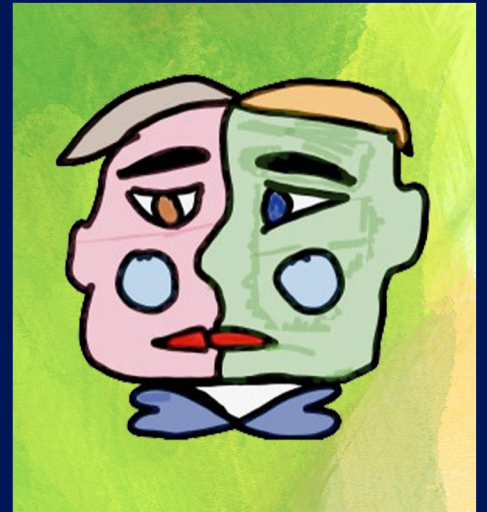
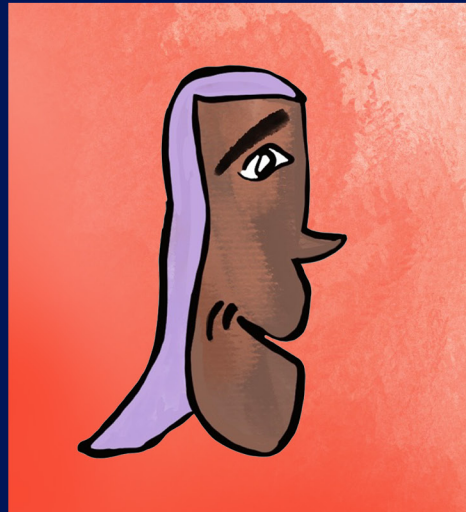
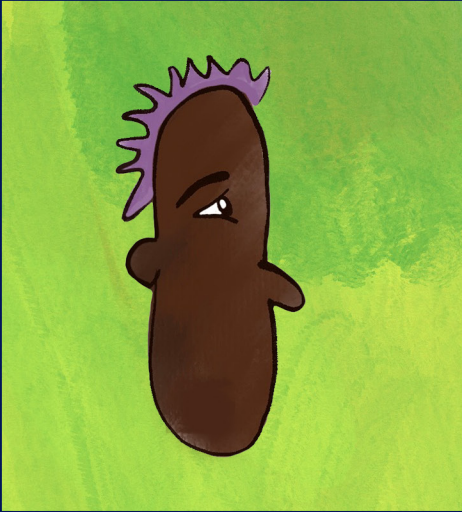
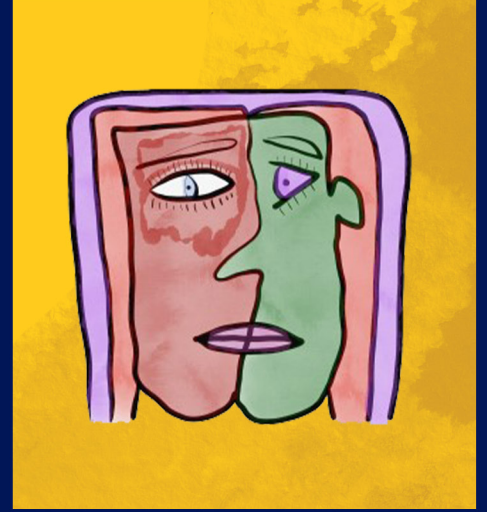
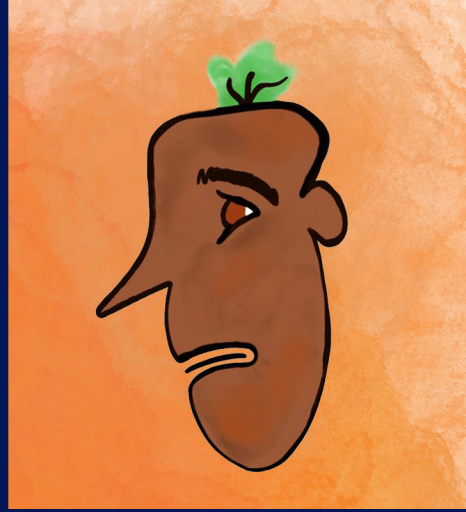
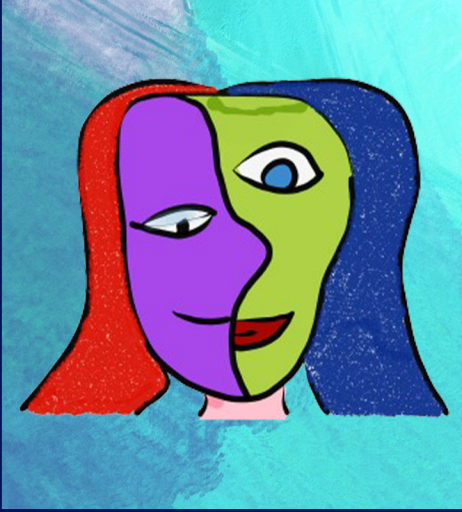


In Dialogue/ En Diálogo



In Dialogue/ En Diálogo

**Volume 1, Number 1
September 2023**

Executive Editors

Yesenia Fernández, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, College of Education
School Leadership Program
California State University Dominguez Hills

Jen Stacy, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, College of Education
Liberal Studies Department
California State University Dominguez Hills

1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, CA 90747

Original Artwork by Helena Donato-Sapp
Journal Design Layout by Ana K Ramirez

CSUDH
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

 **creative
commons**

About In Dialogue/En Diálogo

journals.calstate.edu/dialogue

Executive Co-Editors










Yesenia Fernández, Ph.D., Co-Editor
Associate Professor
School Leadership Program
California State University Dominguez Hills
yfernandez@csudh.edu

Jen Stacy, Ph.D., Co-Editor
Associate Professor
Liberal Studies Department
California State University Dominguez Hills
jstacy@csudh.edu

Review Board

Rita Anderson, California State University Dominguez Hills
Nallely Arteaga, California State University Dominguez Hills
Christina Bosch, Fresno State
Miguel Casar Rodriguez, University of Alabama
Rene Castro, California State University Dominguez Hills
Jenny Chiappe, California State University Dominguez Hills
Joanna Clifton, Inglewood Unified School District
Erwin “Sino” Donato, California State University Dominguez Hills
Karen Escalante, California State University San Bernadino
Cristina Flores, California State University Long Beach
Kitty Fortner, California State University Dominguez Hills
Kai Greene, California State University Dominguez Hills
Amina Humphrey, El Camino College
Mike Karlin, California State University Dominguez Hills
Jarod Kawasaki, California State University Dominguez Hills
Saili Kulkarni, San Jose State
Margarita Landeros, California State University Dominguez Hills
Cynthia Lozano Correa, Los Angeles Unified School District
Angela Macias, California State University Dominguez Hills
Adrieen Mancillas, California State University Dominguez Hills
Beth Mossman-Marroquín, California State University Dominguez Hills
Natalie Nunez, California Association for Bilingual Education
Joanna Perez, California State University Dominguez Hills
Jeff Sapp, California State University Dominguez Hills
Minhye Son, California State University Dominguez Hills
Cristina Stephany, California State University Dominguez Hills
Sharon H. Ulanoff, California State University Los Angeles
Karina Vich, Alliance College-Ready Public Schools

CONTENTS

-  **1. Editors' Dialogue** by Yesenia Fernández and Jen Stacy
-  **2. Teacher's Voice: Teacher in a Global Pandemic?**
by Cynthia Lozano
-  **3. Grief Work: Being with and Moving Through a Resistance to Change in Teacher Education** by Stephanie Cariaga
-  **4. Talk Story: The Experiences of Teaching Special Education During the Pandemic** by Conrad Oh-Young, Joselyn Castañeda, Julie León, Ina Mae Tevaga, and Leslie Nelson
-  **5. Cultivating Comadrerismo for Collective Liberation** by Ana Barragán Santoyo and Joanna Pérez
-  **6. Love, Joy, and Intimacy: One Family's Response to 550 Days of Lockdown A Poem in 3 Voices** by Jeff Sapp, Erwin Sino Donato, and Helena Donato-Sapp
-  **7. Coding to Connect: Centering Joy and Community in Elementary Computer Science Education** by Mike Karlin, Cristina Stephany, and Marcia Reed Book Review
-  **8. Bilinguals are not two monolinguals in one: Life as a bilingual: Knowing and using two or more languages** by Kai Greene
-  **9. Teacher's Voice: Reflections on Grief, Joy, and Healing: Love and Critical Consciousness at the Center of Virtual Learning Spaces**
by Natalie Núñez

Editor's Dialogue

Yesenia Fernández, Associate Professor, School Leadership Program
California State University Dominguez Hills

Jen Stacy, Associate Professor, Liberal Studies Department,
California State University Dominguez Hills

**“Dialogue is, thus, an existential necessity.”
Paulo Freire (1970, p. 88)**

Schools serve as complicated sites that reflect society's complex sociocultural realities. The architecture of educational institutions is constantly co- and re-constructed by the humans invested in them. The permeable nature of schools means that they, at once, reflect society's promises and problems. Institutions of education are spaces in which broader issues show up and replicate themselves; they are also spaces where intentional deliberation transforms not only schools, but the communities in which schools are embedded. Many factors contribute to the messy reality of education and many remedies are necessary for schools to fulfill their liberatory potential. In this journal, we cultivate space for one of the most powerful tools for educational transformation: **dialogue/diálogo.**

Naming the world around us is an act of liberation (Freire, 1970). Words encode reality. Naming our daily realities, which are multiple, means that we simultaneously reflect on what is happening as we take action toward change. Once something we experience is named, we see the world in a new light. We think about things differently, and, because we've participated in reflection, sometimes collectively, we act from a place that - before dialogue - did not exist. Our realities are transformed. It is because of this that Freire (1970) asserts, “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (p. 87).

K-16 educational partners are constantly negotiating social forces and caught amidst school's dual aims of inculcation and liberation. Yet, much of the discourse regarding issues of justice and equity in education happens in silos. This journal upends that practice and, instead, cultivates an authentic dialogue towards a transforming of our realities amongst myriad people invested in education, including pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators, school counselors, staff, community members, faculty, and researchers.

Our intentions for *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* are to put K-16 educational partners in conversation with each other about critical issues in education, and to cultivate collective critical consciousness amongst educators in the greater Los Angeles region. Fostering community dialogue is integral to the process of advocating for more just schooling. As such, we feature voices not typically included in traditional academic journals but that are essential in the discourse toward equity and justice. *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* is aspirational as it integrates theory and practice through multi-voiced discourse and captures evolution of thought and practice. We embrace the messiness of efforts for justice within and through education through the voices of the very people who navigate the daily intricacies of doing the work. We honor the ways in which people name their realities and the languages that they use to do so.

Each volume presents a (sometimes multilingual) snapshot of contemporary, research-informed or reflective conversations and practices while capturing pivotal moments that strengthen collective critical consciousness while always centering our shared humanity.

We publish this inaugural volume of *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* in the fall of 2023, as the world transitions to living with the endemic of the COVID-19 virus. Schools, writ large, are back in-person. Despite reports of increasing numbers of infection and hospitalization, communities are largely expected enact pre-pandemic norms. Occasional nods to the option to mask or take the latest vaccines are made by our institutions. Much effort is made to put behind the unprecedented, difficult experience of living through a global pandemic that has taken the lives of nearly 7 million people (WHO, 2023) and has had lasting impact on our daily lives, our spirits and our humanity. Ongoing research continues to confirm that this pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color, inside and outside of schools. As resistance to a “return to normal,” (a pre-pandemic normal fraught with injustice) we invoke authentic dialogue to name the grief and heaviness we lived through during the pandemic as educators and human beings as well as the joy, healing, and the growth we have experienced despite it and because of it. Grief, joy, and healing are intertwined in the chaos of living through a pandemic and are generating

a novel form of critical praxis and transformed ways of being.

We begin and end this first volume with teacher voices to recognize the depths of the professional and personal transformations PK-12 classroom teachers have, and continue to, experienced these last few years in a transformed landscape. Cynthia Lozano, a third-grade teacher, begins our dialogue by reflecting on how teaching through the pandemic as a first-year teacher changed her: “I feel that I have a stronger will to deal with hardships. I take what is thrown at me and just do the best I can within my power...” Joy and healing, which includes clear boundaries and discernment around the extent of professional involvement, are central to her journey as an educator in this post-pandemic context. Cynthia’s voice sets our intention for this volume.

We honor the messiness that comes with this post pandemic transformation through the dialogue that weaves together grief, joy and healing. We honor the seeds we planted, the roots that have begun to grow, and the sprouts we cultivate as well as those which have already begun to flower. While our existence has been in turmoil as we were forced to transform our realities as educators and as human beings, our humanity, and our ability to find joy and heal has persisted. Indeed, we planted seeds, literal and metaphorical, while the world around us was in shambles. We have innovated as educators and as human beings, even while so many

around us and around the world, sometimes those we loved, transitioned, were hospitalized or were in despair, directly affected by the pandemic. How we were forced to adjust to this catastrophic event irrevocably changed how we live and who we are.

The dialogue continues as Stephanie Cariaga offers a beautiful juxtaposition of love and loss in her melodic piece, the second in this volume. Cariaga's willingness to be vulnerable in sharing her story of grieving her mother's death as she transitioned to in-person learning not only captures her real and raw experience and reflection as a teacher, but also shows how ideologies embedded in institutional structures play out in day-to-day experiences and offers us a post-secondary teaching voice. Cariaga's writing is nurturing throughout and interwoven in her own grief, she reminds us that educators are above all human, and moves us to "clean pain" and compels readers to begin their own journey in moving from dirty to clean pain. She highlights an often-ignored aspect of education—disembodiment, the idea that emotion must be left at the entrance to our schools. Cariaga reminds us to resist this and offers a vulnerable, honest depiction of how so many of us were transformed ideologically through the pandemic. Though some wish to hold on to the hope that we will now "return to normal" after all that we have lived, we argue that our normal will never be what we once knew, and we embrace that

tension and our new realities and are grateful for the pieces herein that shed light on this tension and the dialogue that has emerged.

This *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* volume introduces the dialogue between teachers, families, schools, as well as faculty, staff, university programs, and our students, none of which can exist on their own. Our grief has been collective and now so must our healing. The multiple voices that underscore our collective transformation capture the journey while generating new ways of being and doing in and out of our educational contexts. In "Talk Story: The Experience of Teaching", special education teachers come together with their former professor, Conrad Oh-Young, to discuss moving through their personal grief while supporting their PreK-12 students with theirs during and post lockdown. The teachers simultaneously struggled, innovated, exerted creativity, enacted pedagogies of care, and reconnected with the humanizing elements of teaching. The Talk Story framework underscores the critical need for space for this very human experience. The voices capture how we are grappling with institutional demands placed on educators, such as evermore alarming rhetoric about "data-driven" "learning-loss" that intends to circumvent the necessary human experience. This piece pushes us to think about what we want the educational landscape to be post pandemic, echoing Cariaga's thoughts on disembodiment and the discourse of power within our

collective healing. Who decides what schooling is like – should be like – if not the educators, families, students therein?

This volume not only reflects on the disorder of the pandemic but the dialogue also shows how, from death, hope rises as seeds eventually sprout and flower. It is up to us to decide what we want our new realities to be. In “Cultivating Comadrerismo for Collective Liberation” Barragan Santoyo and Perez show how “...transformation in the academy is possible when seeds are planted through building community, vulnerability, and the creation of an equitable and student-centered curriculum” through an innovative undocuresearch program for students at California State University Dominguez Hills. Harkening the energy of the vecindad (neighborhood), the authors’ work is showcased as an example of comadrismo, a bond of the soul that transforms the institution. Building a program around students’ intersecting identities and experiences, with comadrerismo at the center, has real implications to move toward liberation and joy, past the grief and through the healing, as we reimagine spaces in a post-pandemic context.

With this same comadrismo energy, Karlin, Stephany, and Reed deepen the dialogue about intentional planning for joy in elementary schools. “Coding to Connect: Centering Joy” shares a community-based account that features the work of a professor, school leader, clinical coordinator, teacher education students, and

elementary students participating in an innovative computer science learning experience. Authors question the dominant narrative around computer science education and displace neoliberal, work-force ready rhetoric with one of joy and experiential learning. There is a sense of post-lockdown, post-virtual schooling rebirth that actually moves computer science away from screens. Multifaceted dynamics of computer science are explored, including student-created un-plugged coding projects, and it is clear that curiosity drives the experience. Readers are left with a sense that there is possibility to disentangling from dominant discourse has been weighing down many typical, accepted learning activities in recent years and, as Barragan Santoyo and Perez also shared, there is joy in this liberation.

“Love, Joy, and Intimacy: One Family’s Response to 550 Days of Lockdown” a unique poem by a family of three that shifts focus to pedagogies of the home, both regarding academic learning during virtual schooling but also regarding other topics like death in the family and socio-emotional support. The family shares of their grief both in the sense of processing the death of their fathers/grandfathers and in processing the loss of in-person connection in schools. Interestingly, the poem highlights how lockdown and virtual schooling provided safety from unsafe spaces of school – especially bullying. The authors collectively paint a portrait of how myriad emotions were/are experienced at once and how joy is cultivated

through common practices like cooking and watching TV but mostly through being together. This piece gives voice to families across the world and shows us a glimpse to the homelives of our students during these tumultuous times.

We also gain a glimpse into the home lives of multilingual students during pandemic through this review of *Life as a bilingual: Knowing and using two or more languages* by Francois Grosjean. It captures the funds of knowledge of those who live bilingually everyday by compiling engaging blog posts accessible to a wide audience intrigued by plurilingualism. Greene walks readers through the topics covered in each chapter and explains how each explains, exemplifies, and nuances different theories/perspectives on bilingualism and even when and how the author challenges commonly accepted theories. This book review sets the tone for the holistic, dynamic approach of *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* and serves as a compelling resource for its readership. Most critically, this book addresses how to gain an understanding of funds of knowledge of our students and use it for bringing students' lives into our classroom – this learning from our changed realities through the pandemic is some of what we want to hold on to and continue to grow.

Natalie Nunez, a former teacher turned professional learning specialist, offers final thoughts to this volume, igniting the dialogue to continue amongst our

broader community. Sitting amidst the forces of joy, frustration, and sadness, she reflects on how love, solidarity, and grace served as her pillars during online instruction *and* return to in-person learning. Amidst institutional pressures that stem from deficit ideology, Natalie captures how, in the big and small moments, *la lucha sigue*. Our collective dialogue about our intricate experiences with grief, joy, and healing capacities fuels our ongoing pursuit of justice and our relentless desire to collectively transform our realities through the we've seeds planted while living in tumult.

Readers, as you embark on these pages, you now become part of the dialogue. Your thoughts, your experiences, your ideas are embedded in the force for change that this volume aspires to foster. Voice them. Engage in dialogue in your schools, in your communities, and in your home. Speak your reality, do not ignore the seeds you have planted and what has begun to flower so that you and those around you transform it.

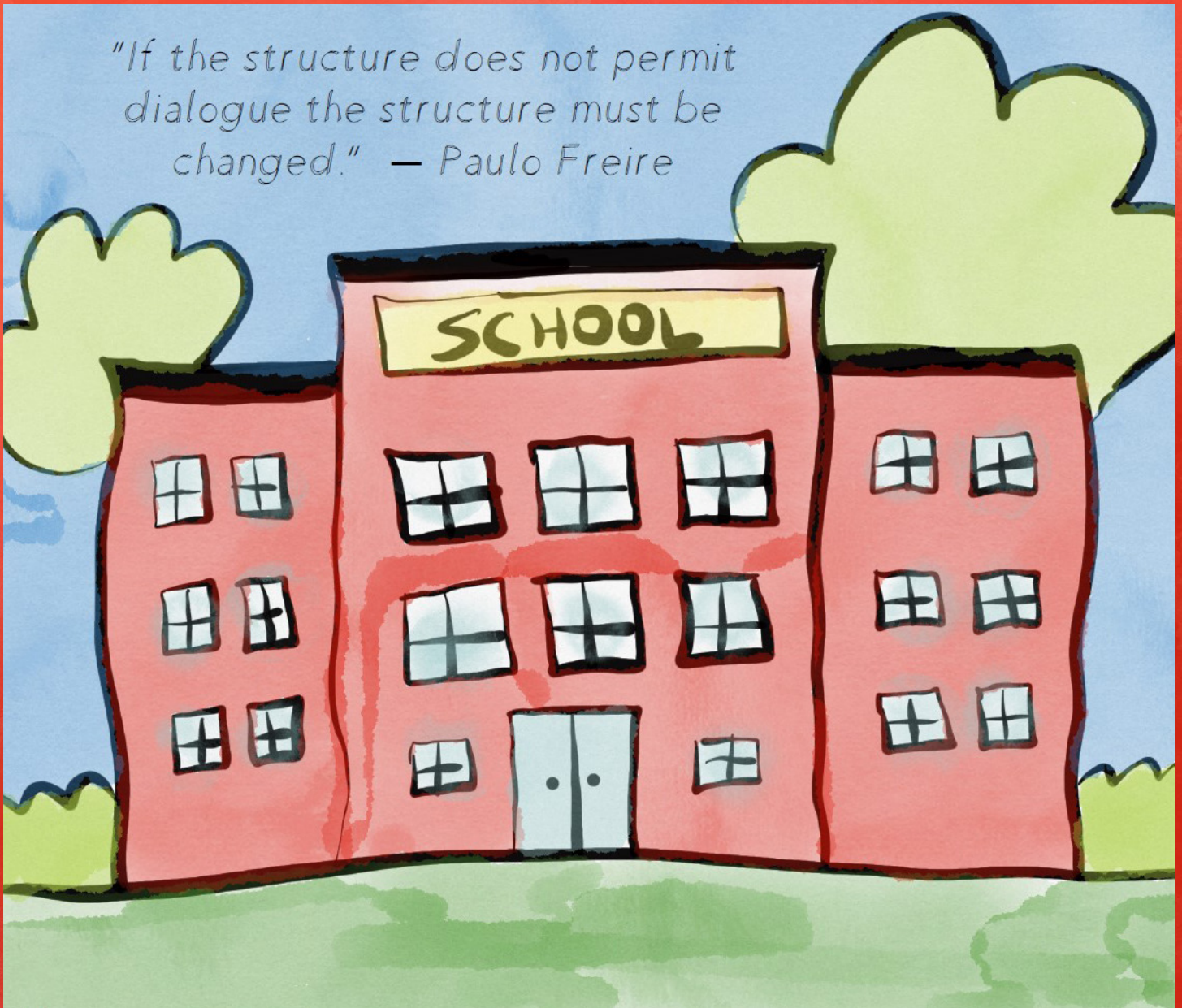
References

- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- World Health Organization. (2023). *WHO Coronavirus dashboard*. <https://covid19.who.int/?mapFilter=deaths>

Teacher in a Global Pandemic?

Cynthia Lozano, M. Ed., Third Grade Dual Language Teacher,
Carlos Santana Arts Academy - LAUSD

*"If the structure does not permit
dialogue the structure must be
changed." — Paulo Freire*



Where do I find myself as a teacher in our changed reality?

Let me start with, I was a first-year teacher that started my career online. On top of that, I had moved 33 miles away from my family and friends to a completely new place where I did not know anybody. I was homesick. Plus, navigating my own teaching ideologies with the curriculum given to me and working with a partner teacher (I teach in a 50/50 dual language program), I can say it was a pretty tough year. The pandemic took a lot of my time. Since I lived on my own and my family was not at a close distance, all I did was work to keep me busy. I worked every day all day so I would not feel the emptiness of my family and friends. I would go over our curricula to get familiar with them and, at the same time, to try and find ways to implement my own lessons. It was hard! I would be in a pool of frustration, anger, and hopelessness at times.

How do I change this unit to a social justice unit?

I would find myself literally planning a whole unit and mid-way through, stopping because I would have to create EVERYTHING in Spanish, and finding resources in Spanish is not easy. On top of that, I still had to get my partner teacher on board. FRUSTRATION AT IT'S FINEST, but also sadness. I wanted to provide my students with the best

education possible. I would spend A LOT of my time creating appealing PowerPoint slides for my students. I would find ways to plan fun and meaningful projects where I involved families and culture in order to provide a more humanizing school experience. Their completed projects brought me joy, happiness, worthiness, and justification to the pain that it took to plan. Lastly, let's not forget all the mandatory training teachers need to take, "helpful" training for new teachers, as well as trainings to learn about new websites or applications teachers can use for distance learning. Mind you, these are just some items that took most of my time. Coming back to in-person teaching was a whole different experience. To me, it was my first year all over again because it was my first year in-person. As a new teacher, I feel that we have to constantly be working. We don't have pre-made worksheets from past years of which all we have to do is make copies; we do not have projects already set and ready to be executed; we do not know what works and what doesn't; and, more importantly, we do not have daily lesson plans ready, ESPECIALLY if you want to cause desmadre like Doctor José Medina states. So, it's a battle in your head. You find it worthwhile spending your time creating social justice lessons because of the outcome but then there is no work balance - at least for me there was not. Again, working in a dual language program with a 50/50 model is

HARD and we were still in a pandemic! We had our students' life experiences to navigate through in the classroom.

So, what is it like being a teacher now?

After going through the pandemic and still going through a pandemic but with new norms, I feel that I have a stronger will to deal with hardships. I take what is thrown at me and just do the best I can within my power AND within my contract hours! I do not check my email after contract hours. I do not attend training sessions that are not mandatory; if so, I make sure I complete them during my contract hours. I have boundaries with parents, and most importantly, I ask questions. My time is valuable, so when something is presented to me or I am being asked to do something or to try something, depending on what it is, I ask, "What is the purpose?" "How is this going to benefit me and/or the students?" "Will I get paid?" "Will you provide planning time?" and, "Will there be consistency?" I think asking questions and setting boundaries are part of my healing process. Not to mention, new friendships and after school clubs. I am a Girls on the Run (GOTR) coach and I help with a journalism club. With another teacher, I run a club called CARP (Community Action Research Program) in partnership with California State University, Northridge (CSUN). It was a partnership opportunity that we were offered as a

Community School. I am also a part of our Local School Leadership Council (LSLC). These are the programs that are worth my time: they have a purpose, I feel I am making a positive impact on others, and they bring me joy! It is important that we talk about this topic across educational settings because teaching and being a teacher is more than delivering lesson plans. Teacher experiences should be heard in a way to provide a more humanizing teacher experience and give teachers what they deserve and need to be able to continue doing the work.

Grief Work: Being with and Moving Through a Resistance to Change in Teacher Education

**Stephanie Cariaga, Ph.D. Associate Professor,
California State University Dominguez Hills**

Abstract

Both the pandemic and the colonial project of schooling have created conditions for compounded grief to emerge, particularly for communities of color who face disproportionate economic instability and loss, and for educators of color impacted by pushout and demoralization. As teacher educators, we have yet to fully feel into the grief of these circumstances and reckon with our underlying responsibilities to ourselves, our students, and each other. Integrating personal narrative and pedagogical reflections alongside Resmaa Menakem's (2017) distinction between *dirty pain* and *clean pain*, I explore our complicit hesitance to both grief and change in teacher education and the field as a whole. I unravel grief work as a necessary intervention in the field to move from a disembodied ideology of schooling to an embodied praxis of education. Doing so allows both educators and students to make necessary changes from within, with each other, and in our respective learning spaces.

Key words:

teacher education, embodiment, grief, critical consciousness

It has been two years since my mother transitioned from this earth, her body taken over by leukemia. I remember the Zoom meeting where the doctors informed my dad, my brothers, and I that she had about a week left to live. Each box on the screen showed our different, yet collective shock: the empty glance of my middle brother's tired, watery eyes; my eldest brother's hesitant voice asking what next steps we needed to take; my uncontrollable tears and quickened breath; my dad's whispered apology as he left his computer to mourn in the hidden hallway behind him.

Having spent the first five months of the COVID-19 pandemic in isolation to protect my parents, we were then thrown together to quickly figure out Mom's hospice care. In that tender, tumultuous week, Mom embodied the kind of strength that fought for a dignified death at home, teaching us how to surrender to fear, helplessness, and endings. We learned the wholehearted satisfaction of pouring love into our mom, just as she had spent her entire life pouring love into us. We learned to embrace falling apart in front of each other, not in seclusion. Together, we humbly "learned the hard-won lesson that grief demands its due, and it will take by force what is not freely given" (Devich-Cyril, 2021, p. 69). In our reluctance to let go of our beloved mother, my dad's 52-year life partner, we opened ourselves up to grief, to uncertainty, and eventually, new possibilities.

This grief work – the process of collectively surrendering to loss, allowing it to change us from within, and consequently moving others to become more compassionate, more present, more free – is a particular labor we must engage in as critical educators, especially right now. The ongoing pandemic and outpouring calls for racial, economic, gender, disability and climate justice have incited a rupture in our "normal" ways of being, relating, and teaching. Youth of color, who were already disproportionately suffering from disengagement and punitive policies in schools, are now increasingly impacted by economic instability and the loss of family members (Jones et al 2021). Educators, especially educators of color, are considering leaving the field at unprecedented rates as they navigate the combined impacts of burnout, grief, and demoralization (Everett & Dunn, 2021; Steiner & Woo, 2021; Zamarro et al, 2021).

Psychotherapist Francis Weller (2015) explains that grief is not just about losing something or someone; it also regards the deep disappointment of what we expected yet did not receive. As a teacher educator, I think about the complicated grief of students who enrolled in a credential program as the pandemic emerged and did not anticipate how the field of education would be deeply complicated and transformed – especially as more schools call on novice educators to fill in amongst staff shortages, take on multiple teaching assignments, and

respond to increasing mental health challenges with insufficient support.

As teacher educators, we have yet to fully “acknowledge the rupture” (Roy, 2020) of these circumstances, grieve what we may have lost, and reckon with our underlying responsibilities to ourselves, our students, and each other. Even before the pandemic, there was already so much to grieve inside of schools: the ways in which the subtractive, colonial project of schooling denigrates the spirits, cultures, and identities of minoritized students, particularly for Black and indigenous youth (Love, 2019; Valenzuela, 2005); the toxic conditions of schools that push out critical educators and educators of color (Navarro et al, 2020); the “tremendous toll that schooling takes on the body” of all whom are compelled to disappear and deny parts of themselves to survive, fit in, and succeed (Marie & Watson, 2020, p. 30).

An integral part of grief work is negotiating both our resistance to change and building our capacity to be open to change. Across the field of education, we are witnessing and experiencing a deep resistance to change, evidenced by a doubling-down on fascist, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal ideologies. As hard-earned victories in ethnic studies and anti-racist teaching become more institutionalized, right-wing politicians continue to attack and dampen efforts towards racial justice in education. As inclusive

practices and language for LGBTQI folks enters our mainstream workspaces and lexicons, a conservative agenda has arisen to try and eradicate the word “gay” and the humanity of gender-expansive peoples in schools. An old, weakened world is dying, and its beneficiaries hold on to strategies of “avoidance, blame, and denial” (Menakem, 2017, p. 20) to soften the blow of a new emerging world. I wonder how much different our world would be if we were taught earlier how to grieve, especially when we are faced with the necessity of letting go of our own power and privilege for the sake of others’ wellness. Grief has taught me that yes, letting go is hard, but that is also sometimes necessary.

I am not exempt from such a hesitance to change. As a teacher educator, I recently noticed a visceral reluctance to change within myself and across my college. After losing my mom, I took a semester-long leave to properly grieve. When I returned to teach, I could feel an unsettledness in my gut and a fogginess in my brain as I tried to plan for the fast-approaching Fall 2021 semester. I did not feel ready to leave the cocoon of my home that had kept me safe from what felt like the impending doom of COVID-19. The first few weeks of the semester were virtual to help us transition back in-person, and in that time numerous students vocalized their anxieties about returning – some were caring for immune-compromised family members or young children

¹Lara (2002) coined *bodymindspirit* as a critique against mind/body dualism in academia and beyond and a reclamation of wholeness for Chicana feminists and other women of color. I use the term *pedagogies of bodymindspirit* (Author, 2018) to highlight ways to engage the full humanity of our students and ourselves in our learning spaces.

at home, some had lost several family members to COVID, others were scared of exposing their own students to illness, others were managing their own heightened stress as working-class students juggling financial and familial responsibilities. Despite the top-down policy that we all return to in-person teaching, along with my fear of censure as an untenured professor, I decided to teach in-person for students who felt ready to return and simultaneously teach on Zoom for students who needed that accommodation. While students appreciated my hybrid accommodation, I was met with disapproval by some colleagues and received a college-wide letter re-asserting the policy to teach exclusively in-person.

That same semester, I noticed a different hesitation to change in my teacher credential courses, where I struggled to connect ideologically with some students about the role of race. In a conversation after my English and History methods class, one student questioned my use of a cartoon about indigenous peoples in Los Angeles, likening the text to communist propaganda. I purposefully made time to listen to the student's perspectives, empathizing with his experiences, most of which were rooted in a desire for his European ancestry to be seen in school curriculum. I attempted to help him understand that in his effort to humanize himself and his history, his deficit framings of others were harmful to Indigenous and marginalized peoples and consequently to his

future students. While it was a frustrating, yet generative conversation, I am not sure how much the student shifted his perspectives. What was missing from our conversation was an acknowledgement of how my curricular choices made him feel (perhaps angry? anxious?) that connected to his longing to be seen. His attachment to whiteness and his unexamined feelings prevented him from envisioning a world where multiple peoples could belong.

I want to be clear that I am offering these two examples - not to shame any particular person or entity, but to instead bring curiosity to our collective and complicit hesitance to change in education. Building upon Marie and Watson (2020) who summon us to slow down and mourn our attachment to schooling, I ask: When the waves of change approach us, how and why do we resist it? What can we learn inside of that hesitation, particularly as it is felt inside of our bodymindspirits¹? How might being with our grief provide a bridge between reluctance and possibility?

Therapist and somatics scholar Resmaa Menakem's (2017) distinction between *dirty pain* and *clean pain*² can help unravel the necessary embodied skills to move from the dehumanizing habits of schooling to a humanizing praxis of education. Like my process of ongoing grief and gratitude for my mother, I want to emphasize that this is not a prescription towards correctness, but an invitation to pause and listen, to let go of control, to

¹I uplift the work of Leora Wolf-Prusan and Oriana Ides of the School Crisis Recovery Renewal Project, who have facilitated powerful professional development with our teacher education department to learn about trauma-informed principles and practice collective grief work. Our discussion of the distinction between dirty and clean pain has largely inspired this essay.

concede power when necessary, and to find our agency as we transition into what comes next. In other words, transformative education requires building our willingness and capacity to grieve.

Moving in between dirty pain and clean pain

According to Menakem (2017), dirty pain is a highly systematized, unconscious response to untended wounds that often results in avoidance, blame, and denial. While these responses may seem convenient at the moment, they actually prolong suffering for ourselves and our relationships. Yet it is difficult to transform these habits because dirty pain is a systematic response, where we are physiologically and evolutionarily wired to protect ourselves from any perceived or real threat – it is not something we do “on purpose” or something we can talk our way out of, because it is our survival brain’s automatic strategy towards self-preservation.

Menakem uses this concept to unpack how the belief systems of white supremacy become internalized into coping strategies that falsely perceive Blackness and anything in proximity to Blackness as a threat. Anything related to this supposed threat – the approaching of a Black body, the mention of race, for example – gets met with responses of “constricted bodies,

frozen attitudes, and closed minds” (104). Hence, our role as teacher educators to work towards racial justice requires us to tend to the “emotional dimensions of critical consciousness raising—the idea that affects move us, and therefore, are at the root of the beliefs undergirding the shifts to blockages in our pedagogical practices” (Ohito, 2017, 193). If we are to shift deeply entrenched worldviews that protect whiteness and other systems of oppression, we must learn how to tend to the emotions underlying them.

To disrupt dirty pain in teacher education, therefore, requires us to acknowledge the ways in which emotions – including grief, anger, and joy – are largely denied, avoided, and invalidated in the teaching profession. Several scholars note that the dehumanization inherent to schooling stems partly from an ideology of disembodiment – the Cartesian notion that insists thinking be attached from feeling, which has rippled into other false binaries that seek to separate the pedagogical from the political, the student from the teacher, the professional from the personal, and so on (Cariaga, 2018; Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ohito, 2017). Within education, grief takes on a particular kind of dirty pain called *disenfranchised grief* (Doka, 2002; Rowling, 2008; Wolf-Prusan, 2021), where structural policies, practices, and internalized narratives work in tandem to deny educators the right and resources to mourn the many losses experienced in schools. Through

the lens of dirty pain and the work of radical feminists like Audre Lorde (2012) and Gloria Anzaldúa (2013), we know that emotions pose a threat to systems of oppression and are therefore a fertile resource for transformation. In *Rebellious Mourning: The Collective Work of Grief, Milstein* (2017) emphasizes that "we must disrupt the expectation that pain should be hidden away, buried, privatized - a lie manufactured so as to mask and uphold the social order that produces our many, unnecessary losses. When we instead open ourselves up to the bonds and losses of pain, we lessen what debilitates us...Crucially, we have a way, together, to undo deadening and deadly structures intent on destroying us" (p. 4).

To undo the disembodiment inherent to schooling and teacher education, we must learn to listen to the needs underneath our enactments of dirty pain and our relative resistance to change. For example, underneath my reluctance to return to in-person teaching were deep-held fears:

If I get sick, will I expose my family? If students get sick, am I responsible? What would that say about me as a mother and a professor?

When I peel back the layers of my behaviors, anxieties, and internal questions, I can touch into a socially and self-constructed identity that has relied on a semblance of control, perfection, and competence in order to feel belonging in my family and survive the academy. When I read Malkia Devich-Cyril's (2021) unflinching account of how they also lost their mother to cancer and their consequent resistance to grief, I realized that I was engaging in a similar form of dirty pain. My obsession with safety during the pandemic and getting work "right" was actually masking the guilt I had from losing my mom - because no matter how hard I worked, nor how much I cared, I could not save her. I could not control my mother's disease, and so I tried finding that control in my teacher education work. Menakem's conceptualization of dirty pain is helpful here, because it helps me understand how my fears of returning to teach in-person were shaped by the trauma of my mother's death, combined with the real threats of an ongoing pandemic, as well as the ways I have been socialized within my family and various institutions into an individualistic mentality of saviorism.

Grief, however, continues to teach me that habits of dirty pain - denial, avoidance, and blame, predicated upon the self and others - can trap us into cycles of isolation and shame, foreclosing the possibility of meeting other important core needs, like connection, vulnerability,

support, wholeness, and transformation. These needs became my core values as I approached a new semester, armed with both grief and clarity about how I wanted to move, learn, and be with students. With a commitment to embodied presence and the support of skilled therapists and beloved community, I learned to feel through the rupture of my mother's death, in addition to my anger against the ongoing violence of academia, grieving moments where I had lost faith and agency.

This, in turn, created space for me to find new possibilities in the liminal grief work of negotiating the contradictions of agency and surrender. It was quite messy, unfamiliar territory for me to figure out how to offer hybrid options to students, as I worked through unpredictable technological glitches alongside students' patience. This helped me unlearn my tendencies towards perfection and orderliness, giving permission for students to do the same. Although I could not promise complete safety amidst the pandemic, I could at least cultivate emotional safety by beginning every class with a Mindful Minute, using either breathing, movement, or reflection to tune into ourselves, nurture home in our bodies, and reclaim embodiment in our learning spaces. We also took time at the beginning and throughout the course to share our personal needs in order to care for one another and be successful together.

Grief has also humbled me to the impermanence of life and has consequently challenged me to prioritize the essentials beyond teaching in the academy: my wellness, sanity, family, and joy. I therefore learned to be clearer in my syllabus policies about my own boundaries around time and capacity, while reminding students that they, too, get to be in their full humanity as they learn to develop humanizing learning spaces of their own. I have long understood that dignity, belonging, and wholeness are important principles for teaching. Sitting with my own grief these past two years has helped me embody these principles from the inside out.

The internal, relational, and pedagogical processes I describe above represent ways that I have learned to move from *dirty pain* to what Menakem (2017) describes as *clean pain*, which

enables us to engage our integrity and tap into our body's inherent resilience and coherence, in a way that dirty pain does not. Paradoxically, only by walking into our pain or discomfort – experience it, moving through it, and metabolizing it – can we grow... The body can settle; more room for growth is created in its nervous system; and the self becomes freer and more capable, because it now has access to energy that was previously protected, bound, and constricted. When this happens, people's lives often improve in other ways as well. (p. 20)

When teacher educators can learn to be with their own grief and practice this process of clean pain for themselves and with their students, it improves the field of education into expansive possibilities “of becoming more fully human” together (Carter-Andrews et al, 2019, p. 10).

But the work of grief and clean pain in teacher education cannot happen in a vacuum - it requires a safe landing place for both students and educators to feel and be heard, ongoing critical reflection about the power dynamics that impact safety and expression, support from skilled mental health practitioners, and a redistribution of resources and time to develop such skills and structures. Grief work requires that we learn to discern the difference between safety and discomfort, which Carter-Andrews et al (2019) aptly describe here:

Students often equate safety with no disruption in the equilibrium of their emotions or the firmness of their values and belief system. Some of our students experience vulnerability, guilt, and even defensiveness in our classroom spaces, and we want them to understand that these are normal reactions to a disruption of their socialization. But it does not mean that we allow for any personal attack. The courageous atmosphere in our classrooms is shaped by students’ ability to sit in those emotions and grapple with what triggers them and how they move beyond those emotions to useful action for change. (p. 10)

Nurturing a genuine, felt sense of safety also means that we absolutely do not require nor passively encourage educators or students to disclose their trauma stories in an attempt to practice clean pain. Without proper training, informed consent, and skilled mental health support, asking individuals to share narratives of pain can actually cause more harm. Just as good educators take time to build community to set the stage for deeper learning, it is best to work first to cultivate the necessary conditions of safety, connection, and playfulness that can allow everyone to be in their bodies and with each other.

If the work of re-integrating embodiment and grief into teacher education sounds foreign and daunting, this is actually a good place to begin. Start with asking: what is it about grief, emotions, and/or the body that makes us feel uncomfortable? How does that discomfort show up in our personal and pedagogical lives? What persons, places, items, or practices might help support us in exploring and being with that discomfort? From there, the hope is that we as educators and life-long learners can eventually

make meaning of the context of [our] own lives, the lives of [our] students, and the context and conditions of our school communities. The grief involved therein demands educators transform, to challenge and contend with our pedagogical practice, (Wolf-Prusan, 2021.)

as well as our institutional norms and values. Grief work in teacher education is not a seamless, linear movement from dirty pain to clean pain; rather, it requires in us an ongoing commitment to be with, and move through our pain, however it may emerge, and towards an openness to change for ourselves, each other, and our potential futures.

References

- Cariaga, S. (2021). Beginning with the body: A unit on building and defining safety in unsafe schools. In The Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective (Eds.), *Lessons in Liberation: An Abolition Toolkit for Educators* (pp. 236-243). AK Press.
- Cariaga, S. (2020). "Now Let Us Shift" A Conocimiento-to Praxis with Students of Color in an English Classroom." In, M. Cantu-Sanchez, C. De Leon-Zepeda, & N. Cantu (Eds.), *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldua: Pedagogy and practice for our classrooms and communities* (pp. 123-137) University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1595m67>
- Cariaga, S. (2018). Towards self-recovery: Cultivating love with young women of color through pedagogies of bodymind spirit. *The Urban Review*, 51(1), 101-122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0482-9>
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2013). Now let us shift... the path of conocimiento... inner work, public acts. In This bridge we call home. In, G. Anzaldúa & A.L. Keating (Eds.), *this bridge we call home radical visions for transformation* (pp. 554-592). Routledge.
- Bernal, D. D., & Villalpando, O. (2002). An apartheid of knowledge in academia: The struggle over the "legitimate" knowledge of faculty of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 169-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713845282>
- Andrews, D. J. C., Brown, T., Castillo, B. M., Jackson, D., & Vellanki, V. (2019). Beyond damage-centered teacher education: Humanizing pedagogy for teacher educators and preservice teachers. *Teachers College Record*, 121(6), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0161468119121006>
- Devich-Cyril, M. (2021). To give your hands to freedom, first give them to grief. In Brown, A. (Ed.), *Holding change: The way of emergent strategy facilitation and meditation* (pp. 64-79). AK Press.
- Doka, K. (2002). *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice*. Champaign, Illinois: Research Company
- Lara, I. (2002). Healing sueños for academia. In G. E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home* (pp. 433-438). New York: Routledge.
- Lorde, A. (2012). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.
- Marie, T., & Watson, K. (2020). Remembering an apocalyptic education: Revealing life beneath the waves of black being. *Root Work Journal*, 1(1), 14-48. <https://doi.org/10.47106/4rwj.11.02181931>
- Martinez, A. N., Valdez, C., & Cariaga, S. (2016). Solidarity with the people: Organizing to disrupt teacher alienation. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(3), 300-313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2016.1194104>
- Menakem, R. (2021). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Penguin UK.
- Milstein, C. (Ed.). (2017). *Rebellious mourning: The collective work of grief*. AK Press.
- Navarro, O., Shah, J. K., Valdez, C., Dover, A. G., & Henning, N. (2020). Fighting on all fronts: The push, pull, and persistence of social justice educators and the move to reimagine teacher preparation. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 47(3), 9-31.
- Ohito, E. O. (2017): Thinking through the flesh: a critical autoethnography of racial body politics in urban teacher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 22 (2), 250-268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1294568>
- Ohito, E. O., & Oyler, C. (2017). Feeling our way toward inclusive counter-hegemonic pedagogies in teacher education. In L. Florian & N. Pantić (Eds.), *Teacher education for the changing demographics of schooling* (pp. 183-198). Springer, Cham.
- Rowling, L (2008): Linking spirituality, school communities, grief and wellbeing. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 13(3), 241-251.
- Roy, A. (2020, April 3). The pandemic is a portal. *The Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/108f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>
- Stovall, D. (2018). Are we ready for 'school' abolition?: Thoughts and practices of radical imaginary in education. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 17(1), 6.

Valenzuela, A. (2005). Subtractive schooling, caring relations, and social capital in the schooling of US-Mexican youth. In, M. Fine & L. Weis (Eds.), *Beyond silenced voices: Class, race, and gender in United States schools* (pp. 83-94). State University of New York Press.

Weller, F. (2015). *The wild edge of sorrow: Rituals of renewal and the sacred work of grief*. North Atlantic Books.

Wolf-Prusan, L. (2021). Grief as the pathway to hope and hope as the pathway through grief in the teaching profession. In N. Sieben & S. Shelton (Eds.), *Humanizing grief in higher education* (pp. 135-141). Routledge.

A correction statement was issued regarding a grammatical error in the originally published version of this article. For the complete statement, visit: <https://doi.org/10.46787/dialogue.v1i1.4037>

Talk Story: The Experiences of Teaching Special Education During the Pandemic

Conrad Oh-Young, Ph.D., California State University Dominguez Hills
Joselyn Castañeda, M.A., California State University Dominguez Hills
Julie León, M.A., California State University Dominguez Hills
Ina Mae Tevaga, M.A., California State University Dominguez Hills
Leslie Nelson, Ph.D., Clark County School District



Abstract

The pandemic was a challenging time. In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, many schools were forced to close. To continue to meet the educational needs of students, educators transitioned instruction to distance learning. This abrupt shift may have had adverse effects on students with disabilities and the teachers who work with them. Thus, the purpose of this manuscript is to provide special education teachers an opportunity to share their pandemic related teaching experiences.

Key words:

special education, special education teachers, specialized instruction, mental health, Free Appropriate Public Education

The onset of the pandemic was a challenging time (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE] Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2021). Many students, teachers, and administrators faced the unimaginable as schools around the world closed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. It has been estimated that these closures impacted 1.57 billion worldwide (UNESCO, 2020).

In the U.S., 77% of public schools transitioned some or all classes to distance learning during spring 2020 (Berger et al., 2022). This was a significant increase when compared to the 21% of public schools that offered at least some classes over distance learning during the 2017-2018 school year (Taie & Goldring, 2019). Suddenly teachers, some of whom have never had the training to provide effective online instruction, were tasked with learning how to teach virtually. While these challenges impacted all students, teachers, and administrators, it is possible that the effects of the pandemic weighed more heavily on students with disabilities (SWD) (Gao, 2020; USDOE OCR, 2021).

In Hawaii, the phrase “talk story” is synonymous with the sharing of stories. Affonso et al. (2007) describes the process as: ...keen listening while another is telling his or her story, not disputing the content of another’s story, and rallying in support of one whose emotions flow in the mid of a story. The flowing of emotions sanctions the depth and meaning of one’s story and encourages others to follow in expressing intimate feelings. (p. 403)

One method of learning more about how the pandemic impacted SWD would be to ask the teachers who worked directly with this population. Thus, the purpose of this manuscript is to provide special education teachers a forum in which they could “talk story”. Before the teachers’ share their experiences, a brief overview that describes how the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) impacts the education of SWD in the U.S., will be presented. Knowledge on this subject will provide a contextual framework of the requirements that special education teachers are responsible for addressing in their professional careers as they work with SWD.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) is U.S. federal law that serves, “to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living” (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 [d] [1] [A]). The Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that eligible SWD receive must be provided at no charge and must be appropriate based on their respective Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

The IEP is a document that describes the special education and related services that the student will receive. The two IEP components that are of interest to this manuscript are how the student's disability impacts the individual's general education curriculum progress and the types of specialized instruction and related services (e.g., speech therapy, audiology services, etc.) that the student is to receive.

FAPE and the IEP are two elements of the IDEA put in place to address both the inequality and inequity of the education that SWD received prior to the law's inception in 1975. With in-person instruction, it is definitely possible for a special education teacher to work with the IEP team, which includes the student's parents, to craft an IEP, and then use it to guide instruction to effectively provide a FAPE. The shift to virtual learning made this process challenging for many special education teachers, leading to feelings of uncertainty, despair, and grief as they did their best to continue providing a FAPE.

Talk Story

The remainder of the manuscript will present the stories of special education teachers as they worked to meet the needs of their students during the pandemic. This will be accomplished by first introducing a pandemic related issue, then providing the educator the

opportunity to present their stories related to the trials and traumas, as well as the tribulations and revelations they experienced.

Impact On Students' Educational Progress

While we may never know the full effects of the pandemic on SWD, the data available provides a disheartening picture. First, when compared to pre-pandemic academic performance, there was an increase in the amount of SWD receiving failing grades during the pandemic (e.g., Alvarez et al., 2020). Second, student attendance decreased (Morando-Rhim & Ekin, 2021). For example, the American Institute for Research (2021) reported that only 74% of SWD participated in assigned distance learning activities. Third, SWD were less engaged (Parents Together Foundation, 2020). For example, based on Fall 2020 data, Morando-Rhim and Ekin (2021) reported that 53% of Los Angeles Unified School District high school SWD submitted online coursework. Finally, many of the services that SWD needed were either not provided (Parents Together Foundation, 2020), or were not comparable to the services pre-pandemic (Morando-Rhim & Ekin, 2021). For example, a survey of 744 school districts found that 61% reported difficulties with delivering speech therapy over distance learning (Jackson & Bowdon, 2020).

This statistic is particularly troublesome as data from the USDOE (2022) suggests that 16.3% of the 6,410,219 students ages 6-21 who received special education under IDEA, were diagnosed as having speech or language impairments, and thus needing speech therapy. While this is a sizable amount, students diagnosed with other types of disabilities (e.g., autism or intellectual disabilities), may also receive speech therapy, making the impact on SWD significant.

Joselyn Castañeda, MA



The first teacher voice is Joselyn Castañeda. She is a special education teacher who has worked with students with intellectual disabilities from transitional kindergarten up to second grade. The 2021-2022 school year was her fourth year of serving as a teacher in the state of California. Joselyn describes her experiences with working to meet her students' education needs during the abrupt shift to distance learning. She then discusses how the increased health and safety guidelines impacted the return to in-person instruction. Joselyn then closes by summarizing what she is thankful for.

FAPE and Distance Learning.

When thinking of special education teaching, one thing that comes to mind is a free appropriate public education (FAPE). As a special education teacher ensuring FAPE is met on a regular basis can be challenging, but ensuring it is met during a pandemic has been one of the hardest things I have done in my career as a teacher. When we were told we were going fully online the first thing that came to my mind was, how was I going to ensure that my students received a free appropriate public education? The simple answer was that solely online instruction was not going to be enough. After much planning I decided that I had to ensure my students had access to tangible lessons that would capture their attention. This included toys, crayons, counting

counting manipulatives, paper worksheets, playdough, and many more items. Items that many of my students did not have access to at home. This meant that in order to fulfill my duty as a teacher, I would have to find a way to get these items to my students. I was able to get some items donated and some items I just bought out of pocket. Once I had these items, I hand delivered them myself to each of my student's homes to ensure they still had not only FAPE, but an equitable education. Although these items helped motivate both me and my students, teaching online was a daily challenge. Whether it was trying to help parents manage behaviors through the camera, keeping students engaged for more than 15 minutes, or simply trying to navigate all the new technology that was thrown at us. Online learning was a daily challenge and once I felt I was getting into a rhythm, we were told we were going to go back to in-person learning.

Return To In-Person Learning.

In-person learning during the pandemic was a completely new ball game and I found myself stumbling through the days scared of either getting sick with the virus or getting my students sick with the virus. It was such a hard time for me specifically because every day I felt like I was failing my students. I felt this way because the guidance for in-person learning was to wear our

masks at all times and keep a 6 feet distance between students. This meant that I was unable to provide a lot of the basic things that my students needed to succeed. How were my students supposed to learn letter sounds when they couldn't see my face? How were they supposed to learn social skills when they couldn't get near their friends? How were they supposed to learn to write letters and numbers when they couldn't receive any hand over hand guidance? Many days I felt like my students were being disproportionately affected by the effects of COVID-19 and there was nothing I could do to fix it. It was really hard for me to stand back and just let things go on, but as the days kept passing and the time kept moving, I found myself feeling a bit optimistic about the situation because of the people around me.

Powerful Interactions.

Although the pandemic is still ongoing, and we are still facing many unknowns, I found myself thankful for the little things and grateful for the daily interactions I once avoided. Although I still struggle with ensuring FAPE is met on a daily basis, I have learned to take everything in stride and go with the flow. To not be as overwhelmed over things I cannot control. Now I enjoy daily conversations with my neighboring teacher, planning for fun in-person collaborative activities and just being around other people in a positive learning environment.

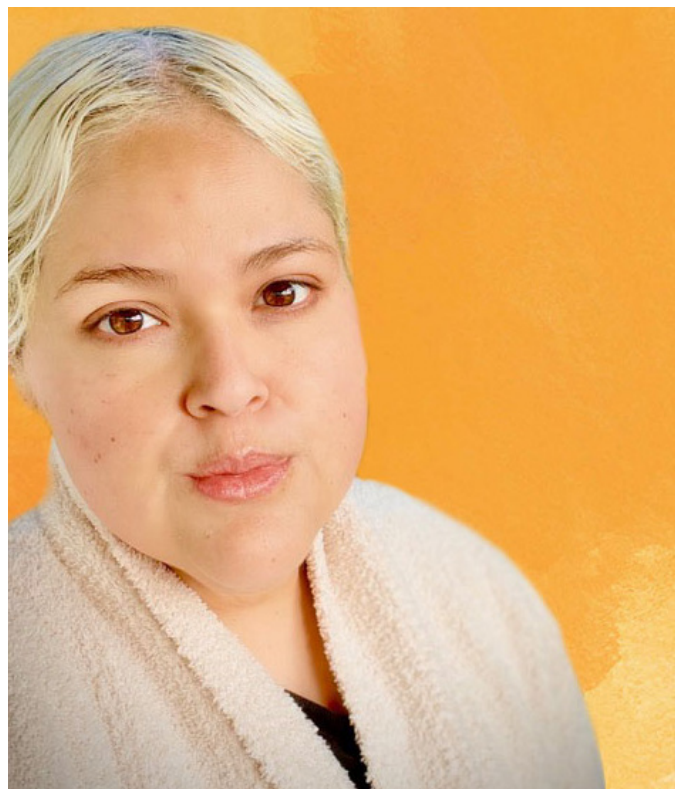
Knowing it could all be taken away in a flash as it was during the 2019-2020 school year makes me really appreciative of even the tough days. Overall, this entire ordeal has been the biggest lesson that I am still learning from to this day.

Impact On Students' Mental Health

Using data collected on over 1,200 parents, Jones (2020) reported that 45% felt the separation from classmates and teachers that their children experienced was a “major challenge”. Other studies reported issues related to students' levels of anxiety, stress, and increased instances of being cyberbullied (Lessard & Puhl, 2021), as well as depression and loneliness (Gazmararian et al., 2021). In addition to these challenges, Asian American students also faced COVID related discrimination (Ermis-Demirtas et al., 2022).



Julie León, MA



Julie León, our second voice, is a high school special education teacher who works with students with mild/moderate disabilities. The 2021-2022 school year was her twelfth year overall working in schools and her fourth year of serving as a teacher of record in California. Here, Julie starts by describing the struggles SWD faced during the pandemic. She then discusses learning how to reach her students as instruction shifted back to the in-person classroom setting. Finally, Julie closes with a reflection on how serving as a teacher is more than lesson plans and grades.

Student Struggles.

The first year of online learning did not provide students FAPE; however, this was by no fault of anyone or anything but a pandemic. No one was prepared for it and when we suddenly found ourselves sitting at home in shock and awe, we, all who are involved in the educational system, desperately scrambled for solutions while trying to cope with everything at hand. Even in the chaos, school districts managed to still provide learning opportunities for free to all. Despite these good intentions, our students suffered...especially our students with disabilities. Our students with disabilities need specialized services and supports that help them meet their educational needs. Without these, how could we have FAPE? It simply was not happening. Online learning, especially at the genesis of the pandemic, was failing them and us. It was heartbreaking to see students lose family members to a virus while trying to figure out how to use a Chromebook and the hotspot the district provided from their school's parking lot. That year, kids disappeared from the radar, some dropping out because online school was too much yet simply not enough.

Starting From the Beginning

Coming back to the classroom was incredibly stressful. I felt like a brand-new teacher. I was worried I had forgotten to be in front of students and

react to real faces and not black boxes. Coming back to the classroom was incredibly stressful. I felt like a brand-new teacher. I was worried I had forgotten to be in front of students and react to real faces and not black boxes with white-lettered names on a computer screen. I was worried about getting sick and maybe dying. The first day back, students were apprehensive while gazing from their medical-grade face masks, unsure of me, each other, and school in general. They looked like they hadn't done this before and they hadn't really, not like this. I felt broken and my students felt broken. This made me shift my way of teaching. I focused on social-emotional skills. I fought hard to build relationships with the most withdrawn of my students. I sought to comfort those who had lost dads and moms and grandparents. I sympathized with those who had to get jobs during the pandemic to help their parents put food on the table and pay rent. This school year (2021-2022) was familiar but not, in an alternate reality type of way where the students feared for their lives daily while relearning basic skills, teachers were fighting the piling lists of duties and tasks and trainings, while we all pretended it was perfectly normal and fine.

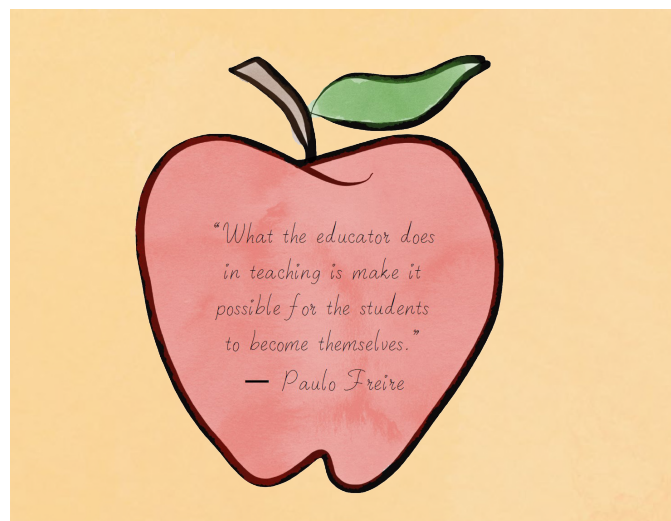
Teaching Is More Than Letter Grades.

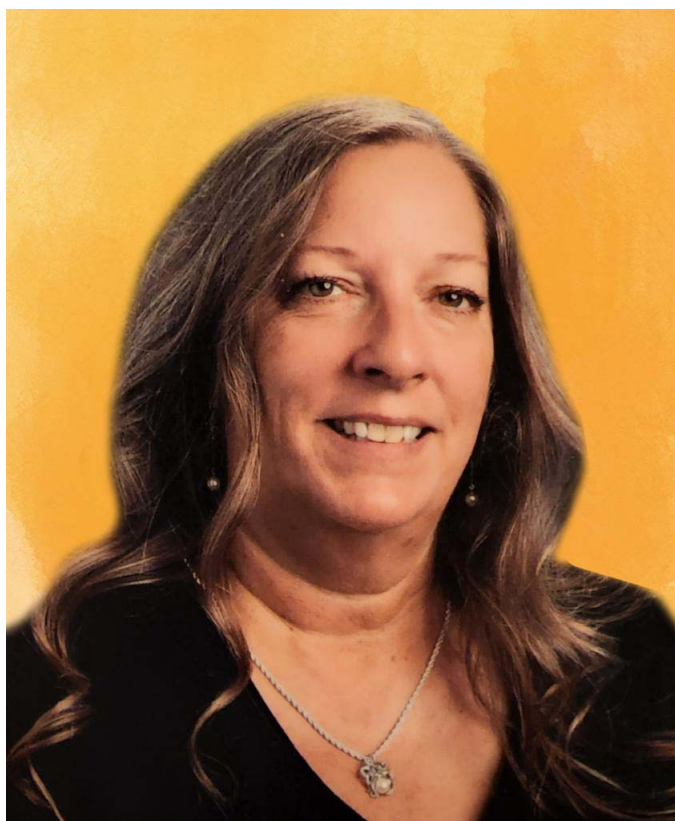
While online learning was challenging, we, my students and I, were able to build something...a coping mechanism of sorts where we logged onto Zoom to see

our names and maybe hear each other's voices for some semblance of normalcy. Some of my Zoom classes became very much like families, where the students sang Happy Birthday to each other and spoke about their lives or highs and lows for that week. We laughed and even cried. In the privacy of turned-off cameras, kids were willing to become vulnerable because they knew we all needed each other. I miss that. Being back in the classroom further reinforced this thought. As educators our duty does not stop at teaching our students but knowing and understanding them. The pandemic changed how I approach my teaching for the better. Yes, I have become skilled at using all these platforms, applications, and fancy websites that the district has paid thousands upon thousands of dollars for. Most importantly, however, I've learned to regularly allocate time for social-emotional learning, reflection, and sharing in my class. This is something I picked up thanks to the pandemic. It has helped my students build strong bonds among each other and myself. We help each other. With all sincerity, because of this, some of the best memories of my life have happened within the four walls of my classroom with my students right by my side.

Impact On Instruction

Prompts are a form of instruction frequently used by teachers to increase the probability of a student responding correctly. Examples of prompts include verbal solve an equation). Though all teachers use prompts, special education teachers frequently use physical prompts with SWD. Physical prompts are where teachers provide students with physical assistance, such as a teacher physically guiding a student's hand when teaching how to write his name. With distance learning, it was no longer possible to utilize physical prompting without the assistance of family members. Challenges with using instructional strategies, such as physical prompting, could be one of the reasons why Jackson and Bowdon (2020) reported that 82% of school districts experienced difficulties with providing SWD, "hands-on instructional accommodations and services", over distance learning (p. 4).



Leslie Nelson, PhD

The third voice is Dr. Leslie Nelson. In her over 30 years of working in schools, she has served as a teacher of record at the preschool, elementary, and middle school levels. She has also served as a teacher coach, special education facilitator, professional development trainer, and has taught courses at the university level. She is currently an elementary school special education teacher in the state of Nevada. In her narrative, Dr. Nelson describes the impact that the pandemic had not only on her unprecedented career as a teacher, but also the impact on her students during the onset of the pandemic. She

then discusses preparing for the 2020-2021 school year as a special education facilitator before transitioning back to being a classroom teacher.

Transition to Distance Learning.

The Friday before the first shut-down occurred, the principal came into my last period English class. This was odd because in a large middle school administrators do not visit special education classrooms unless there is a matter of great urgency. At his heels was the school's tech guru. As he walked in, it became apparent that he was in door-to-door mode, he looked at me and smiled, "Dr. Nelson, you already have a Google Classroom up and running, don't you"? One of my students piped up immediately, "What do you think we are doing right now Mr. P"! He turned to the guru and said, "All good here".

Before the last bell rang an announcement was made for all staff to report to the library. At this meeting we were told to take home any materials we needed to teach from home for a few weeks, just enough time for the school to possibly go through a "deep clean". I started having flashbacks of my students' actions over those past few days, one of whom would not take off a pair of rubber gloves and was spraying everything with Lysol and the other who had been wearing gloves and a surgical mask rolling on the floor crying that he

didn't want to die from COVID. After the meeting I said a quick good-bye to my favorite staff members, gathered the book we had been reading in my English class, and headed for the door not realizing that it would be June before I would be allowed back onto campus.

That evening there was breaking news with the governor announcing a temporary closure of all schools in our state. He referred to it as a 10-day pause while all schools undergo deep cleaning and the state assessed to determine the safety of the students and their families to return to school. As the governor was giving his address my son walked through and said, "You know mom, you aren't going back to your school this year." After listening to the governor's address and the follow-up questions, I left a Google Classroom message for my students letting them know that I would have a Google Meet on Monday that they can join using their phones or tablets.

For the remainder of the school year, I held class via Google Meet, posted assignments in Google Classroom, and used Google Meet to record myself reading our book, *The Watsons go to Birmingham*. As I urged students to join class via Google Meet, I was surprised to find that the students who had been the greatest behavior problem when learning face-to-face, were the most engaged and productive during distance learning.

Helping Other Teachers.

During the summer I changed schools and positions from classroom teacher to special education facilitator for three schools. As we moved closer to go back to school, we received the dreaded news...we would start the year teaching from home. For my new position this meant assisting teachers with revising IEPs over distance learning.

As the school year started, I kept my virtual office door open for the special education teachers at all three schools. I found that supporting a group of educators during times of uncertainty was equally as difficult as supporting students and their families. The greatest difficulty fell with writing the IEPs to include service minutes for distance and hybrid education models and what that service looked like when provided. I spent hours in my virtual office ensuring teachers that they would be alright and their students would be okay as well.

Return To the Classroom.

During the 2021-2022 school year I again shifted positions, choosing to work as a special education resource teacher at a Title I school. During the year there were only 3 families out of more than 30 IEPs I held that elected to attend in-person. Many of the families that attended virtually stated they did so for reasons of convenience. Out of

the 30 IEPs there was only one that a family member did not participate in. This was a huge increase in family participation from my past experiences.

As a result of teaching online and coaching special education teachers, most of whom struggled to teach online, my philosophy on using technology has changed. My 2nd and 3rd grade students came back into the school building craving face-to-face attention and wanting to learn. They didn't want to see a video showing a math strategy or use their Chromebooks all the time. They wanted to hold a book, use their dry erase boards to solve math problems, and talk to their classmates in small groups. My philosophy of student growth shifted from using technology to watch a video to see how to solve a math problem to watching a peer solve it while explaining what they are doing. My students returned to in-person instruction well below where they should have been and it has taken thoughtful planning and instruction to begin to close the gap.

This summer, instead of taking a break from work, I am collaborating with a general education teacher on a standards-based grade level interactive journal for our incoming students. We are hoping this will help close the gaps in reading, writing, and fine motor skills that resulted from distance learning. Before the COVID closures, I would have wanted to create the materials for students to use in an

in an online platform...now I see the importance of students creating their own learning materials with thoughtful guidance from their teachers.

Impact On Teachers' Mental Health

Pre-pandemic, many special education teachers experienced job related stress, exhaustion, and burnout (Hester et al., 2020), all of which disadvantage SWD as it contributes to teacher shortages. COVID-19 seemingly took those feelings in teachers and then amplified them. For example, Cormier et al. (2021) surveyed special education teachers in the U.S. and found that they experienced "moderate to extreme" levels of anxiety, stress, depression, and exhaustion as a result of the pandemic (p. 1768). As stated by a participant in Kim et al. (2022), "I feel like I'm on overload. My brain feels like a browser with 100 tabs open. There is so much to think about all the time" (p. 309).



Ina Mae Tevaga, MA



Our fourth voice is Ina Mae Tevaga. She is a high school special education teacher who teaches math to SWD. The 2021-2022 school year was her fifth year of working in schools and her fourth as a teacher of record in California. Ina Mae begins by describing the challenges of transitioning to distancing learning while caring for two young children at home during the onset of the pandemic. She then discusses the challenges related to the return to in-person instruction and the fears of contracting COVID. Ina Mae then closes by mentioning that she's grateful for the support her administration has provided.

Work/Life Balance During the Pandemic. v Preparing For In-Person Instruction.

Upon returning to in-person schooling, teachers were asked to be vaccinated and have a negative COVID test. The fear of contracting COVID has always been a concern because of my daughters. They are young and I do not want them to experience the dreadful agony of COVID symptoms. The first week was professional development for all staff members. Our administrators planned a retreat for our staff, and not everyone had received their COVID testing results before the start of the retreat. This was alarming because the administrators decided to continue the retreat. Within the next few days, the results of some of the staff members were received, and one of the staff members tested positive. Everyone in close contact with this person was contacted and had to quarantine. This test showed administrators that, although we were all vaccinated, we were not all safe from COVID. It was a scary moment for me because I have never contracted COVID. After the first week of professional development, I felt more comfortable coming to work in-person.

Administrative Support.

I was asked to co-teach with two individuals who were first-year teachers. I was excited to learn from them and bounce ideas off each other. I worked

well with both my co-teachers. We were given multiple days to plan for our classes throughout the year, which helped tremendously because we were on the same page. In addition, the Special Education teachers were given IEP working days to work solely on IEPs. This decreased my stress level. My administrators understand when we ask for planning days or IEP workdays. They usually allow us to take those days if we have enough coverage. The 2021-2022 school year was tough, but it was doable because of the support we had for each other and from our administrators.

Conclusion

Students and teachers have faced many difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as feelings of despair, uncertainty, and grief. The purpose of this manuscript was to provide special education teachers opportunities to talk story by sharing their experiences of teaching during the pandemic. Despite the challenges these teachers faced related to instruction and providing a FAPE, or personal and/or professional struggles with mental health, they have chosen to remain teaching. All four educators continue to serve their schools and heal their communities with knowledge and compassion, along with the experiences gained from teaching during the pandemic.

References

- Affonso, D. D., Shibuya, J. Y., & Frueh, B. C. (2007). Talk-Story: Perspectives of children, parents, and community leaders on community violence in rural Hawaii. *Public Health Nursing, 24*(5), 400–408. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1525-1446.2007.00650.x>
- American Institutes for Research. (2021). *National survey of public education's response to COVID-19*. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/perc.team/viz/COVID_Survey_1Oct2020/NationalSurveyofPublicEducationsResponsetoCOVID-19
- Alvarez, A. M., Czajkowski, J., Moore, V., Salkeld, J., Quirk, J., & Winters, D. (2020). *Sweetwater Union High School District special board meeting: Distance learning and in-person instruction*. <https://ca-times.bright-spotcdn.com/e8/56/ea7c2fcb4e2da92db8bf436960f9/board-presentation-reopening.pdf>
- Berger, M., Kuang, M., Jerry, L., & Freund, D. (2022). *Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on public and private elementary and secondary education in the United States (preliminary data): Results from the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022019.pdf>
- Cormier, C. J., McGrew, J., Ruble, L., & Fischer, M. (2022). Socially distanced teaching: The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on special education teachers. *Journal of Community Psychology, 50*(3), 1768–1772. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22736>
- Ermis-Demirtas, H., Luo, Y., & Huang, Y.-J. (2022). The impact of COVID-19-associated discrimination on anxiety and depression symptoms in Asian American adolescents. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation, 11*(3), 153–160. <https://doi.org/10.1027/2157-3891/a000049>
- GAO. (2020). *Challenges providing services to K-12 English learners and students with disabilities during COVID-19*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-43.pdf>
- Gazmararian, J., Weingart, R., Campbell, K., Cronin, T., & Ashta, J. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of students from 2 semi-rural high schools in Georgia. *Journal of School Health, 91*(5), 356–369. <http://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13007>
- Hester, O. R., Bridges, S. A., & Rollins, L. H. (2020). “Overworked and underappreciated”: Special education teachers describe stress and attrition. *Teacher Development, 24*(3), 348–365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2020.1767189> Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33>
- Jackson, D., & Bowdon, J. (2021). Spotlight on students with disabilities. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/COVID-Survey-Spotlight-on-Students-with-Disabilities-FINAL-Oct-2020.pdf>

Jones, J. (2020). *Social factors most challenging in COVID-19 distance learning*. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/312566/social-factors-challenging-covid-distance-learning.aspx>

Kim, L. E., Oxley, L., & Asbury, K. (2022). "My brain feels like a browser with 100 tabs open": A longitudinal study of teachers' mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 299–318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12450>

Lessard, L. M., & Puhl, R. M. (2021). Adolescent academic worries amid COVID-19 and perspectives on pandemic-related changes in teacher and peer relations. *School Psychology*, 36(5), 285–292. <http://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000443>

Morando-Rhim, L., Ekin, S. (2021). *How has the pandemic affected students with disabilities? A review of the evidence to date*. https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/final_swd_report_2021.pdf

Parents Together Foundation. (2020). *Parents Together survey reveals remote learning is failing our most vulnerable students*. <https://parentstogetheraction.org/2020/05/27/parentstogether-survey-reveals-remote-learning-is-failing-our-most-vulnerable-students-2/>

Taie, S., & Goldring, R. (2019). *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States: Results from the 2017-18 National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019140.pdf>

UNESCO. (2020). *Reopening schools: When, where and how?* <https://en.unesco.org/news/reopening-schools-when-where-and-how?> <https://en.unesco.org/news/reopening-schools-when-where-and-how>

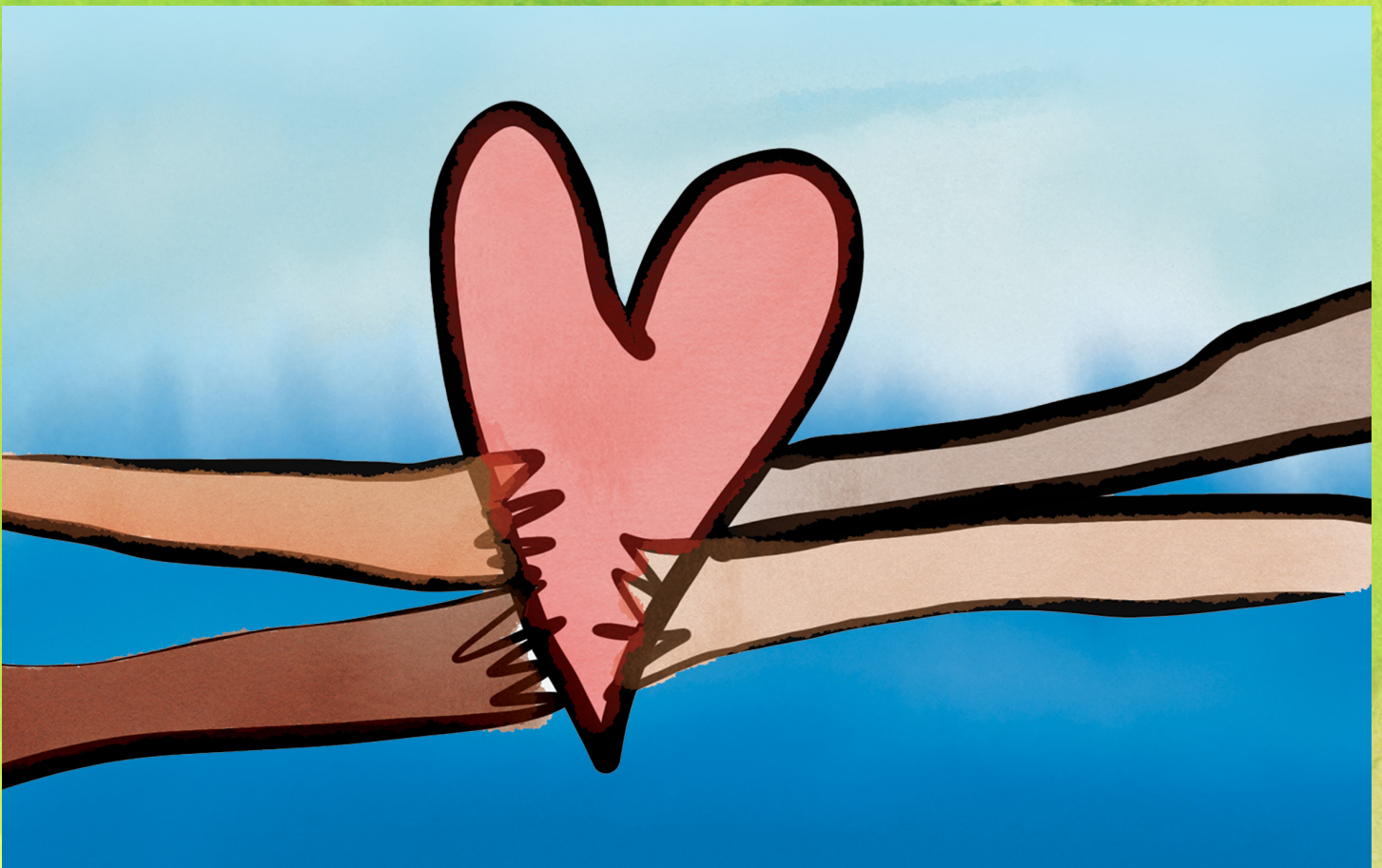
U.S. Department of Education. (2022). *43rd annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2021*. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/43rd-arc-for-idea.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2021). *Education in a pandemic: The disparate impacts of COVID-19 on America's students*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>

Cultivating Comadrerismo for Collective Liberation

Ana Miriam Barragán Santoyo, California State University Dominguez Hills

Joanna B. Pérez, Ph.D., California State University Dominguez Hills



Abstract

In this paper, we draw from our positionality, respective roles on campus, and experience with developing the UndocuScholars Research Methods class. We argue that despite learning to navigate during a pandemic and dealing with the coexistence of grief and joy, transformation in the academy is possible when seeds are planted through building community, vulnerability, and the creation of an equitable and student-centered curriculum. At the same time, transformation in the academy occurs among faculty and staff through the development of comadrerismo, which is a bond that extends beyond collegiality, as it seeks to foster a sisterhood that honors, supports, and validates people's journeys, roles, and goals in life. In the end, we all benefit from the harvest by reimagining spaces as locations where we can experience healing, transformation, and eventually, collective liberation. It is within our line of work that we can envision, change, and benefit from altering the institutional practices that move us to radically shift from individualistic to communal joy.

Key words:

Comadrerismo, UndocuScholars, collective liberation, community healing, higher education

“All of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions and society so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom.”

~bell hooks

As educators, mentors, and practitioners on university campuses, it is not uncommon to work in silos. This is especially the case during the pandemic when social distance is the norm. However, to witness transformation in the academy, it is important to deconstruct and challenge institutional practices that promote oppression, isolation, competitiveness, and disempowerment. Part of the process requires that we collaborate across divisions to build meaningful connections and advocate for culturally relevant practices that account for the needs, strengths, and goals of the entire campus community. In our case, drawing from our expertise and passion for social justice led to the development of a class, *UndocuScholars Research Methods*, which provides undocumented students¹ with opportunities to conduct research, study

abroad, and enhance their professional development. This is significant for multiple reasons. For instance, research programs are usually federally funded, which means that undocumented¹ students are not eligible to participate. Also, without advance parole,² undocumented students cannot study abroad. Lastly, rarely do staff and faculty have the opportunity to bridge their expertise to co-teach and mentor students. More specifically, beyond adding to a student’s learning experience and overall growth, we see this as an opportunity to heal upon collectively understanding that grief and joy can co-exist in our daily lives.

In this paper, we draw from our positionality, respective roles on campus, and experience with developing the UndocuScholars Research Methods class. Ana Miriam is a self-proclaimed *greñuda* whose work is influenced by the thousands of stories she has heard from undocumented immigrants: from interviewing farm workers in her hometown Boonville, California to countless encounters in university offices and K-12 classrooms across the country. She holds many intersectionalities as a queer Chicana who immigrated to the United States at age 10. Her journey includes navigating life as a child of immigrants from Jalisco and Michoacán, Mexico. Fully understanding the direct impact of family separation, she now travels as a form of liberation and hopes to create beautiful spaces for others to experience the world. Her proudest accomplishments include having the

¹The term “undocumented students” is inclusive of immigrants who have obtained additional benefits through United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

² Advance Parole is a federal benefit that allows eligible non-citizen immigrants to travel abroad.

opportunity to grow in community and collectively create spaces in higher education that advocate for equity with and for undocumented students, including serving as the Program Director of the California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) Immigrant Justice Center. A proud daughter of Guatemalan immigrants and first-generation scholar, Joanna is committed to approaching scholarship, teaching, and community engagement with a social justice lens. Her research examines how systems of power and inequality shape the social conditions of immigrant communities. As an educator, she facilitates student-centered learning environments that draw on students' experiences, strengths, and resilience. At the same time, she participates in efforts that center the voices and address the needs of underserved communities. Currently, in her role as Associate Professor and Interim Faculty Associate Director of the Office of First & Second Year Experience at CSUDH, she leads and collaborates with campus partners to implement culturally sustaining pedagogies, programming, and strategies that seek to close equity gaps in higher education and beyond. Together, we argue that, despite learning to navigate during a pandemic and dealing with the coexistence of grief and joy, transformation in the academy is possible when seeds are planted through building community, vulnerability, and the creation of an equitable and student-centered curriculum. At the same time, transformation in the academy occurs among faculty

and staff through the development of comadrerismo, which is a bond that extends beyond collegiality, as it seeks to foster a sisterhood that honors, supports, and validates people's journeys, roles, and goals in life. In the end, we all benefit from the harvest by reimagining spaces as locations where we can experience healing, transformation, and eventually, collective liberation. As bell hooks (1994) points out, it is within our line of work that we can envision, change, and benefit from altering the institutional practices that move us to radically shift from individualistic to communal joy.

Comadrerismo

Within the Latinx community, family, whether biological or non-biological, is often critical to survive, overcome, and thrive in society. In particular, "Latino familism assigns females the helping roles of nurturers, healers, educators, and diviners" (Comas-Diaz, 2013, 63). To sustain such roles, Latinas rely on the guidance, support, and encouragement of other women. In some cases, Latinas become comadres (co-mothers), which "strengthens the special bond between women who are intimate friends" (63). While comadre is often a label that is used to describe the relationship between the mother and the godmother of a child, comadrerismo is also symbolic of the relationship among women who share common goals, values, and seek to utilize their bond to advance the

betterment of their surrounding community.

Women of color, including Latina faculty and staff, are underrepresented in educational and institutional spaces. One way that we manage to persist and thrive is through comadrerismo. In our case, comadrerismo allows us to build a bridge between faculty and student affairs and has become symbolic of resistance, community, unity, love, and hope. Through building strong coalitions, positionalities are valued, experiences are validated, and strengths are uplifted. As Ribero and Arellano (2019) point out, “comadrismo refers to a feminist reciprocal relationship among women” that can be utilized as a mentoring model (p. 336). Through building “trusting kinship relationships,” women that are committed to anti-racist work can thrive and have a deep impact in their respective disciplines and classrooms (p. 336). To do so, especially during a pandemic, like Banda & Reyes (2022) point out, building and embodying comadrerismo includes grounding ourselves in a Latina epistemology of care, which “prioritizes personal connection and sharing life experiences to build community and belonging” (p. 4). This is accomplished through building trust, being vulnerable and transparent, and utilizing a social justice lens that informs the work that we do and how we take care of each other in the process. While this model is critical among faculty who are women of color, it is also equally important to

implement among women of color who are staff and administrators. As evidenced in our experiences, we find that comadrerismo becomes critical not only for women of color in academia, but also has the capacity to have a ripple effect on students and the entire campus community.

Positionality

Beyond colleagues, collaborators, and comrades, we consider ourselves comadres. Through sharing our life experiences, struggles, insecurities, fears, while also celebrating our accomplishments, encouraging each other, and simply providing space for us to be our authentic selves, we have bonded in a way that makes our work that much more meaningful. We find joy in knowing that, as opposed to abiding to the individualistic, competitive, and at times, toxic nature of the academy, we can utilize our roles and draw on our expertise, tools, and resources to imagine, create, and implement programs, events, and classes that center the voices, needs, and strengths of our diverse student population. Together as daughters of immigrants, we embrace the cultural power and accessibility we have to connect with students we serve. We approach our work with compassion knowing exactly what our students are facing, which allows us to operate in common ground. As educators and practitioners, our positionality, higher education experiences,

and community engagement inform the way that we use our roles at CSUDH to validate, affirm, and uplift the unique experiences of students. More than emphasizing the importance of academic success and professional development, we must invest in students by building community and reimagining the academy as a place that recognizes our community cultural wealth (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016) in order to achieve collective liberation (O, 2020).

Comadrerismo has shaped our professional, community, and personal experiences. Professionally, comadrerismo has provided a safe and brave space in academia where we can reimagine our respective roles and how we impact students, campus partners, and community at large. Our comadrerismo represents the power of building coalitions between academic and student affairs. Together, we intentionally facilitate spaces of learning where students witness the importance of community care, which is an act of mutual love, respect, and support. Within and outside the classroom, we consistently create and/or support campus events, programs, and initiatives that focus on celebrating our unique positionalities, experiences, passions, and goals. For example, besides co-creating UndoScholars and Global Immersion Program, we have been active participants in student-centered events including but not limited to: (1) día de los muertos, honoring those who have passed, (2) xtravaganza ball, honoring the tenacity

and creativity of the LGBTQIA+ community, (3) women's retreat, honoring the educational and personal trajectories of students who identify as women, and (4) resilient caregivers workshop, honoring the unique circumstances and experiences of the campus community who play the role of caregivers. In each of these events, we have learned how to re-imagine and model mentorship, how to dismantle meritocracy and the idea that we succeed by working in silos, and how to integrate and celebrate non-white, heteronormative narratives that are often ignored in academia.

Our comadrerismo has provided the outlet that we need to grow professionally through changing the ways we approach academic writing (e.g., co-writing this article), co-teaching (e.g., undocuscholars research course and community engagement & social justice course), and how we embody praxis within both academic and student affairs. This includes changing policies and campus practices that are inclusive of diverse student populations. Through our joint efforts, we have also changed the ways we define and engage in advocacy work. Beyond promoting social change within our campus, we also work towards impacting the surrounding community, including our own respective families.

In an effort to center wellness and prioritize our mental health, we allocate time to check-in, vent about work, talk about our personal life, share experiences

(e.g., work at coffee shops, attend conferences, go on a road trip, etc.), meet each other's families, and constantly show up for each other. Text threads (including audio messages) are filled with affirmations (you are capable, your feelings are valid, etc.), words of encouragement (e.g., you got this!), and accountability (e.g., working out, getting enough sleep, drinking water, etc.). Whether in person, via text, or video chat, we are always vulnerable, give each other grace, share tears, laughter, secrets, Instagram reels, and reimagine what our work and future can be. Given the many ways that it positively impacts our lives, we also began to model our coexistence through comadrerismo with others across campus.

Outside of the classroom and among members of the Undocumented Student Ally Coalition (USAC) on campus, cultivating seeds was reflected in the intentional, consistent, and committed effort to connect and bond beyond the walls of the academy. Slowly and steadily, check-ins and personal life updates became regular at meetings, and a smaller subcommittee of four self-identified Latinas who worked on creating and implementing a mental health retreat for undocumented students started a group text. The group bonded over birthdays and often shared advice on career moves, dating, and family dynamics. At the same time, celebrations over small and significant accomplishments also became a regular practice to uplift one another and show love and support in

new and healthy ways. Consequently, cultivating comadrerismo led to scheduled lunch meetings, walks, and beach dates to share personal goals, challenges, and accomplishments, and gradually, comadrerismo has been extended to those interested in connecting beyond the demands of work as an effort to care for each other. It is through these multiple forms of bonding that we have come to recognize comadrerismo as synonymous with growth, safety, encouragement, partnership, celebration, affirmation, validation, liberation, and commitment.

Pandemic Context

Writing about grief forces us to process and accept the complex, and often devastating, realities of our lives and our students' lives. We have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to separate our personal lives with work. In fact, they blended way before our rooms became our offices and our homes our entire work environment. In the process, we recognize that it is necessary for us to acknowledge that our work has always been political, and that the political, is personal (Lee, 2007). Therefore, in a world of chaos and unfairness, our personal experiences inspire us to create bridges and opportunities for undocumented students to grow and feel joy without neglecting the fact that grief is part of the process. In the case of the pandemic, grief is directly connected to structural inequities. Among

undocumented students in particular, our immigration system, health care structure, labor rights constraints, and educational institutions were the prominent causes of grief (Ro, Rodriguez, & Enriquez, 2021).

Social distancing forces family separation, which has been a reality for immigrants, including our students (Galvan et. al., 2022). When videos of devastated families went viral due to not being able to see their loved ones, it became apparent that pain and grieving remain an individualistic experience rather than building solidarity and showing compassion towards immigrant families. To worsen the situation, undocumented immigrants in certain labor industries are considered essential workers, yet many do not have access to healthcare or receive stimulus checks from the government. In addition, some of them do not qualify for unemployment and face challenges meeting their basic needs. This phenomenon impacts the way that our students conceptualize their humanity.

Feeling helpless and hopeless at times, we did our best to support students and remind them of their humanity. For months, we had been hearing the stories of our students facing financial and mental health challenges. Some of them lost their loved ones, and others lost their jobs while others lost both! Truthfully, it was extremely difficult to support these students with the lack

of resources for undocumented immigrants and the injustices they were and continue to face. The virtual world was not any different because grief logged-in during zoom meetings, too. Despite the screen, grief was present in students' eyes and broken voices. We could hear grief as students recounted stories of sorrow and loss. Grief just kept showing up all around us: in the classroom, in email reminders about people dying, during doctor's visits, and using the pandemic as an excuse to reject Black and Brown people seeking asylum at the border (Beckett, et. al., 2022). Grief showed up at breakfast, and it did not leave after dinner. It lingered. And while we thought there was a collective understanding that everyone was having a difficult time, it is not true. Some people had it much worse than others, and that included our undocumented community.

At CSUDH, there was a direct correlation of the number of students enrolled on campus and the financial challenges undocumented students and their families were experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From fall 2020 to spring 2021, 98 students did not return. Using data from the University Effectiveness, Planning, and Analytics department, at a meeting with advising offices to address the pushout rate among undocumented students, the Immigrant Justice Center reported that almost half of the students did not return the following semester due to an outstanding balance to cover tuition and fees, with

40% of students owing less than \$900. In addition, the number of undocumented students enrolled dropped drastically from 867 in fall 2020 to 676 in fall 2021. This number reflects the national decrease in enrollment across universities in the United States, but that data does not account for the specific challenges that undocumented students face in accessing and staying in higher education.

While the United States government ignored the needs of undocumented immigrants, including those called essential workers, university leaders worked together to find alternatives to the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) since it excluded undocumented students from receiving any of the funds. Successfully, the university distributed financial support through non-federal funds including emergency grants, scholarships, and institutional grants (CSUDH CARES Act). On the other hand, Los Angeles County also offered support available to undocumented immigrants and non-profit organizations such as Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) and Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), both of which provided emergency relief regardless of immigration status (COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe). In California, the Golden State Stimulus checks were also given to undocumented immigrants. Though there was a collective understanding of the need to create equitable and accessible financial

opportunities for undocumented immigrants in California, they were not enough to compensate for the lack of unemployment benefits and the fear to access appropriate health care services due to their immigration status (Yu et al., 2020).

Collectively, we felt the need to rush and force normalcy as much as possible because we were too tired of the pandemic and all the grief that it brought with it. Hence, to change the narrative, we hit the ground running at the beginning of the 2021 - 2022 academic year, ready to plan and implement a study abroad opportunity through advance parole for Deferred Action and Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients. Advance parole is a federal benefit for eligible non-citizens to travel abroad for humanitarian, employment, or educational reasons. For our students, advance parole not only represented an opportunity to study abroad, but it also gave them an opportunity to reunite with family and re-imagine what home means to them (Estrada & Ruth, 2021). This informed our work and classroom dynamics.

Planting Seeds of Joy

The UndocuScholars Research Methods course was planned and designed from an intentional community effort. The idea was born at a USAC meeting where members were asked to address structural inequities at the university

that excluded undocumented students from participating and receiving an equitable education. A group of faculty and staff began brainstorming and writing a proposal to implement a program for undocumented students to conduct research. By spring 2022, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies committed funding to create a course and support the committee's efforts. With additional support from the Office of Undergraduate Research and multiple Student Affairs departments, the program allowed participants to study abroad as part of their research projects. To ensure that students also benefited from an affirming and transformational learning environment, we designed the curriculum and program by accounting for the experiences and intersectional identities of undocumented students on our campus.

We are committed to facilitating learning spaces that are student-centered and constructed through the pedagogy of love and care, which takes time, effort, and compassion. To us, the classroom is more than a learning space; it can become a place where building community, creating a sense of belonging, and experiencing growth can lead to transformation (O, 2020). To do so requires faculty-student engagement that is collaborative rather than transactional. In our case, in the midst of navigating life in a pandemic, adjusting to online teaching/learning, and fighting against structural inequality, we find ourselves realizing that transformation requires working

towards liberation through joy.

From the beginning of the semester, we were intentional about prioritizing community building and connections. In fact, before discussing the weekly course content, we began by doing check-ins where we shared our highlights and struggles. In other words, we provided space to humanize each other's experiences, as we recognize that many of our students have multiple responsibilities beyond being students (i.e., caregivers, parents, workers, etc.). As the semester unfolded, we witnessed how students created a community space where they could be transparent and show support to one another. This became a process where seeds were planted, as it opened up the space for students to share without judgment and be embraced with an open heart and mind (Reyes, Banda, & Caldas, 2020). For example, students creatively showed their support through the Zoom chat, emojis, and reactions. This practice is instrumental in transforming the academy because the humanization of students occurs through acknowledging, validating, and affirming their experiences, resulting in communal joy.

Part of developing an equitable and student-centered curriculum requires the act of selecting readings and creating reflection-based assignments that provide an outlet for students to begin to recognize themselves as scholars and knowledge-producers. In opposition to the culture of academia where there is a

seeds through facilitating open discussions, promoting life-long learning, and building a mentoring relationship. Ultimately, the goal is for students to recognize the power of cultivating their own agency within and outside of the academy.

Within the context of our class, autoethnography research became a tool for students to utilize their experiences and positionality as the foundation to understand larger social issues. Through autoethnography, not only are students contributing to interdisciplinary studies, but they are also challenging traditional notions of research practices (Jimenez, 2020). In the process, planting seeds encompasses students reclaiming their power to question, disrupt, and alter daily practices, institutional barriers, and societal norms that are built to maintain the status quo. Hence, autoethnography research provides students with intellectual growth and has the capacity to cultivate seeds that promote community growth.

Caring for the Seeds

The intentionality behind the curriculum to reflect students' experiences and encouragement to see themselves as scholars included guest speakers who were or are currently undocumented, and since Zoom became our main space for knowledge production and community building, program participants

demonstrated their support to one another in various ways including Zoom chats and emojis. Regarding our first speaker of the semester, a student wrote

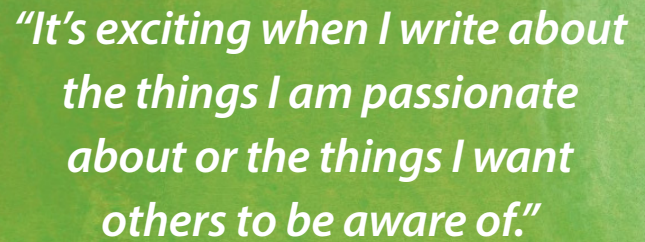
"I would like to say thank you for sharing your story, what really stood out to me is how you said that "you're coming out" was being undocumented. I can relate during high school I will keep quiet; I was ashamed of people knowing I did not have "papers". Also, thank you for sharing the nontraditional resources. I never thought of using a podcast/ social media for research purposes. You give me hope!"

The importance of centering the community using academic research was highlighted among many speakers, and a student shared their gratitude to one speaker as *"thank you for the presentation, I enjoyed it. Specifically, because your projects not only focus on presenting in the academic world but also outside academia."* Using the Zoom chat, several participants were comfortable

demonstrating their support to one another. They shared their favorite music that uplifted them and gave each other tips on how to best study or deal with stress. They also elaborated on how they felt about certain issues discussed in the class and revealed weekly tragedies and triumphs. Sharing heart and clap emojis became a familiar way of showing up for each other and letting students know they were not alone. Students seemed so comfortable with each other that at least five students constantly showed their children or siblings on camera. This sense of community and comadrerismo extended beyond classroom dynamics, as it also informed our pedagogical approach.

Through innovative pedagogical approaches, we found that part of building community and providing a space for students to reflect on the course content was utilizing online learning platforms such as Jamboard. Prior to having students engage in a variety of activities, we would share our own experiences, fears, and doubts regarding research, writing, and professional journeys. In turn, students were willing to share their own questions, concerns, doubts, and fears regarding their own academic journey. For example, in a Jamboard session, students shared their challenges associated with their writing, ranging from making grammatical errors to not doing justice to the data collected, such as, *“finding the correct term that matches the energy that was given during a testimony.”* At the same time, students also shared what

they enjoyed about the course. For example,



“It’s exciting when I write about the things I am passionate about or the things I want others to be aware of.”

Comadrerismo is about pedagogy of love and care that is shared with authenticity, vulnerability, passion, and advocacy. Hence, beyond supporting students along their research journey, it is also about being open to student feedback to co-create a learning space that results in collective empowerment. Students provided feedback through the Perceived Teaching Effectiveness (PTE), a campus student evaluation web-based system, as well as course assessments through a survey and Jamboard.

In a PTE evaluation, a student mentioned, *“be there for the students whenever we needed help, always in a positive attitude, keeping the students engaged, and helped build a community amongst the students. Overall an amazing professor!”* Furthermore, the importance of supporting students to build connections was well received, as a student mentioned a highlight for them was, *“relating the teaching material to real-life experiences to provide the student with a better understanding of the material.”* To do so, we were intentional in making the class community-based and

engaging, which is exemplified as a student mentioned, *“creating a community of belonging with excellent collaborative skills”* and another student stated, *“her lectures are so engaging and interesting that it allowed me [to] further... my interest in the field.”* These responses are critical, as they highlight the effectiveness of community building, pedagogy of love, as well as culturally sustaining curriculum and classroom dynamics. In fact, a student shared, *“this course was exceptional, it was full of knowledge, interactive, and warming.”* Beyond how students felt about the class, it was great to know that the course also had a long-lasting impact in their journeys as scholars. As a student captures,

“My knowledge in research has expanded greatly due to this course...giving me the confidence to conduct my own research and notice the power that the undocumented scholars have in creating new knowledge.”

During our end of the semester Jamboard reflection activity, students wrote *“thank you for being understanding and always giving feedback in such a caring way”* and *“thank you Dr. Perez*

and Ana Miriam for always being true and passionate in every class.” Similarly, through a survey administered by the Immigrant Justice Center to understand/analyze the overall impact of the program, one student wrote, *“the most valuable takeaway from this program was the sense of hope and optimism it provided for me. It helps to build my confidence in a academic setting and it allows me to connect at a personal level with peers and faculty members.”* Also, the sense of community allowed students to rely on each other to stay motivated. A student mentioned, *“the fact there have been other people in my shoes and we are not alone, we can succeed.”* Hence, through our comadrerismo, not only did we learn how to be more intentionally student-centered, but students also became equipped to collectively navigate and thrive throughout their higher education journey.

As faculty, we interpret the impact of comadrerismo extending beyond the classroom. When we asked students to reflect on their growth and describe the impact of the course, they highlighted the following words, *“purposeful experience, eye opening, very empowering, impactful, opened up my mind, great experience, tremendously inspiring, safe place to grow, life changing, immensely rewarding, and positive.”* In addition, we found that the course not only served as a space for community-building and knowledge production, but it also encouraged some students to apply for graduate programs. A student wrote, *“thanks to this program I*

was introduced to amazing individuals and mentors. It allowed me to work with caring faculty which has motivated me to pursue a graduate degree.” Another participant expressed, *“this program has had a great impact on me as a student and as an individual. It has completely changed my view of research and it has allowed me to grow as a scholar. Without this program I don’t think I would have been motivated to apply for graduate school.”* Another valuable takeaway can be interpreted as students’ experiences being validated because they shared the same immigration status. For example, one student wrote, *“I was able to connect to other students in my situation and who understand the challenges of being an undocumented student trying to belong here,”* and another student wrote *“[the course] definitely created a sense of belonging between me and campus because of the amazing people I met as well as discovering the [Immigrant Justice] Center.”* Indeed, as evidenced by student feedback, comadrerismo is critical to the survival of faculty, staff, and students as they navigate institutions that were not built with them in mind.

Upon completing the course, students continued to connect with each other. In particular, for students who conducted research abroad, it was crucial to find outlets to facilitate comadrerismo across borders. Some students created a group text that served as a space to ask questions, exchange ideas, as well as provide resources and tips regarding traveling

abroad as DACA recipients. In the process, students revealed intimate traveling stories. Often, they shared pictures of their family, past or present, or sites that brought back memories about their lives prior to migration. For example, students shared pictures of traditional cuisine, former homes,

*“The moment we choose to love,
we begin to move against
domination, against oppression.
The moment we choose to love,
we begin to move to freedom,
to act in ways that liberate
ourselves and others”*

~ bell hooks

monuments, schools, and grave sites of family members who they did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to because of their inability to travel. It was in these moments when the text exchanges became filled with positive affirmations and words of encouragement. Each student took the time to validate, affirm, and uplift their peers no matter the circumstances.

Harvesting Comadrerismo

As the pandemic positions undocumented students and their families at a

disadvantage, autoethnography research creates a pathway for students to travel to their birth countries, reunite with their loved ones, and reimagine home for themselves. During this process, students experience grief, joy, and begin their healing journeys together. Upon completing the course, students began to prepare themselves for their journeys to their birth country, and it was at this point when students expressed the coexistence of grief and joy. On one hand, grief manifested in the painful reflection of what their lives could have been if they never immigrated to the United States and the guilt associated with their family's inability to travel. On the other hand, joy showed up in the excitement to visit their distant relatives, travel outside of the United States, and experience their birth countries through music, food, tours, customs, etc. As a result of these emotions colliding, healing is rooted in common experiences and collective freedom.

While we intentionally took time to build comadrerismo that influences our approach and experience, we understand that there is always room to learn and improve. One of the lessons we learned was that offering a research methods course was useful, but students would benefit from the academic support beyond one semester. Modeled after McNair, a federally funded program, the Toro UndocuScholars Research program was simply not sustainable as the course was the only funded aspect of the program. Contributing factors that

led the program to not continue included students not being able to receive funding for conducting their research and faculty not receiving financial compensation for their mentorship. In addition, it is vital that we build relationships with faculty mentors the summer before starting the academic year so that they go through an ally training and understand the important role that they play in supporting the research endeavors of undocumented students. Lastly, it is important to also carve out time to discuss the ways that research can be utilized to further their education and career pathways. As such, while student participants learned from and were inspired by several undocumented and/or formerly undocumented scholars, we did not have the capacity to discuss the step-by-step process of applying to graduate school and/or how to make connections between their research expertise and career goals.

Conclusion

More than before, it is important to uphold the value of community – not just as a slogan to promote a false sense of togetherness, but to truly be intentional with the impact we create with our own power. While we continue to grieve the loss of loved ones and an old way of life, we are creating spaces for us, spaces of joy, and spaces to heal together in community and in comadrerismo.

Comadrerismo has been the lesson these

last two years because it is not only about loss; it is about who shows up when we need it. Therefore, comadrerismo is about what we gain when we feel we have lost it all. Comadrerismo allows us a space to grieve, to cry, to feel, to reflect, and above all, to care, and grow. This process allows us to imagine and reimagine what community looks like within and outside of the academy.

Together, we intentionally develop spaces that reflect our authentic selves and allow us to embark on our healing journeys outside of the classroom. While we are working hard to strive for equitable and accessible opportunities for students, we also know that we cannot do it alone. Allies and advocates are important to create and implement the unimaginable. The partnerships³ we build are not only meaningful for the lives of our students, but also for us, as it is symbolic of what we wished we had in our own higher education journeys. There is so much joy that comes from working with others who share resources because they trust and support our vision. Through this transformative collaboration, students can continue engaging in a cycle of growth by utilizing a community-center approach. Above all, they now have the tools and the power to recognize themselves as scholars, say they are knowledge-producers, and have access to better opportunities to advance their studies.

Our recommendation for everyone who is losing hope in higher education is

to challenge yourself to grieve, to push yourself to be vulnerable, and to be intentional about the community you are creating for yourself and others. We acknowledge that when we open ourselves to opportunities, we open ourselves to be vulnerable and to ask for support. This process is necessary in order to witness transformation. Ultimately, with vulnerability comes liberation and with liberation comes joy. And this is part of our healing journey in higher education.

References

- Beckett, A. G., Viaud, L., Heisler, M., & Mukherjee, J. (2022). Misusing public health as a pretext to end asylum — title 42. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 386(16):1-3. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp2200274>
- California State University, Dominguez Hills CARES Act. (n.d.). *Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students*. <https://www.csudh.edu/together/cares-act/#:-:text=Undergraduate%20and%20postgraduate%20students%2C%20including,grants%20from%20different%20CSUDH%20funds415936828> (2021, December 7).
- COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe. (n.d.). City of L.A. *Resource Guide for Immigrants during COVID-10 crisis*. <https://coronavirus.lacity.org/city-la-resource-guide-immigrants-during-covid-19-crisis>
- Estrada, E., & Ruth, A. (2021). Experiential dual frame of reference: Family consequences after DACA youth travel to Mexico through Advanced Parole. *Qualitative Sociology*, 44(2), 231-251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-021-09481-4>
- Galvan, T., Rusch, D., Rodríguez, M. M. D., & Garcini, L. M. (2022). Familias divididas [divided families]: Transnational family separation and undocumented Latinx immigrant health. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 36(4), 513-522. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000975>
- hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jimenez, R.M. (2020). Community cultural wealth pedagogies: Cultivating autoethnographic counternarratives and migration capital. *American Educational Research Journal*, 57(2): 775-807. <https://journals.sagepub.com/>

³Toro Dreamers Success Center, Dr. Quintero, Dr. Wallace, Dr. Costino, Dr. Smith, Study Abroad Office, Student Psychological Services, Department of Sociology, and College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences.

doi/full/10.3102/0002831219866148

Lee, T.M.L. (2007). Rethinking the personal and the political: Feminist activism and civic engagement. *Hypatia*, 22(4), 163-179. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4640110>

O, K. (2020). Bridging the potential-realization gap: One educator's journey towards a praxis for personal and collective liberation. *Transcontinental Human Trajectories*, 8, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.25965/trahs.3219>

Reyes, G., Banda, R.M., Caldas, B. (2020). "We're all in this boat together": Latina/Chicana embodied pedagogies of care. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2020.1791120>

Ro, A., Rodriguez, V. E., & Enriquez, L. E. (2021). Physical and mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic among college students who are undocumented or have undocumented parents. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1-10. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A675216186/AONE?u=c-sudh&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=91bb5044>

Yosso, T.J., & Burciaga, R. (2016). Reclaiming our histories, recovering community cultural wealth. *Center for Critical Race Studies at UCLA*, 5: 1-4.

Yu, M., Kelley, A. T., Morgan, A. U., Duong, A., Mahajan, A., & Gipson, J. D. (2020). *Challenges for adult undocumented immigrants in accessing primary care: A qualitative study of health care workers in Los Angeles County*. *Health Equity*, 4(1), 366-374. <https://doi.org/10.1089/heq.2020.0036>

Love, Joy, and Intimacy: One Family's Response to 550 Days of Lockdown A Poem in 3 Voices

**Jeff Sapp, Ed.D., Professor, Teacher Education California State
University Dominguez Hills**

**Erwin Sino Donato, Negotiation, Conflict Resolution, and Peacebuilding
Specialist and Parent Advocate**

**Helena Donato-Sapp, Globally Award-Winning Disability Justice
Activist, Nationally Award-Winning STEM Honoree, Youth Scholar,
and Youth Activist**

Abstract

Two parents and their middle school aged child reflect back on 550 days of COVID-19 lockdown. Using a Poem in 3 Voices platform, each of them respond in conversation-style about their love of each other, their love of learning, and the joy and healing they found in common everyday things like reading, writing, cooking, music, and gardening. Their playful banter seeks to speak to the intimacy they intentionally built with each other during the pain of the pandemic and their unspeakable losses. The purpose of this aesthetic work is to illuminate that not all of lockdown was despair and that, in the midst of pain, there can also be moments of love, joy, and intimacy.

Key words:

Family, Parenting, Intimacy, Joy, Grief (in order of importance)

Love, Joy, and Intimacy:

One Family's Response to 550 Days of Lockdown A Poem in 3 Voices

Papa
(Left Margin Voice)

Helena
(Center Margin Voice)

Dad
(Right Margin Voice)

March 13, 2020 is the day we went into lockdown.

We made a school in our house and named it
Helen West Middle School, after my grandma,
because she is such a nerd.

My mom loved that and, even though she is in
another state, it made her feel a part of our
lockdown and like she was with us.

I got to go to school barefoot for over a year.
And wear whatever I wanted.

No uniforms.

No uniform\$, no \$chool lunch, no field trip\$,
no \$ports fee\$, no \$cience fair, and
no \$chool activitie\$.
\$aved u\$ a lot of money.

I didn't realize how much school
nickel-and-dimed us to death.

We giggled at "Be careful on your way to school"
because it was just the other room.

And I got to go barefoot to work for over a year because my work was the other side of the dining room table from Helen West Middle School.

Let's all meet in the lunchroom for lunch, okay?

Every day?

Yes, every day. Like best friends.

Science is my hardest class and it is first.

It's okay, I am right on the other side of the table. I will listen and help.

Every day?

Yes, every day. Like best friends.

Snacks galore in the school snack room, also known as the kitchen.

I was the first student in the Zoom waiting room every single class, every single day.

Why?

It was a way to get one-on-one time with each of my teachers. I really missed being in person, but being early and getting a few minutes of alone time with them helped. I also always went to

their office hours.

You are such a nerd.

She really is such a nerd.

Thank you. I learned that from you two nerds.

Sino and I had the kind of work that had both
of us staying at home on lockdown as well.

Yep. Three peas in a pod.

We really were together every minute of every day.

Every minute. It was such a joy!

Like best friends.

Safe, with best friends.

School isn't safe anyway.

How so?

The bullies.

Oh yeah, you have had a lot of bullies at school,
haven't you?

A lot.

A lot.

Being on lockdown was safer than
school.

For some kids, being at school is
safer than home.

Not for me. School is hateful sometimes.
Exclusion. Invisibility.
Name-calling. Ignoring. Unkindness.

I saw a lot of folks talking about the loss of
social interaction and how much it was hurting
kids, but for you it helped instead.

It did.
It was safe here at home.
Safer than school.

But you have social-emotional learning
going on at your school.
The school talks about it all the time.

Meh.

What does that mean?

I think that stuff is just to make the adults
feel good. It doesn't change the way kids
behave and adults are just naïve if they think
it is doing something important.

Books were my friends.
I nerded out on reading lots and lots of books.

Artemis Fowl by Eoin Colfer
The Boy Who Harnessed The Wind by William Kamkwamba
Number The Stars by Lois Lowry

Oh! She is my favorite!

Other Words For Home by Jasmine Warga
Farewell To Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston
The Giver by Lois Lowry

I loved re-reading that with you.

The Odyssey by Homer
Lies My Teacher Told Me by James W. Loewen
Stamped by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

What I loved is that you both sat on the couch
and read each of these books aloud so that
I could hear them as well.

These were the best books I have been given
in school.
All my other years there was only whiteness.
White authors.
White characters.
White, white, white.
These were my first authors-of-color.
I fell in love with reading more and more
because of this.

The intimacy of reading.

Books and authors can be best friends too.

Definitely!

Definitely!

I nerded out on cooking and baking.
Garlic noodles.
Pork Afritada.

Wine-braised chicken.
Homemade spaghetti sauce.
Homemade biscuits.
Banana bread.
Carrot cake.
Honey balsamic brussels sprouts and mushrooms.
Braised Sicilian pork chops.
Roasted cauliflower.
Apple bread.
Thai chicken curry.

The intimacy of cooking.

Delicious!
And I loved calling our parents and getting
their recipes.
I started keeping a recipe book filled with
their cooking wisdom.

I nerded out on gardening.
Boston ferns.
Holly ferns.
Staghorn ferns.
Asparagus ferns.
Bird nest ferns.
Alpine wood ferns.
Rabbit's foot ferns.

The intimacy of a garden.

Beautiful and welcoming.
Plus, that was a way to be connected

to your parents who also love to garden.

Garden nerd.

Cooking nerd.

Reading nerd.

There was a lot more.
Figuring out online shopping.
A new aquarium.
Working on home security to make us feel safer.

I really got into documentaries.
I also followed NASA every day.

Netflix.
That's all I have to say.
All 12 seasons of *The Big Bang Theory*.
Star Trek.

Every *Star Trek* available.

I took a deep dive into music.
Practicing my beloved violin.
Zooming with family and playing for them.
Aunt Margo sent me a ukulele.
Aunt Kimberly got me a keyboard.
I got into vinyl records. And cassettes.

You definitely got into 80's music.

Because of Netflix and *Stranger Things*.

Stranger Things is my absolute favorite!

I got into really vintage music too.
The Police.
Queen.
David Bowie.
Kate Bush.
Peter Gabriel.

Because of Netflix and *Stranger Things*.

Stranger Things is my absolute favorite!

I got into really vintage music too.
The Police.
Queen.
David Bowie.
Kate Bush.
Peter Gabriel.

“Vintage?”

It’s “vintage” to her.

Now I feel vintage.

Music.
TV.
Old friends.

Best friends.

We also had loss during our lockdown.
Are you okay to talk about that Helena?

Maybe I’ll just listen. It’s too hard.

My dear dad was the first loss.
It was so hard being so far away and

not being with my family at the end.
He had been ill for a while,
but COVID took him at the end.

Zoom funerals are so hard. We couldn't
be with family to mourn him.

He loved the outdoors and music and
his church and, most of all, mom.

And then my dad died 14 days later.
He was the best dad too.
And it was awful because no one was
allowed in the hospital.
We couldn't hold his hand.
He was alone.

We did video with him.

Yes, he lit up when he saw you two
on the screen.

But he died alone and it was horrible to
think of him alone at the end.

He loved a good taco more than
anyone I ever knew. He was kind
and quiet-spoken. And he loved
your mom so much.

I miss him so much.

Me too.

Me too.

In the end, we were on lockdown 550 days straight.
We had a beautiful garden.
We had engaging school work.

We had great food.
We had great entertainment.
We had amazing literature.

We had each other.

Yes, and the three of us
had each other every second of every day.

Like best friends.

Yes, like best friends.

Just like best friends.

Afterthoughts

We sat down as a family several times to reminisce about our pandemic lockdown and this poem in three voices comes from those conversations. Like many who will read this, we had unspeakable losses during this pandemic. We lost both of our fathers just fourteen days apart from each other. It was our child's first experience with death, loss, and grieving. Many other family members passed as well. The deaths of our loved ones were compounded by not being able to be at their bedsides when they transitioned, by not being able to travel and collectively grieve with our families, and by trying to grieve through Zoom funerals. These – and so many more traumas – made us focus on our gratitude and joy at having each other. We were constantly present with both our grief *and* joy.

An unexpected educational outcome in our poem surrounds the issue of bullying. Helena has, unfortunately, had more than her share of bullying at her school and being on lockdown and away from the bullies in her class made for a more enjoyable 6th-grade year for her. Helena's first year of middle school was in total lockdown. We were intentional in making her lockdown as comfortable as possible and our poem demonstrates that our efforts did help. In our case, because we are such a love-of-learning centric family, we believe that our child didn't experience learning loss, but

instead gained important organizational skills and educational values that will support her throughout her life. Still, being on lockdown for 550 days impacted social skills and development; it impacted the joy that school brings so many children because of its inherent social nature.

Another great loss is that there was a humanities teacher that our daughter had waited years to have and she had her only during the lockdown, only on a Zoom screen. She was the first teacher to have authors-of-color and was a fierce social justice educator and our daughter loved her and felt a great, great loss at not being able to be in her classroom face-to-face. There is a hole there at not having that face-to-face and heart-to-heart mentoring. It will always be a loss for all of us and just one more thing that the COVID pandemic took from us. We don't talk enough about the incredible loss of intimacy between teacher and student and how much that was impacted by not being in-person.

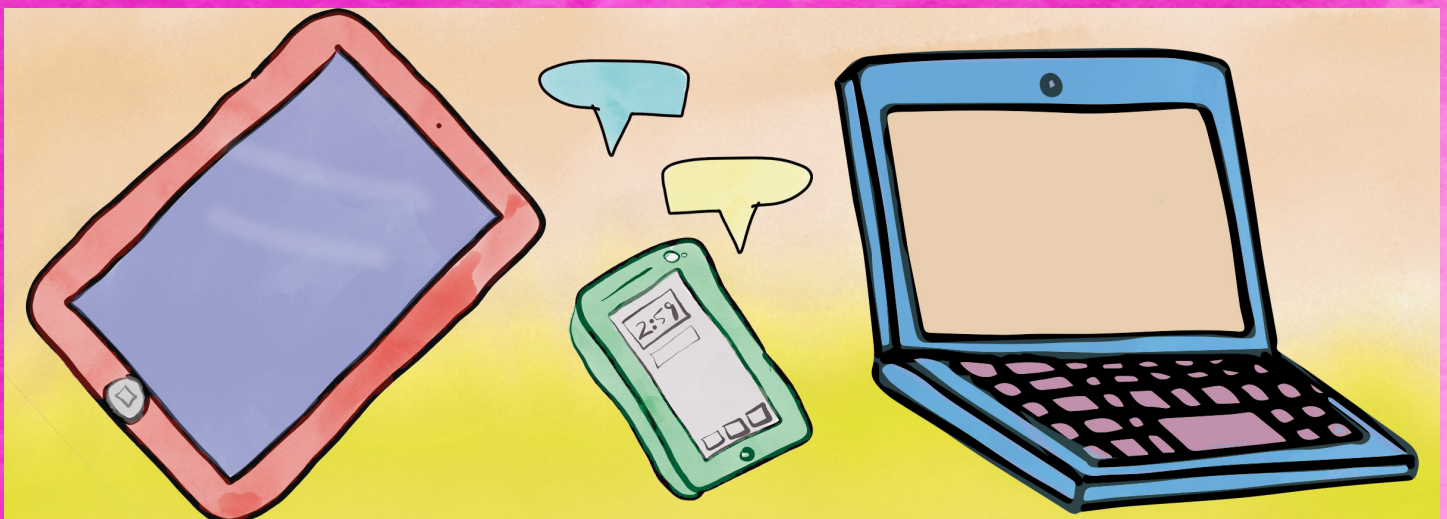
The messy traumas of lockdown still impact us to this day. We continue to see them in an increased fear of germs, of our stress in being in public spaces, and our high anxieties for the safety of our loved ones. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we can hold different emotions all at once – pain and fear and grief right alongside our love and joy and intimacy.

Coding to Connect: Centering Joy and Community in Elementary Computer Science Education

Mike Karlin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, STEM & Director, Snap Inc. Institute for Technology and Education. California State University Dominguez Hills

Cristina Stephany, Ed.D., Coordinator of School Partnerships & Clinical Practice. California State University Dominguez Hills

Marcia Reed, Multiple Subject Clinical Coordinator and Adjunct Professor. California State University Dominguez Hills



Abstract

In this “how-to” piece, we weave together personal experiences and reflections to explore the design and implementation of an unplugged, elementary computer science (CS) event, and examine the underlying pedagogical principles guiding this work. Critical CS scholars have increasingly called for centering joy and connection within CS, while simultaneously decentering the neoliberal focus on workforce development. We aimed to forefront these ideas with a CS event supported and led by a multi-stakeholder partnership between pre-service teachers, staff, and faculty within California State University, Dominguez Hills’ College of Education, and the students, in-service teachers, and administration at 186th St. Elementary School. Historically, CS has been an inequitable and inaccessible field that has not always prioritized diversity or inclusion. By bringing together numerous stakeholders from across the community for a CS event centering joy, we hoped to shift perceptions and experiences of CS and find better ways of supporting and inspiring *all* our students and teachers.

(All images used with permission)

Keywords:

Broadening Participation in Computing, Professional Development, Elementary Education, Teacher Education, Unplugged Computer Science

In 2013, the Obama White House released a statement entitled “Computer Science is for Everyone!” (The White House, 2013). This statement emphasized the importance of CS education (CSed) in our K-12 systems and encouraged participation in CS throughout US classrooms. In the time since, major efforts at the local, state, and national level have worked to shift funding and focus on K-12 CSed (e.g., Code.org, CSTA, & ECEP, 2021). However, the primary drivers for these efforts have largely centered around neoliberal ideas of preparing students for the workforce and future jobs (Jones & Melo, 2020; Vakil, 2018).

Critical scholars have voiced concerns over this emphasis on jobs and careers, and instead argue for CSed curricula that focus on joy, community, and connection (e.g., Bers, 2022; Jones & Melo, 2020; Ryoo, 2019). Recent research emphasizing the importance of collaboration, relevancy, relationships, and community-centered curricula in CSed have suggested that these types of pedagogical approaches can help shift perceptions of CS and support learning experiences for *all* K-12 students, not just those typically represented (i.e., white, male, abled, suburban, etc.) (e.g., Jones & Melo 2020; Karlin et al., 2022; Ryoo, 2019)

In addition to helping shift perceptions of CS, CSed experiences that center joy and community can support the development of a variety of skills and community can support the development

of a variety of skills and dispositions. For example, Dr. Marina Bers’ work (2022) on incorporating CS in elementary settings in joyful, engaging ways suggests that these types of learning experiences can help students develop new modes of thinking, connecting, and relating with themselves and others, while also building critical thinking, problem solving, and social-emotional skills. Research also suggests that joy and a love for learning can be sparked by solving the types of complex problems often present in CSed (e.g., Papert, 1993; 2020). Seymour Papert’s seminal works in CSed (e.g., 1993; 2020) explore these ideas and examine how engaging in scaffolded complex problem solving through CS, even at an early age, can ignite curiosity and wonder, and provide new opportunities for connecting with content and ideas.

Finally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, students (and teachers) are experiencing isolation, loss, trauma, and a lack of connection at significant and continuous levels (Huck & Zhang, 2021). As schools begin to “return to normal”, it is important to use this time to challenge past, inequitable ways of schooling that failed to serve many of our students. K-12 CSed has a long history of being implemented in exclusionary, inequitable ways (e.g., Ryoo, 2019). By centering community, connection, and joy, we can challenge those past ways of doing CS and better serve *all* our students, particularly during this time of deep loss and grief.

Author Positioning

As educators with a wide range of experiences across diverse contexts, all three authors came to this experience (and to this piece) with different backgrounds, perspectives, and values. These experiences and values informed the design and implementation of this event, but central to all our planning was the core belief of the importance of creating a joyful, connected, community-centered event for students, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers.

It is also important to note that this work is not meant to be strictly empirical in nature, but rather more holistic and reflective. Here, we weave together our personal experiences and reflections around the design and implementation of one particular event, where our core focus was to create something joyful and community-centered for students and teachers. We are grateful to have this space and opportunity to share, reflect, and discuss how this event was planned and built, and the reasoning behind our design and implementation decisions.

Background and Context

This event was supported and led by a multi-stakeholder partnership between pre-service teachers, staff, and faculty within California State University, Dominguez Hills' College of Education (CSUDH COE), and the students,

in-service teachers, and administration at nearby 186th St. Elementary School. More specifically, the three authors: Marcia Reed (Multiple Subject Clinical Coordinator and former 186th St. Principal); Dr. Cristina Stephany (Coordinator of School Partnerships and Clinical Practice); and Dr. Mike Karlin (Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies and STEM) worked directly with Antonio Aguilar (current principal at 186th St. Elementary School) to serve as the planning team and organize the event with support from students, teachers, staff, and administration at both organizations.

The impetus for this event was multifaceted:

- 1) The CSUDH COE was in the process of expanding and reinforcing partnerships with local K-12 schools.
- 2) The Snap Inc. Institute for Technology & Education (SITE) was in the process of organizing an inaugural partnership event as a newly formed institute.
- 3) Local schools had emphasized a need (and interest) in better supporting CSed for their students.

To meet these various, intersecting needs, an initial call was set up with the planning team (Marcia Reed, Cristina Stephany, Mike Karlin and Principal

Aguilar) to discuss the possibility of organizing a CSed event at 186th St. Elementary. Principal Aguilar agreed to the event, provided it would benefit *all* students within a particular grade level, including students with special needs who would join their classmates. A time, date, space within the school, and grade level (4th) were agreed on, and the design of the event began.

Event Design

The central, paramount goal for this CSed event was that 4th grade teachers and students at 186th St. Elementary, and undergraduate student volunteers (pre-service teachers) from the CSUDH COE, would have a joyful, beneficial

educational experience. Secondary goals included providing CSed professional development for both pre-service strengthening the existing partnership between 186th St. Elementary and the CSUDH COE, and framing CS as a ubiquitous, interdisciplinary, accessible subject for *all* students and teachers.

Logistically, the event was to be held outside (as a COVID-19 safety measure), for approximately 120 4th grade students across five classrooms, for a one-hour period, on a Friday afternoon in April. To meet these needs, the planning team created a series of three, 20-minute CSed stations (further explored below), each facilitated by one or two pre-service teacher volunteers from the CSUDH COE, as shown below in Figure 1:

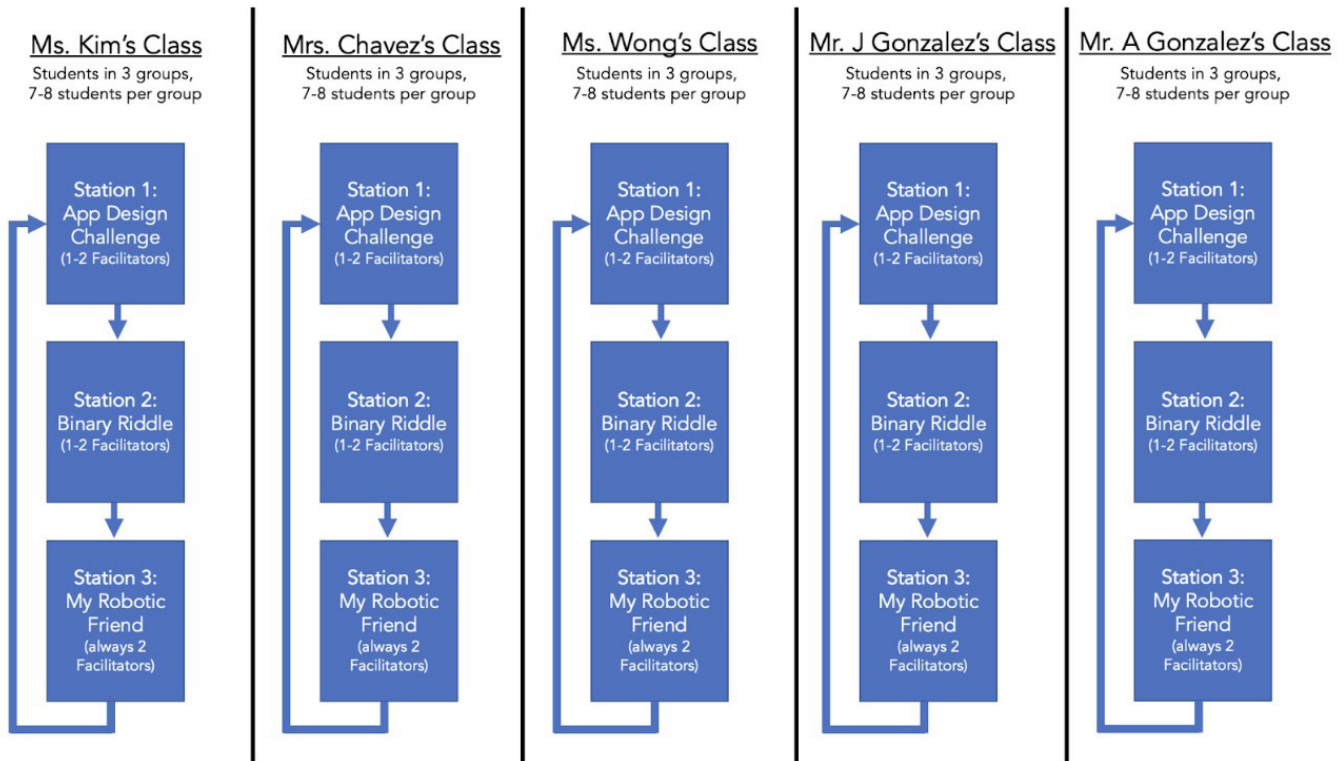


Figure 1
Logistical organization of classes, stations, and volunteers for the CSed event

The planning team also suggested unplugged activities for each of the stations (CS without computers or technology) to work within existing technology limitations as well as to avoid potentially time-consuming troubleshooting issues. These unplugged activities were also designed to demonstrate to in-service and pre-service teachers how to integrate CS in accessible, no-cost/low-cost ways within existing curricula. Finally, given 186th St. Elementary's classification as a STEM school, the school asked that alignment could also be provided to state CS standards and the 21st century skills framework (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009)

To meet these various needs and requirements, three stations were created, two original stations and one remixed from Code.org's curriculum. Across the design of these three stations, a focus was placed on connection, collaboration, and joy (more below, in the description of each station). Additionally, they were designed to be facilitated (and enjoyed) by those at all levels of CSed experience. Finally, alignment with the aforementioned standards and skills frameworks were also provided. The three stations were:

(1) *App Design Challenge*: Students brainstormed a problem they faced in their daily life and drew (wireframed) an app that could help solve that problem (see Figure 2). After they completed sketches of the different pages / components of their apps, each student shared with the group, and the group provided constructive feedback on future iterations. This station was intentionally centered around exploring problems that were specific to students, the school, and the local community. During brainstorming, facilitators helped prompt students to think of problems that were relevant to themselves, their peers, and/or others in their community that they could help address through technology. These relevant, real-world problems also led to rich closing discussions when students provided feedback on each other's apps and shared connections to their own experiences and ideas. By focusing on collaboration and communication, we found students felt valued, appreciated, heard, and willing to take risks to have their ideas acknowledged and accepted in the group discussions.

Station 1: App Design Challenge Template

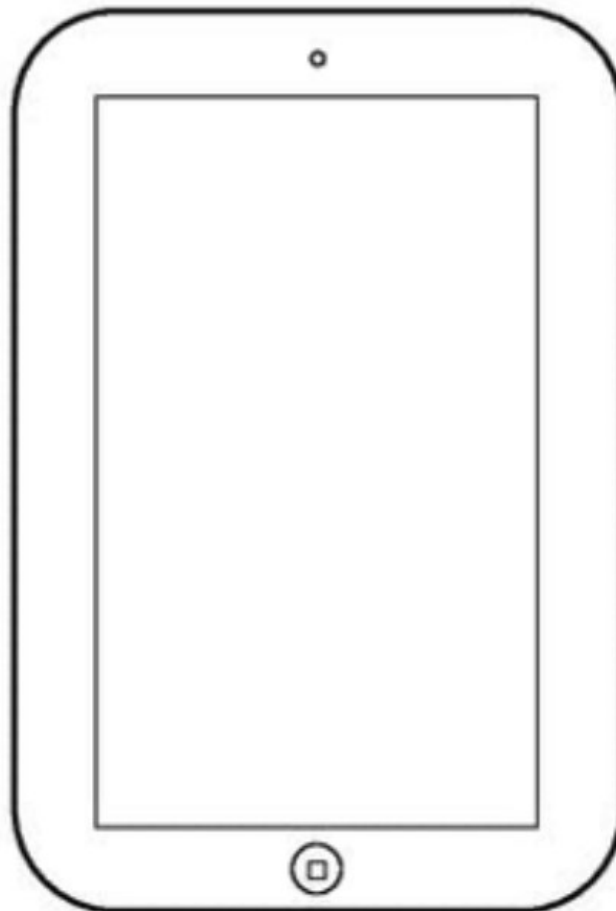
Name: _____

What problem will your app help solve?

How will your app help solve that problem?

Show us your app!

Describe and label what each button / link would do on the right side of each picture



Page Name: Home screen of your app

Figure 2
Template Example for Page 1 of the App Design Challenge Station

(2) *Binary Riddle*: Students were introduced to binary language (how computers store information) by the facilitator and provided with a “key” representing the English alphabet as stored in binary (see Figure 3). Students then solved a riddle by decoding the letters represented in binary. After, students wrote messages, secret codes, or jokes to share with group members, who then decoded each other’s message. Some students also added new binary codes to the key

to incorporate Spanish letters (e.g., ñ). This station was intentionally designed to center joy through the incorporation of jokes and humor as well as through the follow-up activity where students wrote additional messages and notes to each other in binary. Students also built critical thinking skills by exploring language and communication in new ways, which helped promote problem solving, creativity, and teamwork.

A Binary Riddle

Use the binary key below to decode the riddle and find the solution!

Riddle: What was the robot's favorite snack?

Key:

A ■■■■ ■■■■	N ■■■■ □□□■
B ■■■■ ■■■■	O ■■■■ □□□□
C ■■■■ ■■■■	P ■■■■ ■■■■
D ■■■■ ■■■■	Q ■■■■ ■■■■
E ■■■■ ■■■■	R ■■■■ ■■■■
F ■■■■ ■■■■	S ■■■■ ■■■■
G ■■■■ ■■■■	T ■■■■ ■■■■
H ■■■■ ■■■■	U ■■■■ ■■■■
I ■■■■ ■■■■	V ■■■■ ■■■■
J ■■■■ ■■■■	W ■■■■ ■■■■
K ■■■■ ■■■■	X ■■■■ ■■■■
L ■■■■ ■■■■	Y ■■■■ ■■■■
M ■■■■ ■■■■	Z ■■■■ ■■■■

Text Answer: _____

Binary Answer:

■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ □□□□ ■■■■ □□□□ ■■■■ ■■■■

■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■

■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■

■■■■ ■■■■

Figure 3
Key and Riddle for Binary Riddle Station

(3) *My Robotic Friends*: Modified from Code.org’s curriculum (see: <https://youtu.be/xaW3PAzHxCU>), this activity asked students to write simple programs or algorithms so their group members could successfully build a stack of cups in the correct pattern. One group member wrote the program, while the other(s) enacted the program using their arms and hands to act as a robot and build the cup structure. Upon completion, students designed their own cup structures and wrote programs to have their group members solve self-designed challenges. Like station two, this station was also meant to center joy and collaboration. Specifically, we saw that students (and teachers) enjoyed the process of programming their peers and watching each other navigate the unique cup-structure challenges they had created.

Additional event design and setup included the recruitment of CSUDH

pre-service teachers from LBS405 (Engineering and the Arts in the Elementary Classroom), a junior/senior level course for undergraduate pre-service elementary teachers in the COE. An overview video was also created and shared with 186th St. administration and teachers providing an introduction to the event for teachers to show in class the week prior, so participants would know what to expect and how to connect the activities to various standards (see: <https://youtu.be/SY58uuF08EE>). Additionally, gift-bags were created for all participants as a way to build community and connection through gift-giving. Lastly, the team created certificates to mark and celebrate students’ shared achievements in learning computer science (see Figure 4). When taken home, the certificate was also intended to engage parents/caretakers/community members in dialogue with students about their experience at the event.



Figure 4
 Example certificate of participation for 4th grade students at 186th St. Elementary

Event Implementation

The day of the event, 28 pre-service volunteers arrived at 186th St. Elementary School 90-minutes early for training and setup. Nearly all pre-service teachers had no previous experience with CSed, and none had facilitated a similar event prior. They had all received a training overview video the week before the event (see: <https://youtu.be/5aoKidFgZOY>). We spent 60-minutes providing training on the stations with the goal being that all facilitators gain a foundational comfort with the content and activities of their specific station (see Figure 5). Our facilitator training was organized as follows:

(1) *Overview of station (10-min):*

A brief explanation (and recap of above video) was provided for each station while volunteers were asked to think about their top two choices for station facilitation.

(2) *Selection of stations (10-min):*

Volunteers were divided into facilitation roles based on their first and second choices. Nearly all stations had two volunteers, however, two stations were facilitated by a single volunteer.

(3) *First Run-Through (20 min):*

Volunteers first ran through their selected station as students. In other words, they pretended to be 4th grade students, and participated in the station activity as students would during the event.

(4) *Second Run-Through (20 min):*

Finally, volunteers ran through their selected station taking turns as facilitators. One volunteer practiced facilitating for 10-minutes while the other roleplayed as a student, then they switched for the final 10-minutes.



Figure 5
Training for volunteer pre-service teachers prior to the event

Following the 60-minute training, our planning team and the volunteer pre-service teachers had 30-minutes to set up for the event, which was to be held in the outdoor cafeteria area. During this time, tables were set up with supplies, signage was posted letting elementary students and teachers know where to go, and materials were organized so the stations could begin quickly once students arrived.

Once in-service teachers and students arrived, school administrators and the planning team directed them to their assigned stations, and the facilitators, students, and teachers introduced themselves, and began the stations. After 20-minutes, groups rotated so that each group of students was able to complete each station (see Figure 6).



Figure 6
A teacher-created collage of students participating in the CSed event.

During the event, in-service teachers were also provided information, resources, and training on the various stations, and co-participated alongside students. As the event was also meant to serve as professional development for in-service teachers, time was spent discussing the activities, their alignment with standards and skills frameworks, their potential for classroom integration, and follow-up possibilities that teachers could integrate within existing curricula. At the conclusion of the event, students received their certificates of participation and gift bags, and volunteers and the planning team assisted with clean up.

Discussion, Implications, and Future Directions

Current calls for supporting and increasing CSed in K-12 schools often prioritize the development of workforce-ready students (e.g., Code.org, CSTA, & ECEP Alliance 2021; The White House, 2016). This problem is not unique to CSed, and too often our education systems fail to center joy, connection, and community in the process of learning. Radical calls for re-envisioning and reimagining our education systems consistently ask us to prioritize the importance of joy, happiness, hope, and love (e.g., Freire, 2007; Freire, 2021; hooks, 2014), rather than see these ideals as one potential byproduct of schooling.

This is not to say that a focus on these ideals precludes all other needs; our U.S. K-12 schools still exist within accountability systems that necessitate alignment with standards and other measurements. The activities designed above all aligned with the statewide California CS standards, the 21st Century Skills framework, and various Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core Standards. However, teaching to these standards and frameworks was not the central goal of this work, and neither was preparing elementary students to meet future workforce demand for CS jobs (e.g., Bers, 2022). Instead, we worked to center joy and community consistently throughout these activities.

Other CS curricula have worked to meet this balance as well. For example, the Exploring Computer Science curriculum (see exploringcs.org) centers collaboration and equity, with a focus on justice-oriented CS work for both CS teachers and students (e.g., Goode et al., 2020; Madkins et al., 2020). Similarly, the Beauty and Joy of Computing curriculum focuses on helping students make personal connections to the social implications of computing while centering joy and creativity (e.g., Goldenberg et al., 2020). Specific to elementary CSed, the work of Marina Bers (e.g., 2022) provides numerous examples of integrating CS and robotics with young learners with a focus on developing values and supporting joyful play.

Despite these examples, the consistent, dominant narrative surrounding CSed is the prioritization of workforce ready students. More work is needed to shift this conversation and instead prioritize student voices, interests, and visions for their own futures, rather than what the workforce demands of them. Particularly for CSed at the elementary level, where research and insight are significantly lacking (e.g., Code.org, CSTA, & ECEP Alliance 2021), more needs to be done to ensure students are able to engage in CS experiences in joyful, connected ways.

For our specific event, while we believe we were able to center joy and community, it was also a one-time event. To make a sustainable impact, CSed integration should occur across curricula and grade levels, and should center student voices, experiences, perspectives, and communities (Ryoo, 2019). For our team, this event acted as a starting point, and future work will involve the co-design of additional, integrated CSed activities that teachers can draw on throughout the school year.

Additionally, we were limited on implementation time, and believe that engaging in further professional development and training with pre-service and in-service teachers prior would be beneficial. Research suggests that when technology professional development is sustained and continuous over time (rather than a one-time workshop) it is

more impactful on teacher practices (Liao et al., 2017). Additionally, supporting the development of communities of practice and professional learning communities for CSed professional development can further benefit the development of equity-oriented CS pedagogies (Ryoo et al., 2015). For example, future work could focus on building professional learning communities between pre-service and in-service teachers to co-design and develop community centered CSed learning opportunities that draw on student perspectives and needs. Overall, while we believe this event served as a beneficial starting point, significant work is still needed to further the integration of joyful, community centered CSed in local schools and districts.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the space and opportunity to share this work and acknowledge that it would not have been possible without significant effort and support from students, staff, colleagues, parents, and community members from both the CSUDH COE and 186th St. Elementary School. We attempted to collaboratively create an experience that provided elementary students with a joyful welcome to CSed, and that brought together numerous stakeholders from across the community. As others have noted (e.g., Jones and Melo, 2020), these ideals are too often missing from our work in the CSed community and centering

them can help shift the field in support of *all* our students. Particularly in a time of immense collective grief, trauma, and loss, relying on joy as a foundational pedagogical principle is more important than ever. Focusing on activities that encourage children's happiness, curiosity, and engagement builds relationships, promotes positive interactions, and paves the way for sustainable student joy.

References

- Bers, U. M. (2022). *Beyond coding: How children learn human values through programming*. MIT Press.
- Code.org, CSTA, & ECEP Alliance. (2021). 2021 State of computer science education: Accelerating action through advocacy. Retrieved from https://advocacy.code.org/2021_state_of_cs.pdf
- Freire, P. (2021). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Freire, P. (2007) *Pedagogy of the heart*. Continuum Publishing.
- Goldenberg, P., Mark, J., Harvey, B., Cuoco, A., & Fries, M. (2020, February). Design principles behind beauty and joy of computing. In *Proceedings of the 51st ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education* (pp. 220-226).
- Goode, J., Ivey, A., Johnson, S., Ryoo, J., & Ong, C. (2020). Rac(e)ing to computer science for all: How teachers learn about equity in professional development. *Computer Science Education*, 31(3). doi:10.1080/08993408.2020.1804772
- hooks, b. (2014). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.
- Huck, C., & Zhang, J. (2021). Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education: A systematic literature review. *New Waves-Educational Research and Development Journal*, 24(1), 53-84.
- Jones, S. T., & Melo, N. (2020). 'Anti-blackness is no glitch' the need for critical conversations. with-in computer science education. *XRDS: Crossroads, The ACM Magazine for Students*, 27(2), 42-46. doi:10.1145/3433134

- Karlin, M., Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A., & Liao, Y. C. (2022). Building a gender-inclusive secondary computer science program: teacher led and stakeholder supported. *Computer Science Education*, 1-22. doi: 10.1080/08993408.2022.2131281
- Liao, Y. C., Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A., Karlin, M., Glazewski, K., & Brush, T. (2017). Supporting change in teacher practice: Examining shifts of teachers' professional development preferences and needs for technology integration. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 17(4), 522-548.
- Madkins, T., Thomas, J., Soloyom, J. Goode, J., & McClear, F. (2020). Learner-centered and culturally relevant pedagogy. In S. Grover (Ed.), *Computer science in K-12: An A-Z handbook* (pp. 123-129). Edfinity.
- Papert, S. (1993). *The children's machine: Rethinking school in the age of the computer*. Basic Books, Inc. United States.
- Papert, S. A. (2020). *Mindstorms: Children, computers, and powerful ideas*. Basic Books, Inc.
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2009). P21 framework definitions. Retrieved from <http://www.battelleforkids.org/networks/p21/frameworks-resources>
- Ryoo, J., Goode, J., & Margolis, J. (2015). It takes a village: Supporting inquiry-and equity-oriented computer science pedagogy through a professional learning community. *Computer Science Education*, 25(4), 351-370. doi: 10.1080/08993408.2015.1130952
- Ryoo, J. J. (2019). Pedagogy that supports computer science for all. *ACM Transactions on Computing Education (TOCE)*, 19(4), 1-23. doi: 10.1145/3322210
- The White House. (2013). *Computer science is for everyone!*. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2013/12/11/computer-science-everyone>
- The White House. (2016). *Computer science for all*. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/01/30/computer-science-all>
- Vakil, S. (2018). Ethics, identity, and political vision: Toward a justice-centered approach to equity in computer science education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 88(1), 26-52. doi: 10.17763/1943-5045-88.1.26

Book Review: Grosjean

Bilinguals are not Two Monolinguals in One: Life as a Bilingual: Knowing and Using Two or More Languages

Kai Greene, Ph.D. CCC-SLP College of Education: Department of Special Education California State University Dominguez Hills



Abstract

Key tenets of bilingual education involve connectedness in the ability to collaborate with students and colleagues while establishing vital connection to families and communities. This book review examines Francois Grosjean's *Life as a bilingual: Knowing and using two or more languages* (2021); a compilation of blog posts published from 2010 to 2020. Written from a psycholinguistic perspective, Grosjean highlights many of the advantages of life as a bilingual while denouncing the monolingual view of bilingualism that historically maintains how bilinguals should learn, thrive, and exist in a monolingual English-language world at the expense of their first language. Across fifteen chapters, this collection of blog posts offers an assortment of topical and informative snippets on the bilingual person, adult or child, fitting for any bilingual-curious audience: university professors, researchers, educational practitioners, students, families, and community workers.

Keywords:

bilingualism, blogs, translanguaging, monolingual, complementarity principle

Common denominators exist that help unite us to build strength, summon valor, and enrich our sense of community. One such common denominator is the shared experiences of bilinguals. García-Mateus & Palmer (2017) point out the use of the word language as a verb, “when we *language*, we are performing a series of social practices and actions that link us to what we want, and who we believe we are” (p. 252). While estimates show that over half of the world’s population speaks more than one *language* or dialect, bilinguals exist among all age and socio-economic groups across the globe (Grosjean, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). However, in the United States of America, historically one has observed both supportive and opposing viewpoints along with conflicting educational policies that have dehumanized bilingualism. Often this situation has placed educational practitioners along with K-12 students and their families in challenging situations in terms of knowing how to best understand and address the complexity of layers related to language development, second language acquisition, and learning abilities among bilingual populations.

Fortunately, in the book, *Life as a bilingual: Knowing and using two or more languages* (2021) author Francois Grosjean shares 121 of his blog posts from the magazine *Psychology Today* that address a multitude of bilingual topics published between 2010 and 2020. Each of the fifteen chapters begins with a short introduction and a brief outline of each blog

posts from the magazine *Psychology Today* that address a multitude of bilingual topics published between 2010 and 2020. Each of the fifteen chapters begins with a short introduction and a brief outline of each blog post coupled with abstracts and references. Also included are twenty-three interviews with experts in the field of bilingual scholarship. To help guide the reader, many of the blogs are cross-referenced from one section to the next from blog posts in other chapters.

Grosjean’s outstanding contributions to the field of bilingualism now span decades and cover a broad range of interests that include applied linguistics, biculturalism, aphasia, sign language, translanguaging, and language processing in multilingual populations. As well he is a highly regarded academic who has written over a dozen books, countless research articles, and cofounded the highly regarded Cambridge University Press Journal, *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*. When first approached with an offer to blog on topics related to bilingualism by the editors of *Psychology Today*, he was initially reluctant. At that time, blog posts appeared as a new but less significant discourse option to share scholarly findings. However, Grosjean quickly realized the potential in spreading his message on bilingualism outside of the world of scholarly journals and extend his readership to a broader audience. In this capacity, his enthusiasm to share his interest in multilingual transdisciplinary work now reaches millions of

of readers. Grosjean's refrain that *bilinguals are not two monolinguals* in one resonates throughout the book which highlights the specific linguistic configuration that differentiates the bilingual person from monolinguals. This holistic view of bilingualism embraces how bilinguals are not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals. In actuality, bilinguals represent unique beings specific to cognitive and socio-cultural factors that go beyond the auditory processing and expressive use of more than one language. What comes to mind here is how Grosjean's trademark approach incorporates bilinguals' *funds of knowledge* or the perspectives, skills, and abilities that bilinguals accumulate based on historical and interactive roles that families, communities, and culture play in their language acquisition and development and cognitive formation (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

The reader additionally benefits from two conceptual frameworks associated with Grosjean that inform bilingual phenomena: the *language mode* and the *complementarity principle*. Fundamentally, the language mode is controlled by internal and external factors while reflecting the continuum of a bilingual's use of two languages at different activation states which can then vary from moment-to-moment specific to the context. As well, contingent upon the interlocutor or communicative partner(s), the language mode accounts for intermingling between languages that

frequently occurs in the form of code-switching, code-mixing, and/or translanguaging (see MacSwan, 2022 for extensive coverage on translanguaging). The complementarity principle primarily emphasizes how bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes in different contexts throughout the lifespan. This principle accounts for the role of language dominance; one of a bilingual's two languages is usually stronger than the other. However, issues related to dominance and proficiency can shift during one's lifetime. All in all, Grosjean highlights many of the advantages of life as a bilingual while denouncing the monolingual view of bilingualism that historically maintains how bilinguals should learn, thrive, and exist in a monolingual English-language world at the expense of their first language.

After the book's introduction, the first chapter tackles the inherent challenges in how to define and describe bilinguals, an overview of bilingual populations by the numbers, a review of characteristics in those who use two or more languages, an investigation of bilingualism across the life span, and a consideration of bilingualism among school-age children with additional special educational needs. The next section's chapter addresses issues related to emerging and becoming bilingual, a family's role in bilingualism, bilingualism in childhood along with second language learning. The segment that follows covers biculturalism

and personality, dual language emotional and social well-being. Subsequently, the next area centers on neurolinguistic matters such as language processing, the bilingual mind, cognitive advantages of bilingualism, the bilingual brain, and neurological impairment. Following are sections that focus on specialized bilingual professionals: translators, interpreters, teachers, and writers. Finally, in the book's final chapter, the author reflects upon his own life and professional and personal experiences as a person who studies bilingualism.

In sum, this collection of blog posts and interviews integrates theory and practice in an applicable manner that is fitting for students, teachers, professors, researchers, and families or caregivers. Extensive evidence from research-based findings comes along with anecdotal and personal narratives in a way so that any reader can serve as an advocate and better inform those who persist and maintain negative views towards bilingualism. At present, this position is most relevant and now supported in many of the current teacher performance expectations (TPEs) for California public schools. As stated in the *California English learner roadmap: Aligning and articulating practices across the system* (Olsen, 2021), "The mission of the California English Learner Roadmap policy calls for opportunities to develop proficiency in multiple languages preparing graduates with the linguistic, academic, and social skills and

competencies they require for college, career, and civic participation in a global, diverse, and multilingual world" (page 10). While each chapter in this book contains valuable information worthy of much attention, for purposes of this review, certain selections were made that underscore some of the salient segments relevant to university teacher preparation programs. The aim is then to shed light on these matters that may have a direct impact or even indirect influence on pre-service teachers, educational practitioners, and service providers along with students and their families.

The first chapter, *Describing Bilinguals* contains nine blog posts. Worth noting in Blog 1.2 is how the monolingual view of bilingualism has resulted in numerous repercussions. One is that bilinguals' language skills historically have been judged based on monolingual norms. This practice has all too frequently placed undue or unwarranted judgment in that often bilinguals develop a deficit view of their own language skills. For example, the following statements are not uncommon, "I speak English with an accent, and I barely follow proper grammar in my first language" or "I mix my languages all the time" (page 8). Unfortunately, many bilinguals become ashamed of their own first language use while striving to reach English monolingual norms. Grosjean states how "the coexistence and constant interaction of two or more languages have produced a different but

complete language system” (page 9). By stating as much, he shines light on how bilinguals represent an integrated and whole person that cannot be compartmentalized. Overall, bilinguals generally do have a positive view of themselves and take pride in the fact that they can express themselves with more options. Knowing one language helps guide second language learning and can foster open-mindedness while reducing cultural ignorance. In contrast, bilinguals are frequently caught unaware or inconvenienced to act as translators and/or interpreters usually at the request of a monolingual speaker. In Blog 1.5 *What a Bilingual’s Languages are Used For*, one awkward moment is captured in the following exchange, “Antoine, how do you say, ‘download a file’ in French?” “Hem, I’m not quite sure.” “I thought you were bilingual?” (page 14). The complementarity principle explains these inescapable moments when a bilingual person is placed on the spot with limited notice and suddenly asked to use a language that they may not necessarily use within a particular context. Aside from oral language abilities, this holds true with requests for translations or interpretations of written documents or reading material. Knowing another language does not equate being a qualified translator or a productive interpreter contingent upon context, domain, and situations that may require vocabulary or specialized knowledge of syntax, morphology, and even pragmatics.

The five blog posts found in *Chapter 2: The Extent of Bilingualism call attention to bilingualism* in the United States. Of importance is to consider the multitude of indigenous languages along with the diverse range of languages and dialects spoken by immigrant and refugee populations encountered in the United States. While challenges persist in terms of gaining census, reports do estimate that approximately 23% of the United States population is bilingual and these numbers are increasingly on the rise (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Monolingual and bilingual people alike are surprised when informed that more than half of the world’s population is bilingual or bidialectal. Worth noting, transitional bilingualism has primarily been observed in the US; within one or two generations, bilingual speakers will cease to use their heritage-first minority language and move to embrace the majority dominant language to become primarily monolingual speakers of English (Anderson et al., 2020).

The ten blog posts in *Chapter 3: Using Two or More Languages focus on bilingual language phenomena* that may surface in daily discourse. Discussed in Blog 3.2, a common question is addressed, “What base language is to be used when speaking with others who share the same two languages?” In Blog 3.4, the intermingling of languages is explained; when bilinguals code-switch, the grammatical constraints between their two languages are respected which actually

demonstrates a great degree of communicative competence. Language borrowings (Blog 3.5) are not uncommon to the extent that the colloquial words or phrases are gradually accepted and integrated in everyday use. An example is the word “brunch” from English and integrated into French: “Tu viens brunchar avec nous?/Are you coming to brunch with us?” Examples from English to Spanish include verbs such as lonchar/almorzar: to lunch; parquear/estacionar: to park; and the use of nouns such as la renta/el alquiler: the rent. As well, the use of cognates between languages can serve as a positive resource as noted in Blog 3.8. Lexical knowledge based on words in one language to another can serve as successful strategies to guide word learning. Words that sound (homophones) and/or written (homographs) similarly can deceive the bilingual mind in the form of “false friends.” For instance, the Spanish word librería means bookstore in English where biblioteca is the actual Spanish word for library. Countless examples exist and one must err on the side of caution when speaking or relying on cognates between two languages. Additionally, Blog 3.10 focuses on multimodalities in bilingual populations and the case of American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken language (for more information specific to Spanish-English bilingualism and ASL see Quinto-Pozos (2014)).

The nine blog posts in *Chapter 4: Across the Life Span* discuss how language use can change across the life

span; different people, settings, and situations call for the use or not of a bilingual’s language repertoire (Bialystok et al., 2022). Despite the commonly held view that languages are best acquired at a younger age, new language learning can and does occur later in life. Blogs 4.6 - 4.9 consider how atrophy or language loss, most noted in first language, may occur depending upon age of acquisition, proficiency, and opportunities to use the language (Peña et al., 2021). Together these blogs additionally share research studies that address language recovery via brain imagining (fMRI) studies and even hypnosis.

Chapter 5: Becoming Bilingual consists of a total of eleven blog posts and attends to common themes related to bilingual language acquisition and age. While the majority of bilingual language research has focused on younger children with less attention paid to adolescents and adults, sufficient evidence-based findings now support how bilingualism can be attained at any age (see Blog 5.1). Both Blogs 5.2 and 5.8 underscore how age-specific language developmental milestones are achieved in monolinguals and bilinguals around the same time; key information that teachers and parents need to know and understand (Hulse & Curran, 2020). Frequently shared knowledge appears to support the notion that second language learning has a small window that is best optimized during childhood early school years (Blogs 5.3 - 5.7); however

empirical evidence discussed in this chapter informs a different story.

Chapter 6: Bilingualism in the Family contains ten blog posts that address important questions that families may want to consider when approaching how to raise children in a bilingual household. Explanations are provided that explain the following: how to introduce additional languages to children and what types of support are needed. In the Blog Post *6.2: How Early a Second Language*, misconceptions are addressed about age and second language acquisition while arguments confront the critical age to optimize second language learning. Three key elements include: (1) how young children are not necessarily fast and effective language learners; (2) first and second language learning occurs similarly via the same neural structures; and (3) proficiency in second language learners can be significantly influenced by factors that include motivation, time, energy, and language input along with opportunities to practice. While an early start to bilingualism is beneficial, there are no age limits to becoming bilingual. Age restrictions are not to be viewed as a detrimental factor. On the topic of whether or not to raise a child in a bilingual environment, parents play a pivotal role in this department in terms of deciding what languages are to be used in the home and what languages are to be considered for educational and instructional purposes. Important factors that parents should consider is to determine how much

language input and output are needed in order to learn, develop, acquire, and maintain each language. Blog 6.4 addresses how some families integrate the “one-person-one-language” approach to bilingualism with their children; a strategy with noted advantages as well as several inconveniences. On this matter, each parent will only use their preferred or first language with their child; Parent A might speak only Spanish in the household with the child while Parent B will exclusively use English. On a similar note, *Blog 6.5 Parental Language Input and Childhood Bilingualism* relays how imperative it is for children who are brought up in a two-language household to receive as much input and output in the minority language as the majority language.

As is the case, English as the majority language will often take over as the dominant language. Several blogs in this chapter discuss and explain these phenomena and the evolutionary nature of this relationship over time. Worth mentioning, parents repeatedly express fear that the next or future generation(s) is(are) losing not only the family’s heritage language but culture as well (see Blogs 6.6 - 6.8 for more details on this matter). Language use becomes an important component in the dyad between parents and their children. Children might tell their parents, “I do not want to speak that (home or first) language.” On the flip side, many parents feel the need to sacrifice their heritage language so that their child can acculturate or assimilate into

the dominant culture and majority language to ensure a better life. For decades, educators and administrators alike have shared responsibility in promoting the false belief that emerging bilingual students or English-language learners (ELLs) with developmental language disorders were best served in English-only classrooms (Bird et al., 2016; Paradis, & Govindarajan, 2018). The junction of bilingualism and special education is the focus of *Chapter 7: Children with Additional Needs*. During parent conferences and Individualized Educational Program meetings, teachers and administration have consistently dissuaded parents and caregivers of bilingual children with language-based developmental disorders to learn how to speak, learn, maintain their first or home language. This stance even earned state-level legislative support as in Proposition 227 in California (1998) and Arizona's Proposition 203 (2000) where English-only instruction was institutionalized (Gonzalez et al., 2021). However, such claims fail to acknowledge a significant body of research and evidence-based-findings that support how bilinguals with developmental language disorders, specific learning disabilities, dyslexia, autism, and hearing loss can learn and thrive in two languages (Peña et al., 2021; Quinto-Pozos, 2014).

As well, of importance is to better understand how language differences that bilinguals exhibit between their two languages have all too often been misinterpreted as a language disorder or

learning disabilities. Nowhere is this more evident in the over-representation of English-learners in special education or other remedial programs (Hulse & Curran, 2020; Turkan, 2020). The author clearly expresses the many reasons as to why educators should not compare and hold bilinguals accountable to monolingual standards. First, over-identification is a result of not testing a student in both of their two languages as well as the lack of knowledge related to typical linguistic developmental milestones in each of language of a bilingual. Secondly, under-identification takes place under similar circumstances when a student is left in the wait and see period with the idea that they will eventually catch up. However, often is the case that the student does present with a learning disability and therefore misses out on valuable additional support and specialized instructional intervention. All too often, these scenarios have played themselves out in schools based on false beliefs and misdirected guidance towards bilingualism. Over the last two decades, an abundance of available research and experimental studies now support how bilingual and biliterate students experience not only academic benefits, but cognitive gains evidenced throughout one's lifespan (Anderson et al., 2022; Bialystok et al., 2022). The nine blogs located in *Chapter 8: Second Language Learning* address topics related to students who begin to learn a second language upon entering school. Blog 8.2 contains an interview with Dr. Fabrice

Jaumont, author of *The bilingual revolution* (2017), which describes how parent groups advocated for the right to educate their children in bilingual classrooms in New York. As a result, educational policy makers have listened and now many support the additional economic, cultural, and sociopolitical benefits of biliterate populations. On this matter, California voters in 2016 overwhelmingly passed Proposition 58, which placed an educational priority on multilingual learning in K-12 schools resulting in the immediate need for a dramatic increase in the number of dual language university teacher preparation programs. From this victory came Global California 2030, an initiative that contained multiple large-scale ambitious goals. One aim in particular was to quadruple the number of school-based dual language immersion programs from 400 in 2017 to 1,600 by 2030. This policy shift has large implications for the 22.3% of California's school population classified as dual language learners (DLLs) and this percentage increases to 60% of children in the under the age of five category (Gonzalez et al., 2021). On this matter, Blog 8.2 *What is Translanguaging?* includes an interview with Dr. Ofelia García, one of the most visible proponents of translanguaging; which legitimizes fluid language practices as a pedagogical framework that fosters the use of languages in school as they are used in children's homes and communities. Highlighted is one eleven-year-old student's comment, "Spanish runs through my heart, but English rules my veins" (page

174). This quote fittingly captures how a bilingual person's two-language systems are complex and dynamic systems that cannot be separated (García & Kleifgen, 2020).

The eight blogs found in *Chapter 11: Language Processing* cover issues related to bilingual language perception and processing which represent complex systems that operate in different activation states. Blog 11.1 *When Bilinguals Speak* draws attention to Grosjean's conceptual framework of the language mode, which frames how bilinguals navigate along a continuum with two endpoints. One is the monolingual language mode where only one language is fully active and a bilingual language mode where several languages can be activated. Of importance is how the state of activation among bilinguals will fluctuate contingent upon various given points from moment to moment specific to internal and external factors that influence what language or languages are needed. Blog 11.4 *Does Processing Language Differently Mean More Efficiently?* further highlights how the coexistence and constant interaction of two languages in bilinguals creates specific processing characteristics. Certainly, the use of brain imaging has helped our understanding of how bilinguals process language differently than monolinguals, most noted in between-language competition and within-language competition (page 242). Blog 11.8 brings up important diagnostic issues based on

an interview with speech-language pathologist and researcher, Dr. Lu-Feng Shi as related to specific tasks to consider when assessing bilinguals' language perception and comprehension skills.

The eight blog posts found in *Chapter 12: The Bilingual Mind* report on a range of matters such as the bilingual mind and dreaming (Blog 12.1), the retention of autobiographical memory (Blog 12.3) and approaches to mathematical operations and numeric calculations (Blog 12.4). Of significance is the much-discussed recent issue concerning the bilingual advantage. As noted in this chapter, select research findings now inform how bilingualism appears to strengthen certain cognitive processes and executive functioning that “makes the bilingual brain more resistant to neurodegeneration” (page 254). Two blog posts in this section discuss a range of studies that support these claims based on findings that surfaced during certain language processing tasks that involved speech perception, allocation of memory, and categorization tasks. On the other hand, the last two blogs (12.8 & 12.9) impart views that counter these claims. Of importance is the discussion generated here that shares current and contrasting research that yields one conclusion: the need to continue and maintain a healthy debate about the cognitive and linguistics consequences of bilingualism.

Chapter 13: The Bilingual Brain consists of six blogs; the first three posts, each with a distinct focus, cover neuroimaging technique studies. Blog 13.1 views a range of individual differences among bilinguals in terms of their neural networks of different language pairs such as English and Chinese, and how language components are processed differently between our left and right brain hemispheres. Blogs 13.2 and 13.3 review and share results of brain imaging studies that compare and contrast monolinguals with bilinguals. That last four blogs address a range of distinctive issues related to diagnosis, treatment, and recovery of multilingual patients with aphasia; an acquired language impairment which is usually the result of a stroke or brain injury. Aphasia affects a person's ability to express and understand written and spoken language. As bilingual populations are diverse in so many ways, one can anticipate that bilingual aphasic patients have demonstrated a range of recovery patterns in language use that is well explained in Blog 13.5: *Impairment and Recovery Patterns in Multilingual Aphasic Patients*. Of note, explanations are summarized and supported primarily by case studies specific to parallel recovery of both languages, selective recovery during which the patient never regains one or more languages, and differential impairment and recovery where the languages are differently impaired at the time of injury and are then restored at the same time or at different rates. The

The presence of multilingual students who learn or use English as an additional language in general and special education classrooms has gained attention in relation to equitable education opportunities they received during the pandemic (Turkan, 2020). Longstanding matters related to the digital divide were made even more visible and impacted many already marginalized students as a result of COVID-related school closures. Educational practitioners, not only in K-12 classrooms but in higher educational settings, need to find ways to defeat divisiveness. The pandemic will most likely continue to impact the dynamics of educational interactions both in and outside of the classroom. This includes developing social and emotional connections remotely behind the screen, and in-person during class discussions, responding to equity and accessibility issues, while engaging in reflective practices and self-assessment of connecting language and culture. Moving forward, of importance is to engage students in real time and humanize teacher-student connectivity. As a valuable resource suitable for our current post-pandemic times, this book delivers a powerful message in regard to life as a bilingual that fortifies the abundant advantages and unique consequences experienced by speakers of more than one language.

References

- Anderson, J. A., Hawrylewicz, K., & Bialystok, E. (2020). Who is bilingual? Snapshots across the lifespan. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 23(5), 929-937. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728918000950>
- Bialystok, E., Hawrylewicz, K., Grudy, J. G., & Chung-Fat-Yim, A. (2022). The swerve: How childhood bilingualism changed from liability to benefit. *Developmental Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001376>
- Bird, E. K. R., Trudeau, N., & Sutton, A. (2016). Pulling it all together: The road to lasting bilingualism for children with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 63, 63-78. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2016.07.005>
- García, O., & Kleifgen, J. A. (2020) Translanguaging and literacies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(4), 553-571. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.286>
- García-Mateus, S., & Palmer, D. (2017). Translanguaging pedagogies for positive identities in two-way dual language bilingual education. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 16(4), 245-255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2017.1329016>
- Gonzalez, T., Okhremtchouk, I. S., & Esposito, M. C. (2021). Arizona and California special education teachers on their readiness to work with dual language learners: Re-centering social justice in special education. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 20(2), 8. <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/taboo/vol20/iss2/8>
- Grosjean, F. (2021). *Life as a bilingual: Knowing and using two or more languages*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108975490>
- Hulse, D., & Curran, E. (2020). Disabling language: The overrepresentation of emergent bilingual students in special education in New York and Arizona. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, 48, 381. <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/ulj/vol48/iss2/2>
- MacSwan, J. (2022). *Multilingual perspectives on translanguaging* Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800415690>
- Olsen, L. (2022). *California English Learner roadmap implementation guide and toolkit for administrators: Alignment and practice*. Californians Together Publication.
- Paradis, J., & Govindarajan, K. (2018). Bilingualism and children with developmental language and communication disorders. In D. Miller, F. Bayram, J. Rothman, & L. Serratrice (Eds.), *Bilingual cognition and language: The state of the science across its subfields*, 347-370. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.54.16par>

Peña, E. D., Bedore, L. M., & Torres, J. (2021). *Assessment of language proficiency and dominance in monolinguals and bilinguals*. In W. Francis (Ed.), *Bilingualism across the lifespan: Opportunities and challenges for cognitive research in a global society* (pp. 88-105). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315143996>

Quinto-Pozos, D. (Ed.). (2014). *Multilingual aspects of signed language communication and disorder* (Vol. 11). Multilingual Matters.

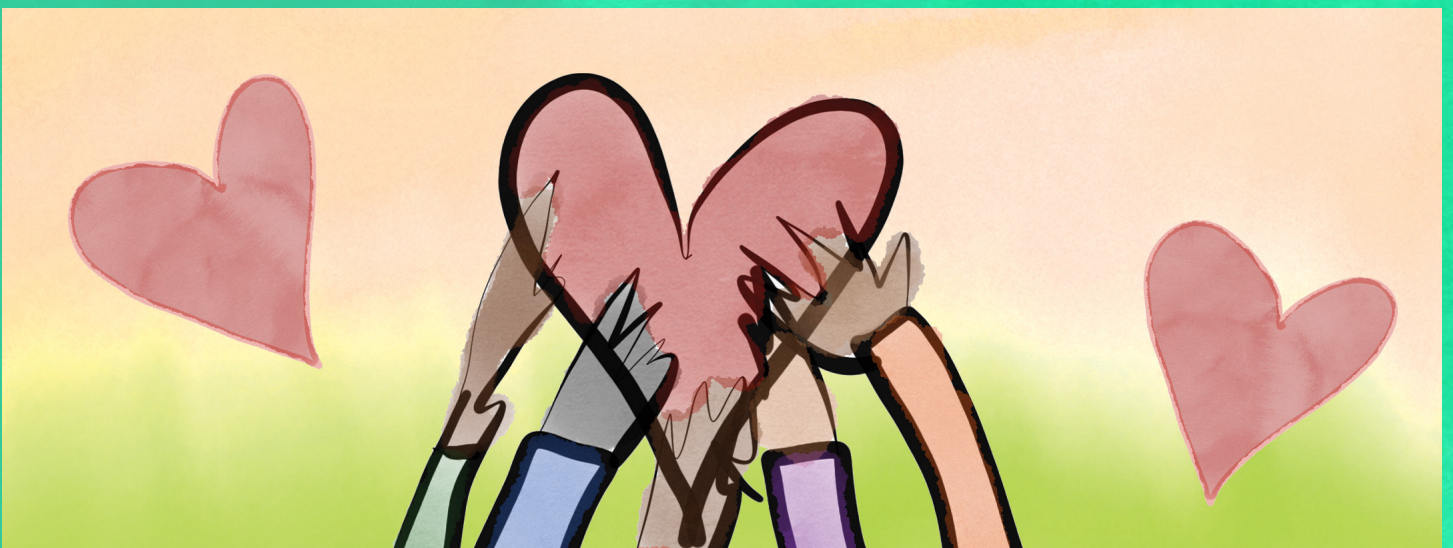
Turkan, S. (2020). Lessons learned in providing field experience opportunities for future teachers of emerging bilinguals during the COVID-19 pandemic. In, R.E. Ferdig & K.E. Pytash (Eds.), *What teacher educators should have learned from 2020*. <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/219088/>

United States Census Bureau. (2019). QuickFacts: Los Angeles County, California; California. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescountycalifornia,CA/PST04521>

Vélez-Ibáñez, C.G., & Greenberg, J.B. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among US-Mexican households. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 313-335. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1992.23.4.05x1582v>

Reflections on Grief, Joy, and Healing: Love and critical consciousness at the center of virtual learning spaces.

Natalie Núñez, Professional Learning Specialist, California Association
for Bilingual Education



I never imagined that a frequent negotiation between doing what I feel is right and protecting my livelihood would be part of my existence as an educator in the public-school system. My days are often filled with mixed emotions that can range from love & joy to frustration & sadness. And now, as I sit here and begin to reflect on the past two years, I realize that I'm having to pause and take deep breaths to help center myself.

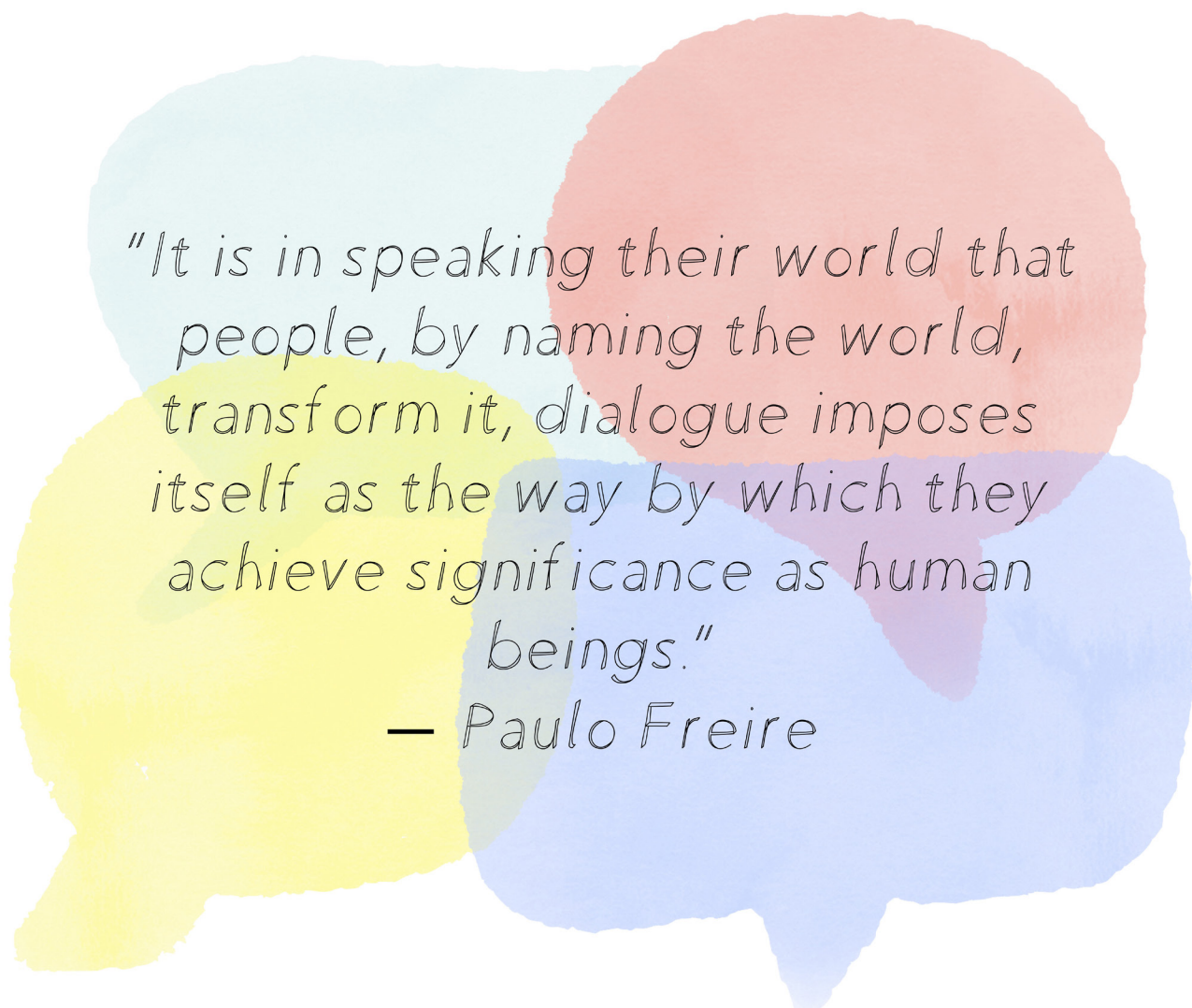
When we began distance learning, I was propelled to reimagine any previous notions I had of what learning would look like and without the constraints of a classroom. Our school community was in crisis and in moments of crisis we all need love, solidarity, and grace. And as we began distance learning, I didn't know how I would teach *sonidos de letras* or provide opportunities for oracy, but I did know that I wanted to be very intentional about creating a virtual space where students and their families knew I was at their service. During the time, stories of sickness, lost loved ones, lost jobs, and struggles with day care came from my students' homes. For many of us, life would never be the same. As a teacher I knew the least I could do was conduct myself in a way that would never be a source of added stress or burden to students and their families.

Returning to in-person learning was difficult. There was the fear of contracting Covid-19, the political conversations among staff, the shortage of staff,

keeping up with quarantine protocols, and not to mention the pressure to address the supposed learning loss. For me, priority of the later has been the most upsetting and sometimes revolting. Many times it feels as if nobody remembers that our students just survived a global pandemic and what our students and schools need now are resources to help recover from traumas of the past three years (really traumas from before the pandemic). The pandemic disproportionately affected schools and communities like mine and yet we continue to do things very much like before the pandemic. Upon our return we still had to issue quarterly grades for the same standards, still issue tardy slips, and still submit students' names for counseling waiting lists- that feel as if the student's safety isn't in danger, they will never be seen, or their needs adequately met. Our schools need clean and working facilities, counselors, nurses, teachers, gardens, music, humanizing pedagogy, and spaces that are safe. Our students need to be celebrated for their resilience and ability to continue to learn under such circumstances - not blamed for the learning loss and problematized.

My days are filled with mixed emotions that stem from questioning if I am complicit in the system that oppresses and continues to perpetuate the dispossession of my own school community? I offer myself comfort by remembering that I try my best to answer

my calling with justice and love at the center of what I do. But those feelings of comfort don't last long and are replaced with guilt when, at a professional development meeting, someone calls our students broken and I failed to speak up. Then the next day, I feel joy as I see our students do amazing things despite all the institutional barriers stacked against them. I'm going to take one last deep breath to finish my thoughts to say, *que la lucha sigue* till the day it's not necessary. Until then, we need to remember to give our own selves radical love and grace.



"It is in speaking their world that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings."

— Paulo Freire

CSUDH | COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

