2-18-2022

Moving into Critical Spaces: Making Meaning of One Rural Educator's Experiences Working with Latinx Immigrant Students

Stephanie Oudghiri
Purdue University, stoudghi@purdue.edu

Moving into Critical Spaces: Making Meaning of One Rural Educator's Experiences Working with Latinx Immigrant Students

Stephanie Oudghiri

This research highlights the experiences of one rural educator in a Midwestern elementary school. Initially grounded in Swanson's middle range theory of caring (1991, 1993), the author sought to make meaning of how the participant worked with immigrant students, specifically undocumented Latinx students, through an ethic of care. As tensions emerged from classroom-based observations and interviews, the author chose to draw upon Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a way of examining how racism operates within educational spaces. Guided by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative form, through the description (telling) and reflection (retelling), the author makes meaning of racial biases, microaggressions, and the exclusion of undocumented Latinx students.

The children of immigrants are shaping classrooms in the United States (U.S.), as well as our country's future. Today, there are over 18 million children of foreign-born parents in U.S. schools (Urban Institute, 2019). Of the total immigrant population in the U.S., 57 percent of children of immigrants identify as Latinx. While urban areas within the southwest and northeast regions of the U.S. have been considered "longtime immigrant destinations" (Rueda & Sillman, 2012), in the Midwest, especially in rural areas, the rapidly changing trends for immigrant students are still emerging. In the state of Indiana, nearly five percent of the student population reside with at least one immigrant parent, and 29 percent of Indiana's total immigrant population are classified as undocumented (American Immigration Council, 2017). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2021), approximately 70 percent of immigrants make up the agriculture workforce and nearly 50 percent of farm laborers identify as undocumented. Specifically in rural midwestern states, immigrant families contribute to local economies through employment in meatpacking and processing plants (Dalla & Christensen, 2005) which often includes demanding and dangerous working conditions (Flores et al., 2011). Within the agriculture industry, there is a growing need to improve the lives of both farmworkers and their families, as workers shift from traditional roles as migrant workers toward permanent agriculture work by "modernizing the temporary visa program and establishing a pathway to citizenship for long-term undocumented agricultural workers" (FWD.US, 2021). Likewise, there is a need to work with and care for Latinx students and families in the U.S. educational system. While the Latinx population is the fastest growing minoritized group in Indiana, as well as the U.S.,

classroom teachers continue to remain white, female, and monolingual (Geiger, 2018). Now more than ever, there is a greater urgency for educators to develop culturally competent teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 2017; DeNicolo et al., 2017) that support ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse students.

Rural communities face a unique challenge in working with immigrant students and families due to lack of funding (Brenner, 2016), teacher recruitment and retention of certified teachers (Kristiansen, 2014), and subtractive schooling practices that erase student's language, culture, and identity (Valenzuela et al., 2016). Drastic cuts in economic and human resources, as well as an increase in discrimination and racism towards immigrant students (Costello, 2016; Nguyen & Kebede, 2017), has led to teachers' feelings of inadequacy and lack of preparedness in supporting the cultural and linguistic needs of their students (Crawford & Hairston, 2018). As immigrant families continue to move into rural communities, thus changing the demographics of rural school districts and impacting the types of services needed to support immigrant students and their families, there is a need for rural school districts to shift their attention in preparing teachers to support linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

For many students, including immigrant and undocumented students, teachers are the first adults that students begin to cultivate relationships with outside of the home (Wong et al., 2018). Teachers who become part of their students' community and work to "instill pride" by supporting students' heritage language, culture, and identity (Ladson-Billings, 2007) are more likely to become successful in developing student wholeness. Wholeness focuses on transformational and holistic student-teacher relationships in which learning, and teaching

practices are grounded in "compassion, integrity, and mindful awareness" (Byrnes, 2012, p. 22). While researchers have been exploring the meaning of wholeness for nearly five decades (Kelly, 1969), scholarship on pedagogies of wholeness in education are emerging. Specifically, current literature focuses on teacher-student relationships grounded in care, in the context of early childhood education (Winther-Lindqvist, 2021), supporting students of color in classrooms (Cariaga, 2018). By embracing all aspects of students' lives, thus valuing their humanness, teachers create a more inclusive environment with students and their families.

Within the U.S., while research is emerging on Latinx immigrant students' experiences in PK-12 settings (Suárez-Orozco, 2017), as well as how DACA legislation impacts undocumented students within higher education (Lara & Nava, 2018; Nguyen & Serna, 2014), literature about undocumented immigrant students who attend rural elementary schools is still emerging. Specifically, in midwestern states, literature traditionally focused on migrant populations (Taylor & Ruiz, 2017; Torrez, 2014), however due to economic opportunities that have led to changing demographics, researchers are taking up scholarship on Latinx immigrant students who live in rural Midwestern states (Crawford & Hairston, 2020). In the post-Trump era, as educational researchers have begun to shift their focus to examining how anti-immigrant rhetoric impacts immigrant families in the rural Midwest (Adkins et al., 2017) more attention is being given to supporting culturally and linguistically diverse communities in rural schools, especially undocumented students (Crawford & Hairston, 2020). With that said, little research can be found on how caring interpersonal relationships are developed between white, female, monolingual teachers, and immigrant student populations. This research adds to rural education literature by specifically focusing on "burgeoning, rural Latinx communities" (Villalba et al., 2018). Additionally, while literature exists on how teachers demonstrate an "ethic of care" (Noddings, 1984) for high school immigrant students (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012; Valenzuela 1999) and higher education students (Barrow, 2015; Valenzuela et al., 2016), literature on educators' experiences working with and caring for rural elementary immigrant and undocumented students is still emerging.

The purpose of this school-based narrative inquiry was to examine the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of one rural educator as they describe their work with immigrant, elementary students, negotiate the "space" between professional and personal identity and demonstrate an ethic of care. This article presents one example of a classroom narrative, as well as excerpts from participant interviews analyzed through a lens of care using Swanson's middle range theory of caring (1991, 1993). While care theories initially grounded my study, as a way of making meaning of emerging tensions, I chose to adopt a critical lens by examining participant data through the lens of CRT.

Care Theories

In the 1980s, feminist philosophers such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings forged the path for developing care ethics. Within human relationships, Gilligan (1982) defines an "ethic of care" as:

> the vision that self and other will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair; the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt. (p. 63)

Adding to the conversation on moral education, Noddings (1984, 1986, 2012) posited that caring is relational. She argued that a caring relationship is developed when the *carer* and the one *cared-for* enter into a reciprocal relationship. Specifically for caring relationships in teaching, Noddings (2012) focused on the caregiver being attention "to hear and understand the needs expressed" (p. 772) of the cared-for, as well as the motivation needed. Listening and reflection are required of the carer, but Noddings argues that for a caring relation to exist, the cared-for must respond.

Within care, theory is a unique subsection of cultural practices that focus specifically on caring for all students. Culturally responsive caring is grounded in caring for instead of minoritized students. According to Gay (2018), "the intended outcomes of 'caring for' are improved competence, agency, autonomy, efficacy, and empowerment in both the role functions (student) and quality of being (person) of ethically and culturally diverse students in school settings and elsewhere" (p. 58). Culturally responsive practices "acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum" (Gay, 2018, p. 37), which includes the need to incorporate multicultural curriculum into all subject matters. This student-

centered approach to teaching encourages students to live their best lives. Teachers act as advocates or guided mentors and care deeply for the emotional, social, and academic wellbeing of all students, especially minoritized groups.

Middle Range Theory of Caring

Swanson's (1991) middle-range theory of caring was the conceptual framework that initially grounded my understanding of how educators work with and care for immigrant students. This theory, contextualized within the field of nursing and extended to the field of education for this study, outlines five caring processes: 1) *knowing*, 2) *being with*, 3) *doing for*, 4) *enabling*, and 5) *maintaining belief*. Swanson (1991) defined caring as "a nurturing way of relating to a valued other toward whom one feels a personal sense of commitment and responsibility" (p. 162). While Swanson's work is grounded in nursing, it applies to the field of education. Both nurses and teachers (*one who cares)* work closely with the *cared for* (patients and students).

Critical Race Theory

Grounded in critical legal studies (CLS) and radical feminism, Critical Race Theory (CRT) traces its origins to the civil rights era of the 1960s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Founded in the 1970s and 1980s by Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Patricia Williams, just to name a few, these lawyers, activists, and legal scholars used their expertise to address relationships related to "race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). According to Zamudio et. al. (2010), as a movement, CRT is framed within the central assumptions that race, history, voice, interpretation, and praxis matter. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) outline the five basic tenets of CRT as (1) racism is ordinary, not aberrational, (2) interest convergence, (3) race is a social construction, (4) intersectionality and (5) unique voice of color. Each of these is discussed below.

The first tenet of CRT is that racism is ordinary and common in the everyday experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Interest convergence, or material determinism, is the concept that the advancement of minoritized groups occurs only when White people benefit within society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The third theme of

critical race theory is race as a social construction. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017) society is racialized differentially, therefore the dominant group "racializes different minority groups at different times" (p. 10). At the core of intersectionality is the idea that everyone has multiple, overlapping identities, thus "everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11). Finally, unique voices of color are crucial to examining race and racism. Counternarratives challenge the dominant ideology that is found within U.S. society. As a form of resistance against racial oppression, through counterstories marginalized people of color "become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed, and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 27).

Critical Race Theory and Education

As the movement has progressed, education scholars have embraced CRT to "understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, affirmative action, high-stakes testing, controversies over curriculum and history, bilingual and multicultural education, and alternative and charter schools" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 7). Specifically, CRT educators critique the myth of meritocracy by challenging that not only does contradict the grand narrative that education is the great equalizer, but also promotes racial inequality for marginalized students of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As a way of understanding schooling, educational scholars have focused on how the structure of schools contributes to racially biased practices and policies (Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2002). CRT seeks to name inequities in schools at both the macro and micro levels. For Latinx students, macro-level policies include bilingual education (Zamudio et al., 2010). For newcomers, an "English-only" curriculum threatens to undermine bilingual education, thus failing to recognize and honor students' linguistic and cultural heritage as assets. Additionally, CRT seeks to "challenge racism in curricular structures, process, and discourses" (Yosso, 2002, p. 93). Eurocentric curriculum (Arday et al., 2021), how schools are organized (Rosiek, 2019), classroom management (Knaus, 2009), and instruction (Rogers & Mosely, 2006) all contribute to "promoting, rather than disrupting, stereotypes, as well as marginalizing the

experiences of people of color" (Zamudio et al., 2010, p. 102).

For this paper, I chose to examine my participant's experience working with immigrant students using Swanson's middle-range theory of caring (1991, 1993). As tensions emerged, including racial biases, microaggressions, and the exclusion of undocumented students based on classroom-based observations and interviews, I chose to examine how racism operates within educational spaces through a CRT lens.

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry was chosen as the methodology because, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry focuses on the human experience as a holistic quality and is grounded in "mutual storytelling and restorying" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) in which the voices of both the researcher and participant become known. Narrative inquiry allows for caring relationships to be established (Noddings, 1986) that not only promote a more equitable partnership between researcher and participant but also collaboration. As stories unfold, the researcher and participant enter an entwined relationship comprised of shared experiences.

Within narrative inquiry, the voice of the participant is central to how participants make meaning of their experiences and how a researcher comes to understand those experiences through the "telling, retelling, and reliving" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) of those stories. These experiences occur over time in a fluid motion and draw from past, present, and future events. According to Chase (2011), as researchers come to know the experiences of their participants, the relationship between them becomes entangled, "allowing for co-constructed meaning of selves, realities, and identities" (p. 422). Narrative inquiry is much more than the retelling of stories; rather, it situates those experiences within a larger context. These experiences are categorized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) into three dimensions of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality, and place. Huber et al., (2011) unpacked these "commonplaces" as a way of further distinguishing narrative inquiry from other methodologies. Temporality refers to the "place, things, and events" that a participant experiences and encompasses their past, present, and future. Sociality refers to the social conditions found within experiences. These social conditions comprised the "cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives" (Huber et al., 2011, p. 5) which are both experienced by the researcher and participant.

Research Puzzle

To understand how my participant worked with and cared for immigrant students, this study addressed the following questions: (1) How do rural educators describe their work with immigrant students and their families? (2) How do rural educators negotiate the "space" between a professional and personal identity? (3) How do rural educators define and demonstrate an ethic of care?

Research Site

The rural community in which this study was situated has experienced a steady increase in the enrollment of immigrant students over the past ten years. The site for this study was selected based upon three factors: (1) location, (2) demographics, and (3) snowball sampling. Ririe Elementary School (all names used are pseudonyms) is a PK-6 building that serves a student population of fewer than 200 students. During the 2019-2020 academic year, approximately 30 percent of Ririe Elementary School's population identified as Hispanic. The certified teaching staff of the school is 100 percent white, female with 31 percent having 0-5 years of teaching experience.

Participants

Initially for this study, a total of four participants were recruited: a first-year elementary school principal, two classroom teachers, and a bi-lingual Spanish/English paraprofessional. The paraprofessional, born in Mexico, was the only bilingual educator in the school and worked specifically with the Spanish-speaking population. Of the four participants in this study, three identified as female. For the purposes of this paper, I elected to discuss the experiences of Jessica, the second-grade teacher.

Consistent with Narrative Inquiry, interviews and classroom observation field notes were turned into written field texts. Participants participated in three separate, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Once the interviews had

been transcribed by me, copies were sent to each participant for member checking. The semi-structured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowed for flexibility within the interview questions. During the 2019-2020 academic year, twenty-five full-day classroom observations were conducted; equal amounts of time were spent with the second-grade teacher, third-grade teacher, and paraprofessional. Following narrative inquiry protocols, as a way of co-creating meaning with participants, detailed field notes were recorded during the classroom observations. These field notes were important in developing follow-up interview questions, as well as beneficial to informing my understanding of educators' experiences. Observations served as a way of recording and contextualizing specific incidents and behaviors, thus providing a reference point for interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During the observations, field notes included the physical setting, informal and formal student-educator interactions, educator behaviors, and dialogue between student-educators and educators-educators. Following classroom observations, field notes, researcher journals, and researcher memos served as a way of reflecting upon my time in the field, as well as making meaning of how the participants conceptualized an ethic of care.

Specifically for this narrative inquiry, I draw from Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of stories stating, "that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story" (p. 71). For this article, the telling of participants "storied lives" took the form of classroom narratives, based on field notes from classroom observations. As a way of making meaning of the complex narrative threads that are difficult to disentangle (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I approached the retelling of stories by first reading and rereading researcher journals. Next, using Swanson's middle-range theory of caring (1991, 1993), I examined interview transcripts as a way of examining the participant's beliefs, attitudes, and practices, as she described her work with immigrant students.

Telling and Retelling: From Field to Research Texts

Classroom Narrative

The following narrative is based on classroom observations with Jessica, a second-grade teacher at Ririe Elementary School. At the time of this study, Jessica had been an educator for nine years. Before coming to Ririe, she served as an aid to a reading interventionalist and for the past five years had been teaching second graders. Approximately one-third of her students identified as Hispanic. This story focuses on Jessica's interactions with four undocumented, newcomers from Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala.

Lost: In Translation. I have been hoping to find some time to speak with Jessica about her students, so I appreciate the fact that she arrives at the school 30-45 minutes before the first bell rings at 8:00 a.m. At 7:45 a.m. I arrive at Ririe Elementary and as I unpack my bag for today's observation, Jessica and I engage in an informal conversation about her immigrant students. Specifically, I am curious about how she communicates with her four emerging ELLs: Liliana, Esteban, Marcos, and Inès. During my first few visits, Jessica would utilize Google translate on her cell phone to communicate with her students, but nearly one month into the school year, her use of technology has become less frequent. Jessica shares with me that she often wonders what languages her students speak. She uses the term "selective understanding" to describe her emerging ELLs; she implies that some of her students are "faking" how much English they know. Although our conversation is brief, I am left with a feeling of dread.

At 8:50 a.m. Mrs. Maples, a Special Education paraprofessional enters the room. Four white students, two males, and two females grab a non-fiction book and meet her at a round table. Jessica, sitting at another round table near her desk, calls out the names of six students: one white male, one Hispanic female, and four Hispanic males. The remaining students are left on their own to read in small groups that have been pre-assigned by Jessica. As I scan the room, I notice Esteban, an emerging ELL from Mexico, is sitting with two white females and one Hispanic male. The lesson hasn't even begun when Jessica says, "Esteban. We're not talking.

You can stay in from recess. If you have a question, ask. We can get the computer to translate but talking between the two of you is NOT ok. Do you have a question?" Esteban shakes his head no and lays it down on the table. I'm confused by the students Jessica has selected for her group. Why isn't Esteban with her and the other emerging ELL's?

In Jessica's group, she asks Marcos if he knows what a reservoir is. As Marcos looks at Jessica, she asks, "Do you understand?" He nods his head. Turning to the group, Jessica says "Like a lake". Jessica's focus is split as she attempts to work with her group, while also keeping a close watch on the groups that are independently reading. Speaking directly to two Hispanic boys in her group, Jessica abruptly says, "Come on. You need to be trying. You're on the wrong page." As Marcos looks confused and turned to his classmates, Jessica directs one of the bi-lingual students in the group to translate for him. Frustrated, Jessica pulls her cellphone from her sweater pocket and begins to translate the directions. "Ok. Right here." she points to the page "With this app, I can call home. It will translate. Do you understand? Do you understand? Pencils on mesa." As Jessica threatens Marcos with a phone call home, again, she looks over at Esteban's group she says "Go back to your seat. You are talking, not learning" however, Esteban remains with his reading group. Focused back on Marcos, Jessica states, "It's one question. That's all I'm asking". Again, Jessica begins typing on her phone to translate "Did you understand the story we read? Please write one question." Then turning to Liliana, an emerging ELL from Mexico, Jessica says, "Do you understand the story we read? Si or no? You can write it is Spanish or English." By the end of the lesson, Liliana and Marcos' papers are blank.

As students return to their seats, I notice that instead of going back to his desk, Marcos walks over to Esteban and the boys begin talking to one another. Jessica must have noticed too, because loudly she states, "Marcos if you have a question don't go over to that table–ask me."

It's 9:31 a.m. and Miss Salinas the new ESL paraprofessional has just entered the room to pick up the four emerging English Language Learners. Although this is Verónica's first week at Ririe Elementary, Liliana and Inès run to her and give her hugs. The brief exchange between Jessica and Verónica was quite telling. "They were naughty, even when the directions were translated for them" to which Verónica relies "I will talk to them."

Each year, school districts in Indiana administer the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) for students identified as English Learners (EL). This test is intended to assess student's English proficiency (e.g., oral language, reading, and writing skills) and support educators in providing quality instruction for multilingual learners. During the months that I spent observing Jessica's second-grade classroom, I struggled to make meaning in terms of how she designed the curriculum to meet the needs of her immigrant students. Although Jessica had received her students' WIDA scores from the previous year, she distrusted the results.

In our frequent informal and formal conversations about her immigrant students, Jessica placed them into two categories: (1) bi-lingual and (2) Spanish only. Jessica appeared to favor the bi-lingual students because they more easily assimilated into her classroom and did not require additional attention. For those students who were identified as "Spanish only" I refer to them as emerging ELLs. In *Lost: In Translation,* I explore the barriers Jessica faces as she attempts to work with her emerging ELLs, all of whom are undocumented.

Retelling Using a Lens of Care

In addition to classroom observations, I returned to the transcribed interviews that I had conducted with Jessica over several months. As a way of co-constructing meaning with my participant, I focused on the ways Jessica described coming to know her immigrant students.

Knowing. According to Swanson (1991, 1993) centering on the one *cared for* involves an informed understanding. Without support from an established ESL program, Jessica was left on her own to wonder about her student's linguistic abilities.

Honestly, sometimes I wonder what they speak. One boy that moved out of my classroom, he swore, you know he spoke Spanish, but then he'd also pretend that he didn't know English or Spanish. So, it makes me wonder if there were a third language in there. That he was just, that he couldn't translate between the three.

Frustrated, Jessica believed that the best way of supporting emerging ELLs was to separate them from the general population.

> *There's such a language barrier. They really, I know we're* not to do segregation but some of those kids who are coming in for the first time, into a school, really should be segregating until they have a kindergarten level speaking. I hate doing that, but I don't know enough Spanish nor does half the population of the schools. I know numbers in Spanish. I can count pretty high and if someone starts counting with me, I can count higher. The math, they could stay in there for, but the reading, until they understand, they're just sitting.

The emerging ELLs in Jessica's second-grade class were viewed as a hindrance to themselves and the overall classroom environment. Instead of working with Veronica, the ESL paraprofessional, to support students in both languages and create an inclusive environment, Jessica believed that the best course of action was to isolate the ESL population. This plan of action does not recognize the cared for as a "significant being" (Swanson, 1993) nor does it support a caring environment.

Being With. It is no surprise that Jessica was unable to establish meaningful connections with her immigrant students on an emotional level. In addition to communication barriers with her students, Jessica did not take the time needed to appreciate her student's reality (Swanson, 1993). In the case of Esteban, a student who was undocumented, Jessica questioned his family's lived experiences.

> You can tell which parents care and which ones didn't care, and which ones made up excuses. Esteban's dad made up excuses left and right. And well, *he saw this, he saw me almost murdered, so this is why he acts this way.* And I'm like, he's been here over a year, two years, almost.

Jessica believed that the amount of time spent in U.S. schools equated to student's language acquisition. From her perspective, the onus was on the immigrant students and their families to learn English and assimilate into the educational system.

Doing For. As the second-grade classroom teacher of immigrant students, Jessica believed that she was unable to anticipate their needs (Swanson, 1991, 1993) because she did not speak Spanish. For her emerging ELLs, they did not belong in a general education class until specific language benchmarks had been met.

> There's no point. They'd be better off secluded. Teach them how to read in Spanish. Teach them how to read in English. Once they have the Spanish foundation in reading, then they can get the English. They don't have that. And then you're expecting them to learn to read in English.

This approach to instruction does not preserve the wholeness of the other (Swanson, 1993), nor support an inclusive classroom environment.

Enabling. Providing information and explanations is one way that a *caregiver* facilitates the *cared for's* transition through unfamiliar situations (Swanson, 1991, 1993). Often during English Language Arts lessons, Jessica struggled to assess her students as learners. This frustration led to identifying students as behavior issues and threats to call home. For her students whose parents were bi-lingual, Jessica felt comfortable reaching out to parents to address issues that arose.

> I can call Marcos' [parents]. I can also call, no they're not in my class anymore, that was last year. They're some [parents] that they'll bend over backward to make sure they learn English to do it. I'm thinking of one in third grade. Her dad came in and was like, *if there's anything wrong whatsoever, this will be nipped in the bud.* I only had one problem and he made her come in and apologize. He made her walk up to me, she was balling because he came in and got her and yelled at her. And said this will be dealt with, I don't know all he said, but he said it in both English and Spanish. Because he started off in English and then he went to a couple of words in Spanish. I have a feeling your butts going to get beat too. But she came back, she went up and hugged the kid and said I'm sorry. I won't do this again.

Overall, Jessica was inconsistent in her approach to curriculum and classroom management for immigrant students. Her inability to connect with students in meaningful ways led to feelings of frustration and distrust, thus contributing to further marginalization.

Researcher Positionality and Emerging Tensions

As a former 6th- 12th grade teacher of immigrant students, current teacher educator of predominately white preservice teachers, emerging qualitative researcher, and resident of a rural community, I

found myself frustrated by my participant's accusations that her second graders were disengaged with curriculum due to a lack of caring. Most upsetting was the idea that immigrant students were "faking" their language abilities. As the daughter of an immigrant, I remember my own father's experience. Although my father spoke six languages fluently, his heavy Moroccan accent was often viewed as a deficit. While I was hyper-aware of my positionality, I attempted to remain a "neutral" educational researcher, observing student-teacher interactions without judgment. However, as the months of in-depth classroom observations and interviews continued, I found myself frustrated by Jessica's lack of empathy towards her emerging ELL students. *Lost in Translation* is only one of several classroom narratives that were constructed during my inquiry. Initially, I had not planned to move my work in critical spaces, but as the tensions began to mount, I sought ways to properly name what I had observed during months of classroom observations as a way of meaning-making.

Embracing Critical Spaces

Moving my dissertation research into critical spaces has allowed me to grow as an emerging researcher. As I began to engage with the writings of CRT scholars, I came to understand that within educational spaces is that "racism is endemic, institutional, and systematic" (Sleeter, 2016). Additionally, as I poured over my field notes, researcher journals, and transcripts, it became clear that emerging themes of racial bias, microaggressions, and the exclusion of undocumented students were areas that I had not considered when I began conducting my dissertation research.

The idea that race is a social construction (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) was prevalent throughout the classroom observations and interviews. For Jessica, immigrant students who learned English quickly and assimilated into the classroom structured were viewed in a positive light. Immigrant students who spoke English were identified as students who cared about their education. Additionally, Jessica did not support bilingual education within the classroom.

> I have to push English on them because I can't. I don't want to say old, but your brain stops growing, I mean, they're going to pick up English as a second language so much faster than

me learning Spanish, right now. And so, I feel bad because I can't, like I had to tell them repeatedly, you have to speak in English. They have to learn it because they're not speaking it at home.

Jessica's belief that learning to speak English would only benefit her students fails to acknowledge the larger issues of racism within the educational system. Zamudio et al. (2010) posit that "the beneficiaries of efforts to dismantle bilingual education are monolingual whites. As long as English remains the only language that is valued in schools, speakers of languages other than English will always be labeled 'at risk' (p. 59). Within Jessica's second-grade classroom, the four emerging ELLs, all of whom were undocumented, were subjected to deficit thinking. From Jessica's perspective, their inability to complete class assignments, lack of engagement, and failing test scores were directly attributed to their inability or unwillingness to learn English.

These students were physically, socially, and emotionally ostracized from their classmates and adults within the classroom, due to their lack of caring. Because Ririe Elementary does not have an ESL program, Jessica was in favor of resegregation with the school walls, as a way of "supporting" newcomers. Each day, the four emerging ELL students met with a white, monolingual Title 1 teacher for English instruction. Additionally, all of the second-grade students were subjected to English-only instruction. Jessica did not allow her immigrant students to speak Spanish in the classroom and made curricular decisions that supported "English-only" policies. According to Zamudio et al. (2010),

> English-only language instruction sends the message to whites that their language and, by extension, their culture, is more valuable and superior to that of others. They come to see their English proficiency as a natural state of affairs that also legitimates a distinct advantage. (p. 61)

By viewing emerging ELLs from a deficit perspective, Jessica viewed her students as the problem, rather than questioning inequities that exist within the institution. While she did admit that due to a lack of resources, the emerging ELLs were "othered," the blame was solely placed on students and their families.

Conclusion

The purpose of the article was to make meaning of one educator's experience working with immigrant

students through an ethic of care. Initially, I did not adopt a critical lens when analyzing my participants experiences, however, from emerging tensions, I sought ways of making meaning of everyday school practices that promote racism at the institutional level. By grounding my understanding in CRT's first tenet, which states that racism is ordinary, I hoped to delve deeper into my participant's epistemological orientation (Ladson-Billings, 2007) towards their immigrant students. Further examination is needed to examine how critical whiteness studies (CWT) and critical race theory (CRT) can help me gain insight into the experiences of my white participants.

As an emerging researcher, while Swanson's middle range theory of caring (1991, 1993) brought insights into how one white educator interacted with Latinx immigrant students, it did not explain why institutional racism exists within PK-12 settings. As I began to analyze my data, I was left with more questions, therefore, adopting a critical lens aided me in explicitly identify and naming racism and other acts of injustice (Parkhouse, 2018). What became clear from my research was that Jessica operated from a deficit perspective and therefore, was unable to see beyond stereotypes, thus perpetuating implicit and explicit racial and ethnic biases' that exist within schools. In order to elicit change in schools, in-service teachers desperately need professional development (PD) that increases awareness of critical theories that drive practice (Osei-Tutu et al., 2021). Specifically, PD courses focused on promoting culturally responsive teaching strategies can support teachers in shifting their perceptions and practices from deficit to asset-based pedagogies.

References

Adkins, D., Sandy, H. & Derpic, J. (2017). Information sources of Latin American immigrants in the rural Midwest in the Trump Era. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, *87*(3), 243-256.

American Immigration Council. (2017). *Immigrants in Indiana.* https://www .americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/fil es/research/immigrants_in_indiana.pdf

Arday, J., Belluigi, D. Z., & Thomas, D. (2021). Attempting to break the chain: Reimaging inclusive pedagogy and decolonizing the curriculum within the academy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 53*(3), 298-313.

Barrow, M. (2015). Caring in teaching: A complicated relationship. *Journal of Effective Teaching, 15*(2), 45-59.

Brenner, D. (2016). Rural educator policy brief: Rural education and the Every Student Succeeds Act. *The Rural Educator*, *37*(2).

Byrnes, K. (2012). A portrait of contemplative teaching: Embracing wholeness. *Journal of Transformative Education, 10*(1), 22-41.

Cariaga, S.M. (2018). *Pedagogies of wholeness: Cultivating critical healing literacies with students of color in an embodied English classroom* [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles]. Proquest.

Chase, S. (2011). Narrative Inquiry: Still a field in the making. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4ᵗʰ ed., pp. 421-434). Sage.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *19*(5), 2-14. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002

Costello, M. (2016). The Trump Effect: The impact of the presidential campaign on our nation's schools. https://www.splcenter.org/ 20161128/trump-effect-impact-2016-presidential-election-our-nations-schools

Crawford, E., & Hairston, S. (2018). He could be undocumented: Striving to be sensitive to student documentation status in a rural community. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 21*(1), 3-15.

Dalla, R. & Christensen, A. (2005). Latino immigrants describe residence in rural Midwestern meatpacking communities: A longitudinal assessment of social and economic change. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 27(1), 23-42.*

Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice? *European journal of teacher education*, *40*(3), 291-309. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1315399

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical Race Theory (Third Edition): An Introduction* (Third ed., Critical America; 20).

DeNicolo, C.P., Min, Y., Crowley, C.B., & Gabel, S.L. (2017). Reimagining critical care and problematizing sense of school belonging as a response to inequality for immigrants and children of immigrants. *Review of research in education, 41*(1), 500-530. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X17690498

Flores, L., Mendoza, M., Ojeda, L., He, Y., Meza, R., Medina, V., Ladehoff, J. & Jordan, S. (2011). A qualitative inquiry of Latino immigrants' work experiences in the Midwest. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(4), 522-536.

FWD.US (2021, March 18). *Immigrant Farmworkers and America's Food Production: 5 Things to Know.* https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrant-farmworkers-and-americas-food-production-5-things-to-know/

Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice. Third Edition. Multicultural Education Series* (Vol. 16; Neukirchener Theologie). Teachers College Press.

Geiger, A.W. (2018) *America's public-school teachers are far less racially and ethnically diverse than their students*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/27/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press.

Hersi, A. A., & Watkinson, J. S. (2012). Supporting immigrant students in a newcomer high school: A case study. *Bilingual research journal, 35*(1), 98-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2012.668869

Huber, J., Murphy, M., & Clandinin, D. (2011). *Places of curriculum making narrative inquiries into children's lives in motion* (1st ed., Advances in research on teaching; v. 14). Emerald.

Kelly, E. (1969). The meaning of wholeness. *Institute of General Semantics 26*(1), 7-15.

Knaus, C. (2009). Shut up and listen: Applied critical race theory in the classroom. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 12*(2), 133-154.

Kristiansen, A. (2014). Teachers as rural educators. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 60*(4), 14.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2007). Culturally Relevant Teaching: Theory and Practice. In Banks, James A. & Cherry A. McGee Bands (6th Ed.), *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (pp. 221-245). Wiley.

Lara, A. & Nava, P. (2018). Achieving the dream, uncertain futures: The postbaccalaureate decision-making process of Latinx undocumented students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 17*(2), 112-131.

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E.J. (2016). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation* (Fourth edition ed.). Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Nguyen, C., & Kebede, M. (2017). Immigrant students in the Trump Era: What we know and do not know. *Educational Policy, 31*(6), 716-742. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817723740

Nguyen, D. H. K., & Serna, G. R. (2014). Access or Barrier? Tuition and fee legislation for undocumented students across the states. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas: Changing Times in School Law, 87*(3), 124-129. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2014.891895

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (1986). Fidelity in teaching, teacher education, and research for teaching. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*(4), 496.

Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(6), 771-781.

Osei-Tutu, A. A. Z., Dwomoh, R., Chhikara, A., Zhou, L., Oudghiri, S., & Bell, T. (2021, September). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in a Time of Crises: A Reflection on Educators' Perspectives of Critical Theory and Social Justice Issues. In *The Kaleidoscope of Lived Curricula: Learning Through a Confluence of Crises*, 13th Annual Curriculum & Pedagogy Group 2021 Edited Collection.

Parkhouse, H. (2018) Pedagogies of naming, questioning, and demystification: A study of two critical U.S. history classrooms, *Theory & Research in Social Education, (46)*2, 277-317, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2017.1389327

Rogers, R. & Mosley, M. (2006). Racial literacy in a second-grade classroom: Critical race theory, whiteness studies, and literacy research. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(4), 462-495.

Rosiek, J. (2019). Critical race theory meets posthumanism: Lessons from a study of racial resegregation in public schools. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 22*(1), 73-92.

Rueda, R., & Stillman, J. (2012). The 21st century teacher: A cultural perspective. *Journal of Teacher Education, 63*(4), 245-253.

Sleeter, C. (2016). Wrestling with problematics of whiteness in teacher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 29*(8), 1065-1068. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1174904

Solórzano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 121-136. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236926

Solórzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 23-44.

Suárez-Orozco, C. (2017). The diverse immigrant student experience: What does it mean for teaching? *Educational Studies*, *53*(5), 522-534.

Swanson, M. (1991). Empirical development of a middle range theory of caring. *Nursing Research*, *40*(3), 161-165. https://doi.org/10.1097/00006199-199105000-00008

Swanson, K. (1993). Nursing as informed caring for the well-being of others. *The Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 25*(4), 352-357.

Taylor, Z. E., & Ruiz, Y. (2017). Contextual stressors and the mental health outcomes of Latino children in rural migrant-farmworker families in the Midwest. *Journal of Rural Mental Health, 41*(4), 284–298. https://doi.org/10.1037/rmh0000082

Torrez, J. E. (2014). "Teachers should be like us!": Bridging migrant communities to rural Michigan classrooms. *Multicultural Education, 21*(3), 39-44. https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/teachers-should-be-like-us-bridging-migrant/docview/1648093718/se-2?accountid=13360

Urban Institute (2019, February 1). *Part of Us: A Data-Driven Look at Children of Immigrants.* https://www.urban.org/features/part-us-data-driven-look-children-immigrants

U.S. Department of Agriculture (2021). *Farm Labor*. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farmlabor/#:~:text=In%202014%2D16%2C%2027%20percent,percent%20held%20no%20work%20authorization.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive Schooling U.S. - Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*. State University of New York Press.

Valenzuela, A., Nieto, S., & Sleeter, C. (2016). *Growing critically conscious teachers: A social justice curriculum for educators of Latinx/a youth*. Teachers College Press.

Villalba, J. A., Brunelli, M., Lewis, L., & Wachter, C. (2018). Examining the academic and personal-social experiences of Latina/o children in Southeastern U.S. rural, burgeoning Latinx communities. *The Rural educator (Fort Collins, Colo.)*, *28*(3), 12. https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v28i3.474

Winther-Lindqvist, D. (2021). Caring well for children in ECEC from a wholeness approach – The role of moral imagination. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, *30*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100452

Wong, S., Sánchez Gosnell, E., Luu, A., Dodson, L., & Chomsky, A. (2018). *Teachers as Allies: Transformative practices for teaching DREAMers & undocumented students*. Teachers College Press.

Yosso, T. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 93-107.

Zamudio, M., Russell, C., Rios, F., & Brideman, J. (2010). *Critical race theory matters education and ideology*. Routledge.

About the Author:

Stephanie Oudghiri is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Purdue University. Contact: stoudghi@purdue.edu

Suggested Citation: