learners.

Furthermore, the contexts of these past few years have brought to the surface inequities, pressure points for all manner of living our lives. Parnell asks, "How can we learn from George Floyd's murder and the many precious, often unarmed, Black lives that have been senselessly lost to police violence recently in re-accumulation?" (Parnell et al., 2021, p. 3). Living in civil unrest during a strange COVID-19 pandemic, Brown and Black children and adults and their bodies continue to be in perilous times.

We all experienced new challenges and distresses during lockdowns. Immigrants experience the compounded effects of the pandemic, xenophobia, and hyper-policing of the Trump era.

> We join many voices asking, "How do we create trust, respectfully listen with co-researchers, and collaborate on risk-taking to chart new paths of agency and activism in difficult times?" We look to Robyn D'Angelo and Brittany Cooper (2018) who put Black Feminist super potency in the foreground of our continually (albeit slowly) emerging understanding of ways to ethically move forward (Parnell et al., 2021 p. 3).

This book documents three early childhood faculty in varying stages of career contexts who carry our roots with us always as we strive for justice and authenticity in early childhood teacher education, working with families and children in our multifaceted leadership work. We join groups of teacher education students in early childhood studies, who are student teaching with children (aged 3–8) in county preschools and primary schools (pre-kindergarten to third grade) and are in graduate and undergraduate university programs. Many of the adult student teachers participating in this research were first-generation college students with a large percentage of them from families and communities of migrant farmworkers (Quintero, 2017). These participants have truly lived bi-culturally with many loved ones located in Mexico and Central America. Also, many of the children in the early care and education programs in our county in California are from Mexico and Central America, and many are from Indigenous communities throughout Latin America. Some children come to school speaking the home language of their Indigenous community, and they are learning Spanish as a second language in the California community, and then they are required to learn English as a third language when they come to school. These collaborators truly carry their roots with them at all times. We have learned collectively through collaborators' storying and interpretations of their stories. This book, and the chapters within, engage with many different groups of learners, across time and places. We, three co-authors, acknowledge the commonalities and relationships among our stories and actions. These stories are entangled in ways discovered and undiscovered. The stories live like roots, woven together, and deep underground. Our stories, too, are like this. We each come from different places, experiences, and backgrounds, yet our stories and paths have crossed, weaving us together as collaborators, and more often than not, as co-conspirators.

In this book, we have something to say about rethinking higher education, especially as it relates to early childhood teacher education in multilingual contexts from a tapestry of experiences. And we believe that our leadership works with our expert co-researchers in California, and in other contexts make a strong case for using this approach across disciplines. We co-authors will introduce ourselves and the specific threads and patterns in our tapestries of experiences and leadership trajectories in later chapters.

Those of us working with our "roots rolled up" as a pillow each night (Alarcón, 2005) consider "reconceptualizing work with renewed understandings of place as grounded and relational, and as providing roots for politics that are deeply specific to place, and yet deeply connected to other places" (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 29).

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) urge a discussion about settler colonialism, "Thus, when we theorize settler colonialism, we must attend to it as both an ongoing and incomplete project, with internal contradictions, cracks, and fissures through which Indigenous life and knowledge have persisted and thrived despite settlement (p. 61)". Southern California and many places in the United States and around the world illustrate vast layers of both exploitation colonialism and settler colonialism with many complicated historical (documented and not documented) antecedents (Hinkinson, 2012). Molloy Murphy (2021) adds to the work of worlding pedagogies (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015) and connects to our work in early childhood. She illustrates, with her co-researchers, how children's common world relations can encourage concern and meaning in children's daily lives. In fact, Molloy Murphy documents a 5-year-old co-researcher, who after a sensitive and calm discussion between the teacher and the children about demonstrations against racism in their city bluntly stated his concrete knowledge that he had learned through being observant living his life. He said, "A police officer stepped on a man's neck with his knee. He couldn't breathe and he died" (Parnell et al., 2021, p. 6).

Speaking of cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, and cross-national contexts, there are foundational supports for enlisting as many co-researchers as possible to share stories and knowledge. Zoe Todd (2016) maintains that:

> …the decolonisation of thought cannot happen until the proponents of the discipline themselves are willing to engage in the decolonial project in a substantive and structural and physical way, and willing to acknowledge that the colonial is an extant, ongoing reality (p. 17).

She explains that she is criticizing the silences. She reminds us that most importantly we should ask, who is doing the describing? Thus, the context and inclusion of participant voices dictate the confluence of our theoretical perspectives.

1.4.2 Theoretical Perspectives

The grounding of our research has been reconceptualizations of postmodern and narrative theoretical influences as an inclusive framework umbrella (Barad, 2014; Dahlberg et al., 2013; Freire, 1985; Gruenewald, 2003; Parnell, 2012; Parnell & Iorio, 2016; Quintero, 2015; Steinberg, 2011; Todd, 2016). A focus has been on the use of stories among faculty, community activists, children and adult student teachers, individually and collaboratively. As the stories have been shared and new stories created, they have generated theoretical questions about the confluence of frameworks of study and work regarding the collaborations of children and adults. Our ongoing analysis reveals findings that support past research about the importance of story and has given new insights to the deep level at which stories address children's strengths and needs (Quintero, 2015) and the importance of family history, past and present, and the generative power of community.

The qualitative participation and data collection methods of the ongoing research have included participant observation in classrooms and community contexts, field notes, transcriptions of informal interviews with children and families, student–teacher research journals, and artifacts of learners' work samples during their interactions, their play, curriculum negotiations, and collaboration on self-reflection about learning and action. Through narrative inquiry, the data have been analyzed by categories of information that emerge, particularly as they related to the influences of the story in various forms on learning, meaning-making, and leadership with the foci guided by critical theory (Freire, 1985) and other postmodern reconceptualizations and postfoundationalism (Dahlberg et al., 2013) leading to matters of fact (Latour, 2004), matters of concern (Latour, 2004), and most recently to the work of Todd (2016) as she illustrates, highlights, and brings front and center the research demands of today, thus reminding us of the eons of wisdom passed to us from Indigenous scholars. She points out that we unconsciously avoid engaging with contemporary Indigenous scholars and thinkers while we engage instead with decades-old ethnographic texts or 200-year-old philosophical tomes.

In terms of connecting the ongoing research to the ongoing pedagogy, through our focus on storying—the personal and the collective—the faculty, community activists, the children, and their student teachers have led the research, documenting through an integrated curriculum, and the experiences of young children in the context of their communities. There is historical richness through various layers of the personal and collective stories that have emerged. Collaborators have engaged in family-focused activities for school and home using folk tales, historical legends, Indigenous languages from their communities, and art projects throughout the communities in dynamic and ever-evolving situations.

The thinking about research contexts within the Global South and Global North border crossing, and our lived experiences, led us to revisit Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), one of our long-standing muses for our work,

> To survive the Borderlands
> you must live sin fronteras
> be a crossroads (p. 195)

This idea of living without borders and being a crossroad brought us to Taylor and Giugni (2012) who have rethought fundamental assumptions about early childhood work and guided us to consider Common Worlds. They highlight,

> As adults and children, we live in a world that is increasingly characterized by mobility and displacement, coexistence with difference…. More than ever before, the question of living together has become a most pressing and confronting political and ethical question (p. 109).

This study led us to Latour (2004) who urges "…rather than foreclosing upon what might constitute the commonalities of the 'common world', an understanding of common worlds as worlds in the process of 'progressive composition'" (p. 222). In other words, this research illustrates a focus on relations as generative encounters with others and shared events that have mutually transformative effects.

We, as participants, the faculty, the community activists, and the adult student teachers and children and families we work with, in the United States and globally, *do not want* our learning or education to be detached from ourselves. To reiterate, many collaborating student teachers in California are first-generation college students from families of migrant farmworkers. Many children in the county are from families of farmworkers with 44% of households reporting language use in the home as "other than English" (Ventura County Office of Education, 2015). In addition, given the life experiences of carrying our roots, participating teacher education students, and the refugee crisis that has unfolded worldwide over the past few years, it is not surprising that in our ongoing research and study we constantly make connections with the families and children in dangerous migration situations. As we approach our work daily in programs that serve children and families, we feel concerned for the children and families in refugee camps (and worse situations). We ask the question, "What happens tomorrow?" [the day after relocation] as do many policy advocates around the world (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The question, of course, is often asked as we work with migrant students in California, and thus, the discussion and inspiration for action worldwide circles back in synergistic ways.

1.4.3 Evolving Findings

Throughout the analysis of findings in all categories, there have been vivid illustrations of family history, critical perspectives of place, and Conocimiento theory (Anzaldúa, 2002), culture, language, and disruption of child development theory (Nelson, 2009) that we had been concurrently studying in university coursework. Nelson's (2009) research originated in the Global North; however, it provides alternatives to the traditional developmental theory that focuses on presumed innate abilities and the assumptions of child and adult forms of cognition and static stages of development. Her framework offers an account of social, cognitive, and linguistic development in the first five years of life. She argued that children be seen as members of a community of minds, striving not only to make sense but also to share meanings with others. Nelson (2009), who described herself as a contextual functionalist, researched meaning-making and memory in children. She stressed that children are "… components of an integrated system…" (p. 186) and she maintained, "…stories bear directly on the problems of different minds, different selves, and different times that are central to the child's emerging understanding of the world…" (p. 172). At the same time, this individual meaning-making is integrated into the contextual world of people, places, and events in the child's life. The theory supports our participants, and many families around the world, in transition from the Global South who proudly carry their roots to a variety of contexts in the Global North. The contextual worlds of people, places, and events are sometimes a complicated mix of struggle, fear, and pain along with being close with loved ones, new friends, and sometimes places to play.

This social understanding between the self and others identified by Nelson suggests a third space for education and human interactions and connects directly to the theoretical stance of Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa's Conocimiento Theory is described as "…an overarching theory of consciousness…all dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, lived experiences…" (Hérnandez-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2010, p. 177). Both Nelson's (2009) approach and Anzaldúa's theory of Conocimiento relate to personal history, meaning-making within the contexts of self, family history, and lived experience. The ongoing storying and re-storying in our findings illustrate this.

For example, through the dynamic cycles of student teachers and children interacting and sharing stories about interests, friends, and passions, it became clear that both the young children and the student teachers were dedicated to creating, documenting, and playfully collaborating on stories throughout this research. In the study, stories of fact and imagination have been shared. Telling stories and giving and receiving stories have been forms of intergenerational engagement and examples of generative collaboration. This has catapulted us to a new trajectory in our research. These webs of influence have led us to consider matters of concern (Latour, 2004) and to the necessary synergy of place and pedagogy that must be considered in the day-to-day engagements and experiences in the lives of children and adults in their worlds of living and learning.

1.5 Building on Leadership Through Intergenerational Stories and Deeper Analysis

Our findings generated a new theoretical journey that has pointed to the depth, breadth, and frequency of the story as a complex framework for many aspects of leadership, curriculum, meaning-making, and learning. The day-to-day stories of children and their student teachers have shown that a framework of story—personal stories, imaginary stories, historical stories, and other types of story—has promise as a way for adults and children to collaborate on teaching, learning, and on research. Through this framework of intergenerational story, we found participants who are living in the Global North were, of course, influenced by located study, forms of knowledge, policy, and politics, which are heavily influenced by Eurocentric modernity (Grosfoguel, 2008). Yet, we have seen vivid examples of influence coming from the Global South through family histories, multiple sources of knowledge (Freire, 1985), and examples of transformative actions that were reflected in the work of Latina/o artists whose work we had studied for years (Anzaldúa, 2002; Hérnandez-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2010; Romo, 2005). This knowledge continually appears in our complex findings in the teacher education students' and children's stories. Therefore, we have generated new research questions that have laid the groundwork for the ongoing qualitative study that led to more disruptions and reinterpretations.

The idea of "carrying our roots" from one world to another creates a third space where the "roots" become a metaphorical "pillow" to support us throughout our lives. Some examples are highlighted through the following excerpts of findings that are categorized according to themes that arose again and again.

This text will explore the following evolving research questions:

> In what ways do learners—across generations—create, build upon, and reinvent each other's stories to make new meanings through consideration of family history, multigenerational knowledge, and experiences?
>
> In what ways do learners' stories offer new possibilities through leadership that connects Global South knowledge with Global North contexts?
>
> In what ways is it possible to use this framework and methodology in higher education to promote systemic consistency in promoting social justice that is generatively inclusive?

A web of relationships, family histories, and stories—both factual and pretend—compile the evidence supporting effective ways to educate teachers and the children we work with. Children are the consummate explorers, questioners, and listeners. They weave their webs of connection to others in their families, communities, and worlds. They don't live or grow in a bubble and they don't sit in school and study to be adults…they are experts at being in the moment. For children, living, story, and learning co-exist. All children, from all backgrounds and histories, learn through their stories while engaging in play and other daily activities. They experience development in multiple domains and engage in multidimensional learning when given the opportunity and encouragement. And I learned years ago that family strengths, and the stories that contextualized these strengths, could be used to generate authentic research and to build curricula that are relevant in many ways for all generations of learners. And currently, mid-COVID-19 pandemic and global demonstrations for racial justice, it is hopeful to revisit the small local, tutoring program in southern California that documents tangible acts of respect and care that keep us from despair.

The director, during mid-pandemic, sends the volunteer team a heartfelt message:

> We appreciate your time and energy in helping our students progress. We know that little by little, *they will succeed*. Half of the battle is believing in themselves. This is where you come in. You build our kids' self-esteem. You cheer them on. *They sense that you believe in them.* And that is what matters. Then, they will start believing in themselves (M. Smith, personal communication, 2020).

This sentiment and documentation mirrors Barad's (2014) work on diffractive practice. Children recognize they are valued when others pay attention to their experiences. This is dramatic for children migrating with family. Diffractive practice (visual documentation) provides engagement.

Our research through story has documented a wide range of examples. In 1995, Hmong families in bilingual family literacy classes created books, in Hmong and English, with stories of family histories. They created audio tapes of the stories in Hmong and English. And more recently in 2020, in California, a 4-year-old from Africa draws and explains, "The squiggles show the plants growing; this is the desert, and these are the mountains. My mom misses the mountains."

Alarcón (1999), who wrote bilingual poetry for children, called books "oversized passports" that enable us and encourage us to dream (1999, p. 14). And in Faith Ringgold's *Tar Beach* (1996) and *Aunt Harriet's Railroad* (1995), the character, Cassie, uses her imagination and her stories which nourish her to overcome oppression and limitations. Children, through their play, especially when immersed in an environment of literature and art, can provide us with voices and perspectives of possibility.

1.6 Leading and Learning through Story where Histories, Cultures, and Languages Meet

By attending to both the sense of engaged participation and the sense of opposition, intellectuals can explore the possibilities for action. Said (2000) reminds us of the assumption that even though one can't do or know everything, it must always be possible to discern the elements of a struggle or problem dialectically, and that others have a similar stake in a common project. He reminded us that at least since Nietzsche, the writing of history and the accumulations of memory have been regarded in many ways as one of the essential foundations of power. Many of the students today in schools around our country have exquisitely complex stories of going and coming. They have gone from a home country for a myriad of reasons, and they have come to their new country with a multitude of experiences.

In addition, what is sometimes missed by scholars is that those who adopt Freire's theories must be aware that it is not made up of techniques to save the world. Instead, he felt that "…the progressive educator must always be moving out on his or her own, continually reinventing me and reinventing what it means to be democratic in his or her own specific cultural and historical context" (Freire, 1997, p. 308). We, with co-researchers and teacher education students, address what such understandings might mean for creating environments for learning and for developing practice both inside and outside school.

The families, children, and teachers who share their wisdom in this book wear the mantle of expert. We have used the ideas of trusted educators in various related fields to guide the work and set a frame for the expression of the findings in each chapter. Through the human layers of story that result in complex intellectual issues are addressed. The data from this qualitative research have been categorized into themes which fall into categories addressed by the questions below in chapters that follow as we work to support each other in world migrations and our global migration from what was our world reality—flawed as it was—to a herculean task of "building a better, more inclusive world" after the current pandemic, the current economic crises, and yes, current racial and social injustices that are intertwined everywhere like a knotted, tenacious throughline of pain.

- How do we as citizens of the world support the people and their children during and after migration to critically address their needs? How can we learn about

ways that "Place" tells stories of local and regional politics that are sensitive to the particularities of where people actually live?

- How, as scholars, can we observe and participate in cultures different from our own? How can we observe the layers of power relations, culture, access, and possibility while maintaining respect in all situations? How do we promote activism and avoid voyeurism?
- How do studies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality (that are of concern to contemporary critical scholarship) become situated within geopolitical arrangements and relations of nations and their inter/national histories?
- How do acculturation and language acquisition become impacted by the process of aligning new societal expectations and requirements with previous cultural norms, individual perceptions, and experiences preeminent in immigrants' lives?
- How can we focus on the importance of people telling their own stories (reading the world) in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society?
- How can we place these complicated findings into practical and hopeful programs?
- (Quintero, 2009)

I have maintained for decades that we educators rethink ways to utilize and build upon families' varied histories as a way for schools to include families and their strengths in the educational process. I say this not from a negative perspective but a positive one. This could be done in many ways. For example, did you know that children from Somalia have vast amounts of knowledge about and interest in camels? Decades ago, in Minnesota, I met a Head Start teacher who learned this by accident and proceeded, with the help of children and their parents, to develop a six weeks unit based on learning about camels. I think of her and the camel activities in her class often, and this very day in 2020 in a zoom interview, Minnesota Congresswoman, Ilhan Omar gave wise and focused thoughts on a particular issue, but my eyes couldn't leave the tapestry pillow decorating the chair in her room—it was a gorgeous camel!

Did you know that in these times a Hmong woman who does not read or write in English can recite, through traditional storytelling of folktales and legends, 2000 years of the history of her ancestors? She and her women classmates in a bilingual family literacy project made audio and picture books for their children and grandchildren to document their history. These stories, all our stories, stand on the strong and caring elders in our histories and hopefully will guide us through difficult times.

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Chapter 2
Storying History Through Family Literacy

Elizabeth P. Quintero

Where we're going to get to eventually is looking at all the stories that haven't been told.
(character Aaron Burr in Hamilton, the play)
(Miranda, 2015)

Abstract At the close of 2020, we hear screams and cries for a moral reckoning. How can we hear the stories that haven't been told? This chapter is a glimpse of the history of two small, participant-led intergenerational family biliteracy projects in which parents and children participated together. The parents, children, and teachers (many with recent or intergenerational experiences with migration) all had hard-earned expertise in education, human rights, and risk-taking. They tackled complicated learning situations and learned to listen to each other's stories. These stories informed their varied journeys and could inform our journeys to consider educational leadership promoting new types of participatory projects in different contexts in a world as we hope to "build back better" in the coming years. In addition, the information leads to the dramatic ways in 2020–2021 that history, both in the United States and around the world, has influenced the fissures in our social thread that we depend upon for sustenance and well-being.

At the close of 2020, we hear screams and cries for a moral reckoning. How can we hear the stories that haven't been told? This is much more complex than any stop-gap, short-term policy can alleviate. The field of education is itself overwhelmingly complex as it touches all aspects of human life. So, where does that leave us to offer hope for better learning, better living, better dreaming, and most importantly, better caring for each other?

This chapter is a glimpse of the history of two small, participant-led intergenerational family biliteracy projects in early childhood. The parents, children, and teachers (many with recent or intergenerational experiences with migration) all had hard-earned expertise in education, human rights, and risk-taking. They tackled complicated learning situations and learned to listen to each other's stories. These stories informed their varied journeys and could inform our journey to consider early childhood leadership promoting new angles of participatory projects in different

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contexts in a world as we hope to "build back better" in the coming years. In addition, the information leads to the dramatic ways in 2020-2021 that history, both in the United States and around the world, has influenced the fissures in our social thread that we depend upon for sustenance.

Barad (2014), who interweaves stories within different times, explains in a journal:

> This paper starts out in the middle by going forward to the past – not in order to recount what once was, but by way of re-turning, turning it over and over again, tasting the rich soil from which ideas spring, and opening up again to the uncountable gifts given that still give, to proceed to the place from which we never left/leave (pp. 168).

Of course, now we are urgently focused on public health, racial justice, accessibility, equity, and human migrations and survival. Hopefully, by listening *with* (Parnell, 2011), the families, children, and teachers, who are responsible for early childhood leadership, will be inspired to make brave choices in their work. What can concretely be done, collaboratively and collectively? And to Congressman John Lewis, may we be able to get into "Good Trouble" following his lead.

The research questions asked and the wisdom shared by these co-researchers are addressed by two categories of findings mentioned at the end of Chap. 1:

- How do we as citizens of the world support the people and their children during and after migration to critically address their needs? How can we learn about ways that "Place" tells stories of local and regional politics that are sensitive to the particularities of where people actually live?
- How, as scholars, can we observe and participate in cultures different from our own? How can we observe the layers of power relations, culture, access, and possibility while maintaining respect in all situations? How do we promote activism and avoid voyeurism?

2.1 Sydney, Australia, 2018 December, Australian Association for Research in Education

I was invited to participate in this conference and at the book launch *of Research Through, With and As Storying* (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). I was asked to speak briefly about my small contribution to the new book. I began by thanking the parents and children who participated with me in bilingual family literacy projects years ago in the 1980s and 1990s. Those families taught me about storying, authentic documentation of personal history, and activism. I said that I learned much in those years, from the participants and their wisdom, about storying, research, teaching, and hope for the future, that carries me forward in inspiration, research, and practice to this day. I went into a few specifics and did elaborate on who the participants were in those projects in order to hopefully make some connections with the international audience in the room, in particular with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and scholars present.

After the short presentations, the meeting was adjourned, and a woman walked up from the last row of seats in the back of the room. She asked, "You wrote about this, right?" I was a little surprised, but answered, yes, and then I listened as she explained why she asked. She told me that she did her dissertation research four years ago (decades after I wrote about these family literacy projects) with Aboriginal children and their families, who spoke their home language as well as English, in the outback regions of Australia. She said:

> I looked and looked for research and documentation of projects like this to use as a guide for my work and I had such trouble. I found almost none. But I found your writing and I can't believe I'm hearing you talk about it. Honestly, I couldn't remember your name, but when you started telling one of the stories, I knew. I thank you so much. Your work helped me with mine all the way over here. (A. Kirra,[1] personal communication, 2018)

Recounting this still brings tears to my eyes. It was a treasured moment for a teacher educator.

2.2 The Dance Between Past and Present

Moss (2019) leads our current theoretical stances to embrace perspectives that include postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, posthumanism, and other dimensions that share similar positions and collaborate with different co-researchers through various lenses. Moss (2019) explains, "…postfoundationalism relativises, because there can be no one objectively right answer in a social world of multiple perspectives—but this should not be confused with anything goes…. For we must take responsibility for this process and for our choices…" (p. 38).

For years, in life and professional work, choices always present themselves—sometimes subtly and sometimes screaming at us. Building upon critical theory (Freire 1985), I am inspired by diffracting (Barad, 2007) intergenerational connections of collaboration. Moss's commitment reflects our intentions that "…both politics and ethics are first practice (2019, p. 55)." He explains:

> …. the ethical subject in the ethics of care is a protagonist who must grapple with context, complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty to decide when and how best to relate...in a caring way, applying the qualities of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness to decide when and how best to practice acts of caring (p. 59).

The present disturbing sociopolitical climate demands ethical practice that leads to immediate action. Despite talk and commitment to "social justice," what are we really *doing*—especially in the cases of oppression, migrating families, children, and planet caring? Barad (2007) reminds us:

> Justice, which entails acknowledgment, recognition, and loving attention, is not a state that can be achieved once and for all. There are no solutions; there is only the ongoing practice

[1] Names changed to protect privacy.

> of being open and alive to each meeting, each intra-action, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken, to breathe life into ever new possibilities for living justly (pp. x–xi).

This relates to Moss's (2019) concrete ask of, "Can the educator respect the otherness of the children with whom she works, resisting the temptation to grasp that alterity by 'pigeon-holing them in her own mental schema?'" (p. 62).

I ask your patience as I jump from present to past and back again through time and layers of story. My experiences working, in often dramatic circumstances, with early childhood staff, children, and parents have influenced me profoundly. At my first job teaching preschool, there was the screaming, crying argument between Stella, a three-year-old, and Lennie, a four-year-old. I was the newest employee at the preschool so I had the task of welcoming the "early arrivals" for some of the working parents. It was a rainy December morning in north Florida as I parked my bicycle under a tree, I heard the ruckus, saw the worried looks on the two mothers' faces. I took both children by the hand to go inside after I assured both their mothers that we'd make some peanut butter sandwiches and sort this out. We went into the kitchen and got out the peanut butter and bread, and I took Stella in my arms and sat down so that I was also at the eye level with Lennie's glares. I asked what happened. Stella said, as she sobbed, "Lennie said Santa isn't Black." I asked Lennie if that was right. He nodded. (Both children were African American.) I remember asking Stella what her mama said. Stella answered, "She said Santa is Black." (I didn't know what I was doing.) Then I asked Lennie what his mama had said. He answered, "She said Santa is White." (I still didn't know what I was doing.) I thought immediately about the two things I knew to be absolutely true at that moment—every child believes her/his mama is the wisest person in the universe and most children at this age are fluent speakers of and believers in the confluence of fantasy and reality. I don't remember exactly what I said, but it was something simple that said mamas are always right and Santa, as far as I understand, is sort of magic, so it must be that he (or she?) could sometimes be Black and sometimes White. By then, the children had finished their sandwiches and headed off (calmly, and friends again) to ride tricycles in the playroom. I still didn't know what I should have said, but I did certainly know that children are smart, observant, and tenacious about learning deep meaning in their worlds.

Over the years, some of the contexts which stand out the most clearly to me have been in family literacy projects serving families in multilingual communities in which people's life experiences, struggles, and resilience come from multiple histories. The two intergenerational literacy projects that I worked with over two decades were projects in two different geographical locations with two different cultural and linguistic groups with a wide variation of family histories. For these projects, we used a framework based on critical theory's tenets of participation, multiple sources of knowledge, and transformative action. I offer selected examples of stories from these family literacy projects relating to educators today and that may offer new avenues for moral reckoning even as we take small, but determined, steps.

From the beginning of my career, I had the opportunity to work in early education programs with parents of young children who were often struggling with economics, work (with and without legal documentation), language issues, and difficulties with "codes of power" (Delpit, 1988). Some parents had had some years of formal education and many had had no formal education at all. Yet, I never met a parent who was not passionate about supporting the learning of her or his children. Also, I never met a parent who was not generous to share knowledge from lived experience with all of us. When the children, the parents, and their cultures and lives were valued, great leaps in learning, literacy, and biliteracy occurred. This chapter brings in glimpses of the two intergenerational, bilingual family literacy projects.

As is often the case as we are immersed in complex, inspiring, and difficult work, there is often no time or energy to reflect. At the close of my involvement in the projects, I began work in New York City and I began to realize the powerful stories that had been given were invaluable trajectories to keep me "keepin' on". My first month at New York University in my new job entangled my own story with jewels of stories (some reflected in this chapter) that would continue to catapult me forward. Mary Catherine Bateson had no idea how her entering my humble personal story gave me hope and confidence. Here's that part of the story.

Mary Catherine Bateson died recently on January 2, 2021. She is rightfully famous for multiple reasons. In 1989, she wrote a seminally stunning book, feminist and family-focused at the same time, *Composing a Life*. She was a renowned scholar (who spoke more than seven languages) across the world encompassing linguistics, cultures, family traditions, and her brilliant writing. She was also the daughter of anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. And to me, she lives in a special place in my heart. I met her just once.

I had recently joined the faculty at New York University in 2001 and I was invited to be on a panel at an event that explored education, language, and literacy as they reflect and support multilingual learners and their families. I was honored and sort of terrified; the other people on the panel were from famous universities known for impeccable scholarship. I tried to hide my discomfort and agreed to join the panel. Right before our presentation, we were asked in what order we would like to speak. I quickly said, "I would like to be last." (I had a million stories in my head but wasn't sure what would be appropriate—especially in this crowd.). As the other panelists gave their presentations I forgot about my fear, and by listening to each of them, I realized I had a story to tell from my work with children and families that related to each of the topics addressed. So, when it was my turn to speak, I was able to sincerely thank the other panelists and offered a few brief stories from my muses and friends (many involving the bilingual family literacy projects) over the years that seemed to me to support what the others were emphasizing.

The Dean held a small reception for the presenters and a few guests. I knew no one, as I accepted a glass of wine, I turned to "mingle". A woman immediately walked over to me and introduced herself to me. She was Mary Catherine Bateson. I was so stunned to be in her presence that I almost missed what she said. She said, "I wanted to thank you so much for your stories about real people. Those stories put

all the issues in perspective and show the strengths of the people you were talking about. That was the most important part of the day for me."

Oh, my goodness, I told myself, I am so thankful for the stories I've been entrusted with.

2.3 Respecting Our Collaborators and Co-researchers

Going back again in time to the 1980s and 1990s, I was becoming more certain that through story and narratives, personal and communal, we find new meanings. Furthermore, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the critical theorists and supporters of Freire's work and "cultural circles" of participatory literacy learning worked with adults. As I was beginning to study critical theory and critical literacy, I immediately saw how it was relevant to adult English language learners whom I was working with—parents and other adults. But from the beginning, I saw the children whom I worked with as expert critical theorists and experts at using multilingual communication, reliance on the arts, and the synergy of fantasy and reality for transformative action. It was truly a no-brainer for me. You can imagine my surprise when I said this out loud among intellectuals and activists, whether in El Paso, Chicago, New York City, or Minnesota, people looked at me as if I had lost my mind. I'd try to explain that I had evidence of this. I told them stories about the children I'd listened to over the years (Stella and Lennie, mentioned earlier and many more). Sometimes scholars thought this was an interesting idea, but they weren't convinced. Some wouldn't listen at all. I do remember that I approached an editor from Peter Lang Publishing at my first AERA national conference. He listened to me thoughtfully and asked me difficult questions that I couldn't answer very well. Yet, that short discussion helped me formulate my passion for this truth (of children and family members being critical theorists) in my practice and my research.

These experiences convinced me that children, their parents, and their early childhood teacher guides would provide leadership in critical, participatory literacy programs (and other programs) focusing on story. This is in part because teachers are then able to see what is not always obvious; parents and children can show strengths and needs that sometimes aren't apparent in the regular school contexts. In terms of literacies and languages, we have known for decades that children who have an opportunity to learn in their native language, while learning a second language, reach full cognitive development in two languages and enjoy cognitive advances over monolinguals (Cognitive Neuroscience Society, 2013; Collier, 1989; Garcia-Sierra et al., 2016). Students and their families who speak languages other than English can, and should, continue to nurture their home languages while their English acquisition (or that of a different target language) is in progress (Anzaldúa 1999; Cognitive Neuroscience Society, 2013; Reyes, 2011). The languages and literacies enrich each other; they do not prohibit the learners from becoming fluent and literate in English. More recent studies suggest that bilinguals surpass monolinguals in tasks of memory and memory flexibility (Blom et al., 2014; Brito & Barr, 2014). Luk and Bialystok

(2013) found that bilingualism is multi-faceted. Hoff (2018) found that bilingual children's competencies reflect the quantity and quality of their exposure to each language. This, in hindsight, is more evidence of the advantage of learning situations with multilingual and intergenerational students together.

I've wondered during the past year if we had more experience under our belts of co-teaching and co-researching with multilingual and intergenerational members of our students' families, would we have been better able to support the navigation of online schooling that has been necessary? Would the families have been better equipped to support the children as they struggled with the task of it all? Would the web designers and software developers have been better able to help teachers create multidimensional experiences? Would the local, state, and federal agencies have been better able to finance the endeavors?

2.4 Intergenerational, Multilingual Family Literacy

The family literacy groups I was involved with most were closely organized according to a model designed to provide participatory, critical literacy, and biliteracy opportunities for families and young children (together) in communities of migration. One family literacy project was for Mexican and Mexican American families in El Paso, Texas, and continued for years led by activist parents and teachers. The other project, Poj Niam Thiab Meyuam (Mother/Child School) was in Duluth, Minnesota, for Hmong women and their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Both projects continued with adaptations according to community needs for many years after the pilot projects.

In El Paso, Texas, a pilot project, The Intergenerational Family Literacy Project and the expanded larger project, Project FIEL: Family Initiative for English Literacy, involved Mexican, Mexican American, and Latino parents and their children. The El Paso Community College administration believed that the newly funded literacy center could provide literacy classes for adults who were interested in learning English and improving their literacy for employment or citizenship access purposes. They learned from entrance interviews that many adults (over 90%) who came for tutoring said that their first, most important reason to improve their literacy skills was to help their children with reading and schoolwork.

This statistic from the interviews led to a woman who I hadn't met standing outside my child development class as it ended early one morning. I had a class of 30, mostly bilingual adults studying child development; of course, we always ended our classes telling stories and laughing. I immediately thought we had disturbed the woman with our noise. But she smiled and said the class sounded engaging. Then she introduced herself and told me about the literacy center and the new information they had from the interviews. She asked me, "Could you design and implement literacy classes with parents and children together?" I said yes and explained that I was finishing my dissertation in a bilingual Head Start classroom with a strong parent involvement

component. Therefore, in 1987, we designed and implemented the Intergenerational Literacy Model Project as a pilot project.

The instructional model was designed with the current research at the time about both emergent literacy in young children and the confluence of bilingualism as related to literacy acquisition. While the Intergenerational Literacy Model Project was funded by an operational grant from Texas Education Agency rather than a research grant, the curriculum designers strongly felt that responsible teaching practice must consider the interrelationships between teaching practice, theory, and research. And it should be noted that the two of us who designed and implemented the pilot project were experienced teachers of both children and parents. We both were certain that our radical idea of holding classes with parents and children together could be effective. We knew and had learned in our professional experience that children's learning flourishes when they have the opportunity to work with a parent. And we were also certain about the positive dynamic of conducting the classes in the home languages of the families when at all possible.

2.4.1 What We Learned Together

I have always believed that the most important function of bilingual, participatory family literacy projects is the service (which can take many forms) provided for the participating families. It can, and usually does, support the efforts and activities of existing educational programs in terms of academics. In addition, the activity of participatory biliteracy in an intergenerational format offers information to the family participants about literacy and codes of power (Delpit, 1988; Reyes, 2011) in the United States in a context where participants are able to explore the relationship that this information (both the literacy and the political aspects) has on their own lives. Furthermore, this participatory literacy setting also used the background knowledge of the participants in a valued, active situation and provided teachers and staff with concrete examples of sociocultural information and factual information that is necessary for any educational setting—information that is often not available in books or teacher education class content. We can learn from parents about sleeping routines and family roles as we engaged in conversation about storytelling and storybook reading. And most importantly, we learned about what parents know their children know and what their strengths are. As a result, the participants of the Pilot Project really influenced the two subsequent bilingual family literacy projects over the following 15 years.

One parent said, "*I want to read. I want to help my kids so they don't have to go through what I did. It's a hard world out there, and if you can't read, it's awful*." Another parent asked, "*Are you sure this will help* my *daughter? If you're sure, we'll do it. I don't know, really, if anything will help me* (Quintero, 1990, p. 5).

Parents' comments revealed the feelings and the situations of many participants in the Intergenerational Literacy Model Project. All the parents were conscientious and caring adults, some of whom lacked basic literacy skills, but at that time wanted

to catch up with and surpass their children in these skills. They wanted to help their children with the tough challenges that come later in school and later in life.

The participating children also gave us primary source information from their perspectives about literacy acquisition and language. The children, ranging from 2 to 11 years of age, from English-speaking families and Spanish-speaking families, gave us all the hope to keep trying. Almost instinctively, certainly intuitively, the children thrived on what the experts at the time called the "roots of literacy" (Goodman, 1985). The children loved to communicate with gestures, by talking, by singing, by drawing, and by playing. As active learners, they enjoyed studying with their parents. Some even tried to protect and compensate for the lack of skills on their parents' part. A few children responded to our interviews:

Child 1: *I like to draw. I tell my baby sister stories about my pictures.*
Child 2: *I do puzzles good.*
Child 3: *My Mom doesn't have to read that. I'll do it for you, Mom.*
Child 4: *I like to talk.* (Quintero, 1990, p. 5).

2.4.2 Results of the El Paso Pilot Project

To say that the parents and their children improved their literacy skills by a certain percentage during the pilot project would be a drastic oversimplification of what happened. What did happen was a complex combination of expected and unexpected events in a human drama of literacy learning. For example, many researchers and teachers had acknowledged for decades that social context is intricately involved with children's academic learning. The social context issues were obvious in the way the adults related to each other, to their children, to the instructors, and to the learning events. It became obvious early in the project that it would be useless to consider methodology, curriculum, or assessment without taking into consideration the effects of social context. I would argue that these decades later, these truths are still self-evident. And I state the obvious when I wonder whether or not if those of us working with newcomer and migrating families as we fell into the pandemic of 2020 could have spent more time, effort, and funding exploring and supporting the myriad social issues that have become more and more horrific for learners as the times became more difficult?

In the El Paso project, probably the most devastating negative effect of social context upon literacy learning for adults was the embarrassment factor. Several parents were so ashamed of their lack of literacy skills that they were absolutely unwilling—perhaps unable—to take the necessary risks involved in learning a new skill. One example of this was seen in a mother of three. The woman was quite an articulate speaker of both Spanish and English. She seemed to be perceptive and was excellent at guiding her children through the "initial inquiry" (conversational) part of the lessons. Yet, because of her lack of schooling and her awareness of the social stigma of illiteracy she had never attempted any involvement with written language. When the language experience approach activities involving basic writing

were presented, this parent stared into space, looked away completely, or made comments such as *I don't read* (Quintero, 1990, p. 11).

Another example of social context in a slightly different sense negatively affecting the lessons was the great number of intense personal problems which many of the adults were experiencing. No amount of innovative teaching or self-motivation could compete with a spouse's threats to kidnap the children or a hungry family's survival on potatoes exclusively for the 10 days after the food stamps have run out. This was the late 1980s. Have we not learned in 2020 that no jobs, no financial support, no healthcare, and often no home to dwell in prevents children and families' learning and living?

2.4.3 The Unexpected

Many unexpected things occurred, but an issue with respect to adult learners and oral language seemed especially noteworthy to project staff. From a standpoint of early childhood education, the project designers were certain of the importance that oral language development plays in the whole literacy learning of children. It was because of this that such an emphasis was placed on oral language in the program—it seemed imperative that the parents realize this importance if they were going to learn to help their children in and out of school. What the project staff did not expect was the importance oral language seemed to have on the adults' learning. In all the classes for monolingual English speakers, Spanish speakers, and bilingual participants there were several levels of connections between the oral language and adults' evidence of literacy and biliteracy development. When a parent seemed to feel comfortable enough to take part in the conversations at the beginning of the class sessions, that parent had set an emotional climate of trust for herself or himself and seemed to be more willing to take the risks with written language in the language experience step of the lesson.

2.5 Project FIEL—A Title VII Demonstration Project

Two years after the pilot project was initiated, the college received three-years funding through the federal Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) to expand the project. Project FIEL (Family Initiative for English Literacy) began in August of 1988 as a demonstration family literacy project for multilingual families. Even though we were required by funders to put *English* literacy in the title, we chose to emphasize what Swadener and Lubeck (1995) promoted in their work with children and families "At Promise," which included respect for and inclusion of home language. Also, it gave us an expression of our hope for our learners that in Spanish FIEL (the acronym for our project) translates as *faithful* or *devoted*.

The literacy groups offered a bilingual setting where parents and children worked together using a flexible five-step instructional model which relied heavily on students' prior knowledge, using both home language and English language interactions and sociocultural strengths. Project FIEL brought parents and kindergarten children (and, as it happened, their siblings of all ages) together once a week after school in their neighborhoods for approximately two hours of activities. The goals of the family literacy project were:

(a) to enhance literacy and biliteracy knowledge and skills of both the parents and the children through a series of participatory intergenerational activities
(b) to provide information regarding the literacy and biliteracy development process in children to the parents and to provide a setting for the parents to utilize the information in a variety of ways
(c) to enhance parents' self-confidence to contribute to their children's literacy acquisition and learning through participatory group interaction; and
(d) to empower the participants to connect the literacy activities to their own social and cultural situations, thus encouraging their use of literacy for personal, family, and community purposes (Quintero & Rummel, 2003).

The FIEL project was implemented in 32 classrooms in seven schools in the El Paso area. The classes met after school and consisted of five to seven parents, their children, a teacher, and an assistant, one of whom was bilingual. The classes were conducted in Spanish and/or English, depending on the proficiencies and desires of the families in each class.

2.5.1 Instructional Model

The FIEL curriculum consisted of a series of generative lesson frameworks collaboratively written by staff with constant input by the participating parents and children (during parent meetings and informal conversations with children and parents). Each lesson revolved around a theme that guided the groups through the five steps of the instructional model. The themes were selected by the participants. The themes, for example, included Puppets (a popular art form in Mexico), T.V.: Good or Bad?, Families (including the extended family and/or different family configurations), Parenting on the Frontera, Recipes and Health Food/Junk Food (including Mexican food and dishes), Music (Mexican and American), Holidays (Mexican and American), Heroes, Cotton and plants (cotton fields surround two of our schools), the Library (where books are available in both Spanish and English), The School and You: Avenues for Advocacy and What's Worth Knowing?

The flexible, five-step instructional format was loosely structured as:

1. Initial Inquiry—an oral language activity that encouraged group dialogue (often in two languages)

2. Learning Activity—a concrete, hands-on experience activity done in family teams (small groups)
3. Language Experience Approach Activity—a writing activity, in either or both languages, done in family teams
4. Storybook Fun—storytime that encouraged interaction, in either or both languages
5. Home Activity Suggestion—activities for the whole family to do at home (materials included)

This curriculum was a confirmation of beliefs regarding effective and ethical ways literacy and biliteracy could be encouraged (Quintero, 1990, pp. 18–19).

Project FIEL embraced the theoretical perspectives of much of the parent involvement research available at the time, however, differed from expert opinion in certain aspects of theory and design. For example, we defined literacy as follows:

> Literacy is a process of constructing and critically using language (oral and written) as a means of expression, interpretation and/or transformation of our lives and the lives of those around us.

Those of us with study and experience working with young children could document that babies, toddlers, and young children are experts at communicating through babbling, intonations, songs, "invented" syllables and words, gestures, and facial expressions. We knew these were the roots of literacy as Yetta Goodman (1985) called them.

So, we extended this to all our learners saying that literacy begins as a process whereby children and adults acquire oral and written language skills that can be used for ongoing, generative critical living. Thus, a parent could be quite literate and quite capable of passing on useful education to her child even if that parent lacked the formal reading and writing skills or formal schooling. It had been our experience that when parents are provided with critically relevant educational information and encouragement to make connections between what is already being done at home in terms of positive parenting to other areas of education, and the skills are not so difficult to acquire.

First, Project FIEL as described above, was a literacy class for parents and their children. Parent engagement was an integral part of the project—not a "side effect" or a peripheral part of the project. The parents in Project FIEL were students; they participated in the lessons and did the optional home activities just as the children did. What was even more significant, however, was the fact that the parents were actually working together with their children during the program. They sat next to each other throughout the lessons as they discussed, drew, wrote, listened to stories, and did a myriad of other activities. This was in contrast to other literacy programs where, for example, the parents attend literacy classes in one room while the children listen to stories in another, or where the children attend classes during the day and the parents meet only during the last segment of the day or in the evening.

As parents and children worked together, they helped each other. While the child may have, for example, offered ideas to the parent for a particular drawing, it was

more often the child who asked for help from the parent than the reverse. This was particularly significant, as we were working with Latino families with varying abilities in Spanish and English in this project. It was significant because the parents, despite the fact that they put themselves in a learning situation with their children, they still had the opportunity to maintain themselves as role models or authority figures for their children. Even though both parents and children were in a learning situation, the children still looked up to their parents as they asked, for example, "How do you write banana?" or "Did I do this right?" or "Can you draw a circle for me?" or "Will you write firefighter for me?" This opportunity for the parent to participate as a role model while at the same time working cooperatively with the child, we felt, was important to the success of the project. As I retell this story in 2020, I wish I had had the foresight and support to provide online parent/child learning groups in these difficult times. Wouldn't this simple design have helped at least some of our students succeed?

The FIEL curriculum was implemented in many different groups each project year. Most schools had three or four classes being offered at once. The teachers were asked to use all five steps of the instructional model. We suggested that the teachers at one school choose (with input from their parents) the same theme to present on the same class day so that they could help and support each other with materials and ideas. Other than these two requirements the teachers were encouraged strongly to interpret the lessons personally according to their own teaching style and especially with attention to the needs and interests of the individual families in their classes (Quintero, 1990, p. 29).

There were always extra brothers and sisters popping in and out of the classroom. Some of these siblings added positively to the family and classroom dynamics. Some of these siblings bothered everyone involved. The classes were dynamic and different every day. Yet, of course, even with our wonderful intellectual teachers, there were always more questions than answers. Consequently, the hour-long weekly staff debriefing sessions which were held immediately after each class were invaluable. Sometimes the sessions seemed to "fix" everything. Often, they seemed only to generate more frustrating questions. Regardless, they provided a short time for tangible and intangible mutual support for professionals who themselves were in a growing process.

2.5.2 Evolution of the Bilingual Model

It eventually became evident in the day-to-day drama of the classes that we were witnessing many of the recent research findings regarding language transfer (Krashen and Biber, 1988) and biliteracy development (Barrera, 1983) which stated that knowledge about oral language and the reading and writing processes transfer from the native language to the second language and that literacy learning can occur among bilinguals through the use of two languages. Samples of parent comments from an evaluation survey follow.

> Yes, I can help my son better because I got more ideas on how to make him listen to what I read to him.
>
> Aprendí como se desenvuelve mi hija en clases y ahora tengo la oportunidad de enseñarle y ayudarle en los aspectos que ella necesita, dos de ellos es el inglés y la participacion en clase. (I learned how my child is developing in class and now I have the opportunity of teaching and helping her where she needs it, two of those areas are with English and class participation.)
>
> Me siento satisfecha, si puedo ayudar en algo provechoso. (I feel content, I can help with something worthwhile.)

2.5.3 Curriculum Evolution... Adjustments!

During the second project year, we made a conscious effort to revise our evolving curriculum to better reflect the needs and interests of the families. We felt we needed to provide more opportunities for parents and children to connect the literacy activities to their everyday lives of needs, hopes, frustrations, and joys. We talked to literally every parent in the project to get suggestions for additions and changes.

In other words, a lesson about "What's Worth Knowing?" could be addressed by both adult learners and child learners. The parents agreed. The children loved it (discussing the effectiveness of a school rule with adults present!). Some of the teachers were intrigued. Some were distressed. Some teachers had difficulty—more with the practice rather than the theory of our changes. They felt uncertain about orchestrating both groups of learners (parents and children) around themes of such profound meaning (Quintero, 1990).

There was the Ghostbuster incident in one class. The experienced and dedicated teacher was leading an "Initial Inquiry" discussion at the beginning of class focused on the theme of community helpers. She was good at involving and engaging both children and parents. I walked in as participants were giving their examples of what a community helper means, what one does. Vicente, aged 5, sat with his mother and raised his hand. He waited, then when the teacher acknowledged him to speak, he spoke eloquently about having a "Ghostbuster" in his house. Vicente's mother calmly smiled throughout his telling of the tale. The teacher was surprised that he wasn't talking about firefighters, doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, as some of the examples she had used in her introduction. It was just a few seconds before she used her authority to refocus the conversation by saying that she didn't think a Ghostbuster was a real community helper. Vicente didn't skip a beat and politely disagreed and explained that he shares a room with his baby sister who was afraid of the dark. He went on to explain that he always tells her that she will be protected in the dark by the Ghostbuster and then she would fall asleep. Just as the teacher was starting to say, "… but a ghostbuster isn't real…" I jumped in and quickly asked the assistant teacher to carry on with the group discussion because I had something to talk with the teacher about urgently. I went with her in the hallway and apologized for interrupting her teaching, but it was really important. I reminded her about our discussions about the pretend/reality fuzzy line for young children at this age and I had noticed how

proud Vicente was to tell his story and how proud Vicente's mother was about his participation. And I reminded her of our definition of literacy and asked her if she would please re-enter the class, the discussion, and continue as if a ghostbuster could be a community helper. I said I'd talk with her in more detail at our meeting after the class. I felt bad, knowing I'd violated her lead in the class. She was flustered but kept her composure. She didn't quit. She continued to be a strong and important part of the project. Most importantly, I was careful to see Vicente and his mother as they left the building and I said I really liked his story about the Ghostbuster. Then he showed me the picture and language experience story that he and his mother had drawn and written together during the Concrete Activity part of the class.

2.6 The Poj Niam Thiab Meyuam (Mother/Child School) Duluth, Minnesota

A decade after the inception of the El Paso project, in Duluth, Minnesota, we initiated a similar project involving Hmong parents (from Laos) and the second year added refugee parents from Somalia, their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The Poj Niam Thiab Meyuam (Mother/Child School) met at a community center, in a housing area where many new residents lived who were from recently closed refugee camps in Thailand where they had lived since the end of the war in Vietnam. The program was a collaboration of Head Start staff, early childhood family education staff, adult basic education/English as a second language staff, parents, children, and university faculty and student teachers. The goals of this project were similar to the goals of Project FIEL, with one added related goal, to provide a collaboration model of professional and paraprofessional staff working with immigrant families in education and social services in Minnesota.

I had moved to the Early Childhood faculty at the University of Minnesota Duluth and was immediately inspired by the community Head Start Early Childhood program, the Family Education program, and adult ESL program which were all collaborating to provide the most relevant, authentic support possible to all ages of newcomers, first Hmong families from Laos and Vietnam and later families from Somalia. I was granted an invitation to send teacher education students from undergraduate and Master's programs in Early Childhood and ESL programs of study to do fieldwork with the families and children at this community center.

On one of our first professional meetings with the Head Start staff, I showed some video documentation and told stories of the El Paso project (Project FIEL). The lead teacher of the Head Start in the county asked, "If what you say about multilingual literacy acquisition is supported by this type of project, could we do one here?" She went on, "I mean, I don't understand a lot of the Spanish in your videos, but I can see how the children and their parents are so engaged. Could we do this with Hmong families?" I was touched and excited. I answered that of course, I believed we could, but I certainly wasn't bilingual in Hmong (or Lao) and English. Yet, if

we could collaborate with some of the mothers who were multilingual because of living in refugee camps in Thailand for many years, they could be our co-teachers and co-researchers if they chose to. So, the second project, Poj Niam Thiab Meyuam (Mother/Child School) began in Duluth, Minnesota, for Hmong women and their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

The Poj Niam Thiab Meyuam project was implemented in a similar format as the El Paso Project FIEL. And it is important to relate that both projects continued with adaptations according to community needs for many years after the pilot projects. In this brief chapter, there are some examples from this work that show the collaboration of children, families, educators, and student teachers that tied together with the histories, very different journeys, and incredible strengths of the learners and the early childhood educators and other educators who worked together tirelessly.

2.7 Parent Advocacy

While the parents and children in both family literacy projects weren't always directly involved in what is traditionally thought of as "issues of power," they were respected and encouraged to read their "world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Often this resulted in their taking action in various ways that both improved something in their lives and informed us as staff. While many people define "transformative action" in different ways, most would agree that a prime example is a parent doing something, taking action, and making "good trouble" (as John Lewis said) to make a situation better for her child. Parent advocacy growing from family literacy could be seen in the El Paso project. For example, a family literacy lesson was developed on "School and You: Avenues for Advocacy," because several of the parents had inquired or expressed discontent with specific situations in their children's schools which they had encountered and were frustrated with. The class discussion focused on the different procedures they could use within the school systems to voice their complaints and advocate for change. Some of the guiding questions for the lesson were: "When you have a question about what is happening in your child's class at school, when and how can you talk to the teacher?" "If you are not happy with what the teacher tells you or if the teacher won't talk to you, what can you do then?" "What are all the avenues you can think of to be an advocate for your children?"

One parent during a class talked about her situation with her child's teacher. The teacher was treating the child in a disrespectful way, which the parent felt was damaging the child's self-confidence and inhibiting her learning. Her child had entered kindergarten, after the generally supportive context of Head Start, but day after day as she struggled with various writing tasks, her kindergarten teacher consistently reprimanded her for poor performance and often grabbed her paper, crumpled it up, and threw it in the trash in front of all the students. After discussing this situation with other parents in the family literacy class, the parent also found other parents outside the class who shared similar stories. They all decided they wanted to meet at

the school for a parent discussion group to brainstorm how they could deal with "children's abuse by teachers." The parents began to meet regularly together with each other, sometimes with their school administration, and sometimes attended school board meetings to make their concerns known (Quintero and Macias, 1995). They often informed staff about community and family information that they otherwise wouldn't have known.

Another example showing transformative action came from Hmong parents who had recently arrived in the United States from refugee camps in Thailand. In one of the first family literacy classes in Duluth, Minnesota, parents came to class with a critical question. The question was "Why doesn't the elementary school (where their older children attended) tell us about parent conferences, send us notifications in our language, or provide an interpreter at meetings?" With the interpreter at the family literacy class and the literacy facilitator taking part in the discussion, the women discussed at length how angry they felt when they heard of the teachers' comments about how the Hmong parents just didn't care about their children's education. The staff at the elementary school reportedly said this because the Hmong parents never come to parent conferences, PTA meetings, or other school functions. However, the women explained that they had been able to be active in Head Start, in part because the staff always made the effort to provide interpreters at meetings, provide information in their language, and respectfully talked to parents about questions regarding their children. After comparing the two situations (Head Start and the elementary school), they decided to take action. They wrote the following letter:

Tus saib xyuas nyob rau hauv tsev kawm ntawv.

Dear Principal,

> Peb yog cov ua niam ua txiv muaj me nyuam tuaj kawn ntawv hauv tsev kawn ntawv School. Peb xav thov kom nej muab cov ntawv xa los tsev txhais ua ntawv Hmoob. Thaum twg nej muaj tej yam uas tseem ceeb nyob rau hauv tsev kawm ntawv los peb thiaj paub tias yog ntawv tseem ceeb thiab.
>
> Ua tsaug ntau koj muab koj lub sij haum los twm peb tsab ntawv no. (Quintero & Rummel, 2003, p. 126).

To paraphrase the letter, the parents asked the principal why they were not notified of school information or conferences regarding their children in their language. They stated that they are active parents who care deeply about their children's education, but when information is illegible to them, they cannot participate.

The principal responded with a letter, written in Hmong, a week later. Interpreters were provided at all school functions in which the parents participated, and school notices were translated into Hmong ever since this incident. And participation by the Hmong parents in school activities rose to over 90%.

2.8 Promising Realities

In another case, of Andre and Ms. Mora, we saw a parenting style quite consistent with the practices and assumptions of the family literacy project. Working with Andre and his mother caused us to challenge another myth. Some researchers believed that a mother must have a formal education in order to be supportive of her children's academic development. Andre, age five, and his mother, Ms. Mora, attended Project FIEL activities in central El Paso for two semesters. Andre lived with his mother, father, 10-year-old brother, 19-year-old sister, and 21-year-old sister. Ms. Mora had only six years of formal schooling in Mexico. Yet, her biblioteca (library) in her home, her literacy practices with her children, as well as her own habits showed no lack of academic support. Furthermore, the academic success of all four children—those in elementary school and those in high school and the university—contradicted the myth that unless mothers obtain a high school diploma, the children will not succeed in school.

Ms. Mora's comments about being an avid reader herself indicated that while she was a monolingual Spanish speaker, she was quite literate in her native language. Videotaped interactions of her and her son during the FIEL classes further showed that she was indeed proficient in literacy behaviors as well. That is to say, she calmly and consistently prompted and encouraged Andre and appropriately explained things to him in Spanish. Andre often then explained to the class the issue or story in perfect English (usually his writing was in English). Thus, while Ms. Mora didn't consider herself bilingual or biliterate she was an effective leader of this bilingual, biliterate family team. Examples from field notes and videotaped class sessions showed mother/son interactions which revealed her leadership on both a literacy development level and a social context level. Consequently, Andre at age five was proficiently bilingual and on his way to becoming biliterate. (Quintero & Rummel, 2003).

I still think of Ms. Mora all these years later. As I was thinking of and missing my new friends from Syria and Libya in the school where they were studying in kindergarten and I was volunteering in 2020, I know that Ms. Mora could have, and would have, helped the parents and the children so much. How many talented and dedicated leaders have not been recognized nor recruited to help?

Likewise, the children in the Minnesota project spoke in two languages—Hmong and English. Some families also spoke Lao giving the children the richness of three languages. With their mothers joining them, they often sang and "showed off" their English with the storybook reading in one breath, and then turned to their mothers to elaborate on the description begun about polar bears, in Hmong, in a private conversation. Pae, age four, on one occasion turned to one of the teachers and asked in English, "If polar bear fights brown bear who wins?" His cognitive flexibility is not slowing down at all while his two languages develop.

The Hmong children in the family literacy project in Minnesota showed complex cognitive processing in spite of language differences. For example, Tong was a child who attended the Head Start classroom in the morning where the teaching was done

primarily in English, with a multicultural group of children consisting of American Indians, African Americans, Spanish-speaking children, English-speaking children, and Hmong children. In the afternoon, Tong attended family literacy class and extended his learning from the morning with the assistance of a Hmong-speaking assistant. He spoke Hmong with his buddies and relatives, sang, drew, and wrote about what he'd learned about whales, the moon, fish and sea life, and dinosaurs. He also read folktales from Africa, Thailand, Laos, and England. In 1995, Hmong families in bilingual family literacy classes created books, in Hmong and English, with stories of family histories. They created audio tapes of the stories in Hmong and English.

These stories should poke at our conscience in 2020–2021 amidst our schooling difficulties. Who should be deciding and declaring what are "promising practices" and in which contexts?

Intergenerational Family Literacy Programs are complex by their very nature, and they differ according to participants' needs and strengths. Yet, it's been my experience that these programs offer more than most parent education programs and more than many student tutorial or parent education programs. And as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, I see these projects foreshadowing many of our challenges and possibilities in 2020 and 2021, especially in terms of early childhood leadership. The following chapters will address aspects of our learnings in these projects relate to our current need to urgently focus on public health, racial justice, accessibility, equity and human migrations, and survival. Hopefully, by listening *with* (Parnell, 2011) the families, children, and teachers we will be inspired to make brave choices in our work of "building back better".

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Chapter 3
Storying Teacher Preparation

Adria Taha-Resnick

Abstract The need to understand and guide migrant and refugee student teachers into early childhood leadership roles is imperative as they are joining the profession in growing numbers. Using stories as teacher preparation is vital, serving as a means of teacher empowerment. Higher education students of today will be teaching children of diverse histories and cultures tomorrow, and their own experiences will guide them. Course work and reflection offer them a way to synthesize their identities as practitioners. These dedicated student teachers share how their experiences as migrants, refugees, and first-generation college students capitalize on their humanity to inform them in their role as teachers of young children and how their personhood is a contribution to changing the narrative of early childhood professionals.

I formally began my early childhood working experience at the age of 16 as an assistant in a family care setting. I had no idea about the science of children, but the educator side of me emerged. I asked a lot of questions. Why do the children do this before that? How do I guide them properly? I remember thinking how the woman I was shadowing knew so much about children and how amazing it would be to continue on the path of working with young children. Little did I know how little I knew. As I transitioned to working in center-based programs and obtaining my BA, being a teacher just felt "right." As the years progressed, I began to see the systems, the hierarchy, and the dismissiveness I was given by colleagues and parents because I was "just an assistant," which became "just a preschool teacher." These moments sat heavy with me, as it was always something I was pushing against. "Just a woman", "just young", "just working with children." I found that I became disenchanted with education when administrators drew a clear line of "them" and "us." Teachers do what the administrator tells them to. Wanting to come up with a way to do a project, change a bulletin board, or discuss missed milestones with parents, all to be told it had to be done as they would do it. This way was embedded into me in no less than four programs I worked at through the years. As one director told me when I was a teacher of four-year-olds, "I'll tell you what to do, you do it" and "and I know you went to school longer than I did, but this is how I learned it, and it works just fine." Other directors conveyed the same messages, in other ways too. Then I was "just in an oppressive workplace." How was I supposed to take my knowledge and

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expand transformationally when my superior was holding me back? I knew I enjoyed being with children but also felt a longing to make a change. I wasn't sure how, but I felt connected to the mindset that an administrator didn't have to divide the team so distinctly or hold on to antiquated ideals. I was starving for permission to do more, to be more, yet I was also afraid to speak up in a way that would enhance my teaching for fear of losing my job. As I moved through the so-called "ranks," I found myself in the role of an administrator who wasn't prepared specifically to lead adults and give what I wanted to the teachers now in my charge. I was young, college-educated, knew a lot about children and curriculum, yet there I was expected to be the leader of others without a clear path.

Twenty years from those fresh leader days, I am still invested in how I can prepare future early childhood teachers to use their teacher leadership as pedagogical praxis. Further, the need to understand and guide migrant and refugee student teachers into early childhood workforce leadership roles is important to me because the majority of my preschool preservice teachers are Latinx. Additionally, a majority of my adult students come from migrant farmworker families and are first-generation college students. The Migration Policy Institute, in the last report, identified that "immigrants now account for nearly one-fifth of the overall ECEC workforce" (Park et al., 2015, p. 5) and 40% of center-based and family child care providers are people of color (Whitebook et al., 2018). With these numbers in mind, it is imperative that we as educators of educators understand "place conscious education" (Gruenwald, 2003) and the systems in place that inhibit full consciousness of educators. Gruenwald further explains how the theory of place connects to the critical pedagogy that must include the specifics of "experiences, problems, language, and histories that communities rely upon to construct a narrative of collective identity and possible transformation" (McLaren and Giroux, 1990, p. 263). Reflecting on Peter Moss and Gunilla Dahlberg (2005) challenging the common, Anglo-Saxon discourse of early childhood programs, I am guiding my work in connecting with and sharing stories with my students to empower them.

I look at my time with students not only for them and their learning, but for myself, and for the profession of early childhood to advance. I am determined to give agency to my students and look at ways we can, in collaboration, understand what exemplary teaching is, and how their personhood is a contribution to changing the narrative of early childhood professionals. I want my students to take the reins and go forth in knowing their power.

Pelo and Carter (2018) discuss the importance of changing the narrative of early childhood professionals as leaders, critical thinkers, researchers, and innovators. They refer to scholar Peter Moss when assessing how storying can challenge "racial and economic injustice" (p. 28). Expressing the importance of new stories, Moss explains stories should "offer hope that another world is possible, a world that is more equal, democratic and sustainable, a world where surprise and wonder, diversity and complexity find their rightful place in early childhood education, indeed all education" (Moss, 2014, p. 2). The stories that my students and I share in respect to working in early childhood programs highlight the importance of identifying our

cultural beliefs, recognizing strengths, and how we make relational connections with adults we work alongside or supervise and the young children we teach.

Returning to the questions guiding our findings, this chapter considers:

- How do acculturation and language acquisition become impacted by the process of aligning new societal expectations and requirements with previous cultural norms, individual perceptions, and experiences preeminent in immigrants' lives?

3.1 Empowering a Diverse Workforce Through Relationships and Story

With all of the responsibilities of the early childhood workforce, one would be left to believe that professionals in early childhood programs would be required to have higher education and a breadth of knowledge. This is rarely the case. The United States does not have a single uniform system for required qualifications, rather it is left to individual states to create policy (Cryer & Clifford, 2003). As state policy is often minimal, higher education and teacher preparation programs should encompass teacher leadership in order to set our future workforce up for success.

What does this mean to those of us educating future teacher leaders in early childhood programs? Clearly, there are identifiable dispositions and skills professionals in early childhood programs should exhibit, yet the lack of education beyond basic child development concepts is sparse. Anyone (myself included) who has been an administrator in early care and education feels the pressure expected to take on greater responsibility for promoting and implementing high-quality practices and engaging their teachers in meaningful discourse about quality practice. Additionally, the literature continuously reinforces a workforce with advanced education, training, and ongoing professional development shows a significant impact on child outcomes (Goffin, 2015; Nicholson et al., 2018). Of course, quality in a sense of what is best for children is debated by what the United States and quality initiatives in the United States view as "quality." Very often, quality is not viewed with cultural contexts. As studies continue, defining quality is an elusive concept because quality must address an array of indicators in both formal and informal settings, which have varying interpretations based on stakeholder values and beliefs (Tankersley et al., 2018). The discourse on quality requires the examination of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which it is defined. Quality perceptions lie in specific situations and with a multifaceted, complex understanding that quality is defined in various ways when viewed through a socio-political, and socio-cultural lens. Helen Penn (2011) claimed that in the United States early childhood quality is based on the norms that the United States perceives as important through a neoliberal colonial lens. The United States has based its quality early childhood programs on those that best prepare children for school. The "schoolification of early childhood" (Penn, 2011, p. 11) does not seek to focus on who a child is at the present time, but rather who they will be later in life;

therefore, U.S. quality is measured with the outcome of school readiness (academic) measures.

Today's early childhood practitioners are working in a world of social and political realities bringing challenges unforeseen. At the time of writing this, we are in the middle of 2020 in the United States. The coronavirus has changed the ways we do everything, especially going to school. The Black Lives Matter movement is heightened, many students have lost their jobs, and numerous students are consumed by the politics of the current President and what it means to their families. Again, Moss (2019) described the importance of how we address early childhood professionals and the need to implore the values of critical thinking, dialogue, and multiple perspectives. Storying allows teachers to gain their own agency as teachers of diverse backgrounds, teaching young children of equally diverse cultures. These storying opportunities advance the opportunities for early childhood teachers to walk alongside those of us who teach them, as a partnership in critical dialogue.

My own experience as a young, educated administrator and the struggles of being ill-prepared for leading adults has led me to investigate how the workforce can be better prepared. I felt the urge to challenge the status quo and examine how administrators are inhibiting staff development without awareness or intention. The main role of the early childhood administrator is to establish a safe, effective, high-quality environment for the children and the staff. The administration of a program affects the climate of the workplace for staff, the overall quality of the program, and a sense of community for parents and families (Cartmel et al., 2013; Leithwood et al., 2010; Stamopoulos, 2012).

As a teacher, I felt inhibited to question practice and how, as a professional, I could make a difference on a larger scale and challenge the status quo of quality. Working in California and Texas, I was further discouraged at the lack of preparation that is required to teach in early childhood, let alone carry an administrative role (which is common throughout the United States). The requirements set the bar so low that programs are set up to fail at no fault of their own. It is my goal to teach future educators to understand the cultural context in which quality is and should be measured.

The stereotypical gendered role of early childhood professionals has relied on the narrative of "just the nice, sweet, caring teacher," and the "boss" who is considered colder, a straightforward task manager. Teachers become the "bosses" they have encountered or visualize through a stereotypical lens of an "I said so" mentality. The intersection of "who I am" and "who I should be" is often where the workforce struggles for their own sense of "placeness." Storying is a way to self-reflect where an individual can find themselves and their power to transform. I can still remember how I had to navigate both sides of myself to become a leader. I had to also understand teacher perceptions that administrators used punitive measures to gain compliance in lieu of teacher collaboration and expertise. One story I often tell my early childhood student teachers is about my own struggle as a new administrator and understanding the perception of the teachers because I wanted to be "taken seriously." I worked in a large center where I was the youngest administrator at the time. I felt that I needed to be "professional" and "knowledgeable" and it came across as cold. I didn't realize

it, as I thought I was friendly, visited classrooms, asked them how I could help. What I wasn't doing was being me as well. I kept my guard up. Because I was young and new, I thought I needed to maintain a "seriousness" to my work. I wanted the teachers to understand what I knew professionally yet was restrained in bridging the gap of humanity with them.

One day, I was in the office and joking with a co-worker, when a teacher walked in. I had a heavy belly laugh going, and I was slapping my thigh. When the teacher walked in, she looked at me stunned. I proceeded to tell her what had me laughing so hard, thinking she would see the hysteria and join in laughing. Instead, her response was "I didn't know you had a sense of humor." She proceeded to tell me I seemed serious all the time and that "word around campus" was how I must have been a bore. That was the first time it really resonated that I needn't hide who I am in my work role. That the humanity in me could bring out the humanity in others. I decided to figure out how I could be more "human" and bring myself (nurturing, funny and capable all at once) to work. I shared more, I asked more, and I had to self-reflect a lot. Not only did I feel better, it made the program happier. Once I shared myself, my humanity, the program morale grew, I felt more secure in difficult conversations with my staff, and I found a sense of placeness. We had built relationships.

Relationships have been heavily researched regarding the importance of working with children (Erikson, 1950; Garrity et al., 2016; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Noltemeyer et al., 2012). The importance of relationships does not cease to exist when a person becomes an adult, rather there is a greater ability to dissect how certain relationships are fractured. Storying builds self-understanding and relationships with others. As explained by Quintero, (2015), "…autobiographical opportunities inherent in critical literacy and integrated curriculum encourage students to tie their personal family stories to the learning situation of children…" (p. 60). In preparing the workforce to succeed in this idea, they need to experience it in their own learning in their higher education and beside their professors.

Another concept we teach early childhood educators is the importance of creating culturally relevant and responsive practices with young children. Continuing the same pedagogical lens with my adult student teachers is imperative as we problematize the value put on their knowledge and within their contexts. As expressed by Quintero, 2017 (p. 181), this work is "grounded in reconceptualizations of postmodern and narrative theoretical influences" (Freire, 1985; Gruenewald, 2003; Josselson, 2006; Parnell, 2011; Iorio and Parnell, 2015; Quintero, 2015; Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2012). Storying with my adult student teachers has led to many eye-opening ways in which deep self-reflection leads to the realization of how their own stories impact themselves as teachers with young children. Through the process of writing and sharing their culture, strength and power emerge and their context becomes a tool in their practice. The exercises in class are meant to bring out the stories of early childhood student teachers and engage them in the ways we ask them to engage with children and families. Lillian Katz, (1993) offers that those of us who work in professional development:

> ...are especially intent on getting something accomplished for the children, and seem to construe the situation as 'getting to the kids through the teachers'. If we want to help children (and no doubt we do), then we should do so directly instead of trying to 'use' teachers. The focus should be on helping the teachers as persons worthy of our caring and concern in their own right. Define [your] role as someone who helps and works with teachers for their own sakes. When we do that wholeheartedly and well, the children will surely benefit also. (p. 16)

Storying exposes this concept and further transforms the early childhood student teachers to envision how their own lived experiences guide their teaching.

3.2 Storying in the Higher Education Classroom

In my classes at a public university, I teach early childhood courses to future teachers. The workforce entering early childhood programs is a diverse and often marginalized population. My goal with my students is to create opportunities for them to examine their culture and the role it plays with who they are as teachers. I offer a variety of assignments and share opportunities to interpret how their culture is an asset as a teacher. I always share first about my lived experience, how I had to fight against stereotypes, and find the lessons that were embedded into each of my own cultural backgrounds. Growing up Lebanese, in a dual language and religious household has made for some complicated conversations with others on the "outside." From the basics of how our food differed, to how to combat racism after September 11. Hearing statements from people in the grocery line that the entire area of the Middle East should be eliminated (by bombing) was especially difficult, as I knew my family in Lebanon to be caring and anti-war. Then, I married a Jewish man and we are raising two Jewish daughters; there became new levels of complexity. My family and I are subjected to a myriad of opinions by unknowing people. It was when I began sharing these experiences with others that I was able to understand that the majority of people did not, could not, understand the intersection of cultures in my own life and that I am just one of many diverse stories. If I asked, and they shared, empathy and relationships had a genuine place for transformation. As bell hooks (2014) describes work in higher education with students "our work is not merely to share information, but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students" (p. 13). Further, hooks explains how we are responsible for providing the conditions that enable our students to reflect and transform.

The early childhood student teachers' culminating assignment in one of my courses is examining their culture and writing a cultural autobiography that connects themselves, their experiences, their contexts, and their challenges to their teacher identity. These storying examples begin with Araceli,[1] who shares the importance of understanding the specifics of her culture:

> I come from native blood of Aztecs and Mayans and have deep

[1] All names have been changed to respect the identities of collaborators.

> pride of my culture and history of both Chicanos in the US and those back in my homeland. My blood is from farmers and workers, Guadalajara and Guanajuato, and native ancestors. My culture puts family, respect, hard work, and spirituality on a high pedestal.... For my teaching I believe that knowing oneself can help in learning another and how they respond, and can be associated with how they learn and how I can support that learning process through interactions and constructive communication/relationships. Knowing the importance of culture and traditions will also help me in understanding aspects and relationships families and their students have with their own as well as how their culture and background has shaped their development. I truly believe that the importance of respect is a shared trait and action across all cultures and to really understand your students, as a teacher you need to be willing to know who they are as individuals rather than as a group of people.

And Christina identifies the entanglement of assimilation and culture in relation to her immigrant family gender roles and poverty in her role as a student:

> Everything changed once we moved to the United States; both of my parents had to go work long days in the field. We are a family of six: my mom and dad, one brother and two sisters. I'm the oldest girl in my family. I remember growing up I felt I had to grow up fast by taking care of my siblings as my parents had to work long hours. As being the oldest girl in my family I had many chores to do before my parents got home like cleaning and I had more restrictions for being a girl than my brother. And I was determined to do my school work...which was encouraged by my parents, but not always priority over family.

Another story from Alejandra about how she now understands her challenges of being an immigrant and how she has learned to switch to a growth mindset in order to overcome and create action for change.

> In society, I see that Hispanics are such a target in the media because of our president. I also see that homosexuality is accepted, but not by many. I feel afraid as an individual of my identity because I am part of those two groups. I am not liked in most places, and I am not welcomed in most places. Although I am afraid, I will always be myself and be proud of it. I have become a very chivalrous woman over the years because of society and the way I grew up. I am a very loving, open minded, caring, genuine, and passionate person. I try to understand others and their demeanors. I want to give people a chance to tell their story and understand who they are.

And as Jasmine shared her thoughts on not being put into a one-size-fits-all picture, and rather, how she can inform others of her culture to maintain her identity.

> I believe ethnicity plays a big role for me as well because I was born here but my family is from Guatemala. So I consider myself Hispanic, because that is what I am. However I am strong when it comes to people always trying to claim that I am still considered Mexican because Guatemala and Mexico are next to each other. Whenever I come across this, with great pride, I say "I am Guatemalan, I am not Mexican, we have different traditions, cultures, different foods, and most importantly our language is different". I really have never

> appreciated people always telling me you are still Mexican, it's the same thing, well you speak Spanish so you're Mexican. Growing up, keeping tradition and Guatemalan culture was very hard because everything is Mexican based. But I had my family to make sure I never lost it and I hope that I will be able to continue to carry this culture with my own family when I am older.

Further, she adds how her teaching is transformed through her understanding.

> One thing that I aspire to do when I am a teacher is to show children different areas of where their friends are from, and have the children bring an item that is sentimental to them. It could be a food, a picture, or simply an item that we can keep in the classroom.

These stories have feelings. Students show feelings of who they are, how they are perceived, and how they embrace and defend their cultures. As my students at the University are navigating higher education and their homelife culture, storying brings to light the ways their experiences impact their teaching. Numerous students speak of the language barrier they and their parents have experienced and the stereotype that they don't understand if they can't articulate their knowledge in English. Reading these and so many other stories of the experiences of my students, I am astonished by the details. These students have self-reflected on who they are, where they can speak their truth and how they can be a voice for children in the same cultural third space.

Gabriella states how her story of being a dual language learner improves her practice working with multilingual children and families. She explains how her identity will:

> ...improve my teaching because it makes me more aware of the hidden children. I will be able to notice the children who are struggling to learn English. I will notice the parents who cannot speak English but still want to know how their child is doing in school.

Another student, Marta explains that learning to reflect on her own culture through storying has allowed her to "hold my culture close but never the stigmas that come from being Mexican." These intricacies are found when we have discussions about how to identify our own cultural experiences. Students recognize how gender roles play a part in their intersection of family culture and professional sense of self. As the majority of my students are female, they often reflect on the cultural gender norms that they are attempting to change by going to school and working.

Sonia reflects on the expectations of women:

> We are expected to be married to men, who are the "machos" of the house.
> Macho is a Spanish term for masculine, someone who is always above a woman
> under all circumstances. We are expected to be a stay at home wife,
> as we take care of the children, clean the house, make food
> throughout the day, be in charge of bill payments, and so forth, while
> the husband works, and is allowed to hang out with "the guys" for a beer, and
> come home to rest.

She concluded by indicating her teaching would include gender equality materials, images, and how she would be careful with her words to not perpetuate gender stereotypes. This is particularly important, as a society in the United States views the early childhood profession itself as "women's work" and is highly undervalued (Taha-Resnick et al., 2018). These deep connections will stay with them, embedded in their teaching to truly embody their role as an educator.

3.3 "Us" Versus "Them" to "We"

How do these identities and student stories create future early childhood leaders?

It is this question that I pondered in understanding my role as a teacher of future early childhood professionals. I have realized the importance I placed on teaching with narratives and clearly see the link to deeper meaning. When teachers deeply reflect on themselves and others to inform their teaching, it should also impact program leadership. When leaders truly have an understanding of their staff, they can lead with relationships.

Examining how relationships as pedagogy creates a culture of thinking and community, Pelo and Carter, (2018) view professional learning interweaved with how each individual person is part of the larger picture of the program. Embracing each person's contribution secures a sense of *placeness* that emerges from relationships. They continue by stating that "relationships sustain an organization's evolution" (p. 113). Again, storying is a way for us and our (future teacher) students to reimagine what could be possible within our work in early childhood programs as critical thinking visionaries of transformation.

At my University, I also teach the administration course and am able to create a way to expand on storying to include relationships with the adults they supervise.

In learning about many types of leadership theory, we examine how we can build relationships with staff to guide coaching and training within the program. The students then take their own cultural identity stories and relate them to their leadership. As Sara explains "It [cultural identity reflection] helped me see my strengths that I can bring to a job like supervising others and help me see ways I could relate to other people's contexts."

Additionally, as part of my administration and leadership course teaching future teachers who are predominantly first-generation, Latinx, an assignment is to attend a professional meeting related to early childhood professionals. Most of the students attend a local planning council meeting and are stunned to see how many people make up our devoted early childhood colleagues. My intent is for them to see how decisions are made and who is involved in making said decisions. Numerous students are amazed at the diverse experts that sit in the room. I hear from countless students that they didn't know these positions existed, let alone could be one of them. "This is so great, but it's not me…. it's those people" Elena states as she waves her arms in a circular pointing motion meant to identify others in the room. She goes further

to explain, "they are all so smart, and know so many acronyms and other people to work with."

It is this mentality that shelters and ultimately inhibits the growth of our future leaders. Most students entering the workforce see "us" (the seasoned professionals or administrators) and "them" (the teachers). I query where we miss the mark in enlightening students to the plentiful opportunities that lie ahead of them…as they did my colleagues and myself once upon a time. When I explain how I started my journey as an assistant teacher, and my progression to becoming a person they see as a "them", they become curious how it can be done. I realize these feelings come from the colonial roots that have bound education as a whole and breaking the cycle for migrant professionals lies within breaking the notion of what was. Teaching through narratives to engage in critical dialogue has allowed my students to see beyond what was and envision a future where their culture will influence their role in the workforce as a strength and representative of the population of children they serve in programs. As one student, Mary, states after attending a county meeting:

> When I first got there and saw how professional everyone was dressed and how accomplished they were, I felt almost like I shouldn't be there. I even felt self-conscious that I was wearing a shirt and sneakers because all the members were dressed so sharp. Then some women sat down at my table and introduced themselves and told me about what they did. These things made me feel a lot more comfortable in that space and more focused on what was being said instead of worrying if I was in the wrong place.

Additionally, added by Alyssa, "We spoke a lot in our groups, they asked me questions. They listened. It was then I knew that I "belonged" in the conversation." Yes, they belong in the conversation and it is imperative we invite them to the table.

> "I am them and they are me...we share so much and I want the young children I work with to see promise in me...as their teacher.... now I understand how this related to my leadership with staff. I am them and I want them to know I see their perspectives"

This is the feeling we should be imparting to the new generation of diverse, critical thinking and involved workforce.

3.4 Where Do We Go?

We are in the midst of an educational paradigm shift that is examining the way we educate diverse early childhood teachers and the diverse population of children they serve. Looking back at Chap. 2 and the question from Peter Moss, (2019), "Can the educator respect the otherness of the children with whom she works, resisting the temptation to grasp that alterity by 'pigeon-holing them in her own mental schema?" (p. 62). I advocate for this concept to be examined in our work with adults and specifically our early childhood professionals. Immigrants in the workforce should be allotted cultural legitimacy (Yu, 2018) and the ability to use their culture as a strength. In reading the stories of these future early childhood teachers, I can

think deeply about how each one has a positive impact on their teaching…and isn't that what we strive for? Critically thinking, reflective and innovative teachers that understand their role in the lives of children and families. Yes!

At the culmination of writing this, I am finishing a fully online semester teaching six courses. 2020 has given us a new way of understanding what students need to succeed and the views of "what was" are intertwined with "how it is." In reflecting on my past views of storying, I have seen the most amazing ways of *walking beside* my students as co-researchers to reimagine how their education, my teaching philosophy, and deep learning are embedded with each other. As I have not taught in a pandemic, and they have not learned in a pandemic, this is a time for growth and reflection for all of us. As Pelo and Carter, (2018) explain "bridging a divided life" (p. 46) as educators ourselves, who do we want to be? This is the concept we "must dismantle in order to bring the fullness of ourselves as humans into the teaching and learning process" (p. 48). Bringing our humanity to our practice means we need to find the humanity of others and their struggles and give them agency to ask for what they need.

Students have many additional strains on their lives, and students in my courses have experienced job loss, illness, healthcare worries, homelessness, and caretaking concerns. I cannot and would not expect students to work "as it was." What I did expect was that our students would need more support. I learned of their needs through storying. I was able to deeply engage with students in groups and one-on-one to grasp their needs. I provided assignments that asked for their needs. I spent many hours on ZOOM in one-on-one meetings and remained vigilant with check-ins with students that needed more support. I had to be reflective and flexible by altering assignments and deadlines and ways to allow students to express their learning. The key is responding to the stories to make them heard. This proved to be time-consuming, to say the least, but one of my best teaching experiences, nonetheless. I was able to truly engage in my teaching through relationships even in an online format and a lack of "face to face" interactions. These personal learnings have also increased my belief that storying in education goes beyond young children and continues to be a substantial path to educating future teachers whom we teach to build relationships with children and families.

This is the time…to examine how to not go back to "what was" and truly reimagine how to grow, challenge the status quo, to advocate for change. The structures that have held us to "what was" are upheaved and leave a window of transformational opportunity.

Attempts to examine early childhood program leadership and educational leadership as a whole are axiomatical (what is the best theory?) and ontological (what actions are best?). Scholars researching these themes reflect how practice is the aim of theory (Male & Palaiologou, 2013, 2016; Palaiologou & Male, 2018) yet also embracing Freire's concept of "unfinishedness" (2000, p. 50). Freire viewed education and humanity as a constant process of *becoming,* something never done, something to always make progress in (Shor & Freire, 1987). Within the construct of *becoming*, education and humanity are "unfinished" with the journey of learning lasting a lifetime and never complete. The stories of my students are unfinished. As

they learn and flourish, their stories continue to unfold while they still carry their roots, rolled up, used as a pillow.

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Chapter 4
Storying Family Relationships

Larisa Callaway-Cole

Abstract How does love serve as the roots for transformative action and what does it look like for us to position stories at the forefront of our work? Focusing on the stories of two mixed-status families who are caregiving for their children in extremely intentional ways, we are engaged with the power of storying and the leadership inherent in the family-generated agency. When informed by cultural values, these caregiving practices are both protective and resistant strategies by and for their families. Considering the power of working *with* others, this chapter reflects my journey as an early childhood educator, teacher educator, and researcher and the ways in which my lived experiences are intertwined with those I work with. As we view our current world and its conditions, I believe stories are a wake-up call to understanding both injustice and agency and tasks us with the responsibility to be responsive to this knowledge within our classrooms, homes, and communities.

In the first chapter of this book, we are engaged with Francisco X. Alarcón's poetry about our roots and this idea of carrying our roots with us connects deeply for me to the idea of seeking out the process of storying everywhere we go through everything we do. I consider how I have carried my roots, unfurl them, and plant them deeply within communities so that I might learn and live through story. I wonder, and invite you to wonder in this chapter with me:

- How do stories provide the potential for the multiplicity of ways of knowing?
- How does deep love and care live in story?
- How does that love serve as the roots for transformative action in our communities where oppression exists?
- What does it look like for stories to be at the center of our work, our experiences, and our connection to the work?

The following stories and experiences exemplify the findings and our ever-evolving questions included in Chap. 1.

E. P. Quintero et al., *Making Space for Storied Leadership in Higher Education*,
Rethinking Higher Education, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4157-2_4

- How, as scholars, can we observe and participate in cultures different from our own? How can we observe the layers of power relations, culture, access, and possibility while maintaining respect in all situations? How do we promote activism and avoid voyeurism?
- How can we focus on the importance of people telling their own stories (reading the world) in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society?

4.1 Storying as a Way of Unraveling and Entangling

I open an early childhood education course every semester with two small media clips of children.

The first is a video of a small group of children. They are wearing safety vests and holding onto the poles of a San Francisco public bus returning back to their preschool from a field trip. A man sitting in the back row of the bus is playing a popular hip-hop track from his cell phone and the children are dancing to the music, one with fast bounces and another swinging her hips back and forth. One child calls to me, "*Mira, mira.* Me dance!" Some of the chaperoning mothers watch the children, smiling, as our bus continues to lurch forward.

The second is simply a photo. In it, a child stands on the back of an orange pickup truck, smiling with her eyes scrunched up. On the other side of the pickup, her grandpa, wearing a plaid shirt, also smiles for the camera. In the frame is a little white house, one that belongs to the child's great-grandma. Trees and meadow are blurred out of focus behind the child and her grandpa. Behind them, lying atop a large platform in the truck is a bear that has been recently shot and gutted by the family.

I offer these two stories of childhood, the first story, of the children I taught as a preschool teacher. The second story of my own childhood growing up in rural Northern California. My intention when presenting these vastly different stories of childhood is to help my early childhood teacher education students consider the contexts of children and families and how these contexts should shape our engagement with families and our curriculum and pedagogy. Context is key in understanding the culture and lives of the children and families we work with.

Over time, I have learned that one of the most significant ways to deeply learn the context of children and families is to engage in storying with them. Finding my way in early childhood teaching and research, I have found it crucial to develop relationally with children, families, and communities wherever I have worked. While all of the educational contexts I've worked in have been vastly different from one another, I have found that I am able to tune into the stories and ways of knowing and being of the families by carefully noticing and listening with them. A relational, loving pedagogy and methodology (Laura, 2013, 2016) calls for reciprocity and respectfully valuing those we co-collaborate with in our research. A loving methodology positions the

relationships with our co-collaborators at the forefront of the research. For without the relationship, the context, the story—there would be no research to do.

This relational way of knowing and being, and the storying that results from building relationships in community has influenced my teaching in higher education. One of the ways I view leadership is that our listening with families and young children will often provide us with the knowledge we need to help create effective and supportive schooling and early childhood contexts. The stories and knowledge of children and their families also support the needs of the community and offer strategies for viable change.

I wonder about the possibility of stories not only as a means for unraveling but also as a way of further entangling. Sandra Cisneros (2015), noted Chicana author, shares in her memoir, "the science writer Jonah Lehrer claims we never revisit a memory without altering it. If this is true, then perhaps all memory is a chance at storytelling, and every story brings us closer to revealing ourselves to ourselves" (p. 54). Cisneros captures the essence of entanglement and storytelling, especially those stories deeply close and personal to the teller. We are entangled in our memories through our storytelling and the stories of those close to us. The idea of stories bringing us closer to ourselves is reflective of unraveling—unraveling our family histories, embodied ways of knowing, and our material realities.

Storying is reflective of the idea that stories are fluid and constantly in motion as we interact with them. Stories are not fixed, historical accounts, but alive and part of our humanness (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). Working with storying honors the many ways of knowing and being in this world (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) as experienced by children, families, and educators. May we be forever engaged with the power of stories and their transformative nature:

> story continues to express the fundamental nature of humanity. Stories are not to be treated lightly as they both carry, and inspire, significant obligations and responsibilities: stories must be cared for as they are at the heart of how we make meaning of our experiences in the world. (Huber et al., 2013, p. 214)

4.2 The Power of Being and Working *With*

My first time working in a preschool classroom I was 16-years-old, enrolled in a Regional Occupation Program through my high school to receive six college credits in early childhood education. One of my mother's values that she ingrained in me since childhood is to be gracious and helpful, especially when someone invited me into their space. I smiled on the first day asking the classroom aide if I could help her wipe down tables after the children finished their breakfast. She gladly showed me their procedures and later mentioned that it's rare for a student teacher to offer to do that part of the work. For me, it was a simple matter of respect and care. I quickly felt like I was part of the team, with shared conversations and jokes with the whole teaching team. I was flexible and always ready for whatever came up in our day.

That flexibility and desire to be part of the team guided many of my teaching experiences in early childhood settings. Engaging deeply with a willingness to listen and learn became a hallmark of my teaching and learning in my classrooms. This was especially important with families and co-teachers but particularly with the children in my classrooms. As a white woman, doing work with marginalized families, I recognize the importance of positionality and the ways I might posit myself in deference to the knowledge that families and children constructed. Being in collaboration allowed me to learn more about myself as an educator and a human. It also helped me build relational trust with those I worked with.

A decade of careful noticing and engaging deeply with others in early childhood settings prepared me to become a researcher in higher education. For a long time, I didn't know how I would be a researcher or what it would look like for me. But I found myself not long ago making notes in my journal that reminded me of what I've learned by being entangled and engaged while in community. Reflecting on the time I spent working on my dissertation, I recalled:

> I feel so lucky to have these times with people that I hope will be lifelong friends. I care about them and their children. I feel connected to them and their lives. There's something so powerful about embedding yourself. Because it's not just sitting and taking notes, it's being *with*.
>
> I've never been the best at watching things happen from afar. I give space where needed for children to explore, but once invited into their spaces, I find myself immersed and engaged, rarely a note taker but an action maker. Sometimes I think I should learn to be a better note taker, but I have so gained so much information, have learned so much from sweet interactions, careful noticing, and conversations with those around me. There's a big difference between being *with* and researching *on*. Because of being an early childhood educator for so many years, I've realized the value in jumping in, even if it complicates things, makes our thinking sticky, or we find it challenging to separate "us" from "them." I'd prefer if there is no us from them, but rather coexisting and learning and being and living together in common spaces, in thought, and in love.

I have learned a lot about what I value and what I think leadership in higher education looks like. It looks like being in collaboration and building relationships with those we work with. Together we are co-collaborating and co-researching, in dialogue about lived experiences and knowledge that are shared, theorized, and (re)constructed (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Laura (2013) described the loving way of working in collaboration *with*, not on or for by noting:

> Qualitative researchers who invoke love in their work choose to witness, engage, and labor for the people who we admire and respect, and we treat them with the regard and reverence that we would extend to our own kin. Not "the subjects," but "my people" inspire and direct such acts toward the negotiation of relationships—personal, social, political, historical—out of love and in solidarity. (p. 291)

These co-collaborators, "my people," in this chapter are those who have helped inform my robust view of leadership. This leadership is caring, fierce, and rooted in a commitment to justice. By being in community with one another, we build stronger relationships rooted in love and respect for one another's knowledge.

4.3 Storied Snapshots of Family Life

I had the privilege of researching with two families over the course of a year, the Puentes[1] family and the Díaz/Martinez family. Each family and I spent time deep in conversation about a variety of topics, but most were centered on the ways in which they are raising their children in response to oppressive politics, especially regarding ICE and im/migration, particularly during the time of Donald Trump's presidency in the United States. While we knew that the oppressive politics of Trump's presidency were not new (Ali, 2017; Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Shirazi, 2017), this time was characterized by a resurgence of targeted hate and force on marginalized populations (Williams, 2018), especially migrating families (Rizzo, 2018) and undocumented people (National Immigration Law Center, 2019). More about these conversations centering their resistance and their stories will come later, but I want to take the time now to provide a snapshot of the time I spent with each family and the ways our relationships came to be. I hope this provides perspectives on entanglement and unraveling through stories, as our roots unfurled together in relationality and complexity as we researched together.

4.3.1 The Díaz/Martinez Family

Sarita, the mother of the Díaz/Martinez family, and I met almost a decade ago when I was a student teacher in her preschool classroom. I clearly remember her love and care embodied in her teaching practice. I can still see her lying in a bed of pillows and stuffed animals on the lawn reading books with the children. Later, Sarita became my student at the university as I supervised her student teaching and had her in class. Sarita is full of laughter and I learned from her as I watched her teach those semesters–lying on the jungle gym, pretending to be sick while children acted as paramedics and administered CPR. When they pushed too hard on her stomach, she would lurch upright, laughing and saying, "Not so hard!" Or when she gently helped toddlers shower and bathe their baby dolls to get them ready for bed, trying to offer opportunities for children to caregive the ways they are cared for in their own homes.

I met Sarita's family not long before she graduated from our program, her four children and her mother piled into my office, and I offered books to read and toys to play with. We promised to do it again, when the youngest children protested leaving. And we did do it again, although this transitioned to me coming to their homes to begin what we called "the project."

Conversations at the Díaz/Martinez family home were sometimes quiet, with Sarita and I sitting together in the afternoon before children came home from school. But most often they were loud and busy, with a whole houseful of family on Friday afternoons and evenings, four children popping in and out of rooms, cousins sprawled on the floor, and grandma sitting quietly observing the room from the couch. We

[1] All names have been changed to protect the identities of collaborators.

sat together, sharing meals and visiting about how work and school are going, or playing UNO with children who were mad that I kept winning. The adults in the house spent time with me, having hard conversations, sometimes with contention, and disagreement, but still in a caring manner, willing to listen to one another and try to understand one another's perspectives.

I was an outsider in their home but tried not to be. I truly feel that I became more like family after the "work" was over, when things were more casual, and we laid on the floor playing Monopoly or Life. My outsider positionality was confirmed by the youngest member of the household, a 5-year-old, after a few months of me coming to the house when he was frustrated that there wasn't a chair at the table for him. I was sitting on the chair and had pulled it close to his grandmother so that I could hear her well. I offered to give the chair up, so that it could be at the table for dinner, and his mother said no. He screamed, frustrated about his circumstances and said that he hated me and that it was my fault, yelling, "Why is Larisa in our house?" Children often have a way of clearly telling and speaking their truths, even when told in anger.

We hung out, picking children up from school, going to one child's talent show, and spending an evening together at church on the *día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* sipping champurrado and eating tamales. I had the family to my house, where the two youngest children sat in the space under my desk where the chair ought to be, curled up and giggling, quite concerned about why I live alone and that I must be lonely.

Bustling family life in the Díaz/Martinez home felt different from my own childhood, but somehow made me feel at peace. There is always something going on in their home, someone in the kitchen, someone doing homework, others at play. Sometimes the children would be getting ready for bed, and come out in their pajamas, surprised to see Sarita and I still sitting in the living room talking.

4.3.2 The Puentes Family

Angela, mother of the Puentes family, and I first met in a family and community engagement course I was teaching. It was the spring of 2017, when everything was politically tumultuous. When DACA was threatened to be rescinded that spring, university employees gathered at meetings to learn the implications of this on our students, staff, and faculty. I had been reading poems written by elementary school children about migration and home, which I had found to be uplifting and inspiring. I brought one of these poems to class after another DACA meeting to share with my students and to let them know that I supported the undocumented community and that my classroom would remain a safe space for them. Angela approached me after class to thank me, and to hesitantly tell me that she was a DACA recipient. Angela studied with me in two more classes later before graduating, sharing a poem she had written for another class at the end of her studies. It was her migration story, and as I read, she told me that this is real, this is what she went through.

Even though I didn't have the same type of history with Angela as I did Sarita, I felt close to her and her willingness to share her story with me. When we first began working together on this project, I slowly met members of her family. I remember pulling up to her house, wondering how things might go, if I had built enough rapport with her to do this work. That was clearly evidenced by the time I left that day. We had talked so much about who informs our lives, how we were raised, and Angela's story of how she came to be where she is today.

Our chats at the Puentes home were always held at the table, something that over time, seemed to become part of the ritual around my visits. Initially, we began with a quiet and private time between me and Angela, with her 5-year-old son Miguel, and Miguel's dad Ernesto upstairs together. But usually, Miguel was with us, popping in from upstairs to grab popsicles from the fridge, or building race car tracks on the living room floor. Once, we sat over a meal of *sopitas*, with me trying to convince Angela's mom, Miriam, that the salsa is just right, and not too spicy for me. We watched the 2018 midterm election results for the Senate and the House of Representatives at that table, tension abuzz. Miguel warmed to me over time, calling me "mommy's friend", and laughed and screamed as he punched my head off during games of Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em Robots. We shared quiet moments so as not to disturb Miguel, but sometimes our voices rose, angry and scoffing about the state of the world.

Miguel sat with us one day, carefully cutting out little items he had drawn on a piece of binder paper. He cut shoes, pants, a shirt, arms and hands, and a head, gluing them all into a paper doll person. He sent this home with me, paper pieces flopping around on yellow construction paper. I remember the time and attention to detail this took, in opposition to the stories Angela was told about Miguel in his kindergarten classroom. A constant source of challenge to Angela that year had been Miguel "not behaving" at school. Angela carefully balanced early childhood expertise with respect for his teacher in navigating how to support Miguel in his learning.

Meeting family members at their homes, visiting with a former student who was a friend of Angela's and enjoying Miguel's birthday party in the backyard at his dad's house helped me learn more about Angela's community. Often it was just Miguel and Angela at home, but she always had friends and family outside the home to cheer on Miguel at baseball games or people over for dinners, especially after her mother moved back to town and home with them.

As I spent time with the Puentes family, I got to know them better, and Miguel, hopeful for another sibling to play with, reminded me of when I was a little girl. I, too, waited 7 years for a little sister. Miguel is so close to his mom, their relationship marked by little rituals like the love game they played, similar to the closeness I felt with my own mother as a child.

4.4 Cultural Values and Their Role in the Nurturing of Young Children

The ways in which people raise their children are influenced by a number of factors. Cultural values are often passed and transmitted to children through family caregiving practices, both overtly and subliminally. There are many cultural values held among Latinx families, often interpreted and shared differently depending on family context, personal family values, and their relationship with their culture. Latinx is a homogenizing category/language for extremely diverse people from different countries of origin, many of Indigenous and Black ancestry, which often goes unacknowledged in describing this population (Pelaez Lopez, 2018). While this section of the chapter discusses the values of Latinx families as cited in the literature and by storied examples, I also acknowledge that this interpretation is not inclusive of all Latinx people or family values.

Cultural values have the potential for helping us to more deeply understand how families care for and educate their young children. This care and education often exist in everyday realities, such as the one facing a family who had been migrating across regions in California to work in agriculture. The following vignette captures a conversation we shared in a community setting that highlights her values as it relates to raising her children:

> After talking with a child about his drawing, I then introduced myself to his mother. I asked her about the age of her son, and he smiled and held up his hand showing 4 fingers. She agreed with him, smiling at him as he continued his drawing. When I told her I was a teacher from the university and that my students come to visit and play with the children at the meetings, she began to talk to me about her son's school. She said that she had enrolled him earlier in the year and he had been in attendance for 4 months. Usually, their family moves to Northern California because she and her husband are migrant workers. The preschool teacher had encouraged the family to stay in Oxnard so that her son could continue school. The teacher emphasized his intelligence and the importance of continuity. The mom told me that they will stay in Oxnard now so that he can continue school, and so the other children can have consistency in schooling when they are older.

For educators working with migrant families, we know that a family's decision to sacrifice work for educational continuity is a complex decision, affected by economic, social, and political forces. Making a choice to remain in Oxnard documents this mother's sacrifice for her children, demonstrating her love for her children and connects to deeply held family values. Returning to the child,

> The child called me back to his drawing, and I saw two names squished together on his paper. He told me, "This is my name, and this is my brother's name. They're close because we're together" as he smiled toward his baby brother.

I squatted with him looking at his writing, and considered the deep and loving relationship between him, his brother, and his mother. This 4-year-old child's connection to his brother through his emerging literacy highlights how love manifests itself in complex ways.

The family relationship and closeness described in the story above helps to situate family values and parenting styles. The mother's love for her children and her son's love for his brother help to complicate the dialogue around how care is demonstrated in contexts and spaces of contention, for example, in the mother choosing not to migrate in order to support the education of her children. A number of studies have focused on the nature of Latinx parenting styles and values related to child-rearing (Durand, 2011; Fischer et al., 2009; Livas-Dlott et al., 2010; Ornelas et al., 2009). Researchers return to the definition of these values in Harwood et al.'s, (2002) discussion of cultural values among Latinx families in the United States. The two noted values of *familismo* and *respeto* are crucial in understanding related values to the Latinx community including: *convivimiento* (Uttal, 2010), *bien educado* (Gonzales, 2015), and the use of *conversaciones, consejos,* and *dichos* (Cortez, 2008; Dueñas, 2015). These values all closely tie to the principal value of *cariño*, a value of care, affection, and love (Dueñas, 2015) that encompasses all other familial, community, and cultural values mentioned. Values, and thus the demonstration of love, are dependent upon the specific cultural context. These values, while presented independently of one another, are inextricably linked and woven in practice.

The value of *respeto,* also known as "proper demeanor" (Harwood et al., 2002, p. 25), is known for its deeply contextual connection to those with which one is engaged; demonstrated through courtesy and decorum as called for by the context. *Respeto* is woven into several other values including *bien educado*, through *conversaciones* and *dichos*, and *convivimiento.* Demonstrated through family unity, (Cortez, 2008) *respeto* is related to interdependence and reflected in the relationships children have with their families and the broader community. For example, at a community meeting, an early childhood studies student helped a young child get a drink from a water fountain by holding her up to reach for the drink. After, the family sent the child back to get the student. They then offered her some of the food they had prepared to share together, inviting her to sit down with the other mothers.

Familismo can be defined as acknowledging the family as an extension of oneself and the associated care of family members through this closeness, solidarity, and interdependence (Durand, 2011; Harwood et al., 2002; Livas-Dlott et al., 2010). *Familismo* is often demonstrated through the interdependent relationship between young children and their mothers and, as children grow older, in respecting the necessity and priorities of the family (Durand, 2011). *Familismo* can also be seen in the networks of extended families and community members who rely on one another in navigating institutionalized services (Ornelas et al., 2009; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Yosso, 2005). For example, at one of our local preschools, many of the families know one another and their children are all picked up by the same *abuelita* while the families are at work. It took me several sessions of observation to figure out which child the grandma came for, as all the children she took home were treated like family.

The value of *convivimiento*, "living together daily with respect and empathy" (Uttal, 2010, p. 736) is described through its important impact on relationships with others, within the family, and in community. Latina family childcare providers were concerned that this value of *convivimiento* was absent from the professional development and education of U.S. family childcare providers and also felt criticized for

their ways of demonstrating care for children, with emotion and affection (Uttal, 2010). For example, a student volunteered at a community meeting and noticed an older child watching over a younger one. The older child helped to get crayons and paper for her sister to draw. When my student asked if she would like to draw too, the older child said no, that she would watch and take care of her younger sister.

The framework of *bien educado* conveys demonstrating care, respect, and togetherness; as having good values (Gonzales, 2015). There is a distinct relationship between *bien educado* and a kinship model, both rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and a value of interdependence. Being *bien preparado* (being well prepared for the workforce) is not the same as being *bien educado* (Gonzales, 2015). *Educación* is noted in the literature as being a linked and interwoven concept in Latinx culture that does not separate academic learning from other life learning children must engage in (Durand, 2011; Livas-Dlott et al., 2010). For example, when teaching preschool, whenever I welcomed the children into our classroom, the mothers would tell the children, "*dile buenos días a la maestra*" and before leaving their children for the day a reminder of "*te portas bien*", reinforcing values such as *respeto* in children's relationship with the teacher and their early schooling.

Conversaciones, consejos, and *dichos* are ways Latinx families teach children how they should behave and the implications for their actions (Cortez, 2008; Dueñas, 2015). My own childhood was filled with *dichos*, although delivered in English by my mother. "People in hell want ice water," meaning we do not always get what we want. Through *conversaciones* and *consejos*, families convey to their children the value of relationships, respect, and *cariño* (Dueñas, 2015). Furthermore, the use of *consejos* and *dichos* helps to transmit values and beliefs to young children (Cortez, 2008). These specific pieces of advice help to reinforce *bien educado* in children. While some *dichos* and *consejos* help to reinforce positive behavior, they also help to avoid negative behavior. For example, *consejos* shared at the table of the Díaz-Martinez family sometimes centered on how children should engage in behavior at school or how they should treat each other as siblings. These various forms of sharing values with young children reinforce said values, but this form of communication is also a value in and of itself.

Love is shown through many values, but *cariño* helps to explain the all-encompassing "fondness or tenderness" (Smith & Riojas-Cortez, 2010, p. 128) that is demonstrated between Latinx families and their young children. *Cariño* is shown through relationships with children and their grandparents (Gonzales, 2015), through families' letter writing to their children (Smith & Riojas-Cortez, 2010), through offering assertive commands to help correct children's behavior (Livas-Dlott et al., 2010), and through physical affection (Uttal, 2010). These are not the only ways that *cariño* is shown for young children; the depth of community cultural values and their use for teaching and raising young children is immense. Returning to the original vignette that framed this discussion of love as community culture, love is shown not only through a mother's commitment to her child's education but also between the closeness of the siblings. It could be argued that *cariño* is the grand, encompassing value of all the others, for it is by and for love that Latinx families care for their children.

4.5 Leadership Through Family-Generated Agency

The first few sections of this chapter help to provide the context for the ways I came to be a researcher and the relationships that have been cultivated as part of this process that has informed my views of leadership. Earlier I introduced you to the Puentes family and the Díaz/Martinez family and the ways we spent time together co-collaborating and co-conspiring. Now, I'd like to return to their family stories and consider the ways that they have established themselves as leaders in their communities and their homes.

4.5.1 Relationships as Agentic Forces

For both Sarita and Angela, childhoods were marked by the absence of family members. For Sarita, this was the absence of her father. For Angela, her mother had migrated to the United States while Angela remained in Mexico. Later, that absence for Angela was characterized by the loss of loved ones in Mexico once she had immigrated to California as a preteen. Although these absences were significant, Sarita and Angela also described the characteristics of their primary caregivers, people who were sources of strength for them growing up. Sarita remarked on her mother's relationship with her father and her mother's decision to distance herself from him early in Sarita's life:

> My mom met my dad here working in the fields and decided she would give him a chance. Then I was born. But my mom said it wouldn't work out [between them] because he wouldn't stay committed to her. My mom said, "You're probably still with your wife." He said he wasn't [in a relationship with her], but that he did have children with [his wife]. After I was born, he had another daughter with his wife. So I have four half-siblings, one brother and three sisters. [His wife] used to go and scream at my mom outside the house. She would drive up with her older daughter and call [my mom] a "ho" and all these things. My mom wanted to push my dad away because she didn't want that around me.

Sarita further described her relationship with her father Samuel, addressing the fact that his parenting style was influenced by his *machismo*, demanding that Sarita not talk with boys, not get her hair cut, and not go out. Elena disagreed, stating that he had no right to make those decisions because he was not involved in raising Sarita.

When Sarita was 17, she became pregnant with her daughter Sabrina. Samuel came to visit Sarita and Elena at their home and was surprised to discover that there were baby clothes drying on the couches and that the clothes belonged to Sarita's daughter. Sarita recounted the moment of his realization:

> My mom says that he just got up and walked away. He never came back until Sabrina was 3-years-old when he stopped by my mom's house. I didn't open the door because I didn't want to see him. But he left a bike in front of the door for [Sabrina]. He believed that a baby was going to ruin my life at a young age.

After this occurrence, Sarita did not have any contact with Samuel for 4 or 5 years, until she received a letter in the mail. Sarita was concerned her father had died, because he does not read or write, but the letter was written by his girlfriend, letting Sarita know he wanted to talk with her. Months passed and another letter came for her. At this point Sarita called and talked with him, later resulting in them reuniting in person, at her home. When Samuel told her that he thought having a baby at a young age would ruin her life, Sarita replied,

> Well, you were wrong! It motivated me more. I graduated [high school] after having [Sabrina]. She was born May 27th, and I graduated June 13th, which was 2 weeks after she was born. I had to go to my practice so I could [graduate]. When I graduated college, I was already married with my first two children. I graduated college, now I'm going to start going to the university. My children didn't hold me back from anything. It's motivation for me to keep going.

During Angela's childhood, she was raised mainly by her grandma, Flavia and her uncle Alejandro, however, Alejandro took the role of Angela's father growing up. Angela described the closeness in her relationship with her dad. Alejandro stepped in to help care for and support Angela and her brother Ariel as children. He treated them as if they were his own children and when people asked if they were his children, he always said yes. Angela reflected on times when her dad made her feel loved and cared for:

> I was [always] excited to see my dad. He would take us to his house sometimes on the weekends. You want to sleep over? Come sleep over. You want to go on vacation? Let's go on vacation. During the summertime, he'd always take us out. He didn't have to. Even after he had [his own children], my brothers, he still didn't make a separation [between us]. We were all his kids.

Angela has always been very close with her brother, Ariel. This closeness remains today, with a lot of excitement in the last few months. Recently, Ariel's wife Zoey gave birth to their daughter Kimberly. Angela was extremely excited to welcome Kimberly into the world, and very proud of her brother and his family. Angela reflected on her childhood living with her brother:

> He's always looking out [for me] and I think it has to do [with his responsibility] since we were little. It was imprinted [on him], "I have to take care of my sister because mom is working, we don't know our dad, and grandma is old, so I have to take care of everybody."

When Angela was 10 years old, her mom Miriam came back to Mexico from California to visit her family. Angela recalled the conflict she faced at this time in understanding her connection to her mother:

> When she came to visit, I thought, "Who's this woman? I don't really know her." It was awkward. I felt like my mom was my grandma and that's all I knew. I have a good connection with [my mom], but I don't think it was the mother/daughter connection. It felt more like a friend connection.

Angela reflected deeply on the impact of her childhood caregivers and the roles they played in shaping her personhood:

> Each of them inspires me differently. My grandma was always kind-hearted. If people come to visit, you offer them whatever they want, cook for everybody, feed everybody. My dad inspired me with love. Family is not blood and you can genuinely care for someone without having to expect anything in return. He's the one who makes me the way I am when it comes to people. I'm very welcoming to other people and if people need something, I'm always the one [to help take care of them]. And from my uncle, don't let anyone bully you. Don't let anyone take advantage of you. Each of them is a very different aspect of my life and I keep with me.

Both Angela and Sarita had childhood caregivers who inspired their development as strong women and have also impacted the ways they are raising their children. Their own formative relationships helped to guide the decisions they make about who they keep in their lives and the close relationships they maintain.

Although Angela and Sarita recognized the absence of family members from their lives. One of the important things discussed by both, though, was a message of forgiveness and goodwill toward their family members now, although sometimes hard to reconcile.

Sarita discussed her relationship with her dad, Samuel, and the way it has evolved since they reconnected. Samuel is more present in her life, with him making more contact and reaching out to Sarita:

> Now he comes more often. I hardly call him, but he calls more often. He stops by. He works doing cement, so he has friends who sell fruit in the trucks and he brings me fruit or vegetables sometimes. I told him, "You know, I love you. You're my father, whatever happened, happened. We can't go back and fix it." But one thing that I do hold against him is that he never let me meet my brother and sisters.

Sarita has now met two of her sisters, maintaining contact with one, but not the other, and giving space to the youngest sister until she is ready to meet. Her brother was murdered in gang-related violence before she had an opportunity to meet him.

Due to Angela's separation from her mother in her childhood, Angela and her mother had to learn to live together again, as Angela reached adolescence, a challenging time in itself. Angela reflected on her mother's position and the sacrifices she made for her family, despite the challenges they encountered in reunification:

> She always felt guilty, "It's my fault I left you. I should have been there." But now that I'm a mom, I [realize that I] was stupid. I never should have made her feel bad. She did what she had to do. She sacrificed time to be with us so that she could provide a better future. I wouldn't be here [without her]. I wouldn't have a degree, and I'm the only one in our family to have a degree. [I wouldn't] be bilingual. [I wouldn't be able] to actually work here if it wasn't for everything that she did. It puts things in perspective. (Callaway-Cole, 2020, p. 147)

As roles changed and as Angela and Sarita grew older, so did some of their perspectives about their relationships with their own parents. Both sought to offer forgiveness and mend relationships with their parents. Both women sought to maintain close relationships between their children and their grandparents. Children regularly saw their grandparents, spent quality time with them, and treated these relationships with respect.

Considering the power of childhood experiences with caregivers and the nature of our relationships speaks greatly to the ways in which people intentionally and unintentionally react and form their own relationships. Both Sarita and Angela were highly reflective and intentional about their relationships with caregivers and that impact upon their personal relationships. I believe that some of these are due to their study of early childhood education. As we study our own experiences and family identities, we are better able to serve children and families.

4.5.2 Caregiving as Agentic Change

Both families shared ways that they raised their children, and the ways in which they viewed family values and caregiving. For each family, there were specific elements that were the most crucial, and I believe this is reflective of their childhoods.

Spending time with their children is very important to the Díaz/Martinez family. Life is busy for all, with Sarita balancing the lives of four children and her work as a preschool teacher. Just watching her pick up children from school is exhausting. Two schools, with four different pick-up times, beginning at 2:30 p.m. and ending at 6 p.m. Her day seems to never stop. While busy, Sarita focuses on the relationship between showing *cariño* and spending time with the children. Sarita reflected on making memories with her children and doing things together as a family:

> I think it's very important because the [children] are making a lot of memories of how we spend time with them. They're going to do it with their children. For me, because [my mom] didn't drive, we didn't have a lot of time to go out and do things together. My uncle tried to make it possible, taking me to SeaWorld and taking us all to the park. I wanted that to happen [for my children], so I do it with them now. Besides that, I enjoy having conversations with them, learning about their day, or what they would like to do next time. We plan our weekends together sometimes, like, "What do you guys want to do?" Sometimes it's just out of nowhere. Okay, let's go. Just put on your shoes and let's go.

Sarita's desire to spend time with her children is influenced by her experiences as a child and her hopes for her children as future parents. Her interpretation of spending time is reflective of wanting to engage deeply with her children and share their lives together.

Showing affection to Miguel is very important to Angela. She wants Miguel to know how much she loves him. She tells him regularly how much she loves him and that she will always be there for him. Angela described the "love game" that she and Miguel play together. They enjoy telling one another that they love each other, that they love each other the mostest, and that they love each other to the moon and back. Angela reflected on the ways she shows affection to Miguel regularly and the ways in which this caregiving reflects values she was raised with:

> And I'm always just hugging him and holding him and looking at him. I'll tell him, "You know you're my baby, right?" He's like, "But I'm not a baby." I say, "But you're always going to be my baby." He's always giving me a hard time about that. My grandma would

> tell us she loved us, and I just try to do the same thing. There's not a day when I don't tell him I love him.

Angela's affection for Miguel is also very much part of Miguel's personality and engagement with others. He regularly likes to hug his friends at school. Angela has been teaching him to ask people if they would like hugs first. Angela sees Miguel as very affectionate, sensitive, and empathetic. When Angela has had a bad day, Miguel checks in on her, asking why she is sad and trying to comfort her:

> I think it's because of how I treat him. I've seen other moms, how they don't really say I love you to their kids. I want my son to know I love him every minute. Even if it's just through a kiss or holding his hand. I always tell him, "Hold my hand," when we go to the store or are at the movie theater.

This affection between Miguel and Angela is always present. When I visited their home, Miguel would always come and curl up on Angela's lap, peppering her cheek with kisses. Angela would always pay him attention and meet his needs while we were talking together, both of us stopping to visit with him or answer his questions.

The ways that Sarita and Angela show care for their children are also reflective in their care of other people's children in their work contexts with children, youth, and families. Sarita finds herself in the position of an advocate often for the preschoolers she teaches and helps families access resources and information. Angela often used her personal experiences of being undocumented to inform her care of the youth in the group home she worked in. As educators know, and this book documents, teaching requires one to do more than just teach. Education often looks like showing up for people and the community you serve. Angela and Sarita both do this as engaged caregivers–of their own children, and of others'.

4.5.3 Remaining Informed as Agentic Change

One of the specific ways that transformation and resistance to ICE and im/migration politics was demonstrated by both the Díaz/Martinez and Puentes families was their commitment to staying abreast of the current sociopolitical climate and informing themselves and others about what they were hearing, reading, watching, and discussing. Angela discussed the importance of staying informed with everything happening politically. She noted,

> I think [it's important to] stay informed and see what alternatives we have [to what is currently going on]. Especially with everything [Trump's] doing right now with the [government] shutdown and right now he's trying to bribe [politicians to get his U.S./Mexico border wall].

> I was just actually telling my mom because she called me and asked, "Did you hear that [if Democrats give Trump the wall, he will protect Dreamers]? That could be a good thing." I said, "No mom, he's just trying to bribe them. It's really not [good] for Dreamers because at any given point he can decide, 'Okay, I'm done extending this. I'm going to [repeal Dreamer protections] again.'"

These conversations between Angela and her mother help support one another in processing through the current politics and events occurring and how those politics relate to their family. Angela also believes that one of the ways we can be resistant and transformational to current politics is for people to be active in their communities and to vote. Angela talked about the frustration of people not being civically minded and not voting in the recent elections:

> A lot of people don't even vote anymore. I think that if the community [of undocumented people] starts getting more education, they can push those that can actually vote to help those that can't be heard. There are so many people that didn't even vote. I know friends that didn't vote because they said, "Oh everything's the same. Nothing's going to change." But, in reality, it can change if they just educate themselves.

In Sarita's family, being transparent with the children is the hallmark of family life. The children are well aware of the fact that their father is undocumented, and while only two of the four children remember him being deported previously, the youngest ones also know the implications of this for their family. The children worry if their dad does not come home early enough, wondering if he is ok. The children know not to open the door to anyone, and to wait for an adult to get it, just in case ICE was to appear on their doorstep.

Sarita recalled the family discussion that took place about the possibility of the children's father being deported:

> I [told the children], "Yes. We're going to be sad. Daddy won't be here, but we're going to see how we can manage." And we've talked about it. Like I said, I've told him, "I would not go with my children [to Mexico] at this moment because this is all they know. They know the United States, California, Oxnard. This is all they know. And I would not take them to a new place." He says he agrees with that because he knows that they are going to be okay with me. But I do know that I [would find ways for the children to see their dad and be with him]. I [could] send them to go see him, but I'm also not going to force them if they don't want to go. (Callaway-Cole, 2020, p. 151)

These conversations are not the focal point of daily life at home, but the children are aware and prepared should something happen to Cesar. The education of their young children regarding current events and politics in age-appropriate ways helps to further protect the vulnerability of Cesar's undocumented status. The children are also great supporters of their friends at school who face similar circumstances, using their knowledge of deportation to support others. For example, Frankie, Sarita's son who experienced significant trauma when his dad was deported now provides care and emotional support to his peers at school who fear for their families being deported, especially in the wake of ongoing sociopolitical trauma regarding im/migration policy.

While there are many ways to stay informed regarding ICE and im/migration issues, the families took a variety of approaches to staying informed, all reflective of their leadership within their homes, schools, and community settings.

4.5.4 Story Sharing as Agentic Change

Angela recounted an experience she faced with her boyfriend's brother making jokes about her because she is Mexican and trying to be funny saying things like, "Did you and your family come over with a coyote?" Angela said that to shut him up, she told him her story of crossing the border undocumented. She described the difference in him after hearing her story:

> I saw how their perspectives changed once they found out everything and I think, honestly, that's what people need to hear. People need to hear real stories. Real people telling their stories, so they stop creating this [narrative of] "Oh, they're here to take advantage. They get free everything." Every single time I hear that I say, "They don't get anything. We don't get anything. Look at me, I don't have [health] insurance. If I get sick, I have to suck it up. I pay hundreds of dollars to go get a checkup because I don't have freaking insurance."

Angela continued talking about the importance of sharing her story and the sacrifices she has made to be here and be successful. She acknowledged the challenges of people sharing their stories and the fear of judgment, but that her accomplishments of achieving a degree have helped her to feel confident in herself:

> I'm really willing to share my story now more than ever just because I feel like I accomplished a lot. I feel like I can open people's eyes to what the reality of being undocumented is like. Having to deal with all the adversity but yet, still trying to pursue your goals and be the best you can be, you know?

Sarita is deeply concerned about the importance of her family's story being told and hopes that her story might transform the lives of community members who are also facing similar challenges. Sarita expressed the importance of connections between people who have shared lived experiences:

> [You need to hear about resources from] somebody that has lived through it. I think that's more reliable because that person went through that situation. Maybe what was helpful for me won't be helpful for them, but it can [give them] a sense of where to go get the help and stuff.

The other important aspect that Sarita highlighted was the importance of educators being supportive and helping provide resources to families who need them. Sarita discussed her experiences with her son Frankie and the reality of being fearful of seeking out resources:

> I think that by sharing our stories, educators can find support for these families. I did share that I went to the counselor [at Frankie's] school and I found resources on my own. Because like I said, I called the crisis line and what did they say? "Yeah, we're going to send an officer so they can tie up your child and take him to the emergency room." I said, "No. You're not going to do that to my child. He's already suffering enough." I think it helps [educators] to find support and support the families that are needing it and ask for it. Not a lot of families want to open up to people because they're scared. They're scared to ask for help because they're scared that instead of making their process [and lives] better, it's going to get worse. They think, "Oh, they're probably [going to do] an investigation and see if the rest of the family has documents."

Both Sarita and Angela are convinced by the power of storytelling and story sharing. They deeply believe that the stories they have shared have the ability to transform the lives of others. They believe that these stories will convince others of circumstances unknown and that their stories will find their ways into the hearts and minds that need them. Stories offer the possibility that people who are facing similar journeys will find comfort and resources to support themselves. Stories help everyone become kinder, more knowledgeable, and resist the dominant narrative circulating about im/migrant and Latinx families in the United States.

4.6 Conclusion

These conversations shared above were wrapping up almost 2 years ago, and Angela and Sarita continue in their persistence to educate and support their children in ways that make the most sense for their families. The children have grown smarter and stronger, flexible in response to the pandemic. Sarita's children study at home together, with the two older siblings helping the two younger ones navigate online learning, while Sarita and all the other early childhood educators in her district are forced to become distance teachers from their classrooms–seemingly not trusted like the elementary school teachers to make decisions about whether they should work from home or from their classrooms. Cesar, Sarita's husband, was deported over a year ago, and the family has made adjustments to their lives in response to this.

Angela has shifted jobs, moving closer to her professional goals, and creating the change she needs for her family and her community. She is in a new relationship and was carefully waiting to introduce her son Miguel to him, thinking about the right way and the right time to do so. Angela continues to wait for an opportunity to adjust her status and become a legal resident. Her mother relocated to live with Angela and Miguel, and now is able to spend lots of time with her grandchildren.

So much of the leadership possessed by these caring families that I have had the privilege to work with is rooted in their resistance to oppressive politics that affect not only their families but also the transformative nature of the ways they carry their roots, through their stories and into their work as educators. So much of the important work being done to care and educate children is done in their homes, with much love and nurturance. For families facing political trauma, this love is more than just care, this love is resistance. Hinton (2015) framed, "Though love moves from one person to another, it is not thereby reduced. Instead, it multiplies, and irreversibly changes. Love sustains us in the face of trauma and loss. Love is an overwhelming, elusive, many-splendored thing…" (p. 312). Love cannot be commodified or transposed, existing in opposition to capitalistic and neoliberal frameworks. I can only be encouraged by this idea, the idea that love is a means of transformation and resistance to families who are often the targets of state-sanctioned violence. That in the state of our current world, one of the unknowns made evident by COVID-19: When will it be safe? When can we venture out? How will things be different? Will things just return to the status quo? We must recognize that these questions and this virus that has

disrupted "normal" life for so many only further highlights the injustices faced by BIPOC, especially in the United States.

As we saw the impacts and ramifications of white supremacy running rampant at our nation's Capitol, for some this was a wakeup call that shouldn't have been necessary. For many, it was simply a reminder of business-as-usual U.S. daily life. This has always existed; people have simply chosen to look away. Walking alongside children and families, hearing their stories, and learning from their experiences is an opportunity to look directly in the face of injustice and do something about it: in our classrooms, in our homes, in our communities. Fear is used as a compliance strategy to ensure obedience (hooks, 2001). This fear promotes sameness and withdrawal from the unknown, and those different from ourselves. hooks (2001) argued that when we move against fear and instead choose love, that "the choice to love is a choice to connect–to find ourselves in the other" (p. 93). May we carry our roots, unfurl them, love deeply, and resist.

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Chapter 5
Storying Co-mentoring

Larisa Callaway-Cole and Adria Taha-Resnick

> *Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the retelling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to another: a potential translation in which narrative becomes parable...Our species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories.*
> —Mary Catherine Bateson (1990, p. 11)

Abstract How can the relationships of colleagues strengthen the relationships we have with our work and the people we engage with? Using a storied approach, we recall our memories of one another, reflecting on how we came to be together. We explore co-mentoring as a way for maintaining and building relationships not only both as colleagues and friends but also with students in higher education. This co-mentoring has led us to know one another deeply, being in better service to our own deepening knowledge and intentionality as educators. Teaching in the same early childhood program while studying in the same educational leadership doctorate allowed us to bridge our knowledge to create change that would impact our students. We discuss the power dynamics present for contingent faculty as we sought ways to integrate our new knowledge in meaningful ways for our work. We explore the power of vulnerability in our teaching and how this aligns with supporting im/migrant students in higher education.

We begin here with our stories, our memories of one another. We think carefully about how we came to be, situating ourselves in an ethic of care for one another, our students, and our profession. Our relationship is situated in our experiences not only as both educators and students working in tandem but also as friends and colleagues. In this chapter we hope to show you who we are and how we have grown, with and alongside our students, learning to share space and voice.

Revisiting the research questions from Chap. 1, this story connects most closely with:

- How, as scholars, can we observe and participate in cultures different from our own?

E. P. Quintero et al., *Making Space for Storied Leadership in Higher Education*,
Rethinking Higher Education, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4157-2_5

- How can we observe the layers of power relations, culture, access, and possibility while maintaining respect in all situations?
- How do we promote activism and avoid voyeurism?
- How can we place these complicated findings into practical and hopeful programs?

5.1 Two-Gathering

We share with you our ideas together, or two-gather (Phillps & Bunda, 2018). These ideas of two-gathering are engaged with our care and intention for being in reciprocal, cyclical relationships. Phillips & Bunda (2018) describe their theorizing of two-gathering as:

> We imbue our work in values-- within a set of guide ropes-- that remind us of our humanness, rather than give ourselves over to cyborgian effect….In reflecting on our practice, that is, what we have done and what we are aiming to do, our affinity with stories draws us close so that we *two-gather* to write this text. (p.1)

Just as Phillips & Bunda two-gathered their stories and experiences, we shall too.

We spent time thinking about our relationship and the ways that our relationship grew over time. We found that as our relationship strengthened, we became in tune with each other and with our students and their concerns. Now we story some pieces of our relationship, weaving them back and forth, two-gather.

Adria: The first night of our doctoral program, anxious students and numerous faculty were packed into a somewhat small room. I see Dr. Quintero talking to a woman excitedly as I walk up. I knew there was a person, a new hire in our Early Childhood Studies program, who was also starting the program with me. As I approached, Dr. Quintero introduced me, "This is Larisa, the one I told you about." I wasn't expecting her to be so young. How did this woman have it together enough to get her bachelor's and master's AND now be starting a doctoral program at such a young age? I was both intrigued and a bit jealous. I had managed to be at the same place as her, but it took me an additional 20 years to get there. I was still determined to get to know her and hoped that our mutual connection to early childhood would bring us close. We were the only ones with an early childhood background. Others in the program had various experiences in K-12 and higher education. As I sat down, I motioned to Larisa to sit with me in a large chair, small loveseat. We were smashed together, and the entirety of the sides of our bodies pushed against each other. This would later turn out to be our relationship. Close and personal, with an understanding that only we shared together. Our viewpoints, our fire, our vulnerability, and our connection of knowing what each other has to offer always somewhat smooshed together in calming comfort.

Larisa: The first night Adria and I met was the first night of our doctoral program. I had driven 7 hours and changed out of a sweaty dress, hurrying to our meeting only to see Dr. Quintero walking slowly down the path to our meeting space. I squealed, noting that her "hair had changed color!" and she squeezed me. As we walked in, Dr.

Quintero introduced me to Adria, one of the faculty members in the Early Childhood Studies program. I remember feeling nervous, knowing that I was the new kid on the block and that Adria had joined the early childhood program after I had graduated from it years before, leading me to wonder if the program still felt the same.

That night after Adria and I squashed in a chair, I did my typical thing of picking at my fingers while introductions were made. I am a bad listener when I am nervous and am usually trying to think of what to say while others are talking. Imposter syndrome took over and when it was our turn, Adria stood and boomed out her introduction, making me feel even more nervous to be next to someone with such a loud and confident voice. That loud and confident voice was always there, often with an accompanying belly laugh that could be heard across any space, whether that be a classroom or the lawn while we eagerly supported our graduating seniors. I didn't know how to engage with her in the beginning, or if we shared the same values or orientations to our teaching and pedagogy. Her depth of experience in the field made me nervous. Goodness knows she knew more about working in early childhood than I did.

Adria: Our ability to be vulnerable with each other was something I came to rely on. While attempting to title our dissertation work, a task that seemed innocuous, we were lost in how to really convey what we were doing. We decided that this conversation was suited for happy hour. As we sat together in a crowded restaurant, we laid out our thoughts. Our conversation was raw and emotional. As we ordered our second drink, the ideas flowed between us. We laughed and wrote in notebooks to reflect on later. I left with a title (which Larisa is a pro at putting into words) and the knowledge that I would always want to collaborate with someone who is so graceful in articulating her purpose.

Larisa: We came to be together, slowly at first and then all in a rush, like how a small trickle of a stream meets others and begins to flood together. While we often had different approaches, our core values were the same. We worked in service to our students, placing value on their personal experiences and helping them to become the teachers they envisioned being.

I used to come to the office and on my desk would be snacks, left for me by Adria who I soon came to see as my work wife/mom. She took care of me. I used to sneak snacks and ibuprofen from her desk when we weren't in there together. I owe this woman more snacks than I can count. We used to spin, whip-fast around in our office chairs to interrupt each other with questions we had about work or school, often intertwined. I used to joke that I couldn't get any work done if we were both in the office, but I think we both know that the best work got done when we were together.

Adria: Many days, weekends, and late nights occurred in our shared office as we completed homework, graded student work and then, writing our dissertations. Our music loud, and the back and forth of asking each other to "read this" "what do you think about that?" Often, we would trade desks to read through what the other had written. Asking questions, clarifying intent, or simply reassuring each other that we could do it when we were tired and/or fed up with the heaviness of being a student, and a teacher at the same time.

Larisa: In our last year of study together, in the middle of data collection, we galavanted to Copenhagen for that year's Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education conference. On one of the first nights, Adria told me her sister was taking us to dinner. Adria's brother-in-law helped to pick me up from my hostel, let me wash my laundry at their house, and off we went to dinner. Let's just say that it was one of the most extravagant and lush (and I mean this in more ways than one) dinners of my life. As we all toppled outside onto the chilly late-night street where sleeping babies laid in their prams, Adria and her family said I must come home with them. I squabbled, saying that I could just come back in the morning for my laundry and I'd get myself home. They insisted and made me a bed on the basement floor. The next morning when I thanked them again, feeling like I had intruded and imposed, Adria shrugged over a cup of coffee and smiled saying, "You're family."

And family we were. The next year, my dad died. Adria would walk into our office sometimes, look at my face, and say, "Come here, lovie," the same pet name she uses with her children, and hold me while I cried tears I didn't know were waiting under the surface. Our emotional selves and our connections to our work in a deep, vulnerable, and emotional way truly impact our pedagogy. Our classrooms are our homes. Our homes are our classrooms.

Two-gather: Too many things have changed since that time, yet many things are the same between us. Our families are in survival mode, like many others at this time. We face the pandemic, staring into the vast unknown which is scary but offers room for possibilities of change. We both share family members who are extremely ill, not due to COVID-19, but for other reasons. Jobs have been lost, children ripped from their schools and friends, the weight of a move half-way across the country, losing a sense of place, sense of time, and sense of belonging. These are our lives during the pandemic. People are in a constant cycle of grief. Other families that we know and study with face challenging circumstances as well. Older siblings must care for and help educate younger ones while parents are at work, families have inconsistencies in work, childcare, and the ability to maintain financial security. Some students have no security, finding themselves homeless during the pandemic, relying on the University to maintain their housing. And too many families find themselves ill with COVID-19, and experience losses due to the pandemic. We understand the privilege we both have in safe homes, access to healthcare, and having a support network. We know for many of the families we work and study with, these are not privileges they are afforded. We continue in our work as educators, meeting students where they are, listening, and adapting to support them and their contexts. We move forward, together, in our own spaces now, no longer sharing an office, but zooming from our homes. But in a relationship like this, we don't need to be together to *see* one another.

5.2 Storying as Co-mentorship

We didn't realize it at the time, but we were/are in a co-mentoring relationship. Mentoring is typically a hierarchical relationship where the older person mentors

a younger person. In our situation, we created a co-mentorship relationship. The term "co-mentoring" was first used by Bona et al. (1995) to describe a nonhierarchical mentoring relationship, where the individuals involved foster opportunities for shared knowledge and perspectives. Further, feminist co-mentoring relationships stem from the principles of McGuire and Reger (2003), which encompass equal balance of power in the relationship, mutual empowerment, and acknowledging the interconnections of work and home life in each individual. We, as the participants in a co-mentoring relationship, serve both roles of teacher and learner. These contributions are rooted in critical dialogue (Freire, 1993), which emphasizes humanizing and empowering those involved.

Co-mentoring, as opposed to a classical mentor/mentee relationship, is "reciprocal and mutual" (Bona, et al., 1995, p. 119). These mutual understandings of each other unfolded through our everyday experiences with each other; from sharing our individual stories and creating a new one. Our experience can be further explained by Mullen and Lick (1999) when they conceived "synergistic co mentoring." When we collaborated together, our results were greater than the sum of each of our individual parts in part due to trust and vulnerability.

Because we both worked at the same institution, we had very close shared experiences in our work. We shared the same administration, students, and for us, we even shared an office. These shared experiences were also gathered in a place of "otherness." Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explain that the place we teach is influential in shaping our identities as educators. The place is not only a specific location but also holds meaning to the people who occupy it (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). As lecturers at a four-year university, we occupied a space within our institution that often felt liminal, situated in a strange insider/outsider positionality that required expertise in our classrooms, but was not always included in greater programmatic decision making that affected our work and our students' engagement. Our place was in-between, for Larisa it was in between two academic jobs, shuttling back and forth, and for Adria between her community leadership and her academic role.

In our program, we taught a large percentage of the courses and were also advising students as well. We felt a sense of belonging with students, yet also understood that we were on the fringes of the institution regarding the inner workings and collaboration of others. We came together as an equal, collective, and cooperative structure (Angelique et al., 2002). In this capacity, we found ourselves in many ways able to understand the position of our first-generation im/migrant students who may also feel a place of "otherness" in higher education. While we acknowledge our place of privilege, we also embraced our dual identity as a higher education institution's marginalized population. Our shared understandings, albeit different from our students, gave us a sense of community with each other and allowed us to bring those feelings to better understand the position of our students.

Co-mentoring offers space to hold one another up and accountable as we learn together. For example, we often have different approaches to change. One of us (Adria), often finds that small, incremental changes will result in large changes over time. The other (Larisa) is of the position that we should often burn down existing structures and begin anew. While both approaches have the potential to be impactful,

we've found that a happy medium often suits our needs. We draw from Paulo Freire's (1998) guidance on patience/impatience to support our relationship:

> Patience alone may bring the educator to a position of resignation, of permissiveness, that denies the educator's democratic dream…. Conversely, impatience alone may lead the educator to blind activism, to action for its own sake, to a practice that does not respect the necessary relationship between tactics and strategy…. Virtue then, does not lie in experiencing either without the other but, rather, in living the permanent tension between the two. The educator must live and work impatiently patiently, never surrendering entirely to either (p. 44).

While we recognize that the tension must exist within ourselves, having a co-mentor who helps to balance you and maintain tension is a gift. We challenge one another to strengthen our action through a back and forth tug-of-war, settling in the balanced position appropriate for that particular situation. Our students benefit from this too—by teaching and showing patience/impatience in our teaching and work together, we help to build well-rounded activists who are ready to play with their own tension, teetering their own scales back and forth as necessary to take action in their own classrooms and communities.

Our co-mentoring relationship not only existed for us, together, but also with our students. We both deeply believe in co-constructing knowledge and learning from experiences together. Our classrooms and our communities are better for it. These reciprocal relationships allowed us to go deeper in our work. We embraced critical theory and a problem-posing format in our interactions, not hierarchical power dynamics. It seemed too that, for both of us, the more we learned about each other and became empowered through our study of educational leadership, the less we felt the need to engage in performative ways. For example, as lecturers living on the bridge of power dynamics already at our institution, and for some years without doctoral degrees, we initially felt that we needed to assert our knowledge in specific "appropriate" ways. But what we remembered quickly was that the things we learned that made us good early childhood teachers and administrators were also what made us good university instructors.

Co-mentoring together, and with our students (and our students with one another), has afforded us to deeply know one another. We know what lens each of us works through. Knowing one another's lenses helps us to work better together even when we don't take the same perspectives. We live in mutual respect for one another's understanding and we push one another to take other perspectives and consider multiplicities often. It's us saying to one another, I value your perspective, but more importantly, I value you.

5.3 Pedagogy of Vulnerability

Reflecting on chapter three, we again look at how scholar Katz (1993) posits that those of us whose work is primarily in teacher preparation expand on the idea of

professional learning. As in chapter three, the intersection of who we are as people and who we are as educators is embedded in each teacher being valued for who they are. She says:

> Some in-service educators are especially intent on getting something accomplished for the children, and seem to construe the situation as 'getting to the kids through the teachers.' If we want to help children (and no doubt we do), then we should do so directly instead of trying to 'use' teachers. The focus should be on helping teachers as persons worthy in their own right. Define [your role] as someone who helps and works with teachers for their own sakes. When we do that wholeheartedly and well, the children will surely benefit also (p.16).

Katz clearly builds the connection that we ask our teacher educators to bring the humanity of our work with children into our work with adult learners with the same commitment and importance we ask of them to bring into their work with children and families. Our goal then is for the teachers to see the intersectionality of what they themselves receive and what they give to those in their care. We ask that those of us guiding teacher preparation programs understand what we expect of teachers in classrooms, and model that same introspection within the context of their growth. In addition, we hope our counterparts can go beyond the "banking" idea of educational concepts and transfer personal experiences within their work. In order to bring personal connections to our college students, we acknowledge the obligation of intentional vulnerability.

Vulnerability is the backbone of storying, when we can be honest in our feelings, insecurities, and our strengths. We must note that while vulnerability can be construed as weakness, Brown (2012) argues "vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful human experiences" (p. 12). We do a disservice to ourselves and others when we inhibit our vulnerability as it leads to less interpersonal potential growth. As people, it is imperative that we recognize our students' humanity and that they are filled with emotion albeit in preschool, high school, or college. Emotionally, whether you are an instructor or a student, feelings are inescapable. Further, Parker Palmer (1998) explains how "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher…in every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood- and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning" (p. l 0). We can say with certainty that these tenets have brought us close with our students and we have seen the impact of vulnerability and humanity in our classrooms.

5.3.1 Making Room for Emotion

I (Adria) would like to share a story of embracing vulnerability in my classroom and its transformative impacts. The evening started out as a regular fun college night at a dance club where a lot of our students were in attendance. The night ended with a mass shooting that killed 12 people. It was one of the most shocking and sad events

that has ever shaken the community. Not only was I emotional, as I grew up in the community, I also had numerous students reach out to me via email about being late on assignments. Students were telling me that the emotional stress of dealing with such a trauma had affected their ability to concentrate on their schoolwork. Of course, I understood, I was also feeling the inability to focus as my mind raced about how to best reconcile my own feelings.

A cool November day we reconvened in class just days after the shooting event. I was standing in the front of the room as students with glazed looks slowly began entering. One student, in particular with whom I had an existing advising relationship with, walked in, looked at me, and literally ran into my arms. Tears came in a flood for her. Another student followed in suit. Straight to me, arms open and needing comfort. Both of these students were in the shooting. I, too, was engulfed in tears. As more students entered, it became a room of hugging, crying, and anxious people. We were all in a place of extreme vulnerability and it was necessary to address the feelings that were spilling out from the students. It never occurred to me that I should do anything but comfort at that time. As we gathered ourselves and sat down, I could see in their eyes they were not in a place to hear a lecture. And I wasn't in a place to give one either. We decided we would instead use our time to console and support one another. Some students needed to just tell their stories, some needed concrete information about what we would do in our classroom should something so frightening happen on campus. We spent time unraveling our thoughts and checking our window openings and options to flee from the second story. One student asked another to help them move a large file cabinet to block the door of the classroom. Moving that cabinet and checking the windows was cathartic in many ways.

I consider the experiences of the im/migrant families in our communities. For those who are undocumented, they live in fear of the unknown constantly. The fear of whether ICE will appear on their doorstep or follow them to their workplaces. They wonder about how they will care for their children should one adult be deported. Our families' fear for their safety mirrored my students. The numerous questions reminded me of a student-teacher who had reported to Larisa that when she asked the mother about taking the children on neighborhood walks, she replied with questions: What will happen if we encounter ICE? What will the school/teachers do? Where will we go to be safe?

I reflect on my own emotion and as an instructor how I "should" have handled this experience. Did I cry too hard? Did telling them I was scared also make it better or worse? Should I have gained composure to teach that day? My answer was a resounding no. It was then that I also realized how motherhood had affected me in my workspace. Most of these students had moved away from home, were living in dorms, and hoping for a wonderful college experience. I knew the parents of my students would want to know they had a person who cared for them and who was willing to give them what they needed at the time. I hope someone would do the same for my own daughters if needed.

A couple of weeks later, a candlelight vigil was held on campus. I attended and held the hands of students again as the memory of terror brought another rush of tears. My heart ached for them and I have never felt so right in the emotional ways of

my own personhood. As an educator, as a mother, and most importantly, as support for students, I was comforted in knowing we had each other. When those students finally graduated, the immense pride I felt in their resilience was overwhelming. I was there for them, they were there for me, and together we persevered. What an education we received.

5.3.2 Leaning into Love

I (Larisa) keep recalling moments of goodbye recently. I have been looking back to the days I taught preschool. I took a note from an amazing mentor I worked with when I spent time in her preschool classroom over 10 years ago. She was never afraid to tell the children that she loved them. Because of her, I, too, was never afraid to show and tell care in my classroom. One year I was teaching with a new team and we were at the end of the fall term, the day before we would get two weeks at home to rest for our winter break. I had brought presents for the other teachers and we surprised one another, each running to a different closet or cubby and pulling out gifts to share at nap time. I had written cards to each of them telling them how much I appreciated them. One cried, and said that she had learned so much from me. I started crying and said, "No way. What? I've learned so much from you!" She replied that what she had learned from me was to be silly. She said that I didn't take things too seriously and had fun with the children and had taught her to do that. I have always worn my heart on my sleeve.

When children "graduated" from our preschool we would host a wonderful celebration for families to gather. The children would receive diplomas, share work they had made around the classroom, we would enjoy a meal, and we would dance. The families of the children in our classroom delighted in this celebration. Our families were multilingual im/migrants, many of whom were sending their first child to school. On graduation day, I always dressed nicely so that I could take picture after picture with them for their families. But on the last day of school, I always went back to my exercise pants and crocs, dressed comfortably, so that I could do a really important thing. I knelt down before each child as they left my classroom, gave them a hug, and told them how proud I was of them. Perhaps this is a small gesture, but it solidified for me that I was leaving them with love.

Fast forward to 2019, to a classroom that only contained about two-thirds of our normal class. As I am trying to talk with our students about culture and the deep ways we must look to understand different family backgrounds and experiences, a student says, "They sent it. Here's the email." I went over, picked up her phone, and read the email to all from there—our campus would close for the next two weeks in an abundance of caution due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And while the room twittered with a nervous conversation, all of us feeling more unsure, full of questions, I returned back to class to finish the night together. I thought "This is my favorite class. If we have to study online for two weeks, I should finish it." And while we have learned earlier in the chapter from Adria that perhaps the more responsive thing to do

would have been to stop and discuss the pandemic that we still did not understand, I pressed forward.

We took a class selfie like I always do at the end of every semester, with the fear we might not see one another again. We finished up the content we had been working on, then went out onto the lawn at nearly 10 pm, dew on the grass, with everyone spread out to do an exercise that I have found is often impactful in ways I can't explain. I began to read statements from the light of my phone asking students to step forward or backward depending on the experiences they had. The purpose of this is to demonstrate privilege and to debunk ideas surrounding meritocracy. I do this after much rapport has been built in the classroom, once students feel safe to do it. My intention is for them to think about how this impacts the way they interact with children and families and what they will do to meet people where they are and lift them up. In the end, with some students standing far apart in both directions on the quad, I asked people to share their experiences. Perhaps it was because emotions were high already that night, but several cried and others left their spots on the lawn to hold one another. They talked about overcoming, about being grateful even if not being afforded privileges, and about wanting to use their privilege to make the change. After our conversation, I sent them home. But several students came to me that night, thanking me for class, and asking for hugs. I thought quickly about the pandemic. We were supposed to keep our distance, right? But I hugged them tightly instead. I am glad that I did because I will never see any of them face to face again. It was my last semester at the institution, a hard time changing my trajectory. So many loose ends, and many things that felt unfinished. But I think back to those students that I got to squeeze one more time, just like my preschoolers years before. It was one more opportunity to let love shine through.

5.3.3 Bringing Ourselves to the Table

Brookfield (2006) explains "Personhood is the perception students have that their teacher is a flesh-and-blood human being with a life and identity outside the classroom. Students recognize personhood when teachers move out from behind their formal identity and role description to allow aspects of their life and personality to be revealed in the classroom" (p. 10). This part of our personhood was exposed on a grand level during those overwhelming times. Students not only appreciated vulnerability but were comforted by it. hooks (1994) further describes how some faculty do not understand the role emotion plays in a classroom and rather they feel their "academic purpose has been diminished" (p. 155). hooks goes on to explain that while educators place their importance on the content they teach, they must realize and embrace that we are teaching people who have outside lives and struggles and have feelings and emotions unrelated to academia. Our students have always known and experienced this with us. Our vulnerability lies in instances of sorrow and fear like the Borderline tragedy, the 2016 presidential election, or the numerous fires that ravaged our communities and took students' homes. But also in instances of

joy like the celebration of their graduations and honors convocations, lunching with them and their cooperating teachers while children napped, or romping around with children in the community on Saturdays wearing exercise leggings, tennis shoes, and sunglasses. We bring who we are to our work, people who care about people, authentically ourselves.

It may not be clear in sharing these stories how this connects carefully to studying with and engaging with migrant and refugee children, families, and higher education students. The authenticity that we bring into our spaces which reflects our identities and formative experiences, our continued growth as educators, and our desire to meet students in a space of shared leadership and communication does a really important thing. Being who we are allows our students to be who they are. There's something about bearing your soul, sharing your story, connecting personally, and advocating for responsiveness to our communities that helps students become comfortable being themselves as a teacher, not the idea of "what a teacher should be". And when our students who are the first generation to college, from working-class backgrounds, immigrants or the children of immigrants, undocumented Dreamers, Spanish speaking, proud Chicanxs and Latinxs, bring their authentic identities to their classrooms, to then help groups of children feel authentically themselves, we see the power in vulnerability.

5.4 Whipping up Generative Change

Action is the name of the game in our work. This can be largely attributed to our epistemological and ontological framing and to the scholars we study closely. We spend time theorizing, along with university students and with children, thinking often about who we are as members of communities—classroom, cultural, and familial in the broader sense. Then we spend time using this knowledge to apply it toward meaningful and powerful learning experiences. While we studied in our educational leadership doctorate, we worked in actionable ways to envision and re-envision possibilities for higher education. I think we were used to doing this in early childhood, but the structure of higher education seemed too elusive, top/down, and frankly, too powerful to tackle or topple systems and structures that weren't serving us or our students. Studying in our coursework though helped us realize that these systems could be improved upon through small, thoughtful changes. And we had the opportunity to embark on our journey, combining what we knew best about early childhood and higher education, to support our students.

One example of us making change for our students involved creating systems that would support advising. Together, both of us advised all of the students in our program at the time. We were enrolled in a course on Community College Administration. During the course, a classmate gave a presentation on Guided Pathways, an approach to streamlining students' experiences in college which supports students by providing a clear path toward timely graduation (Bailey, 2017). One important aspect that stood out to us was the possibility of including checkpoints in their educational

journeys to ensure they are on track and prepared. We began to wonder how we could use this as an additive practice to our existing advising system. For us, it became an issue of integrating field placement coordination with advising in meaningful ways. So, we started working backward, beginning with a final checkpoint prior to/during their senior year. We wrote and sent out a thoughtful letter to students describing the process of submitting their intent to student teach (that is still being used in some capacity today, though things have changed), and then proceeded to individually check the graduation and course requirements for every student who submitted their intent to student teach. We used a stoplight system to ensure they were ready, using green to proceed to student teaching, yellow to follow up with them about courses/experiences/GPA/etc., and red to prevent students from student teaching with an advising session to help them prepare to reach this step in their undergraduate education. What we found was amazing. Students who had never really had advising before sought it out for the first time. Students who were ready to graduate but didn't know and needed to be told to apply. Students who needed support got it because we could see it and offer it at this juncture. We became better advisors by making this small and effective change to our work.

Advising students in our program was a privilege. One that we held with much regard and intentionality. I (Larisa) was a first-generation college student, and I rarely relied on or trusted my academic advisors because I was afraid that I would be misinformed (something that is often advised by more senior students). I simply read my catalog closely, figured it out, and proceeded to the best of my ability. As a transfer student, I had to learn what things counted at different institutions, what courses I would need to make up, etc. This perspective changed the way we both advised our students. We put relationships with our students first. We helped them to know that they could trust us and that we were working on supporting their best interests. Many of our students were Latinx, first-generation to college, and transferred from a community college. There are many unknowns and questions they have when we first advise. Initially, students needed help with their classes and we got them settled. But as they continued with us, we not only continued to plan schedules but also provided advising related to their career choices and prospects and graduate school and credential program requirements and admission. The two of us have probably written more letters of recommendation and provided more reference calls than we can count. Because the work we did with these students was transformational in a way. They learned that there were people in a system that were more than the system. That we would work with them to figure things out, even when they went outside of our scope of work. We did this in service of decolonizing the architecture of higher education in service to our students. We tried to make higher education a place that felt accessible. A place that belonged to *them.*

Iorio et al. (2018) present us with the notion of hope and how it informs teacher educators as public intellectuals. They conceptualize hope and its relation to our humanity, "This understanding of hope presents the possibility of hope as anti-storying of neoliberalism—a way to see what could be possible" (p. 300). This seeing of what could be possible in our classrooms, communities, homes, and relationships characterizes our engagement with our students. Our care and concern for their

learning are situated in students' hope for themselves and their own worlds, while also drawing them into a community of minds (Nelson et al., 2003) that supports their continual questioning of: Who am I? How do my formative experiences shape my identity as a teacher? How do the experiences of the children I work with continue to shape my understanding of the world and myself?

Teaching, advising, researching, and studying all at the same time allowed us to think about possibilities for change, ones that honored our bridging between early childhood and educational leadership for higher education. Our perspectives helped to shape and shift the work we did with our early childhood students, but our backgrounds also shaped our approaches to leadership which we were able to share with our cohort members in our doctoral program. We took chances to explore what could be, which helped us open up to new possibilities in our work as educators.

5.5 Relationships Onward

Our relationships as colleagues and friends extend to one another, and also to our students. If studying educational leadership taught us anything, it's that we can create systems and become change agents in service to our students. That we have the tools and skills to be both leaders and researchers, and that when we share that leadership with others, those with marginalized voices become centered in our stories about higher education. We think about the ways we encourage teachers to become self-reflective and engaged citizens of the world. And how that citizenship extends as loving-kindness in their classrooms. Loris Malaguzzi reflected:

> Teachers-like children and everyone else-- feel the need to grow in their competencies; they want to transform experiences into thoughts, thoughts into reflections, and reflections into new thoughts and new actions. They also feel a need to make predictions, to try things out, and to interpret them…. Teachers must learn to interpret ongoing processes rather than wait to evaluate results. (Wurm, 2005, p. 96)

Focusing on the ways we reflect to generate action and the idea that we must think and generate this endlessly, churns our ideas and theories around and helps us know that the work of education is never done. We are lucky to work together, churning around our ideas together, taking perspective, and moving forward in a way that honors our work, our place, and our people.

We came out on the other side of our doctoral studies transformed, not only because of our study but also because of our work together. Going through all of this together has helped us understand our own agency, we have emerged on the other side of things confident that we do not know everything but can continue learning. We know who we want to be in our classrooms and our lives, people who share agency, a way of be/coming together. Although we engage in different positions now, we both know the challenges with power structures in the academy, the red tape, that often stands in the way of our service to our students. We carefully, with intention, care and respect, continue to cut the tape.

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Chapter 6
Storying Educational Leadership in Challenging Contexts

Elizabeth P. Quintero

Abstract How does our "new normal" in 2021 demand that we make brave adjustments to our work in educational leadership to promote justice in policy and in public health, while continuing to focus on young children and their families? I met some muses in a graduate seminar created around an intensive 2-week Study Abroad Program in which participants were master-level students majoring in early childhood education, international education, or bilingual education. In the 2-week experience, I saw students' potential for risk taking and professionalism in their current and future careers blossom. The course contained information, experience, and transformational perspectives regarding issues of refugee and migrating families and children. The stories connected graduate students from New Jersey, Ecuador, Jamaica, Alabama, and Korea to their experiences with asylum-seekers from around the world. Another teacher education program combined core curricula and fieldwork in early childhood education while highlighting the contextual influences of family, culture, language, and society in California from 2016 to the present. In every class, there is information to prepare graduates with knowledge and dispositions to work with dual language learners—even when teachers are not bilingual. Fieldwork is required in different communities. Many of the participants, both children and adult student teachers bring family history, knowledge, linguistic perspectives, and lived experiences from Mexico and Central America. These histories may influence better learning journeys in our world of families caught up in world migrations, our striving for justice for all world citizens as seen through the Black Lives Matter movement and ending the terror of a world health pandemic.

Teacher educators and student teachers are working and studying to engage in deeply innovative work—especially in these unprecedented times. What are we collectively, around the world, learning about the strengths and needs of families in migration and in other crises related to public health and criminal justice everywhere? In what ways does our "new normal" in 2021 engage us and demand that we make brave adjustments to our work in early childhood leadership to promote justice in policy, in public health, while continuing to focus on young children and their families?

Going to the categories of findings at the end of Chap. 1, these particular ones are addressed in this chapter:

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- How do studies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality (that are of concern to contemporary critical scholarship) become situated within geopolitical arrangements, and relations of nations and their inter/national histories?
- How do acculturation and language acquisition become impacted by the process of aligning new societal expectations and requirements with previous cultural norms, individual perceptions, and experiences preeminent in immigrants' lives?

For years as previously discussed, I've learned from participants in storying research whose wisdom and experience put my own knowledge in the shadows. Often muses—knowledgeable and informative—come to us in the persona of learners from all ages and all backgrounds**.** We've met some of the muses in past stories. We have more muses who speak to us through their teacher education and student teaching experiences.

6.1 Graduate Students Exploring Challenging Contexts

I met some muses some years ago who were beginning to work in early childhood and educational leadership to promote justice in policy and in public health, while continuing to focus on young children and their families. We met in a graduate seminar created around an intensive 2-week Study Abroad Program in London in which most participants were master-level students majoring in early childhood education, international education, or bilingual education. In the 2-week experience, I saw students' potential for risk taking and professionalism in their current and future careers. The course was titled, *Working with Parents: Cross Cultural Collaborations.* The students wanted information, experience, and transformational perspectives regarding issues of refugee and migrating families and children.

A series of seminar activities were implemented—fieldwork experiences, and small group and individual tutorials (British label, or office hours, American label). Guidelines for their work combined critical theory and qualitative methods for the selected time-frame experiences. At the outset, the chronology of events, the activities, and methodologies used in varying ways were given as a template. In other words, the methodology structured the learning activities in ways that poststructuralist theory would help us to keep at the forefront the underlying question of "What is really going on here?".

As the professor, I elucidated my personal theoretical and philosophical perspective, which was strongly influenced by Paulo Freire (1985, 2000, 2014) and other poststructuralist theories. Because my teaching and research had been based upon critical theory and critical literacy, over many years I'd learned that qualitative methods were the most effective way to probe and analyze issues of participants' agendas and transformation. The combination of a critical theoretical framework and qualitative methods promotes educational researchers' connecting their own lives and experiences to their study and brings to the fore the potential for resulting transformative action. And, as the two intergenerational bilingual family literacy projects discussed

previously had recently happened, I related many of the stories from those projects to the students in this seminar as we studied *Working with Parents: Cross Cultural Collaborations* in London.

This particular course involved the study of relationships among families, communities, and educational programs. As a class, we addressed the challenges and the nature of collaboration among families, schools, and communities for the purpose of supporting all children's success in educational settings. Emphasis was placed on family history and culture, models of parent involvement, forms of communicating with parents, parent education, working with families in crisis, and identifying resources for families. The seminar was offered in an intensive format (2 weeks) each January in London, England. It was conducted once a year in London because, in spite of ongoing in-country and international contention, London was an active center of collaboration among advocacy groups supporting refugee parents, educational programs, and community agencies. The contexts were often complex combinations of many cultures, languages, styles of childrearing, and daily living. Professionals in many agencies (both government sponsored and private) strove to meet daily challenges of supporting families in their desire and need to maintain their cultural roots while learning the skills and ways of life for successful living in a modern, but unfamiliar, society.

We visited schools, early childhood programs, community centers, and government programs of the Refugee Council UK in various neighborhoods in London as part of the course activities. We had opportunities to interview family members and children from a variety of situations to inform our work. Students participated in aspects of a problem-posing format (Listening, Dialogue, Action) in the seminar as one of the requirements for course completion. The theoretical framework underlying the pedagogy demanded a critical treatment of new information and a responsibility for using this information in an action format. Furthermore, the framework was a structured way to expose beginning researchers to some basic forms of qualitative methods for approaching fieldwork. The format also allowed students to have a choice in pursuing specific aspects of their scholarly interests.

6.2 Combination of Personal History, Community Relationships, Activism, and New Information

On the first day of this particular seminar, we met Mr. Jackson from *London Walks Tours* (2006) for a walking historical tour of "The Old Jewish Quarter." The historical tour began near Tower Hill in London by a section of the excavated Old Roman Wall as a point of departure for talking about immigrants and refugees coming from other lands to London. The walk ended on Brick Lane in the neighborhood of East London that has been settled by many different immigrant groups over the past four centuries.

As we traveled to the meeting place, I told the students a story about Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former Director of the United Nations

Commission on Human Rights. I'd met her at an earlier conference about migration and education and she implored us to "…put a human face on migration…" (M. Robinson, personal communication, 2005). I explained to the students that this "putting human faces" to our research is a characteristic of qualitative research. I also told them that our tour guide, Mr. Jackson, was a longtime London resident whose parents and grandparents were refugees from Poland who settled in the neighborhood where he was taking us. He was adept at mixing historical facts and stories of his family. I encouraged the students to make connections between the factual information and the human stories. Our walk traced the history of London's Jewish community in the East End. It is a story of synagogues and sweatshops, Sephardim and soup kitchens. During the tour, we worked to connect the history of the neighborhood to the political and cultural contexts of the present.

The following day, I introduced the variety of experiences we had planned in various refugee communities, the rigor of my expectations for the students' reading, dialogue, and collaborative and individual actions. I pointed out that the act of "noticing" is a big part of qualitative methods. I used the problem-posing format for class activities and explained to students the importance of connecting personal experience, new information through reading, interviews, lectures, and action outside our classroom. In one activity designed to connect student participants' personal lives to our study and activities, I asked students to write a short journal entry about either the history of a tradition or a celebration in their family or a story that has been retold in their family or in a group of friends. A few excerpts were:

> As I started to travel more and more I began to value other cultures. Through that I began to look for the value in my own. I realized that I have many more questions than answers. Am I Latina or Hispanic? Am I Ecuadorian or Ecuadorian-American? What does it mean to be who I am? How much of who I am is connected to my racial identity? I am not sure of the answers, but I feel that "race" is only the tip of the iceberg to culture. (Quintero, 2007, p. 117)

A student who grew up in the Deep South wrote:

> My racial identity has always been the word Black. However, what that means is hard to say. My family is more religious than cultural, so no one ever really talked about our ethnic history. To be honest, most people my age where I come from don't even know about Zora Neal Hurston and Billie Holiday. They only have heard mention of those more noted leaders of our culture, like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, but still couldn't share much knowledge about their beliefs and struggles. (Quintero, 2007, pp. 117–118)

Finally, a student from the same group, came from different life circumstances, and perhaps, asked the most provocative questions in her reflection.

> I am still trying to reconcile what the difference is between personal philosophy, personality and culture. I find myself making statements about all, after seeing the actions of a few…Unable to see, think or believe what is outside of the racial check boxes. Why do we have to check the box? Why are the boxes there in the first place? Who does it benefit? I feel that the process of migrating, in itself, changes the migrant. The Jamaican culture is neither racial nor ethnic, but it is what I identify with most strongly. Yes, most of the population is Black and so I guess many of us do not use the Blackness as a unifying factor in the way we view

> potential friends. It is hard to understand the concept that those identifiers are now used to judge us when we do not necessarily do the same to ourselves. (Quintero, 2007, p. 118)

The following day, we visited the Refugee Council. This was the largest organization in the United Kingdom working with asylum-seekers and refugees at that time. While the work of the Refugee Council was by and large very effective, a critical perspective required a closer look at difficult issues affecting the work of the organization. The Refugee Council had the complex job of being strong advocates for asylum-seekers and criticizing the British Home Office for neither enough support nor strong enough action, while at the same time being required to work with this political, government bureaucracy. The Refugee Council welcomed us. Each of the seminar students was assigned to a different professional throughout the Refugee Council office doing various coordinated tasks for the crowds of asylum-seekers who came each day.

Another day, on our first school visit to Star Primary School, we had an opportunity to address the questions of: What are the aspects involved in educating children of refugee and immigrant families? In communities with a high population of refugee families, where students learn the language of the school as a second, third or fourth language, and have a high rate of poverty, what can schools do? How can a curriculum be designed and delivered that supports and respects the history, language, and culture of newcomers while at the same time providing students with knowledge and skills to give them an equal chance for success in their new homes? How can schools provide support for the entire family of its students? These are questions that exemplify critical theory and questions that are served by using qualitative methods to explore them.

Star Primary School was a community school for pupils aged 3–11 years. It was located in Canning Town in the East End of London, an area of economic deprivation. The school provided education to pupils from a wide range of cultures, faiths, and languages. There were 750 students in the primary school and 75 in the nursery. Half of the pupils were speakers of languages other than English and for those who were children in asylum-seeking families, their potential for resettlement caused additional complications and stress. Teachers had to become legal advisors, helping families negotiate the minefields of immigration, housing law, and social security benefits.

The school director explained that her intentions for teachers at Star School have to do with moral purpose and social justice: “Teachers have to be the best they can be…It’s about building for the future…You don’t write anybody off.” “I’m really interested in change,” she said. She urged the public to not judge kids in our communities. She said that “…our kids are not intellectually less able than kids anywhere else in the country; it’s just their circumstances. They’re already disadvantaged when they come in.” She believed strongly that the kids and the parents have an entitlement for change (M. Rosen, personal communication, 2005).

My students and I learned that while the educators at the school were under the guidelines of their federal educational standards and required to provide appropriate instruction, they were risk takers, and they had the support and leadership of the

school's director. While they had some resources to support their need to be legal advisors, helping families negotiate the minefields of immigration, housing law, and social security benefits, they also had freedom to be creative with curriculum and academics. The educators collaborated and agreed on how to implement their commitment to focus on the arts as elegant learning methods. They met in grade-level teams. Each grade level chose a different area of the fine arts to focus on, such as musical instruments, painting, theater, dance, architecture, literature and designed their grade level curricula around their category within the arts. Many students at the school were learning English as their second, third, and fourth languages in pull-out classes, but through their arts-based curriculum, they had many opportunities to create, communicate, develop literacy and yes, participate in transformative action. Over several years of observing and listening with students at Star School, I met many critical theorists aged 5—11.

The following day we touched on post-positivist and feminist paradigms and summaries of major philosophical and theoretical considerations for our work. I reminded students that while my theoretical perspective was heavily influenced by critical theory, there are many other perspectives that are compatible with studying migrating families and their children and these perspectives can be supported also by using qualitative methods. Then, I asked students to identify the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that currently guided their own professional and academic study. I explained that we would later connect these assumptions to their research interests and the qualitative methods to explore these interests. Some students were able to identify philosophers upon whose work they base theirs. Others were more general in terms of identifying what their intentions were.

A few of the identified assumptions were:

> An assumption from my field that heavily guides my work is that human motivations and behaviors are largely determined by their cognition. Something the school director said about the impact of "talking up" the community that she works in really rattles me and hit close to home. Most of the time, we Missippians [sic] spend so much of our time sharing all the negative aspects of our community in an effort to find help for it and to possibly change things. I think if we spend more time "talking up" the more positive aspects and possibilities, it will encourage those within that community to help themselves rather than sitting around waiting on someone else to rescue them. This doesn't indicate that I feel their struggles should be forgotten, but rather use them to support their efforts and accent where they are now versus where they came from. (Quintero, 2007, p. 121)

Another:

> I am influenced by Seyla Benhabib: Cultures are fluid and porous and thus there is definitely a way that we can understand one another…if only we try…societies need to be able to access the layers our shared and unique histories with the ability to question the ideas and philosophies behind the creation, transmission and perpetuation of thought. (Quintero, 2007, p. 122)

The students' analyses of interview data, observations logs, and underlying philosophical assumptions pointed out discontinuities in their own ideas about aspects of teaching and learning. The intensive experience of traveling to an international city

while at the same time working with and learning from families, children, educators, social workers, and other advocacy groups proved to be a sort of pressure cooker of personal growth and renewed sensitivity and understanding.

6.3 The Beginnings of the Students' Research and Project Planning

One student's project proposal flipped the discussion of "participating in a culture other than one's own" so that the educators hold the responsibility for participating in their newly composed classroom and school culture, which now involves immigrants and refugees from many cultures. The National Literacy Trust of England produced documents that detail backgrounds on the pupils' countries of origin and felt that would guide ways to adapt the curriculum. She felt that a document that sits stagnantly in a staffroom is insufficient. Who better to share the information than the students and families themselves? Her project focused on Immigration Consultant Educators who could support teachers using their immigrant populations as knowledge brokers and not only demonstrate both universal methods for improving immigrant accessibility to learning in the classroom but also disperse culture-focused methods that must be taken into account.

Another student took her study and action to her home community in Mississippi in a youth development, school, and family connection project. Another student took his investigation back to his Korean community in the United States to study the dynamics of first-generation Korean immigrants to the US, 1.5-generation immigrants, and second-generation immigrants. Two students were involved in an international qualitative study investigating support and advocacy for Ecuadorian immigrants around the world. (Quintero, 2007, p. 126).

Another student chose to comment upon her interviews with Unaccompanied Minors through the Refugee Council:

> Before traveling to London, I was under the impression that the biggest problem faced by refugees was political. The only time we hear about refugees is typically when a law is being changed or contested. Sometimes we may hear about how refugees are draining away tax dollars. We never hear about the hidden psychological trauma experienced by refugees living in our own communities. We never hear about the problems that are not solved by counselors. We never hear the personal stories. When we do, however, we might be open to change. After meeting Pierre, I felt shock, disbelief, anger, and sorrow. The way that refugees are treated needs to be changed. They should no longer be thought of as people who cause problems. (Quintero, 2007, p. 126)

The composite experience was a mosaic comprised of the thinking of the participating students, and as I kept in touch with many of them over the following years, I was encouraged to see evidence of their sensitivity to learners and their brave risk taking. I see their brief experiences and ongoing work pointing to challenges we face now as we aim to "build better" the future for children and families.

6.4 Early Childhood Student Teachers in a California Program

The past decade of early childhood teacher education work gave me the opportunity to work with dedicated students in southern California. The Early Childhood Studies academic program offers core curricula and fieldwork in early childhood education while highlighting the contextual influences of family, culture, language, and society. The program is distinctive with a unique feature of an emphasis on the California context of families and children who are dual language learners. In every class, there is information to prepare graduates with knowledge and dispositions to work with dual language learners—even when teachers are not bilingual. An additional emphasis in the program is the commitment to extensive opportunities for ECS students to have selected fieldwork experiences while taking courses in an undergraduate program. The senior-level sequence of courses for both infant/toddler student teaching and preschool/primary student teaching were designed so that ECS students studied, designed, and implemented integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum with children.

Many of the participants described here, both children and adult student teachers, are living and studying in the Global North and they bring with them generations of family history, knowledge, linguistic perspectives, and lived experiences from the Global South. Many participants are Latina and Latino, and some are Indigenous people from Mexico. Their specific family histories in multilingual contexts, multigenerational knowledge, critical conceptualizations of place, and matters of concern (Latour, 2004) were born, in part, from their experiences in the Global South. Their histories and current lived experiences are reflective in many ways of communities around the world where intergenerational participants of two or more cultures and language groups with different economic and political histories find themselves learning together.

6.5 Contexts, World Migration, and Our Participants

To elaborate more on the participants, our study documented groups of teacher education students in an early childhood studies program who were student teaching with children (aged 3–8) in county preschools and primary schools (pre-kindergarten to third grade). More than half of the adult student teachers participating in this ongoing study were first-generation college students with a large percentage of them from families and communities of migrant farmworkers in California (Quintero, 2015). These participants truly carry their roots with them at all times. We have learned collectively through participants' engagements in and interpretations of their stories. I take liberty to shorten the long, joyful, and difficult stories about learning from and with children and their communities. The stories of adults (teacher educators and student teachers) and children they work with are from their lived experiences, and

they nudge our thinking about aspects of supporting children's learning and families' well-being.

Many early childhood specialists, as we work with children and families, are committed to the importance of including multilingual communication and multiliteracies in our work with young children (and those learning to become teachers of these children). What we have found in our research is that story, as a basis for the framework of an integrated curriculum, provides exciting generative possibilities for learning. This includes all subject matter content supported by a foundation built upon multiple languages, family history, and cultural and political realities. Using story encourages thinking about language, literacy, and learning as dynamic systems that exist in familiar (to the learners) dimensions. Even in familiar dimensions such as language and literacy, spaces in between two points can create a third space between incongruous polarizations; intersections become possible.

We found "third spaces" (Bhabha, 2004) in early childhood learning by listening to the power of stories with/in integrated curriculum. These spaces encourage opportunities to use families' home languages while addressing target languages and to include varied family histories in curriculum. Dahlberg et al. (2013) note the importance of lived experiences and stress that in order to avoid silencing some learners' voices we must listen to stories that may be different from our own. The integrated curriculum framework allows for the fluidity of challenges and hope.

Student teachers reflected on their own family history to emphasize the meaning-making involved in learning. Student teachers also listened to children through their pretend play, which revealed their own stories about their ongoing making sense of the world. Multicultural children's literature also put stories at the center of integrated curriculum. And children writing their own stories in narrative form (in their home languages and in target languages) became a way to generate meaningful integrated learning. Whether families migrate from one country to another seeking a better life, fleeing violence and war or famine, children are living their lives amidst a reality of struggle. As explained, many participants, both children and adult student teachers, are living and studying in the Global North (the United States) and they brought with them generations of family history, knowledge, linguistic backgrounds, and lived experiences from the Global South (Mexico, Central, and South America, the Philippines, Southeast Asia the Middle East). Their stories created a third space (Bhabha, 2004) where choice between one language and another isn't necessary and where historical experiences can be built upon. What appeared in the third space was informative, inclusive, and inspiring. This third space was integrated curriculum at its finest. We listened to children and student teachers use their own languages and ways of thinking in order for the integrated curriculum to be generative and authentic.

In pedagogy, with an integrated curriculum, I rely on Pinar's (2004) idea of curriculum as a complicated conversation. "The complicated conversation that is the curriculum requires interdisciplinary intellectuality, erudition, and self-reflexivity. This is not a recipe for high test scores, but a common faith in the possibility of self-realization and democratization, twin projects of social subjective reconstruction" (p. 8).

"Complicated conversations" framed the discussions in our university classes, and later, the research questions, and finally, the patterns of interrelated themes of research findings. Integrated curriculum, through personal story, through multicultural literature, and through children's use of multilingual narrative in writing, encourages all areas of curriculum while we intentionally strive for "self-realization and democratization" (Pinar, 2004, p. 8). In other words, the student teachers and children become researchers by informing us of their histories and cultural ways of knowing. This becomes our integrated curriculum—both for the adult student teachers in their university class and for the children whom they work with.

In addition, both the student teachers and the children were encouraged to use their home languages in their learning. For example, sociolinguistic research, and neuroscience (Cognitive Neuroscience Society, 2013), verifies that the brains of babies and young children can support multilingual development. Kuhl's research confirms that all ages of multilingual learners have cognitive gains and more cognitive flexibility than monolingual learners. People who reside on geographical borders where two, three, or more languages are spoken learn all the languages. Often, they learn each language separately and sometimes code-switch between the languages. The acquisition of multiple languages happens "unevenly" and with different timing, but acquisition is always progressing. Integrated curriculum that is story-based is flexible in ways to support literacy skills in two or more languages (Blom et al. 2014; Brito & Barr, 2014; Luk & Bialystok, 2013). Furthermore, when families and children have histories in one philosophical tradition and then migrate to a different place with different traditions, they choose to keep the learning from their past while learning new traditions. These differing histories and lived experiences come to light in many ways through stories shared within integrated curriculum.

For example, for course requirements in an Integrated Curriculum course paired with student teaching fieldwork with 3–8-year-old children, the Curriculum Design Assignment was based upon students' observations of children's strengths and interests and on interactions with the children in programs and identified standards/goals/objectives. Students designed and implemented a series of integrated curriculum activities (literacy, math, music, science, art, social studies). Importantly, before beginning planning, students were responsible for documenting (through journal notes and class assignments) the aspects of the children's interests, strengths and needs, and the context of the classroom. Students were responsible for planning 3 days of opportunities for focused activities (Quintero, 2016).

6.6 Glimpses of Student Teachers Learning Through Stories of Children

While there were myriads of integrated curriculum designs that showed how children's interests in sharks, in hibernating animals, in fires, in nightmares, and in new babies could be brilliant points of departure for all sorts of learning across curriculum

topics, often the most dramatic learnings evolved in the areas of human empathy, justice, and relationships. A student–teacher who had just met the kindergarteners in her class a few weeks earlier noted that the children were filled with excitement about fantastical superheroes and their own actual heroic family members. She wrote,

> There is continuing interest in superheroes in the classroom, especially reflected through the costumes children wore during Halloween. In addition to this continued interest, there is also an increasing display of pride for their culture. About half of the students in my classroom are Latinos. They can communicate in Spanish, and a lot of them are very proud of their culture, families, and language abilities.
>
> For example, when the class was doing an art activity, a boy chose three unique colors for his sea creature. He told his friend: "I'm going to color my shark with the colors of the Mexican flag because that's where my mom was born. I was born in Oxnard." The same boy turned to me a few minutes later and told me, "I can speak two languages, English and Spanish," which prompted another child at the table to say, "I can speak Spanish too!".

The student teacher reflected on the ways she saw the children's families and community heroes in this third space that the integrated curriculum provided. "This lesson connects the in-class experiences of children's interest in superheroes to their curiosity about real life heroes. This also connects with the lesson they've explored about Latino history and culture in their own community."

Another student–teacher had been working for a few months in an elementary school with third graders. She was pushed to think of family history and current realities in terms of place as it relates to all dimensions of life, especially as it all relates to the 8-year-olds she met in student teaching. The school where she was assigned serves the most economically challenged families in the city with a large population of children from the migrant agricultural workers' community. The student teacher was jolted by her own initial impressions of the children. She is bilingual (Spanish/English); her family was originally from Mexico and has lived in California for several generations. She reflected:

> I looked back on my notes from day one and realized how much I have learned from students in these past weeks. I realized that I had written in my notes on the first day that some children lack energy and motivation to engage in classroom activities and learning. I have realized now that this is because most children don't get the sleep they need at night or have peace and quiet at home. Some of them share a home with other families, and this affects how they function at school. I realized that I'd been so fast to judge them in the beginning and now I empathize with them. I found out just last week that one of the students is currently homeless and his family sleeps in their car.

While family history and culture and language are of extreme importance to learners and teachers, so are the day-to-day realities of survival. A few months later, the same student teacher became even more sensitive to the strengths and needs of children and their families.

> In the beginning of my days in the classroom I asked my cooperating teacher, Mrs. Reza, what the philosophy of the school is. She said, "The school's mission is that every child should be college ready by the end of her/his years at this school." But her own philosophy is different. She (Mrs. Reza) said her philosophy is "Believing that if she tries her best at teaching then her students will try their best at achieving." And I can see that while this

> teacher may lack some academic preparation, she truly cares about her students. I can see this by the way students from her previous classes come into her class and run up to her in the halls. I think that is the type of teacher I want to be--a teacher everyone remembers because of the caring she gave them. She did more than just teaching them the required knowledge, she actually cared.

Another student teacher working with bilingual first graders reflected:

> In my United States lesson, when I read the phrase from the Preamble of the Constitution to "ensure domestic tranquility" I told children this meant "to keep our home peaceful." To check for understanding, I asked the children "what or who keeps your homes peaceful" many of them replied that their moms kept their homes peaceful. However, Iza decided to share with me who doesn't make her home peaceful. Iza, is a first grader and shared that her uncle and cousins make her life very hectic (her words) and that she didn't like them living with her. (Quintero, 2015)

She clearly was encouraging the children to use primary source documentation of the Preamble to the US Constitution and relate it to their own lives at their own level of understanding.

Also, stories problematize some aspects of deficit conceptions of children and families and the resulting learning experiences for them (Hérnandez-Ávila and Anzaldúa, 2010; Nelson, 2009; Quintero and Rummel, 2014). These conceptions of children and families influence the institutional systems, the pedagogies, and daily life realities of all learners. This is especially true for learners who are immigrants and those who are currently migrating through uncertain global landscapes. Stories in an integrated curriculum provide for inclusion of positive aspects of unfamiliar cultures and lived experience so the information can be respected and learned from—without being framed in a deficit model. Stories from my work reveal patterns of findings that provide information for educators in a world of changing demographics.

However, we still see in classrooms the dominant discourse around language learning is from a deficit perspective couched in the outcome of "achievement gaps." The need for counter-narrative, or alternative stories, arises from the dominant narrative, about certain people and who they are (Moss, 2019). Dominant narratives perpetuate one way of telling a story and marginalizing all other stories. A third space to share each other's stories is a way to encourage an important counter-narrative. The use of story supported by integrated curriculum supports the possibility of counter-narrative becoming a foundation for learning and for allowing children (and student teachers) to use their assets in the learning endeavor.

The hope is that this work in the United States with student teachers and children can connect to broader work with world migration. It can set the stage for broader and more inclusive cultural understanding, and for a more open realm of what education can mean for communities. We have urgent needs for these types of collaborations.

6.7 Student Teachers Preparing to Work with Migrating Families and Children

So, by early childhood student teachers studying first the strengths and interests of children and families and then collaborating with the children and families to develop their curriculum designs, they seem to be more well equipped to deal with our current turmoil.

In our collective reality in 2020, we are reeling from drastic political stories of war, displacement, trauma, migration, and stories of decades of sexual assault and abuse. Whatever stories one chooses to believe, the multilayered transactions in today's world influence our children's stories, their language, and even their play. In California, a 4-year-old girl recently told her preschool student teacher: "*La migra took my dad. I'm leaving soon to be with my dad. Mom said."* (A. Quintanilla[1], personal communication, 2017).

To be with ones we love, to give and receive stories, and to make memories in multiple languages is the synergy that may be our main hope for survival. With the intentional consideration of family history, multigenerational knowledge, and experiences with critical conceptions of place in contexts of vulnerability we began to consider and learn from the construct of matters of concern (Latour, 2004) or the construct of Conocimiento[2] (Anzaldua), or constructs that have guided millions of families all over the world.

With all this in mind in 2017, while teaching and working with the early childhood student teachers, while we feverishly tried to counter the anti-immigrant proselytization of our President and many people about the need for a wall between the United States and Mexico, a Muslim Ban, and other horrors (*before* we knew the government was putting families and children in detention centers and cages all over the country), I heard an interview with author Dave Eggers about his new children's book *Her Right Foot* (WBUR, 2017). He talked about this book idea's inception occurring as he and his children were visiting the Statue of Liberty. He said he'd seen images of the statue his whole life, but "…never had noticed until we were up close that she's in mid-stride, and that she seems to be walking and walking with great purpose out to the sea. And I thought, 'Well, that's gotta mean something.'".

And he went on to explain, especially with the hateful rhetoric about immigrants escalating that it might be an opportunity to remind ourselves who we are as a country and the role immigration plays. He said he felt that a statue that's walking out to sea might symbolize a welcome rather than a prohibition. I regularly reminded our students of Eggar's words.

> ...it's not like the United States of America is done, and we have settled exactly who we are forever. We are an ongoing experiment in democracy and in welcome, in welcoming the oppressed, welcoming the needy, welcoming people that want a better opportunity. And the

[1] Names changed to protect privacy.

[2] "…an overarching theory of consciousness…all dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, lived experiences…" (Hérnandez-Ávila and Anzaldúa, 2010, p. 177).

> fact that she is on the move, I think, is perfectly symbolic of that. She's not standing still. (WBUR, 2017)

As we prepare to support newcomers who've joined our communities in a new land and most likely a new language, we see more evolving studies of strength, struggle, and wisdom. What are our responsibilities? Are we confident in using our "own two hands" (Harper, 2017) to initiate a better more inclusive "new normal?" What work are you/we doing right now that makes a difference, right now? What work and wisdom do the newcomers you work *with* right now bring with them? What do you see, hear, and witness that shows the importance of this work?

More specifically, in terms of Early Childhood Leadership, we can

- Emphasize influence of family histories, home languages, and sources of knowledge entangled by migration
- Consistently question and re-weave theory and practice
- Disrupt curriculum and assessment through story
- Name horror and inhumanity/maintaining hope and resilience
- Demand to participate in collaborations of policy and practice
- Acknowledge a third reimagined research space is created as marginalized people and children participate and share stories of their past lived experiences and experiences resulting from migration.

We have seen examples of intergenerational, bilingual family literacy giving us inspiration for and collaborative possibilities for our work. We have seen graduate students in education bringing their varied areas of study taking risks to create new possibilities for learning in collaboration with migrating families and students. We have seen student teachers working with multiple contexts of children and families becoming leaders. In what ways can we use our learnings to help us contribute to a better world of families caught up in world migrations, justice for all world citizens as seen through the Black Lives Matter movement, and the terror of a world health pandemic?

I go back to an excerpt from a folktale I always use in my teaching. For me, it reflects the wisdom of Indigenous people in many parts of the world as they have learned to trust their truths and maintain their struggles against oppression. In *The Story of Questions,* Subcomandante Marcos (leader of the Zapatista rebels in southern Mexico) listens to elder Antonio, telling a story about Zapata, who was of Indigenous ancestry and led the Mexican Revolution. Antonio says, "But it is also not about Zapata. It is about what shall happen. It is about what shall be done (Ortiz, 2001, p. 51)." Antonio explains:

> This is how the true men and women learned that questions are for walking, not for just standing around and doing nothing. And since then, when true men and women want to walk, they ask questions. When they want to arrive, they take leave. And when they want to leave, they say hello. They are never still. (Ortiz, 2001, p. 51)

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Chapter 7
Storying Dreaming and Learning

Elizabeth P. Quintero

Abstract We are responsible for dreaming together, learning and teaching with all learners, especially for newcomers including asylum-seeking families, refugees, and immigrants. How do we support the education of children whose families have migrated from all over the world in this era's combined crises? We promote stories as an effective way to honor, understand, and learn from people who have different family histories and different experiences from ourselves. We believe that through storying we can support all children's learning. Through story, our brains and hearts have "license" to work together to make sense. This meaning can be associated with social and emotional aspects of life, with cognitive and knowledge-building learning, or can open spaces for art to express things that languages cannot. Children are experts at combining factual reality and fantasy as they try to make sense of their worlds. I use the metaphor of a circle in which children are the throughlines as we guide each other to "dream together" through storying about the interrelationship of life and learning. And while the work of scholars, activists, and authors, supports the circles like strong spiderwebs, the children's voices make the music of the meaning. In this discussion of theorists, activists, artists, and other adults, children appear and on the scenes as experts in a metaphorical way of hiding and seeking.

DREAMING TOGETHER	SOÑADO JUNTOS
a dream	un sueño
we dream	los soñamos
alone	solos
reality	la realidad
we dream	nos soñamos
together	juntos

(Alarcón, 2005, p. 29)

We are urgently responsible for dreaming together to make a better world for learning and teaching—especially for our newcomers including asylum-seeking families, refugees, and immigrants. My family and friends know that even in informal gatherings, my "stories" come from learners of all ages and all backgrounds who dream alone and dream together.

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I collect memories seen in the eyes and gestures of a 4-year-old, originally from Mexico, in a recent conversation about moving from one place to another (*We have to wait to move. My mom says we can't move until my dad gets out of jail or he won't know where to find us.).* And a few years ago, in Italy, I met a Nigerian woman who had been trafficked and had escaped from a jail in Libya. After escaping and literally running to the seacoast and jumping into a flimsy rubber boat, she had to swim to the Italian shore when the rubber raft sank (*It's never easy, she told me*). An unaccompanied minor seeking asylum in the UK a decade ago (*The normal people of Sudan are seeking peace*) taught us much through his music. Wherever we live and however we survive, we all participate in the community of educating children.

How do we support the education of children, especially children whose families have migrated from all over the world in this era's combined crises? In spite of divisions and despair, over the years through the wisdom of generations of learners I've met, I see hope when we listen to each other—most often through stories and art. In this book, we promote stories as an effective way to honor, understand, and learn from people who have different family histories and different experiences from ourselves on many levels.

Revisiting our research questions mentioned in Chap. 1 of this book, the two most elaborated upon through data in this chapter are:

- How can we focus on the importance of people telling their own stories (reading the world) in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society?
- How can we place these complicated findings into practical and hopeful programs?

Stories are supported by language, by history, by myths and folk tales, and by imagination. Translation of stories is not always perfect, to be sure, and this is more dire and consequential within contexts of exploitation, colonialism, war, and oppression. Still, there are multiple ways that storying is transformative while also highlighting the joyfulness of the work in its making. As with most transformations, there is a complicated mix of struggle, even trauma, and uncertainty along with the joy.

Whether I am thinking about story in terms of theory, advocacy, policy, or curriculum, my "go to" for exploring practical applications of story in teaching and learning is a combination of children's literature and the arts. Our research clearly is grounded reconceptualizations of postmodern and narrative theoretical influences (Freire, 1985; Gruenewald, 2003; Josselson, 2006; Parnell, 2012; Parnell & Iorio, 2016). Yet, before I begin talking about practical applications, I want to stress the need for everyone to understand the *why* we should and can dream together—even if it does look and seem unusual.

7.1 Guides for Storying: Children, Scholars, Authors, and Activists

So, how do we begin the risk-taking endeavor to be brave about supporting children's learning? In what ways can we learn from and with stories from children and families who have been in situations of migration and all the challenges that bring? In this chapter, I carry on with the idea that through storying we can support children's learning. This can be done in many different ways. Through stories, we make emergent meaning slowly over time. Through story, our brains and hearts have "license" to work together to make sense. This meaning can be associated with social and emotional aspects of life, with cognitive and knowledge-building learning, or can open spaces for art to express things that language cannot. And stories don't require that we categorize and separate the mind from the heart. Stories may be the ultimate methodology for authentic, participatory learning.

Children are often the experts at combining factual reality and a version of fantasy that they contrive as they try to make sense of their worlds (Really, is there a monster under my bed? Really, is Santa Claus Black or White or a woman?). We can support and promote this learning without abandoning standards and more traditional objectives. Two high school teachers interviewed by National Public Radio (Garcia-Navarro, 2021) during the COVID pandemic in the United States were adamant about their decisions to change their guidelines and rubrics to include learning experiences that were truly useful to students' lives. And they were vocal about maintaining the academic rigor of their teaching—even increasing the rigor. Stories can be a useful framework that is inclusive of history and language, cultural priorities, myths, folktales and even some imaginative elaboration. And when stories have personal connections, learners are adamant about excellence and communication of meaning.

Children's author, Mac Barnett, in a TED Talk, quotes Pablo Picasso:

> We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth or at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies. (Barnett, 2014)

In terms of relating this thought to his own approach to children's literature, Barnett believes art gives us access to a space between truth and lies that he interprets as wonder. He explains that "It's what Coleridge called the willing suspension of disbelief or poetic faith, for those moments where a story, no matter how strange, has some semblance of the truth, and then you're able to believe it" (Barnett, 2014). He believes, and I concur, that it isn't only children who have this ability. Adults do too and we often get there when we share stories in a variety of ways. Barnett reminds us that when people go to London and they visit Baker Street to see Sherlock Holmes' apartment, even though 221B is just a number that was painted on a building they are between the fuzzy lines of fact and fantasy. We all know the characters in the stories aren't real, but we have real feelings about them and feel like we know them.

Mac Barnett has his own family history to tell. He grew up with a single mother, a nurse, who when he was a child scoured thrift stores, garage sales, and other places

to bring him the picture books and storybooks he devoured. I don't know much about his family story, but I do know that the variety of children and families I have worked with over the years have certainly resonated with his ideas about wonder, joy, puzzles that need solving, and "make believe".

7.2 Children Combining Fantasy, Reality, People, and Other-Than-Humans in Stories

Later in this chapter, we hear from an Anishinabe elementary school teacher who explains the campfire of his family as a circle of belonging when he was a child. Then as an adult and a teacher he extended his campfire of belonging to include children of many cultures, backgrounds, and genders (Wazouko, 1997). The world is a circle, as he sees it, and he reminded us of Black Elk's words:

> You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be round…The, wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. (Allen, 1991, p.51)

I see the metaphor of a circle in which children are the throughlines as we guide each other to "dream together" through storying. I know the term throughline has taken on a variety of meanings. I propose to use it in this case as "connection" whether the connection takes the form of a circle, or of multiple straight lines with an intersection point, or even as order in apparent experiential randomness as Lorenz (Gleick, 1987) saw in the Lorenz Butterfly of chaos theory. The interrelationship of life and teaching is a continum that loops around forever. Children can *be* this and *do* this naturally. This makes it difficult to organize the presentation of the data, but this circle of dreaming is based upon trust, interactions, relationships, communication, and love among participants as we have been promoting throughout this book. And while the work of the scholars, activists, authors, and activists support the circles like strong spiderwebs, the children's voices make the music of the meaning. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, a remarkable scholar, Barad (2014) interweaves stories within different times, and she explains,

> This paper starts out in the middle by going forward to the past-not in order to recount what once was, but by way of re-turning, turning it over and over again, tasting the rich soil from which ideas spring, and opening up again to the uncountable gifts given that still give, to proceed to the place from which we never left/leave. (pp. 168)

This re-turning of children, adult teachers, families, and activists as our guides ties the stories and intentionality of our sharing them together.

7.2.1 Imagination and Re-turning

You won't be surprised to see in my discussion of theorists, activists, artists, and other adults, that children "re-turn" in a metaphorical way of hiding and seeking, to appear and on the scenes as experts. Mac Barnett, children's literature author mentioned above, strives for this wonder as he creates stories for children and he shows us how children can be our guides in this work. In his first book, *Billy Twitters and His Blue Whale Problem* (Barnett, 2009), he told a story about a boy who gets a blue whale as a pet but it almost ruins his life. The boy lives in San Francisco—a very tough city to own a blue whale in. There are a lot of hills, and other challenges. The story is amusing and it was augmented by an ad that offered a free 30-day risk-free trial for a blue whale. The ad said you can just send in a self-addressed stamped envelope and they would send you a whale. And kids did write in.

One letter said, "Dear people, I bet you 10 bucks you won't send me a blue whale. Eliot Gannon (age 6)" (Barnett, 2014). What Eliot and the other children who sent these letters got back was a letter in very small print from a Norwegian law firm—that said that due to a change in customs laws, their whale has been held up in Norway, but the letter finished by saying that the whale would love to hear from you. The whale had a phone number and the children were invited to call and leave the whale a message. And the children received a picture of their whale too. In the TED talk (Barnett, 2014), Barnett showed a picture of Randolph the Whale, that belongs to a boy named Nico who was one of the first children to ever call in. In the TED talk, Barnett played some of Nico's actual voice messages. The first message from Nico said,

> Hello, Randolph, this is Nico. I haven't talked to you for a long time, but I talked to you on Saturday or Sunday, yeah, Saturday or Sunday, so now I'm calling you again to say hello and I wonder what you're doing right now, and I'm going to probably call you again tomorrow or today, so I'll talk to you later. Bye. (Barnett, 2014)

Matt reported that Nico called back that day again. And by the time of the TED talk, Nico had left over 25 messages for Randolph over 4 years. He played one more message from Nico during the TED Talk. This was the Christmas message from Nico.

> Hi, Randolph, sorry I haven't talked to you in a long time. It's just that I've been so busy because school started, as you might not know, probably, since you're a whale, you don't know, and I'm calling you to just say, to wish you a merry Christmas. So have a nice Christmas, and bye-bye, Randolph. Goodbye. (Barnett, 2014)

Is this fantasy giving children some factual opportunities to connect through telephone messaging? I would argue that it does.

When asked about what meaning he hopes those who read his books receive, Barnett (2021) answers,

> What I'm most excited about is what the kid or adult brings to the books themselves. I put my thoughts out as best I can with a story, but it doesn't become art until a child on the

> other end brings their intelligence and experience to make their own interpretation. I want my books to leave plenty of room for kids to come in and figure out what to take from the story. This conversation between the book and reader is what is most exciting to me as a writer and reader myself. (The Windward School, 2021)

Barnett (Manley, 2019) acknowledges that his tutoring experiences were his first hint that kids are smarter, braver readers than adults are. He maintains that "Kids will ask you the real questions." And he goes on to say, "I like books that end with questions, whether it be with a question or implied questions," Mac says. "I don't have any moral that I am interested inscribing on a kid's brain." (Manley, 2019).

This approach is especially important for students and readers who have migration experiences and multiple histories and who use multiple languages. This sounds strange as a way to discuss learning for our children. But, we have guides who through their history and courage show us storying is full of potential. A brief look at some children guiding us with their student teachers supporting them illustrates these ideas. Children combine pretend, imagination, and learning as a part of their schooling. A teacher education student working with 4-year olds in preschool wrote:

> This week at the preschool I was able to observe an example of a collaborative, imaginative story between the teacher and the students. It was during snack time when the children were all sitting at a table together eating. The teacher started by saying, "Let's make up a story. I'll start." She then said, "Once upon a time there was a spooky story…" Eduardo[1] continued by saying, "About ninja turtles and skeletons". Another child, Sophia, said, "The ninja turtles are good". The teacher then said, "And they ate…" Eduardo went on to say, "Milk and pizza!". Another child named Callie added, "And then the skeleton saw cats and dogs". Sophia said, "And they got attacked and then Maleficent came and was looking for treasure." The teacher added, "Maleficent has power and says, "abra ca dabra!" Eduardo finished the story by saying, "Maleficent stole the cats and dog's gold on an island".

The student teacher also noted that this example supported some of her own learning of going back to past teacher guides in her university literacy class.

> I thought this story was interesting to observe because the teacher was able to work together with different children in creating a spooky story. I remember in class we studied Sylvia Ashton Warner's (1986) work with Maori children in New Zealand which found that children were fascinated with and interested in stories that are scary. The children seemed to have really enjoyed it as they created all the different things they thought of, such as ninja turtles and Maleficent.

Throughout the analysis of findings in all categories of our research about storying over the past projects, there have been vivid illustrations of family history, critical perspectives of place, and conocimiento theory (Anzaldúa, 2002), culture, language, and disruption of child development theory (Nelson, 2009) that we had been concurrently studying in university coursework. These theorists guide us to listen to and believe in our children's guides.

Nelson's (2009) research provides alternatives to the traditional developmental theory that focuses on presumed innate abilities and the assumptions of child and adult

[1] All names changed to protect privacy.

forms of cognition and static stages of development. We have discussed Nelson's work throughout this book, and I do so again here intentionally. Her framework offers an account of social, cognitive, and linguistic development in the first 5 years of life. She argues, differently from more traditional child development foundational theory, that children be seen as members of a community of minds, striving not only to make sense, but also to share meanings with others. To reiterate Nelson's (2009) contribution to our work, we note that she describes herself as a contextual functionalist, and she researches meaning-making and memory in children. She stresses that children are "… components of an integrated system…" (p. 186) and she maintains, "…stories bear directly on the problems of different minds, different selves, and different times that are central to the child's emerging understanding of the world…" (p. 172). At the same time, this individual meaning-making is integrated into the contextual world of people, places, and events in children's lives.

Another child guide working with a student teacher in California showed the complexity of Nelson's ideas about stories, meaning making, and children's emerging understanding of their worlds. There are aspects of games, art, children's stories, and some unvoiced trauma. A few years ago, we were guided by Nina, age 5, and her student teacher, Eva. Critical conceptions of Place in terms of lived experiences, family dynamics, situations with a child living in two households, affecting school contexts arose also for Eva, Nina's student teacher. She was preparing a felt storyboard in a kindergarten classroom and she noted that one child, Nina, came in with a perplexed look on her face as she saw that the felt storyboard was being prepared. Then, when it was time for children to come together, Nina chose a spot in the front row and sat there with a curious look on her face.

As Eva began to tell the children who hurried over to watch her that she had two little mice friends that were hiding behind two of the multicolored houses, Nina exclaimed, "I know this game! We used to play it at my old school." Eva then explained the rules to the "game" and the group of children listened intently. The game involved different colored felt houses placed on the felt board and two mice figures that were hidden behind two of the houses. A song about colors often introduces the game, and then children are encouraged to guess which houses the mice are behind. An illustrated storybook follows and includes a story about why the mouse was hiding.

Nina smiled as she sang the accompanying song with the other children and shot her hand in the air to guess what color house the mouse was behind. When it was her turn to guess she chose purple and grinned broadly when she saw that one mouse was behind it. Eva then brought out the book *Mouse Paint* (Walsh, 1995) and Nina blurted out, "I love this book! I have it at Mommy's house". When Eva finished reading the storybook she led a discussion comparing and contrasting the storybook with the felt board game.

Nina scrunched up her nose and shook her head when a boy said that the "Little Mouse" game was not a story. Eva asked Nina if she disagreed and she nodded yes, and remarked, "It (the game/story) shows us how the two little mice are hiding behind two houses and we found out one was in the purple house and one was in

the brown house. It has a beginning, something happens, and then there is an end." Other children nodded their heads in agreement that it is a story and Nina smiled.

The example here documents a complex incident that evolved as Eva, the student teacher, learned more about the family situation of the child, Nina, and how this situation is one that entangles place in terms of a child living in two different family homes with an unpredictable pattern and lack of routine (between her mother's home and her father's home). This was complicated by her transferring to a new school. In the 3 months since school had begun during family-focused activities and storybooks in the class, Nina had never mentioned any family members—this was the first time. And through this story activity, Nina showed interest and confidence interacting with her peers (which hadn't happened earlier in the months since school had begun). The school social worker had mentioned to the kindergarten teacher and the student teacher that the child's family life "is complicated." Eva reported that Nina often seemed disengaged in school, but the story of the mice and the fact that she enthusiastically shared how she loved reading the story at her mother's house was poignant.

Nelson's theory supports our participants, and many families around the world, in transition from a homeland, who proudly carry their roots to a variety of contexts. The contextual worlds of people, places, and events are sometimes a complicated mix of struggle, fear, and pain along with being close with loved ones, new friends, and sometimes places to play. The photojournalists and activists during what has become a world migration tragedy have brought us touching, tragic, beautiful and horrible stories from around the world that began to be recognized internationally about 2015. These activists show children from different countries with different languages playing together as they continue their work of trying to make sense of their worlds in refugee camps.

7.2.2 Re-turning: Teachers' Life Experiences as Children Influencing Them as Teachers

Years ago, in an interview study of activist teachers striving for inclusion of and respect for all children and families, we found that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a relationship between living a life story and telling a life story. This telling a life story is often done in the language of metaphor. Metaphor often provides the possibility of communicating what cannot be expressed literally. Maxine Greene (1992) taught us that we feel less powerless when we can name and explain. The life metaphors of the teachers who were interviewed seemed to provide a mechanism for "remything." We saw the teachers as involved in midwifing new mythologies through transformations in their classrooms (Rummel & Quintero, 1997). This recreation happened during the experiences of the family histories and the critical reading and thinking the teachers engaged in as children, adults, and professionals. We asked over 50 teachers to participate in this study. To identify

the participants, we used Casey's (1993) concept of teacher as "artisan," implying the possibility of changing the world through work. These teacher–artisans create curricula, which weave their knowledge with the needs and interests of their students. Their commitment to students was part of the fabric of their total lives. In most cases, they created or participated in organizations that influence larger systems of school or society. We included teachers from a wide spectrum of racial, class, and gender backgrounds who teach in a variety of contexts.

The teachers in this interview study (Rummel & Quintero, 1997) talked a lot about how they valued the passing down of stories from their parents and grandparents. One teacher talked about her West Indian grandmother passing on teachings through folk tales. One teacher was the daughter of an educator who read and talked about works of James Baldwin and Richard Wright, but this teacher noted that as a child there were almost no children's books in her childhood with people of color.

An elementary school teacher who is Anishinabe, and who participated in the study, explained to us in an interview:

> Before we start I would like to say that much of the literacy during my youth was done orally. I remember some of the stories. Most of the stories were passed down from grandfather to grandfather. Mostly animal stories, stories of valor, stories of helping each other. … We would gather around a campfire, and the eldest would talk, a lot of times it was the grandmother. We all sat close to the fire nobody talked, not even babies cried. This is where a lot of the learning about my culture took place. (Wazouko in Rummel & Quintero, 1997, 105–112.)

Wazouko has lived experiences showing contrasts. He uses his gift of vision and expresses himself through his work with children. He sees the center of his world as his place at the circle of the campfire. He doesn't dwell on the bad; he tells his story through the art of interacting with the students.

Another of the participants, a middle school teacher and fiction writer in St. Paul, Minnesota, showed us a lively mix of the art of writing, of people-watching, activism, and teaching. This teacher's belief in imagination as a transforming act guided his writing and also fostered his belief in his students.

> I think that part of what you need to do to be a good teacher is to be able to imagine the lives of your students and to respond compassionately to that and through that compassionate response make a decision that they are worthwhile and that they are bringing something to the experience and that you as the teacher have an important role in shaping them. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p.59)

Another of the teachers who grew up in a community of farmworkers as a child in Texas, realized:

> We didn't have any heroes to identify with…We had one person, General Zaragoza. The reason that we identify with him is because he was born in an area of south Texas, which is now Goldeanne, and he was the one that won the final battle. The Mexicans didn't want us because we were Chicanos, and the Americans didn't want us because they think we're Mexican. So we made this guy our hero. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p.190)

On a different autobiographical note, the same teacher spoke about his family context, which is important to add to our knowledge and perspective about the strengths of families in migrant communities. He explained,

> We were so many. There wasn't a big house, so there wasn't a lot of space. I would read outside. I wasn't the only one. There were two little ones that I read with. We would play school. And I would read inside even though my brothers and sisters would look at me and wonder, "What is he doing?" Well, reading. Or if I had a project to work on for school I would practice a speech or a presentation with them, they couldn't understand. They would laugh…They didn't understand. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p. 209)

The same teacher above also told us about his memories of working in the farm fields with his family,

> Everything was very positive. Your father is there; your mother is there, and your brothers and sisters are there too. You are all working together and your father is saying good things all day, every day for a long time. I didn't know at that time, but it was a close family unit. They talk about supporting a family now with two incomes. The migrant families--we were doing that long ago. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p. 210)

Another teacher, who was particularly influenced by Maya Angelou offered her opinion in terms of how artists and writers should respond to some political groups.

> The conservative right has decided that artists are apart from the people. That's ridiculous! I mean, at our best, the writer, painter, architect, actor, dancer, folksinger—we *are* the people. We come *out* of the people and remain *in* the people. What we ought to be doing is singing in the parks, talking to children going to gatherings of parents, doing whatever it is we do—dancing, reading poetry, performing—all the time, so that people know, "These artists are my people—you can't kill them, you can't stop them" (Kelley, 1995, p. 23).

7.3 Current Stories Developing at the Border in the United States

Fast forward, to what the American Association of Pediatrics calls the "torture" and "child abuse" (Soboroff, 2020) inflicted upon children separated from their parents in detention centers around the United States during the past 4 years. In 2017, we began to see children in ICE detention centers in the United States drew poignant pictures about themselves and their new friends in cold "cages" and covering themselves with "aluminum foil" blankets.

We realize, and tremble about, the meaning-making terrified children are experiencing. It is useful to revisit this social understanding between the self and others identified by Nelson suggests a third space for education and human interactions and connects directly to the theoretical stance of Gloria Anzaldúa. To reiterate, Anzaldúa's Conocimiento Theory is described as "…an overarching theory of consciousness…all dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, lived experiences…" (Hérnandez-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2010, p. 177). Both Nelson's (2009) approach and

Anzaldúa's theory of conocimiento relate to personal history, meaning-making within the contexts of self, family history, and lived experience. The on-going storying and re-storying in our findings illustrate this.

In Conocimiento theory, Anzaldúa highlights transformative elements of her theories of Mestizo consciousness and la facultad (mental ability). "Like mestizo consciousness, conocimiento represents a non-binary, connectionist mode of thinking; like la facultad, conocimiento often unfolds within oppressive and entails a deepening of perception" (Keating, 2009, p. 320). Durham (2012), a scholar of Anzaldúa's work, maintains, "Anzaldúa's epistemological project requires active participation on many fronts" (p. 183).

Anzaldúa also participated and created children's books about the world of curanderas (healers), la migra (ICE), and children, their friends and their families doing their best to survive. *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado.* Anzaldúa (1995) is a story of fiction that contains many truths that children understand. The two children featured are from different sides of the Rio Grande River. They become friends, negotiate bullies, hide from la migra, learn from a curandera about how to make healing salves from plants. They make sense of their world and reflect transformative elements of conocimiento theory.

In addition, Anzaldúa wrote a children's book based on the folktale about La Llorona, a folktale about a ghost woman that some believe was created to scare young children from not venturing too far from the safety of their homes and caregivers. Anzaldúa reported to have wondered even as a child, whether there was another side to this scary ghost woman. So, she created *Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y La Llorona,* that tells the story of a young girl who was discovering things and truths in her life that were hidden. She discovered a positive, female, Indian side of La Llorona (Anzaldúa, 1995).

Another artist guide is the late poet Francisco X. Alarcón who explained the experiences of multinational, multilingual learners through his poetry. He was born in Los Angeles, California, and he considered himself "bi-national." His entire life he spent time in both Mexico and the United States with extended family, friends, and colleagues. Songs and stories he heard from his grandmother, as well as experiences he had growing up, inspired his poetry. This chapter opened with one of his last poetry contributions about our "dreaming together" (Alarcón, 2005). He always wrote and presented his poetry in both Spanish and English. This approach to learning, life, loved ones and strife is reflected in participant contributions to much of our research.

From National Public Radio, we learn about new groups of Latinx writers, editors, and literary agents who are providing more storying and art for all of us (del Barco, 2020). One group is Las Musas/The Muses and supports Latina writers with mentorships and webinars. Writer and activist Aida Salazar is one of the founders of Las Musas. Salazar explains,

> We decided to create this collective that would help amplify each other's work, and we didn't want to be pitted against each other. That happens in many publishing houses. They'll say, well, we've got that one Latina author, so therefore, we don't need another. We know that we have to build each other up. We know that there's plenty of room at the table and that, in

> some instances, we're ready to create our very own table if they don't want to invite us. (del Barco, 2020)

Salazar's second book, *Land of the Cranes* (2020), is a poetic account told by a fictional 9-year girl, Betita, writing from a detention center. Salazar wrote the book to protest immigrant roundups, and she created the stories based on her own family's experiences years ago that reflect the tragic situation that persists to this day.

Aida Salazar (2020) ends her heart-wrenching and gloriously hopeful book in a letter to the reader in her own voice. She says,

> Thank you for taking the journey with Betita. May you, like her, search to find light in your darkest hour, or as her Papi says, "find sweetness in your struggle." May you see that as a child, like Betita, you have the power to write, to draw, to speak up against and shut down the forces that seek to make migrants criminals. (p. 245)

Also, to make the previous point about combining poetry, literature, and factual truths, at the end of her Acknowledgements for *Land of the Cranes* (Salazar, 2020, p. 247), Salazar says, "My most heartbroken love for the seven children she knew through journalists and activists…".

> …who lost their young lives while in immigration custody and to the unnamed migrant children who have also died while incarcerated or while crossing the border, to those separated from their parents, to those who have been or remain incarcerated and endure(d) the brutality of that experience. You matter, and I am so sorry. (Salazar, 2020, p. 247).

7.4 Becoming Advocates for Imagination and New Ways of Making Meaning

And going back 400 years in history in the United States and re-turning, we have a capable, brave guide in our present time for our thinking about truth and lies, and story and art as a medium for our understanding and our advocacy. Nikole Hannah-Jones compiles historical stories through The 1619 Project. She guides us back to August of 1619, when the first enslaved Africans landed on American shores. Last year Ms. Hannah-Jones created the project with the New York Times and launched The 1619 Project with the intention of reframing the American narrative around slavery 400 years after that first arrival. In her introductory essay for which she recently won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary, she explained in an interview:

> You know, I relied very heavily on the work of historians for this. This essay was about democracy and the unparalleled role that black Americans have played almost always without getting credit and actually creating the democracy that we have and making those glorious words of the declaration actually true for all Americans. (Shapiro, 2020)

The interviewer asked her to explain how writing the introduction for the project helped her better understand her own family. He asked her about a flag she mentioned that her father flew outside their home when she was a child. She elaborated,

> There's a part in that opening where I say, you know, as a child, you think you know so much when, in fact, you understand so little and that I finally understood why my dad flew this flag that, when I was young, used to deeply embarrass me. And people ask me all the time, well, how - you know, when did you come to that realization? … I truly never really got my father's patriotism until I was immersed for weeks upon weeks reading about black people's really dogged patriotism and dogged belief in a country that has never treated us as full citizens. And thinking about what that meant allowed me, as a 42-year-old woman, to finally understand where my father was coming from, which is kind of miraculous. (A. Shapiro, 2020)

In the collection of essays and literary works observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery documents the prevailing narrative taught in schools is that Black Americans' history begins with enslavement and they had contributed little to the founding of this nation. Instead, Hannah-Jones (2019) writes, "it is we who have been the perfecters of this democracy". She guides us to think about how patriotism is actually truly believing in ideals of equality and our responsibility to challenge our country and to be honest about our country. Black Americans certainly can claim "the type of patriotism that has been built through the blood sacrifice of black Americans and so many other marginalized people" (Hannah-Jones, 2019).

Another activist historian guides us through the rich past experiences of African American teachers in an oral history project to influence support for teachers of the present and their students. Derrick Alridge is founder, director, and principal investigator of Teachers in the Movement, an oral history project. Alridge initiated in 2018 a program for supporting teachers' increasing racial, religious, and ethnic inclusion for students from kindergarten to college. In a virtual presentation for Oklahoma State University (2021) titled *Teachers as Intellectuals: Pedagogy, Activism and Freedom,* he introduced the ancient principle of Sankofa. This idea is based on looking back and looking forward. The word Sankofa is from the Akan Tribe in Ghana.

> The literal translation of the word is *"it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."* The word is derived from the words:
>
> SAN (return),
> KO (go),
> FA (look, seek and take). The sankofa symbolizes the Akan people's quest for knowledge with the implication that the quest is based on critical examination, and intelligent and patient investigation. (Berea College, n.d.)

Another activist and author guide who is important to this discussion is Dave Eggers. We mentioned his children's book based on the Statue of Liberty, *Her Right Foot* (2017) in Chapter 6. He believes we should remind children (and all of us) that the Statue of Liberty is not a static thing that stood for the country a century ago, but she stands for it now and is walking, is striding out to sea to welcome the next wave of immigrants (Eggers, 2017).

He has another important book for our work with young learners, *What Can a Citizen Do?* (2018). This picture book, illustrated by Shawn Harris, shows that "a kid" is a citizen, a bear is a citizen, and no act of caring and love is too small or insignificant to be important. Eggers is an inspiring literary activist and often focuses

on personal stories in his nonfiction, adult fiction, and children's books. He explains in an interview with the Guardian, "Any time you're cynical about the world, meet a first-generation kid who writes about what she's grateful for." His belief in individual and collective purpose is unwavering. "On this block," he says, "I could introduce you to nine people whose stories would make interesting books … If you're listening, the stories are never-ending." (Laity, 2018).

Our qualitative work presents examples of information about and analysis of stories of children and the teachers and student teachers working with them. Stories of fact and imagination have been shared. As explained earlier, our work in southern California had long valued the dynamics of story–personal stories, imaginary stories, historical stories, and other types of story—that always combined a mosaic of meaning that children were constructing from their lived experiences and from fantasy. Murris (2016) presents a pedagogy that disrupts a "structural and systemic discrimination of children, particularly as knowers …" (p.35). She proposes education practices in which "…all earth dwellers are mutually entangled and always becoming, always intra-acting with everything else….Individuals materialize and come into being through relationships; and so does meaning" (Murris, 2016, p. xi). Children with imaginative expertise are experts at intra-acting.

We are reminded by Thomas Peacock (2002) that we have guides in our spiritual and omnipresent ancestors in our Indigenous histories. He explains that Anishinabe (Ojibwe) people tell many stories about Waynabozho, a half spirit, half human. Waynabozho stories are often used to explain life to young children. Why is it dogs are always sniffing? Why do birch trees have black marks? These and many other questions are answered by Waynabozho stories.

Todd (2016) illustrates, highlights, and brings front and center to the research demands of today, the eons of wisdom passed to us from Indigenous scholars. She reminds us that we unconsciously avoid engaging with contemporary Indigenous scholars and thinkers while we engage instead with decades old ethnographic texts or 200-year-old philosophical tomes. She warns,

> What I am critiquing here then, really, are the silences. It is not that current trends in the discipline of anthropology or the Euroacademy more broadly are wrong. It is that they do not currently live up to the promises they make. I do think many people making claims regarding the promise of current turns in anthropology have very good intentions. However, these cannot always easily translate into long-term structural change. (Todd, 2016).

This is important advice and the work never ends…the good thing is we have the inspiration of artists and activists, and most importantly in the energy and passion of young children. We continue. Yes, we have many guides to listening, to trusting, to being brave.

One of my current guides is wise beyond my own capabilities and understandings. And I am content to read and listen to few pages of *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Kimmerer, 2013) every night and know I will need to listen and read again and again. Kimmerer (2013) says "Skywoman seems to look me in the eye and ask, in return for this gift of a world on Turtle's back, what will I give in return?" (p. 8).

Kimmerer reminds us, as we dream together with immigrants and people we have yet to meet,

> It is good to remember that the original woman was herself an immigrant. She fell a long way from her home in the Skyworld, leaving behind all who knew her and who held her dear. She could never go back. Since 1492, most here are immigrants as well, perhaps arriving on Ellis Island without even knowing that Turtle Island rested beneath their feet. Some of my ancestors are Skywoman's people, and I belong to them. Some of my ancestors were the newer kind of immigrants too: a French fur trader, an Irish carpenter, a Welsh farmer. And here we all are, on Turtle Island, trying to make a home….She (Skywoman) came here with nothing but a handful of seeds and the slimmest of instructions to "use your gifts and dreams for good," the same instructions we all carry. (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 8)

We dream together. And we take wisdom from an Anishinabe woman who advised activists in the Minnesota community where she lived and worked for decades, "I just have to wake up each morning and tell myself that I'm going to do the best I can to make one small change for the better for my people. And I vow not to let society take the sparkle out of my grandchildren's eyes" (Meyers, 1988).

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Chapter 8
Storying Onward

Elizabeth P. Quintero, Larisa Callaway-Cole, and Adria Taha-Resnick

"*The new dawn blooms as we free it.*
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it."
Amanda Gorman (2021)

Abstract What are the possibilities for these stories as we continue onward? We invite the reader to wonder with us about the power these deeply context-embedded stories and human experiences have to shape our responses to both early childhood and higher education. We acknowledge that this work cannot be done alone or in isolation, that storying requires us to engage our elders, our histories, and first-person perspectives. We return to our roots, and go forward, with urgent questions about the conditions of storying and positioning migrant and refugee communities and their voices at the forefront of participatory leadership.

8.1 Amplifying Voices Through Counterstory

These are the stories untold and unheard. No longer. Stories are cracks and fissures in the hardness of the world. They open small spaces of opportunity and the possibility to explore, engage, and fight back.

Documenting counterstories is a way to ensure that the diverse stories of our children and families are told—but these stories must also be heard. Counterstory is particularly important in our culture of alternative facts and fake news. These stories are people's truths. When shifting the focus of counterstories from "matters of fact" to "matters of concern" (Latour, 2004), we begin to draw upon the complexities of meaning-making and contextually driven relationships. Doing so helps to complicate stories about people (Fujimoto, 2013), reinforcing a rich and diverse framework for multiple ways of knowing and being in this world. Knowing one person's story does not lead us to know all people's stories—but instead provides us a window to look in on a reality, an experience, that further expands our understanding of humanity. We reiterate Moss urging us to consider, "…postfoundationalism relativises, because

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there can be no one objectively right answer in a social world of multiple perspectives—but this should not be confused with anything goes…. For we must take responsibility for this process and for our choices… (2019, p.38). Jaramillo's (2012) notion of "looking south" is centered on "how we look south, that is toward and with the subjects and objects of our ethnographic gaze. It is as much about how we position ourselves in the act of looking, as it is the act of looking itself" (Jaramillo, 2012, p, xiii). It is with our work we engage with the act of looking south, sharing Global South stories, in a position of partnership and community.

We have shared the stories of Stella, who sought to understand Santa in her world. We shared the stories of Sarita and Angela and the many ways they care for their children. We shared the story of Araceli whose teaching is influenced by her own culture. Typically, and sadly, we're not going to hear their stories in academia. While the tides continue to change, as we continue to fight, as the world becomes more just, perhaps we will see these stories being told more often by the tellers themselves. We know these stories are gifts and we have made these stories available to be shared. We have spent time connecting these stories to others and to our theoretical and methodological frames. Yet, again, sadly, even though we don't necessarily interpret them, and we want to present their authentic voices, we are not the people who are most important to tell these stories—they are. We struggle with telling other people's stories, at the same time, we want people who are working with children and families to hear these stories, and we want to ensure these get shared. We draw upon Audre Lorde's urging to speak up and speak out when she said "and when we speak we are afraid/ our words will not be heard/ nor welcomed/ but when we are silent we are still afraid/ So it is better to speak" (1978, p. 32). We support and urge meaning-making and shared responsibility with transformation, but we must choose to create space for the giving and receiving of stories in all aspects of life. Stories are ways people speak for themselves.

8.2 Nurturing Relationships

What have we learned about serving all our students and leading and supporting all our educators—especially now after almost a year of school closings and well-intentioned attempts at online instruction? During this year, we have noticed educational researchers asking the questions about children (what they are missing), teaching (how to do it remotely), and in what ways is it different? Our hope is that the research of these scholars continues and asks questions about what we should change in such an open window of opportunity. We hope that educators take the opportunity to reflect on "what was" but move into "what could be." Whether we embrace or struggle to understand the socio-political hold that the government has on early care and education, we must move to continue our work alongside our children, families, and teachers to create favorable outcomes for all.

In Chap. 1, we heard from educators working with children and families who are newcomers to our country from all over the world. So many difficulties and so many

inequities raise their ugly heads. At the same time, 10 or 11 months later, there are a multiplicity of stories of success, tenacity, and hope.

In one tutoring program, student attendance, from kindergarten to high school, was up to the same number for attendance in virtual tutoring as for in-person tutoring previously. The tutoring team and the community provided fresh produce and non-perishable food items for every family in their program for over 9 months. The tutoring team safely delivered tech support, books, groceries, essential items, and more to families (M. Smith, personal communication, 2021).

More hope shines through difficulty as described by two high school teachers from different states and different populations of students (Garcia-Navarro, 2021). Both acknowledged that when coffee shops with Wi-Fi and public libraries with computers and Wi-Fi closed, many students could not participate in school. Some students, when asked about why they turned off their zoom cameras and muted their microphones during class, acknowledged that they were ashamed of their living environments and that there was too much noise from siblings and others living in the same space. Furthermore, when the students were questioned about missing classes, it came out that many of the teenagers were working part-time jobs to help their families and they had to go to work when called, regardless of the school schedules.

But, here's the hopeful part. Both teachers talked about what they personally and professionally learned from their students' stories and their own teacher stories. Both teachers acknowledged making new rubrics for expectations and their dedication to academic rigor in spite of the circumstances. They both articulated their determination to make sure every single lesson and assignment they did was something that students could learn from. They focused on critical thinking and analysis and skills students could take with them throughout life (i.e., no busy work!). And, both teachers realized the importance of personally checking on students regularly. As we've seen from our muses' stories in this book, the relationship of reaching out because we care is an operational necessity and the heart of education—whatever the circumstances.

8.3 Having the Potential for Building Better, Making New

And, as always, I (Elizabeth) am inspired by young children's wisdom and creativity to combine reality and fantasy as they think about a better world for their future. Children do reimagine events for a better world. I keep over my writing desk a framed photograph. On the left is an intentionally blurred picture of a scene from a memorial with flowers, candles, and many protest signs, a few of which have what appear to be photos of people. On the right side is a child's drawing of two tall tower buildings, a sun with a sad face, an airplane under the sun, and a child-written caption, "Turn around and go back to the airport and let those people out!! A nice lady is waiting for you at the airport and she will give you a big kiss."

I purchased the photograph from an art exhibit in October of 2001 at a fundraiser for schools impacted by the September 11th tragedy. Some of my student teachers

were working in schools across the street from the World Trade Center and the student who made the drawing and wrote the commentary was 7-years-old. While we could discuss the less-than-politically correct language about the lady and the kiss, I'd rather point out how the child used her art, her literacy, and her imagination to create a possible different outcome for history. I see this as a hopeful agency.

We have been forced to see through a new lens, a flexible lens, a transformational lens. Using stories with children, families, and early childhood educators brings a light of hope that our profession is constantly growing, and *becoming*. We need to take this and embrace the transformation. As spoken word artist and poet Steve Connell illustrates in his poem *Transform* (2013) "… we know that the caterpillar doesn't just become the butterfly- it is the butterfly waiting to become …but we didn't know it then" and when true transformation happens "…something becomes something it has never been…and ceases to be what it was". I, (Adria) grew up with a father who would often make jokes about how we, my sisters and our families, should all live together on a compound with our parents. I always viewed this as an overprotective father of 4 daughters until I took a trip with my father to Lebanon. We visited what I think were hundreds of family members, across cities and mountain villages. What caught my attention was the family living in the city often had numerous family members in the same building. And the family in the countryside lived in intergenerational connected *manazil*. It was like an awakening when I realized my father was comforted by the ways of his own childhood. It was his story that I didn't know I needed to know. Once I knew…there was a transformation. I could no longer see my father as I did before, I would always now see him also as a child. I would also now see a person who was living away from his home culture and missed it. I became a new daughter. I am the butterfly. As we imagine what can be, we must not hold on to what was…or the transformation cannot be completed.

Storying in higher education allows for a depth of self-reflection that promotes future teachers to embrace and use their stories to inform their teaching practice. As Kolb (2015) describes, self-reflection is a critical component in experiential learning. Further, storying allows reflection that enables a person to examine their context in greater detail (Boud et al., 2013). These reflections allow for future teachers to go beyond the surface and create a depth of knowledge. We need to embrace the fact that early childhood teachers, like all educators, are worthy and able to reimagine their work through a transformative lens. We need to give our marginalized students the power and agency to know they have respected and useful contributions to early childhood.

How do we support the next generation—of teachers, families, and children—in this context? Over the years through the wisdom of generations of learners we've met, there is hope when we listen to each other—often through stories and art. But aren't stories a distraction, an escape from reality, and even almost a sacrilege? No, just like "play" is neither a useless pastime for children nor a useless distraction for adults. We've gained perspective and hope from stories in families, stories in young children's play, stories in school and work, and yes, stories for activism in this crazy world. Stories give us hope for our human condition; stories do support our ability to care for each other.

8.4 Conclusion

There has been human meaning-making involved in the passion to tell stories and the thirst to receive stories since the beginning of time. Of course, stories do take many shapes and the intended sharing of meaning in stories is always contingent upon the context in which the stories are shared, the relationships among the story-givers and the story-receivers, and the language used to share the stories. Our stories are our throughlines. Translation of stories is not always perfect, to be sure, and this is more dire and consequential within contexts of exploitation, colonialism, war, and oppression. Still, there are multiple ways that storying is transformative. And as with most transformations, there is a complicated mix of struggle, even trauma, and uncertainty along with joy.

We acknowledge that the stories we've shared in this book are complex, richly layered, and interdependent. The meaning-making that children, families, and teachers are engaging in is deeply contextual and situated in their ways of knowing and being. We hope that by sharing these stories, our readers understand the significant task they must undertake to develop their own interpretations, become their own meaning-makers. We hope that you use these stories as a path forward to honor the people you work with in your own contexts. We invite you to continue wonder along with us about the following things:

- What do we do with what we know? How do we use it to change our communities? How do we use it to change the world?
- What does it mean to care deeply? How can resistance be rooted in care and listening with?
- How do these stories guide you in your understanding of what cultural humanity and legitimacy carry in your work?
- What other stories are there to learn from? What stories need to emerge?

I (Larisa) had an opportunity several years ago to attend the Forestry Institute for Teachers, sponsored by the California Society of American Foresters. We lived at Humboldt State University for the week and studied everything forest-related, from basic ecology to the logging process and lumber production. I was there to learn to teach science concepts more effectively to my preschoolers. But I left with much more than that. I was fascinated as we quietly walked among *sequoia sempervirens*, the coast redwoods, every afternoon. Redwoods are majestic trees. There are millennia-old towering trees, blocking out the sun. Some have been ravaged by fire, but persist, holes carved into them where flames have tried to consume them. They are the elders of these particular forests, the feeling of history and strength apparent as I would tread down the trails. The most important thing I learned, something that I hold onto dearly, is what I learned about the roots of redwood trees. These trees, so large and tall, do not burrow their roots down deep into the ground as one might imagine. Instead, they stretch outward, linking themselves with their fellow trees to provide a network of support. These roots are like our work with stories and storying. These roots, our roots, hold up something unholdable and fragile—relying on deep history

and strength. These stories, and the people who engage and tell them, rely on our elders and generations of knowledge like the redwoods do. We must consider the complex system of sustenance that stories hold. They are a way to buck the status quo, to forge new pathways, to transform our environments. May our stories be a way for our roots to unfurl and to hold one another up.

Conclusions are the in-our-faces "so what"? Why does this matter? Humbly, we maintain that first, if we listen with children and their families, they show confidence, creativity, and generative learning and hope. If we can assure deep family support for all families and an ethos of planet-caring, if teacher education stretches beyond the status quo to include these important learners (who are really all our families), then policies can be changed. Going back to Moss (2019, p. 174), we agree that "…possibilities really do exist…" and "…there is a lot of work to be done to realise them. That work involves creating new stories but also thinking through what conditions may be to enact—put to work—those stories."

At the end of his self-written obituary to us after his death, John Lewis called for everyone to "continue to build union between movements stretching across the globe because we must put away our willingness to profit from the exploitation of others." And echoing the words of King, he said now it's America's turn to "let freedom ring." "Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe" (Lewis, 2020).

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