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## Challenging the Dominant Narrative: Critical Bilingual Leadership (*Liderazgo*)<sup>1</sup> for Emergent Bilingual Latin@ Students

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**ABSTRACT:** The growing “Latinization” of the United States is drastically changing the demographics of the students served in PK-12 public schools (Irizarry, 2011). To understand how educational leaders can best serve this changing student population, we used Critical Bilingual leadership, *Liderazgo*, to interrogate the aim to create a culturally and linguistically responsive school. We found that *Liderazgo* was operationalized across the following themes: promoting dual language programming as the foundation for equity; drawing on experiential knowledge as a strength; fostering relationships through transcaring; and exercising instructional bilingual leadership.

**KEYWORDS:** educational leadership, critical bilingual leadership, dual language, Spanish speakers, bilingual education

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Current shifts in student enrollment are drastically changing the linguistic landscape in U.S. schools. Between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of White students in U.S. public schools decreased from 60% to 52%, and this coincided with an increase in Latin@<sup>2</sup> student enrollment from 17% to 24% (NCES, 2014). Furthermore, a significant percentage of U.S. Latin@ students is considered English Language Learners (ELL). According to the most recently reported data from the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 37% of Latin@ students in grade 4 and 21% in grade 8 were labeled ELL (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2010).

Subtractive school ideologies, policies, and practices force Latin@ youth to shed their multidimensional identities for a chance of school success (Irizarry, 2011;

Valenzuela, 1999). According to research, culturally and linguistically responsive schools that promote additive bilingual programming, such as dual language programs, are essential for the development of bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic benefits for emergent bilingual Latin@ students (EBLS)<sup>3</sup> (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2009; Scanlan & Lopez, 2012; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Unfortunately, these schools tend to be the exception as politics and nationalism drive the educational structures and programming for EBLS (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).

In order to move away from subtractive forms of schooling and to foster more culturally and linguistically responsive school opportunities for EBLS, leadership at the school level is essential. Moreover, equity-minded leadership that uses social justice as a barometer for school success is necessary for schools that serve EBLS (Brooks, Normore, Jean-Marie, & Hodgins, 2007; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Theoharis, 2007). However, this research is limited to monolingual English settings, applies an inclusive leadership perspective, and emphasizes English-only educational models for EBLS that highlight the voices of predominately White, monolingual principals (Cooper, 2009; Kose, 2009; Theoharis, 2007, 2008; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

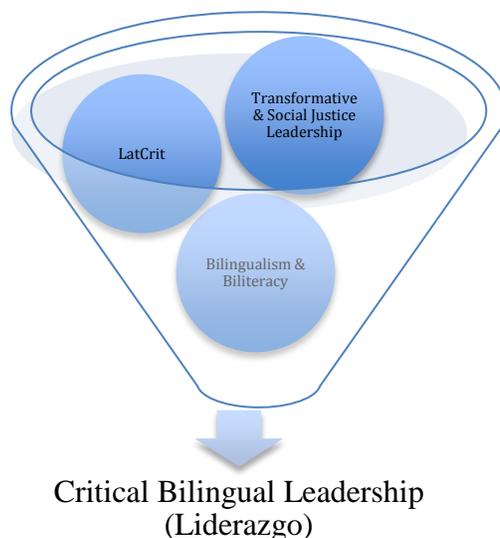
Therefore, as a counternarrative, we argue that social justice leadership should be contextualized in bilingual settings for EBLS and highlight the culturally and linguistically empowering approaches of bilingual principals of color. Consequently, for this study we aim to explore the following research question: What culturally and linguistically responsive school leadership practices best support EBLS to succeed academically and develop bilingualism/biliteracy? To answer this, we use counterstorytelling as a method to highlight the leadership of a school community at a PK-8 dual language immersion school.

## **Theoretical Framework**

We integrate the following three perspectives to craft a theoretical framework for leading culturally and linguistically responsive education for EBLS: transformative and social justice leadership, Latin@ Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), and research on bilingual education (Figure 1). In this section, we will discuss how these theories and concepts complement each other and will frame the analysis for this study.

### **Transformative and Social Justice Leadership**

Transformative and social justice leadership operates under the notion that school principals must not only manage schools, but also be equity-minded leaders that lead for socially just school policies and practices (Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2008). Moreover, if principals are transformative leaders for social justice, they must focus their work around ensuring that all students have the opportunity for school success. More specifically, they need to challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems,



*Figure 1.* Critical bilingual leadership

encourage individual achievement and the public good, and focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice. Transformative leaders engage in self-reflection, systematically analyze schools, and confront inequities regarding race, class, gender, language, ability, and/or sexual orientation (Cooper, 2009).

We believe that transformative and social justice leadership can lead to educational change and success for students across all minoritized populations (Shields, 2010; Cooper, 2009; Theoharis, 2007, 2008). However, there is limited empirical evidence that operationalizes these two frameworks for leadership that supports the academic success of EBLs within bilingual education contexts.

### LatCrit

LatCrit derives from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and examines “racialized layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, phenotype, accent, and surname” (Yosso, 2005, p. 7). Thus, LatCrit theorists work on the premise that racism is about power and power is used to create additive or subtractive educational spaces for EBLs. LatCrit is a theory that elucidates Latin@s’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Solorzano, 1997). Most importantly, LatCrit underscores the voices of Latin@ students and their families.

Furthermore, while LatCrit explores educational structures and opportunities for Latin@ students and families, there is limited emphasis of this framework within the field of educational leadership. Although Alemán’s (2009a, 2009b) research notably employs both LatCrit and CRT to uncover school finance inequities and the political status quo that Latin@ leaders combat when advocating for their communities, very few scholars in

educational leadership use a racial lens to examine the leadership necessary to support the linguistic experiences and assets of Latin@ youth. For this reason we argue bilingual education research must also be integrated with LatCrit and transformative/social justice leadership frameworks.

## **Bilingual Education**

Bilingualism and biliteracy must be at the forefront of any educational environment that strives to be responsive to EBLs (Cummins, 2000). However, EBLs often are enrolled in schools that do not meet this essential principle of meaningful educational programs. Scholars consistently demonstrate how students' evolving bilingualism and use of their home language is essential to their learning process and academic success (Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002, 2009; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005.) For these reasons, culturally and linguistically responsive schools for EBLs are those that implement empirically based arguments for additive and developmental forms of bilingual programs for long-term academic achievement (Garcia, 2009; Francis, et al., 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2009; Rolstad, et al., 2005). Additive and long-term bilingual programs are multi-faceted models, in that they develop bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic achievement in order to develop two languages instead of attempting to transition students to English-only (de Jong, 2002; Garcia, 2009; Francis, et al., 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2009; Rolstad, et al., 2005).

Program evaluation research continues to provide evidence that long-term, additive bilingual education models are the most successful models for EBLs, and other emergent bilingual students, to develop bilingualism and succeed academically (Francis, et al., 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2009; Rolstad, et al., 2005). Researchers contend that students who participate in additive and developmental bilingual programs have higher test scores (Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1997; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Pérez, 2004; Thomas & Collier, 2002), higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2001), and more positive attitudes toward other cultures and languages (Cazabon, Lambert, & Hall, 1993; Lindholm-Leary, 2001) when compared with similar students involved in other types of school programs. Additionally, students in bilingual settings develop stronger levels of self-competence, one of the strongest predictors of future performance (López, 2010).

## **Critical Bilingual Leadership: *Liderazgo***

We use our study to demonstrate how the integration of the three frameworks reviewed above, what we coin as Critical Bilingual Leadership (CBL) or *Liderazgo*, represents the breadth of leadership capacity needed to support the school success of EBLs. CBL and the Spanish term for leadership, *liderazgo*, are used interchangeably throughout the article. *Liderazgo* promotes and legitimizes the experiential knowledge of

culturally and linguistically diverse communities as a counter narrative to the majoritarian tale (Franquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011). Leaders who embody *Liderazgo* must acknowledge and critique educational theory and practices that are used to subordinate and marginalize EBLs, as well as promise deep and equitable change in social conditions (Shields, 2010). Additionally, these leaders involve their school community in striving for culturally and linguistically responsive schools that view the cultural and linguistic knowledge that EBLs bring to school as an asset, not as a risk for failure, and create school policies and practices to reflect these pro-bilingual educational beliefs (Cummins, 2000; Garcia, 2009; Santamaria, 2009; Yosso, 2005). Lastly, these types of leaders must challenge the role of racism and linguisticism in education, centralize the experiential knowledge of EBLs, and draw upon the experiences of EBLs as a strength to be incorporated and fostered in schools. In this study, *Liderazgo* will be utilized to interrogate institutional and structural racism through the testimonios of members of a school community that aims to create a culturally and linguistically responsive school.

## Methods

We use counterstorytelling as a qualitative research method via in-depth and semi-structured interviews to further operationalize *Liderazgo* from the perspectives of the principal and school community that aim to create a culturally and linguistically responsive school for EBLs. Counterstorytelling is a method of telling the story of people historically placed on the margins whose experiences are commonly untold (Solorzano, 1997). Also, counterstorytelling challenges the majoritarian tale of those in power whose story is part of the dominant discourse (Solorzano, 1997). Fittingly, the participants' voices in this study are a counterstory to deficit generalizations of school communities that serve EBLs.

## School Context

Escuela Esperanza is a PK-8<sup>th</sup> grade public school in Maple School District (MSD), a large urban school district in the Midwest. The student enrollment of approximately 800 students is 95% Latin@ (predominately Mexican); 2% Asian (predominately Chinese); 2% African American, and 1% White. Of the student body, approximately 50% are identified as EBLs (ELL), 12% as students with disabilities, and 96% qualified as low-income. Approximately 85% of the teaching faculty are bilingual, mostly former emergent bilingual students themselves, and approximately 90% of the faculty and staff are Latin@, predominately of Mexican descent. The school has a major focus on fine arts, offering music, art, and dance classes that are culturally inspired and influenced by Mexican and Latin@ culture. The walls are covered with traditional Latin@ and Mexican art, and the air is filled with a mixture of Spanish and English, and Mandarin Chinese as well. The principal believes that the school should reflect the culture of the community by "bringing in Mexican culture in terms of dance, in terms of

bringing in artists, in terms of bringing in history, and myself bringing some myths and legends to the children.”

Presently the school implements an 80/20 whole school dual language program. All students in PK-1st grade are educated in Spanish 80% of the day; by 4<sup>th</sup> grade all students transition to 50% of the day in Spanish and 50% of the day in English. The goals of this program are that all students develop academic fluency in English and Spanish, achieve high levels of academic knowledge, and develop a positive sense of self and multicultural competencies with others. Additionally, all students take Mandarin classes, which functions as a third language for Latin@ and African American students and as the native language for Chinese students.

### Site and Participant Selection

During the search for a school and principal that embody tenets of *Liderazgo*, we utilized snowball sampling via recommendations (Patton, 1990). We started with providing a general description of *Liderazgo* and circulated it among bilingual education and equity-oriented scholars and practitioners. The site selection process led us to Escuela Esperanza and the principal, Directora Martinez. The recommendations received emphasized the school's focus on dual language immersion, culturally relevant fine arts, and a schoolwide commitment to the education of Latin@ youth. Initial site visits were conducted in order to observe the school setting and interview the principal.

After attending and observing several faculty meetings and dual language program meetings, as well as multiple classroom observations, we recruited staff members who demonstrated a commitment to the school community either in visible leadership roles, or based on their level of engagement in meetings observed. Secondly, after attending multiple school improvement committee meetings that included staff, parents, and community members, we recruited members of this committee based on the level of involvement in school leadership. After interviewing a teacher who was also on the school improvement committee, we asked her for recommendations of other staff members who would be ideal candidates to interview. Lastly, Directora Martinez suggested a few parents involved in the school community, and we contacted the parents who were also members of the school improvement committee. Overall, the staff participants in this study identify as Latin@ and bilingual and range from 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation adults who were born and raised in the MSD community. The parents interviewed primarily consisted of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants. Some of the parents were born and raised and attended school in MSD.

Table 1

*Study participants*

Name	Role	Race/ Ethnicity	Language s	Gender	Immigratio n History	Experience in Community
Directora Martinez	Principal	Latina (Mexican)	Spanish English	Female	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Born in Texas, Moved to MSD in 5 <sup>th</sup> grade
Mr. Gonzalez	Office Manager	Latino (Mexican)	Spanish English	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Born & Raised in MSD
Mr. Enriquez	Teaching Assistant	Latino (Mexican)	Spanish English	Male	Adult Immigrant	10 Years: Immigrated from Mexico
Maestra Soto	Dual Language Teacher	Latina (Mexican)	Spanish English	Female	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Born & Raised in MSD
Maestro Lopez	Dual Language Teacher	Latino (Mexican)	Spanish English	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Born & Raised in MSD
Maestra Ramirez	Dual Language Teacher	Latina (Guatemal an)	Spanish English	Female	Adult Immigrant	Immigrated to Illinois 20 years ago
Señora Barrios	Parent	Latina (Mexican)	Spanish	Female	Adult Immigrant	Immigrated to Illinois 10 years ago
Señor Aleman	Parent	Latino (Mexican)	Spanish English	Male	Adult Immigrant	Immigrated to Illinois 8 years ago
Señorita Garcia	Parent	Latina (Mexican)	Spanish English	Female	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Born & Raised in MSD
Mr. Igana	Parent	Filipino	Tagalog English Spanish	Male	Adult Immigrant	Immigrated to Illinois 5 years ago
Mr. Alonso	Parents	Latino (Mexican)	Spanish English	Male Female	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Born & Raised in MSD
Mrs. Alonso		White	English		Unknown	Foster Care/ Child of the State

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The process of data collection took place over the course of the 2013-2014 school year. Data collection consisted of multiple school site visits and observations focused on the aspects of *Liderazgo* as we observed the principal, teachers, staff, students, and parents; in-depth and semi-structured interviews with the principal,

teachers, staff, and parents; and review and analysis of a number of policy documents. We coded for aspects of *Liderazgo* or CBL in our analysis of observational field notes and interview transcripts. We used several analytic processes to qualitatively code the data. We first conducted open coding with an initial reading of the field notes and interview transcripts line by line identifying consistent themes and story lines (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). We then engaged in focused coding, streamlining themes and eliminating inconsistent storylines. As co-authors we served as critical peers, questioning one another's interpretation of the data. Over the course of this study, we continuously looked across data points to triangulate and confirm the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

### **Testimonies**

In-depth and semi-structured interviews of the lead principal (interviewed four times), six staff members (each interviewed once), and five parents (each interviewed once) also served as testimonios, a form of counterstorytelling from the field of Latin American studies that honors and affirms the sources of knowledge often overlooked or delegitimized within the master-narrative (Delgado Bernal, 1998). We focused on testimonios in the data collection and analysis process because they document life experiences with special attention to instances of injustice; are transformative, aiming to dismantle oppressive structures; and allow the individual narrator to positively shape his or her trajectory, and honor the knowledge produced by the narrator (Irizarry, 2011).

### **Researcher Positionality**

As researchers and educators, we recognize our own positionalities and how our multidimensional identities influence our work. The first author is a bilingual White male who is an educational leader in bilingual programs. His White, male, and linguistic privileges, as a native English speaker who learned Spanish, mean that his experiences as an educator in bilingual education leadership are different from those of Directora Martinez. The second author is a Black female whose native language is English. While she continues to experience the intersecting oppressions of racism and sexism in the US context, she has experienced some privilege as a native English speaker. Thus, we recognize and acknowledge that our own experiences with oppression and privilege vary from the participants in this study, and for this reason we consider how these differences impact our analysis for this study.

### **Findings**

In the subsequent findings we use counterstorytelling to determine what aspects of CBL provide a culturally and linguistically responsive space for EBLs at Escuela

Esperanza. This is achieved via testimonios from Directora Martinez as well as key staff and parents from the school community. As such, we present the following major themes as a promising ideology for leadership promoting the success of EBLs: dual language as the starting point and foundation for equity; drawing on experiential knowledge as a strength; and fostering relationships through transcaring and instructional bilingual leadership.

### **Dual Language as the Starting Point and Foundation for Equity**

One important implication of our emerging framework is how a critical bilingual leader acknowledges and critiques inequities and policies that impact EBLs with the recognition that ideological beliefs play a major role in English-only policies and subtractive educational opportunities in schools (Zamudio et al., 2011). Directora Martinez talked about pushing back and challenging subtractive policies by saying:

It is my job to *shield* my students, families, and teachers from the deficit-oriented policies we are forced into. I can take the heat for that from those above, but the school and the programs must be in the best interest of our students and families. We do not enforce English-only policies and inappropriate assessments that target Latin@ youth for special education.

Directora Martinez viewed the establishment of a dual language school as the foundation and starting point for achieving equity within her school community. She led her staff with the premise that traditional forms of schooling are subtractive and promote English-only monolingualism. Therefore, at Escuela Esperanza they focused on long-term bilingualism as the goal instead of merely transitioning students to English. She indicated that:

Administrators always blame Latin@ youth and families for the dropout rate, but we never talk about why the dropout rate exists nor what we are doing early on to transform the opportunities for Latin@ youth. Other principals talk about the lack of English and Spanish for Latin@s and the lack of parent involvement but at the same time these principals are pushing for English-only programs in all of our schools even if we know research does not support this policy.

Staff members and parents concurred with Directora Martinez's sentiments on dual language as a conduit to achieving systemic equity for EBLs. For example, Maestra Ramirez used the following quote by Rigoberta Menchú, a civil and indigenous human rights leader from Guatemala, to explain how dual language education promotes equity: "ahi me nacio la consciencia," which means, "This is when my consciousness was born." Thus, she declared dual language as one solution:

to a problem that we as a system created. I have never seen a country where students enter in first grade knowing one or two languages and get out barely knowing one, so being able to give the opportunity as a school to develop both fully and to make sure that the students are going to be able to succeed and

have the base foundation that they're going to need to be strong in their own language will give them the capacity to make the transitions later.

Maestra Ramirez powerfully describes how dual language is indeed the foundation for equity, as students are able to use their native language and cultural knowledge as an additive (not a deficit) starting point for academic success.

Parents also emphasized the importance of bilingualism in the academic success of their children. Señorita Garcia compared her schooling experiences to her children, and sensed that she did not fully develop into a bilingual adult because she was educated in traditional forms of schooling such as remedial bilingual and English-only programs. She now sees the difference in her own children and the larger community. She views dual language programming as a way to “help in the future” to prevent “the dropout rates of students and prepare them for jobs. I’m seeing all the time that jobs right now in this generation are requiring both languages. So with this program it’s going to help them a lot.”

Another parent, Señora Barrios, articulated how dual language programming cultivates the academic achievement of immigrant youth who are recent arrivals as well as U.S. born, 1<sup>st</sup> generation youth. According to Señora Barrios, dual language programming helps newly arrived immigrant youth transition to US schooling with greater ease. She stated:

[el programa] beneficia por los estudiantes que tienen o vienen de México, o vienen de otros países donde hablan un solo idioma, pues esa transición al inglés, este, al estar en una escuela como esta que ofrece ese programa, pues los hacer sentir en confianza en la escuela y en casa.

*[The program] benefits the students who come from Mexico or other countries where they speak only one language, so this transition to English, um, to be able to be in a school like this that offers this program, well, it makes them feel confident and they trust in school and at home.*

Ultimately, the Esperanza school community used dual language education as a lens to contest systemic inequities and subtractive schooling by preparing students academically in both languages and tapping into students’ and families’ experiential knowledge as strength.

### **Drawing on Experiential Knowledge as Strength**

From a LatCrit perspective, it is important to challenge the Eurocentric perspective of what is considered “valid knowledge” and legitimize the cultural knowledge: i.e., the “bilingualism, biculturalism, and commitment to communities” of Latin@ youth, families, and staff (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 115). Directora Martinez solicits the experiential and cultural knowledge of students, staff, and parents as well as her own educational experiences when constructing school improvement decisions and processes. Directora Martinez drew upon her own experiential knowledge as a strength by declaring,

I am a former EBLs and I understand the challenges we face in this anti-Latin@ environment, but I also know the strengths of my family when I was a student...I landed in education as a bilingual educator, which was my passion as well because I was, um I am, an EBLs and I understand the struggles and I wanted to make sure that I tried to make it a little easier for the future generations that were coming behind me.

Directora Martinez also secured the experiential knowledge of staff who understood firsthand the challenges of navigating school as an EBLs. She hired a staff of primarily former EBLs, many who grew up in the Esperanza community and attended school in MSD. Several staff in their testimonios emphasized the importance of remaining in their communities to give back. For example, Maestra Soto worked at Esperanza Escuela since it first opened and she herself was a product of bilingual education. She admitted that she did not know much about dual language instructionally when first hired but, because of her experiential knowledge as a former EBLs, Directora Martinez “took a leap of faith in offering me this position” and “she hasn’t looked back since.” Maestra Soto spoke about the importance of having bilingual Latin@ staff at Escuela Esperanza:

I think it is, especially with our dual language mission, because I think that parents get inspired when they see successful Latin@s teaching their own children. We serve as role models because they can aspire to be successful and know that they can make it because, well here's my teacher, she comes from this family and she's Latina and she speaks Spanish and English very well. I definitely think it's important that our administrators see that and value that and they take leaps of faith on teachers like us and are representative of being Latin@s in this country. We're in front of our students, we identify with their cultures, we know where they come from you know we know the setting where they come from . . . because we came from there ourselves.

This experiential knowledge of being bilingual and “coming from where their students come from,” both linguistically and ethnically, was an important aspect of the school at Esperanza. Additionally, teachers such as Maestro Lopez were called to teach because they wanted to change the type of schooling environment that they struggled through, as well as strengthen the surrounding community. Maestro Lopez said he was “one of the lucky kids to actually attend college from the neighborhood” partly because of “a life-changing experience when one of my youngest brothers was 18, back in 2007, passed away (by gun violence).” Maestro Lopez worked in a school community in which he culturally and linguistically identified because he came from a long history of family members who were also educators.

Finally, teachers testified that their *linguistic capital*, or the intellectual and social skills acquired from experiences speaking in more than one language or style (Yosso, 2005) and their prior experience as an EBLs enhanced their instruction. Maestra Ramirez worked in MSD for 29 years, but was born in Guatemala City. She said she was fortunate that in the early years of her life she was “educated in Latino culture” and because of the “the richness of the language” she has the experiential knowledge of “learning a language from the roots.” Since she spent her early years in a Spanish

dominant (or “mother language” as she called it) school setting meant she has experiential knowledge pedagogically speaking that cannot be formally attained in a teacher educational program. Maestra Ramirez explained:

A lot of people probably go to college and get educated in how to teach literacy [for dual language] and probably are very well, uh, informed in how to do it. But when you have to teach the mother language to students it's a different thing. It's not the same and you read books and they tell you how, but it's never having what it takes to be that culture. And knowing how it was done for me, and how I did it when I studied to become a teacher there. So that gave me a very rich background, and really, um, very fortunate to know how it is to be done.

The experiences that participants in this study had were unique, both culturally and linguistically, to the communities in which they lived, worked, and served. Pulling from these experiences also allowed the educators at Escuela Esperanza to develop a strong culture of care.

### **Fostering Relationships Through Transcaring**

One aspect of Escuela Esperanza is the overarching culture of care that allows a third space within school for student to express their lived reality as borderlanders or, as Anzaldúa (1999) describes, a struggle of borders within oneself. This notion of borderlanders encompasses the ever-changing struggle of navigating intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, and immigration status, among others. For many students, having to identify as Mexican or American, a Spanish speaker or an English speaker, documented or undocumented, is a constant and ever-changing struggle. In order to help students who were living in the borderlands emotionally cope with living in the “two worlds,” educators at Escuela Esperanza practiced a specific type of caring that García, Woodley, Flores, and Chu (2012) coined *transcaring*. This type of caring refers to how teachers and administrators straddle “language, cultures, and modes of knowing and performing in the borderlands in which these immigrant students live” (García et al., 2012, p. 807). Moreover, this notion of transcaring includes, and moves beyond, concepts of *cariño*, authentic caring, and critical caring to become responsive to the “fluid ethnolinguistic identities” (García et al., 2012, p. 807) of EBLs as they construct their identities as US Latin@ youth.

Maestra Ramirez spent part of her testimonio explaining how she tries to nurture her students as best as she can, but at some point she has to provide them with the armor necessary to contend with the racism and xenophobia they experience outside the protective school walls. She said that in some ways Latin@s are beginning to be accepted as a “part of society” and there is “recognition we are here” but she continues:

Unfortunately because of the fact that a lot of our parents don't have legal documentation, we are still a stigma or something. You know there is a connection between us and the legal aspects of our culture, so that affects our

students because they are also being the shadow [feeling] the one that probably “I am here, but I am not.” “I am part of this country, but I am not.”

In this study, Maestra Ramirez and other teachers engaged in transcaring as a culturally transformative pedagogy by allowing students to explore their third space as borderlanders, students who straddle cultures and perform features that might be considered unique to their identities (Garcia et al., 2012). For example, Maestra Ramirez provided students opportunities to write about the marginalization they experienced because of their undocumented status. She expressed:

When I find students that write me compositions when they say how they feel, some of those things come out, you know. Some of them are able to tell “I am here, and I am in this country, and my parents are from there, but sometimes I wonder you know what my future will be like.” And so when you see cases like the Dream Act or stuff like that you start thinking, “Is this really reality?” and “What are they going to be facing?”

Maestra Ramirez went on to explain she teaches students that they must learn how to thrive in multiple worlds of being bilingual, not just English speakers or Spanish speakers, and being immigrants, being Latin@, and any number of intersecting identities in which they must traverse.

I know some of them will be successful but if we don't give them really the tools that are required, they may not, because the same society is not going to let them. Educators make them believe that regardless to those conditions that are happening at home, or regardless to whatever is in their way, they need to strive for their own.

Maestro Lopez also spoke about this notion of learning to thrive in this third space of multiple and conflicting worlds and describes it as a hybrid space; when asked to expand on this, he described that since he is well versed in both languages,

It's kind of hard to decide (who you are). One day and I wake up and I'm as American as apple pie and the next morning I'm as Mexican as my grandfather. So it's like sometimes it's just a tough decision, it's kind of like you're in and out, it's kind of a hybrid space.

Esperanza has worked to prepare students for the realities of life as Latin@ youth and young adults in the United States. Mr. Enriquez, a school staff member, talked about how the school has approached immigration issues as a school-wide community to better support students. He spoke about a pro-immigrant march that Directora Martinez led with the entire school community. He believed this march showcased what the school was about, and it was led by the principal “because she understands the movement” and aimed at “making it educational to teach them (the students) about it, so that nobody tells them otherwise or influences them to do something else.” He shared the idea that this movement was important for EBLs so that they “can defend themselves and nobody can just put ideas into their head that shouldn't be there.” Ultimately, this level of transcaring that Mr. Enriquez describes between the administration, staff, and families spans all aspects of schooling at Escuela Esperanza.

## Instructional Bilingual Leadership

Throughout the literature related to educational leadership, we know that instructional leadership is very important to school success. Having a strong instructional leader makes a difference in schools. However, within the context of bilingual education, instructional leadership must be influenced by bilingual education research and practices as well. School leaders in bilingual settings must use research literature to craft effective and integrated service delivery for EBLs by promoting high quality curriculum, cultivating bilingualism and biliteracy, and fostering positive sociocultural development (Scanlan & Lopez, 2012). In Escuela Esperanza, Directora Martinez demonstrates her leadership capacity above and beyond what most principals have to do. Most principals are leading monolingual English schools, and while they are held to high standards as principals, Directora Martinez has an additional level of work to ensure her leadership is valued.

For example, in the beginning of the year Directora Martinez led the first school improvement team meeting by documenting and presenting all of the examples of evidence for meeting the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders<sup>4</sup>. During this meeting, she updated the school improvement team on all the work she and her leadership team had done the previous academic year as well as over the summer and outlined the goals as they related to the standards for this academic year. This leadership team is comprised of teachers, community members, and parents, some of whom are Spanish dominant; therefore, she presented all of this evidence in both English and Spanish. Directora Martinez presents evidence of meeting the ISLLC standards at the beginning of all of the school improvement meetings as a way to explicitly demonstrate how she is leading the school forward from a standards perspective. Interestingly, this initiative is one that Directora Martinez does on her own in both languages.

As a bilingual Latina principal, she believes that this additional work is required in order to validate her leadership, which speaks to the complexity of *Liderazgo* within an educational space where a bilingual principal of color is in a leadership role that is historically dominated by White, English monolingual principals.

Directora Martinez sets the stage as the leader who continues to foster a dual language immersion model and pushes the school community to continue to improve. She operationalized her instructional leadership as encouraging teachers to “try new things” and sometimes even “have the kids lead.” Therefore, teachers knew that Directora Martinez’s instructional leadership was based on giving teachers the opportunity to “come to master their craft of teaching” and “be supported by creative ideas” within the framework of dual language, because “it is not a place where you are going to be handed a textbook and be told this is the book you are going to teach from and you got to get from this page to this page by this time.” Also, as an instructional leader, she makes sure that

Everyone understands high expectations across Spanish, English, Mandarin, or the arts or music. It is for the benefit of the children.... I want to pride myself that I'm thinking that I'm providing a nurturing and supportive environment for teachers and I have to take care of teachers and I have to help them grow so that they can do the best for the kids. That is my job.

Maestra Soto shared similar thinking about Directora Martinez's high expectations for teachers and how these high expectations then "trickle down to (us) holding high expectations for students." Additionally, incorporating high expectations and supporting teachers to meet them is an area that Maestra Soto feels is extremely valuable and unique at Esperanza. In fact, she spoke about how this type of leadership has directly influenced teacher recruitment and retention. She stated:

That's why I've been so happy here and I have not wanted to seek employment elsewhere because I think that you don't see that (elsewhere). You see principals making choices that they feel are necessary (on their own) and that isn't the case here.

Escuela Esperanza, Directora Martinez, and the larger school community embody the broader notion of *liderazgo* as a shared mission, one that Directora Martinez directly shapes, and is continuously shaped by, for the educational success of the EBLs at Escuela Esperanza.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This article showcases a school where a bilingual Latina principal, bilingual Latin@ staff members, and Latin@ parents use their personal and school testimonios to highlight the success of their school community. Previous research has reported transformative and social justice leadership in English-only settings with predominately White and monolingual principals but has not explicitly analyzed or highlighted how bilingual principals of color lead a school forward with the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy for EBLs. Therefore, this research operationalizes how a school can embody aspects of *Liderazgo* to lead with social justice in mind for EBLs. Based on the findings of this study, we suggest several recommendations for scholars and educators serving EBLs and their communities, as well as for future research.

First, the daily work of critical bilingual principals and school communities must facilitate and implement a transformative vision of schooling that acknowledges inequities that impact EBLs (e.g., racism, linguicism, and monolingual standards) and develop an equity-oriented mission of fostering responsive schooling. This vision must include the goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement, and race-conscious school improvement planning. Ultimately, critical bilingual principals must challenge the subtractive system in which they work and transform the learning opportunities for students by leading their school communities forward with the goals of long term bilingual programs such as dual language immersion. Additionally, future research should explore how this vision is implemented in other schools, both elementary and secondary, both nationally and internationally.

Second, critical bilingual leaders must draw on the experiential knowledge of the communities they serve in order to be truly responsive to the context-specific needs of the school. Escuela Esperanza situated the lived experiences of their students and families as an important principle in how they approached schooling. The principal and the majority of teachers closely mirrored their students racially and linguistically, and most teachers grew up in the same community and school district as their students. The teachers and school community valued the cultural and linguistic identities of students as important assets to the school. This finding has important implications for developing and recruiting teachers and principals who are from the community and who understand the sociopolitical contexts of the community firsthand.

Third, we must critically analyze how we approach and foster a culture of care that allows for students to develop their unique identities as borderlanders. Escuela Esperanza fostered a deep level of transcaring that allowed students to feel supported socially, emotionally, and academically across the intersecting identities of language, race, and immigration status. The development of EBLS in this third space is unique, and educators must seek to support and care for students in affirming and transformative ways. This is essential because to truly build meaningful relationships with EBLS so that they succeed academically, we must have educators who understand who our students are across all identities and value their cultural and linguistic hybridity as assets to be developed and fostered.

Lastly, school leaders who serve EBLS must understand the research and theoretical foundation for bilingualism and biliteracy and how they foster academic achievement and social justice. Principal leadership in bilingual settings must incorporate the goals of school leadership (i.e., ISLLC standards) with the goals of bilingual education. Therefore, the field of bilingual education must influence principal preparation and the ongoing development of school leaders, because they must know how to develop and continuously improve bilingual program models in order to truly lead for social justice for EBLS.

### Notes

1. *Liderazgo* is the theoretical framework used in this paper to analyze leadership practices by combining Transformative and Social Justice Leadership Theories, Latin@ Critical Race Theory, and Bilingual Education Research.
2. We use Latin@ to refer to persons with Latin American roots and to promote gender neutrality and equality.
3. In this paper, we use the more culturally and linguistically responsive term “Emergent Bilingual Latin@ Students” (EBLS) as a way to reject more deficit-oriented labels such as limited English proficient (LEP) or English Language Learner (ELL). EBLS reflects the development of bilinguals by acknowledging that their linguistic hybridity is indeed an asset (Garcia, 2009).

4. The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Policy Standards (ISLLC) school leadership standards were originally designed for leadership preparation programs and are now used for all effective leadership practice. Thirty-five states have adopted ISLLC standards as the standards used to prepare and evaluate school administrators.

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