

The Rural Educator

Volume 45
Number 4 *Special Topics Issue on Rural
Multilingual Education*

Article 2

Fall 2024

"I Want to Give Back": Examining the Mestiza Consciousness of Multilingual Rural Latinx Students from California's San Joaquin Valley

Mayra Puente
University of California, Santa Barbara, mayrapuente@ucsb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/ruraleducator>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Puente, M. (2024). "I Want to Give Back": Examining the Mestiza Consciousness of Multilingual Rural Latinx Students from California's San Joaquin Valley. *The Rural Educator*, 45(4), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.55533/2643-9662.1518>

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Rural Educator by an authorized editor of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

Research Article

“I Want to Give Back”: Examining the Mestiza Consciousness of Multilingual Rural Latinx Students from California’s San Joaquin Valley

Mayra Puente

In 2016, California residents widely supported the passage of Proposition 58, which allowed non-English languages to be used in public education. This proposition was intended to benefit all students, especially the state’s large Latinx K–12 student population, who tend to speak Spanish and English at home and in school. Yet educational resources to support multilingual students in the state’s rural areas are scarce, and students consequently experience “English-only” learning spaces despite progressive educational policy. This article examines the educational experiences of multilingual rural Latinx students from California’s San Joaquin Valley agricultural region using Chicana/Latina feminist pláticas methodology. Drawing on Anzaldúa’s concept of mestiza consciousness, this study found that multilingual rural Latinx students are hyperaware of their linguistic marginalization within their K–12 schooling experiences and their migrant farm worker parents’ exclusion by English-only U.S. institutions. Due to the institutional harm caused by English dominance in their communities, multilingual rural Latinx students were motivated to pursue professions in which they could give back to their communities by using their linguistic strengths and resources to transform language inequities. Implications for policymakers and practitioners are provided to ensure that rural multilingual students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds are centered and leveraged to support student learning and community well-being.

In 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau declared Latinxs the nation’s largest “minority” group (Sáenz, 2004). Since that announcement, the “geographic spread” of Latinxs has continued, particularly in regions like the Midwest and South, which historically have not had large Latinx populations (Chapa et al., 2004; Passel et al., 2022; Sáenz et al., 2003). Latinxs have provided rural America a “demographic lifeline” (Lichter & Johnson, 2021), and by 2025, they will be the largest “minority” group in the rural US (Economic Research Service, 2005). Their growth in new rural destinations and historical settlements in rural areas of the West and Southwest is primarily due to their search for employment in U.S. industries like agriculture and food processing, meatpacking, dairy farming, manufacturing, and construction (Economic Research Service, 2005; Lichter & Johnson, 2021), due to the role of U.S. empire in destabilizing Latin American countries and economies (J. González, 2011). Yet rural Latinxs have more to contribute to rural places than offsetting white¹ population declines and undertaking low-wage jobs that U.S. citizens do not want (Krogstad et al., 2020). In particular, rural Latinx students possess an array of cultural

knowledge, skills, and abilities that they bring from their homes and communities into the classroom (Crumb et al., 2023; Yosso, 2005). When leveraged and nurtured, these knowledge, skills, and abilities can help advance social and racial justice in U.S. education and society.

Accordingly, this article conceptualizes multilingualism as a cultural asset that many rural Latinx students possess and daily use to help their migrant farm working families and communities navigate “English-only” spaces in rural California. For instance, in 2016, approximately 73% of Californians voted “yes” on Proposition 58 (Prop 58), which repealed bilingual education restrictions enacted by Proposition 227 in 1998 (Mihalik et al., 2016), a proposition deemed anti-immigrant (CalMatters, 2020). While the passing of Prop 58 signaled a newfound openness toward language diversity, some rural places of the state lagged in their support of Prop 58. For instance, in Tulare County, a historically conservative county within California’s San Joaquin Valley agricultural region (McGhee, 2020), support for Prop 58 was much lower at about 60% compared to more liberal places like Los Angeles County at 76% and the overall state

¹ Following the writing and theorizing practices of critical race scholars (e.g., Pérez Huber et al., 2017), the term “white” is intentionally lowercased to reject the standard

grammatical norm as a means of rejecting the grammatical representation of power that capitalization brings to the term “white.”

at about 73% (“California Proposition 58,” 2017). Evidently, some residents of the San Joaquin Valley maintain some resistance to progressive educational measures, and this view may detrimentally impact the educational experiences and opportunities of the region’s large and growing multilingual student population (Gallegos, 2023), most of whom are Latinx and Spanish-speakers (Californians Together, n.d.).

This study examined how 16 multilingual rural Latinx high school seniors from migrant farm working backgrounds straddle their belongingness to multiple cultures and languages as they grow, live, and learn in the conservative and anti-immigrant region of California’s San Joaquin Valley (McGhee, 2020; Puente & Vélez, 2023; Terriquez et al., 2020). In employing Anzaldúa’s (1987) theoretical concept of *mestiza* consciousness and conducting Chicana/Latina feminist *pláticas* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) with the students, I found that youth were deeply aware of existing racial and linguistic hierarchies in their schools and communities that detrimentally affect their educational experiences and lives, as well as those of their families, their peers, and future generations of rural Latinx people. Their multiple identities not only enabled them to see such inequities but also propelled them to act by serving as translators for their peers and parents and pursuing careers in which their multilingualism would be an asset. The employment of *mestiza* consciousness and *pláticas* methodology has implications for researchers committed to centering the voices and authentic expressions of multilingual rural Latinx students in research. Further, this article provides recommendations for policymakers and practitioners invested in nurturing the linguistic strengths of rural multilingual students and supporting them in obtaining a high-quality education and achieving their educational and career aspirations.

Literature Review

Researchers have long documented the assimilationist policies and practices of U.S. schooling that strip racially and linguistically

² I use the term “Latina/o” to reflect the chosen term of the authors’ cited, but I use the term “Latinx” to disrupt the gender binary in the Spanish language that marginalizes transgender and gender-nonconforming folks and to advance Latinx liberation in my writing and theorizing practices.

marginalized students of their cultures and languages. Valenzuela (1999) theorized this “process of cultural and linguistic eradication” (p. 62) as “subtractive schooling” and noted that U.S.-born Mexican youth were more likely to experience underachievement than their Mexican immigrant peers who retained their language and networks of support. Pérez Huber (2011) similarly examined the educational experiences of undocumented and U.S.-born Chicana students to understand the impact of English hegemony in California public education. Using a Latina/o² critical theory framework (LatCrit), Pérez Huber theorized English dominance in K–12 schooling as a form of “racist nativist microaggressions,” which are “subtle, layered, and cumulative verbal and non-verbal assaults” (p. 380) that both student groups experienced. Researchers have also found that racially and linguistically diverse parents are excluded from the U.S. education system. Osoria’s (2024) systematic literature review argued that Latina immigrant mothers experience language discrimination in K–12 settings. Specifically, the review found that these mothers could not communicate with teachers and staff and voice their concerns. They also only received school-related information in English, preventing them from fully engaging in school settings.

In addition to documenting the detrimental effects of English-only language policies and practices on multilingual students and families, researchers have emphasized the benefits of multilingualism on students’ academic success and overall community well-being. Grounded in a critical race theory in education framework (Solórzano, 1997, 1998), Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model reframed dominant interpretations of cultural capital that ignored the abundance of knowledge, skills, and abilities that Students of Color³ bring with them from their families and communities into schools. One of these forms of cultural wealth is linguistic capital, which reflects the multiple languages and communication skills of Students of Color. Delgado Bernal (2001) framed the communication and learning that occur in the home and community as “pedagogies of the home,” arguing

³ Following the writing and theorizing practices of critical race scholars (e.g., Pérez Huber et al., 2017), the term “Students of Color” is intentionally capitalized to reject the standard grammatical norm as a means of moving toward empowerment and social and racial justice for groups of people that are institutionally marginalized. This practice will also apply to the term “People of Color.”

that such cultural teachings and knowledges like bilingualism help Chicana students survive and succeed in higher education. Multilingual students' linguistic assets are also leveraged to support their families and communities. Borrero's (2015) interviews with five bilingual graduating Latina/o high school seniors showed that students considered their diverse linguistic identities and experiences as "a powerful tool in life" (p. 15) that they used to assist family and community members navigating English-only contexts.

In rural contexts, the contributions of rural multilingual people and the benefits of multilingualism to rural places have been overlooked or, worse, framed as a problem (Gallegos, 2023). There are practical challenges associated with the changing demographics of new rural destinations, such as a lack of English language services in rural areas (Kandel et al., 2011), the underpreparedness of teachers to work with English language learners (Coady et al., 2019), and the need for stronger partnerships and communication between Latinx immigrant families and schools (Coady et al., 2015). Additionally, there is limited empirical research and knowledge about the intersections between rurality and English learner education (Coady, 2020), contributing to the false myth that rural communities are racially and linguistically homogenous and erasing the historical and continued presence of rural multilingual People of Color. Further, most of the existing research focuses on the perspectives of teachers working with multilingual students and families in diversifying rural communities, with less attention given to the linguistic identities and experiences of multilingual students who are the changing face of rural K–12 schools and districts and future leaders of rural communities and economies.

Theoretical Perspectives

To center multilingual rural Latinx students' multiple racial and linguistic identities and contributions to their communities, this study draws on Anzaldúa's (1987) theoretical concept of *mestiza* consciousness, as outlined in her seminal book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. As described by Anzaldúa, the *mestiza* is a "mixed breed," typically of Indigenous and white European ancestry. Because of larger processes of colonialism

and racism, the *mestiza* is inherently a contradiction, belonging to multiple, often opposing cultures and worlds. Anzaldúa recognized this mode of being as a strength, noting that occupying multiple and contradictory social locations produces a consciousness within the *mestiza*. This consciousness motivates the *mestiza* to transcend dualistic thinking and oppressive, binary category construction that has limited her life and that of others. Instead, the *mestiza* is tasked with healing the split between cultures and languages and constructing a *mundo nuevo*⁴ (new world) that includes multiple ways of being. This concept helps theorize rural multilingual students' various identities, educational experiences, and community and societal contributions, given their belongingness to and use of multiple cultures and languages in their homes, schools, and communities.

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness has previously been applied to the educational experiences of bilingual students. Delgado Bernal (2001) used this theoretical concept to examine how living a *mestiza* consciousness helped Chicana college students navigate educational obstacles. She extended the concept to include elements of biculturalism, bilingualism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities related to Chicanas' educational experiences. Concerning bilingualism, Delgado Bernal found varying experiences among the Chicana students. These included feelings of shame due to limited English skills, resistance to English-only contexts, and viewing bilingualism as a resource that helped them test out of their university's language requirement and would yield additional professional opportunities in their futures. Delgado Bernal noted that most of the 32 Chicana students in her study came from working-class families, with the majority of students' mothers and fathers working as farm laborers. I apply *mestiza* consciousness to a similar student population, multilingual rural Latinx students from farm working backgrounds. However, I intentionally center students' rural identities and communities as central to shaping their language use and educational experiences.

In drawing on Anzaldúa's (1987) writings and theoretical contributions, I center her often overlooked rural background as a daughter of migrant farm workers from the Lower Rio Grande Valley of

severing of my bilingualism and biculturalism as a Mexicana writer and scholar.

⁴ Following the writing and theorizing practices of Chicana/Latina feminists like Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Spanish words are not italicized throughout this article to reject the

Texas (“Celebrating the Birth and Life,” 2019), arguing that her theorizations not only emerged from a particular social location but also from a distinctive rural place and sensibility. Similarly, I contend that the San Joaquin Valley agricultural region, specifically its conservative and anti-immigrant sociopolitical context and subjugation of Spanish-speaking Mexican migrant farm workers (Puente, 2022a, 2023a, 2023b; Puente & Vélez, 2023; Terriquez et al., 2022), played a significant role in the consciousness development of multilingual rural Latinx youth. Thus, in applying *mestiza* consciousness to better understand multilingual rural Latinx identity and experience, I explore how these students straddled multiple worlds, including English-only schools, their familial roles, and future professions—each of which demanded contending with linguistic exclusion and giving new meaning to their experiences, namely as “privileged” multilingual students who could positively transform their lives and opportunities, as well as of their peers, families, and rural communities. Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* consciousness helps identify the challenges experienced by multilingual rural Latinx students from their perspectives and voices while also being attuned to how these students conceptualize the transformative potential of their presence and multilingual assets in their schools and communities.

Method

The qualitative data for this study stem from a larger convergent mixed methods research study that examined the college access and choice processes of rural Latinx high school seniors from migrant farm working backgrounds in California’s San Joaquin Valley (Puente, 2022a). The larger study was specifically concerned with the cumulative impact of sociospatial factors such as race/ethnicity, educational attainment, low income, farm working labor, and rural geography and isolation on rural Latinx students’ college (in)opportunities.

Research Context and Collaborators

The students who participated in the larger research study included 16 rural Latinx high school seniors from six different communities in Tulare County, located in one of the world’s most productive agricultural regions: the San Joaquin Valley (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2023). Tulare County significantly relies on farming (and farm workers) and holds the annual World Ag

Expo (California Department of Transportation, 2023). U.S. Census Bureau (2023) estimates for 2023 show that about 67% of Tulare County’s population identify as Latinx, 22% are “foreign-born,” 18% live in poverty, and 15% of people 25 years and older hold a bachelor’s degree. Additionally, residents in the county and the broader region are geographically isolated from public higher education institutions (Puente, 2022b), and the region lags in areas of college preparation, participation, and completion when compared to the coastal and urban areas of the state (Moore et al., 2014).

The students were recruited through virtual classroom presentations at a public high school in Tulare County in which I had personal and professional connections, snowball sampling, and social media outreach through two community-based organizations in the San Joaquin Valley, through which I also had personal and professional relationships. In delivering presentations and connecting with the students, I shared my identity and positionality as a daughter of Mexican migrant farm workers raised in an unincorporated community in Tulare County who was looking to partner with students who shared my background to discuss their higher education pursuits. At the time of the study, all 16 rural Latinx students were high school seniors who intended to apply to at least one college. All students had migrant farm working backgrounds, spoke Spanish and English, and identified as Mexican or Mexican American, with two students also being of Salvadorian and Panamanian descent.

Data Collection

This article focuses on the 32 Chicana/Latina feminist *pláticas* conducted with the students. *Pláticas* translate to conversations and were introduced as part of a Chicana/Latina feminist methodology by F. E. González (1998) in her dissertation research study with eight Mexican high school students. Further, Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) outlined five principles of *pláticas* methodology, including (a) drawing upon Chicana/Latina feminist theory; (b) honoring participants as co-constructors of knowledge; (c) making connections to everyday lived experiences; (d) providing a potential space for healing; and (e) relying on relations of reciprocity, vulnerability, and reflexivity. Collectively, these principles disrupt relations of power between “researcher” and “participant” and resist traditional qualitative research approaches rooted in “whiteness,

colonial logics, and white supremacy” (Morales et al., 2023, p. 3).

Each multilingual rural Latinx high school senior participated in two pláticas via Zoom, lasting between 60 and 120 minutes. Zoom was chosen as a platform because the study was conducted during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Before beginning the pláticas, I connected with the students via text messages and phone calls to (re)introduce myself and the purpose of the study, answer any questions they had, and establish rapport. By the time the Zoom pláticas began, the students and I already had some familiarity and back-and-forth with each other. The first plática focused on students’ college application processes, namely the type and quality of college information and guidance students received and how the pandemic and online learning affected their access to college resources and opportunities. In the second plática, we discussed students’ college choices and majors, the professions they wanted to pursue, and whether they wanted to return to their rural communities after college. All pláticas were audio and video recorded and transcribed using Zoom’s transcription feature.

While issues of college access and choice were the primary focus of the larger study, a plática methodology necessitates that the researcher intentionally create space for the participants “to discuss those topics that matter for them” (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 113). Rather than mere informants of stories and experiences, participants are positioned as collaborators, contributors, and co-constructors of meaning-making and knowledge-production processes. When this relational principle of pláticas was practiced, students took the opportunity to discuss the role that language played in their lives and educational experiences, suggesting that their linguistic identities and skills were significant to their pursuit of higher education.

Data Analysis

In addition to centering topics that matter to students, F. E. González (1998) argued that pláticas are a space of theorization in which stories and experiences are not only collected but simultaneously analyzed. The talking back-and-forth nature of pláticas allowed me to check in with the rural Latinx students about my preliminary understanding of the salience of their rural multilingual identities to their educational experiences and pursuit of particular educational and career goals. Further, because I

conducted several pláticas with each student over four months, we often referenced what was discussed in prior pláticas, helping to confirm my understanding of their lives and linguistic identities and skills and providing students with additional time and space to refine my interpretation and make meaning of their experiences.

The 32 plática transcripts were also analyzed using Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) step-by-step qualitative data analysis process. Each plática transcript was read and coded by jotting down notes in the margins of the documents using Google Docs. Initially, the codes reflected the verbatim words and phrases used by the multilingual rural Latinx students during the pláticas. The exact words and phrases of the students, known as *in vivo* coding, were then grouped to begin category construction. A running list of the grouped codes was maintained for each transcript during this axial coding process. The grouped codes for the first plática, which included 16 transcripts, were compared to each other, while the grouped codes for the second plática, which were the remaining 16 transcripts, were compared. Two master lists of concepts were produced, one for the first plática that reflected students’ educational and familial experiences and one for the second plática that reflected students’ professional interests.

The final step was to become more theoretical, which included applying Anzaldúa’s (1987) *mestiza* consciousness to the data and using my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) as a rural Latina to make sense of the data and develop themes. The concepts from the two master lists were compared to fundamental elements of *mestiza* consciousness, such as experiencing pain, being torn between ways, awareness and action, and pursuing societal transformation. I further used my personal and professional experiences as a rural Latina scholar from the San Joaquin Valley to theorize how multilingual rural Latinx students from this region displayed and enacted a *mestiza* consciousness in their migrant farm working communities. The three findings presented below resulted from the co-construction of knowledge with the students in the study and qualitative and Chicana/Latina feminist analytic practices in educational research.

Findings

This article highlights three findings from *platicando* with multilingual rural Latinx youth from the San Joaquin Valley about their educational

experiences and opportunities post-Prop 58, which brought back bilingual education in California almost a decade ago. The findings highlight the continuing challenges faced by rural multilingual students; their awareness of inequities; and their desires to improve disparities, including (a) grappling with the heridas of English-only schooling, (b) transforming the institutional exclusion of Spanish-speaking parents, and (c) eliminating linguistic barriers as future multilingual professionals.

Grappling With the Heridas (Wounds) of English-Only Schooling

Most of the multilingual rural Latinx students in the study grew up speaking Spanish as their first language and continued to use it in their homes as their primary language. Upon entering schools in their rural communities, where most students shared that their teachers were primarily white and monolingual English speakers, they faced limited opportunities to enhance their multilingual identities and skills. They were subsequently forced into English-only learning spaces. While the high school students could now more easily navigate monolingual, English schooling contexts, their experiences with linguistic marginalization as young elementary school students were so profound that they continuously referenced these memories as they described their upbringings, identities, and educational experiences in their rural communities. In a plática with Mariana, she detailed the distress she felt as a multilingual student receiving English-only instruction:

I remember when I was younger, Spanish was my first language, and living in Lindsay, I personally just remember going into Spanish classes, so I started off with Spanish, and I learned English later because we were in bilingual classes. So, when I moved here, I was really struggling a lot because it was just all English. I remember this one time I had to do math homework, and I did not get it, and I couldn't ask my parents, or I couldn't ask my siblings because they obviously didn't know anything, so I feel like it's always been harder for me specifically because [my brother and sister] have me.

In explaining her role as the eldest daughter and sister in her family, Mariana recalled an experience during her early elementary school years in which she struggled academically. She attributed these

academic difficulties to being in classes that were “all English.” Mariana also stated that she could not ask her parents or siblings for help with her math homework, lamenting that they “didn't know anything” because the homework was only available in English, and her parents and siblings only spoke and understood Spanish. While Mariana's educational trajectory has “always been harder for [her]” because of the lack of instructional and emotional support she received as a multilingual student, she simultaneously recognized that her siblings now have her, suggesting that they would not face the same heridas as her. Mariana further described how she can now “help” her siblings with their homework and “[paves] the way” for them.

In addition to reminiscing about their educational heridas due to English-only instruction, the multilingual rural Latinx students also commented on the educational inequities their Spanish-speaking, immigrant peers navigated compared to themselves as multilingual students who spoke and understood English. Ximena detailed these disparities, labeling them “unfair”:

I think it's unfair because everyone deserves the same education, and everyone should have the same opportunities. People that already know English—they understand everything, like they understand the materials, whereas Mexicans that don't speak English.... It's harder for them to get an education if they don't understand, and I know here in [our community], we do have a shortage of teachers that speak Spanish, so I know that it's harder for students to learn. In some of my classes, there were students that speak Spanish but don't speak English, so we had students translate to them what the teacher was saying, which is hard sometimes when you don't know how to translate it. I think that is a little unfair.

In the plática, Ximena shared her belief in equal educational opportunity and access regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, and language. Simultaneously, she alluded to the myth of equal opportunity in the US, noting that, in practice, educational spaces discriminate against Spanish-speaking Mexican students because they do not have access to materials in their first language or multilingual teachers who could support them in their learning. These disparities resulted in unequal learning opportunities for Spanish-speaking students and students like Ximena, who interrupted those disparities by translating for their classmates without

institutional support from teachers or schools. While they recognized this as “unfair,” many students like Ximena were happy and willing to support their peers by translating because they understood their privilege and responsibility as multilingual students to assist others, including monolingual Spanish-speaking peers and English-speaking teachers, and heal the heridas caused by language exclusion in their schools.

Some students also grappled with the pain of not feeling Mexican or Latinx “enough” because they lost some Spanish-speaking abilities as they grew up and progressed in their educational paths due to being immersed in educational spaces where English was the only spoken and taught language. Michelle described some of the shame she carried as a multilingual rural Latina and the impact this loss of language also had on her relationship with her Spanish-speaking dad:

I grew up speaking Spanish, but I’m not that strong in it anymore. [My dad] only really speaks Spanish, so there was kind of a language barrier growing up.... So that also made me feel—I don’t want to say bad—but at some points it did because I wasn’t able to talk to him more about how he’s tired from work or just the stuff he goes through at work.

Michelle explained that she grew up speaking Spanish in her home and among her family members. She was not as “strong” in Spanish as she once was because she received schooling in English and did not have opportunities to strengthen her multilingual skills. Lacking Spanish proficiency had detrimental effects on Michelle’s ethnic sense of self. She often did not feel “Latina enough.” She further described her inability to communicate effectively with her dad, such as learning more about his role as a farm worker, which impacted their relationship.

Many students also described feeling inadequate in their English comprehension and communication. For instance, Mariana shared that English classes have “always been harder” for her and that she “struggled” in those academic spaces, and Sofia claimed that “just because I know English doesn’t mean I know how to do all of this,” as she detailed assumptions her parents had about her schooling. Thus, rural multilingual Latinx students described their schools as places where only English was spoken and taught but where their multilingual identities and skills were not nurtured in the ways they wanted them to be.

Transforming the Institutional Exclusion of Spanish-Speaking Parents

The multilingual rural Latinx students were also adversely impacted by the exclusion of their Spanish-speaking parents from English-only spaces. Students witnessed their parents’ struggles as they navigated such contexts and felt compelled to support their parents by listening, translating, and advising. Students described these activities with great responsibility, pride, and satisfaction. In a plática with Sofia, she reflected on her plática with her dad about his perception of his higher education and professional opportunities given his monolingual Spanish identity and the dominance of the English language in their rural community and the US:

I think it’s seeing the missed opportunities, like [my parents] came [to the US] when they were basically adults, so they weren’t able to go to college, and my dad always tells me that had he been able to go to college and learn English sooner, he would have been an engineer, and we actually had this conversation yesterday, and he was like, “Well, I don’t hate my job because I enjoy what I do, but it just makes me a little sad, like what could have been,” so I think that’s one of the things that motivates me most.

Sofia’s dad suggested that being an engineer in the US requires a command of the English language. In contrast, his current employments in agriculture and manufacturing, in which Latinx migrants in rural communities are concentrated, do not. While Sofia’s dad was barred from realizing his educational and career aspirations due to multiple systems of oppression, including language barriers and discrimination, Sofia’s multilingual identity—a direct product of her parents’ sacrifices, migration, and settlement in their rural community—offered her greater opportunities. In particular, Sofia described being motivated to pursue higher education because she understood that her multilingual skills were privileges that afforded her greater access to higher education and a career in an industry of her choosing.

Catalina similarly discussed her mom’s perception of her available employment opportunities as a monolingual Spanish speaker:

[My mom] always told me that she wanted more for herself, but she didn’t know how, specifically because she couldn’t speak English, and she felt like there wouldn’t be any jobs that she could be in without knowing English, so it always made me want to do more for my family because I

have the privilege of learning how to speak English.

Like Sofia's plática with her dad, Catalina talked with her mom about the lack of jobs available to Spanish speakers in their rural community outside of manual labor in the agricultural fields. Her mom's inability to explore professions in other industries that could offer her "more" than a low wage, job insecurity and instability, and backbreaking labor prompted Catalina to want "to do more" for her family by leveraging her multilingual asset in the pursuit of her educational and career goals, which she described as an immense privilege.

Catalina also discussed using her linguistic skills to keep her Spanish-speaking mother informed about local school and community politics since the information was only available in English:

I always inform my family of different political issues just because my mom is not fully involved because she can't read in English or she can't listen in English, so she doesn't understand, so I just translate the local news to her.

Earlier in the plática, Catalina had detailed the sociopolitical context of her community, emphasizing that those with political power, including congress members, city council members, and school board members, did not "look like [her]" or speak Spanish. Recognizing her mother's exclusion from engaging in local politics and decision making, Catalina used her multilingualism to ensure that her mom had access to crucial information and news of their community.

Multilingual rural Latinx students also highlighted the exclusion their parents faced from the U.S. education system. They noted how they had to mediate between English-only schooling contexts and their Spanish-speaking parents. Xavier explained his familial role as a translator:

If they get a call from the [school] district, I have to be willing to receive the call and speak for my mom in English. Recently, my brother and sister were entering ninth grade, and there was a complication because my little brother didn't want to do [the coding career pathway]. He wanted to do [the teaching career pathway] because he wants to be a teacher, so I had to call, and I had to speak for my mom because I had to call the district and the woman who is the head of the pathways, we understood that she didn't really understand Spanish, so I had to call for her, and then I had to figure out how to fix

everything. I can say in my family, I earned more of the interpreter role.

Xavier detailed the many steps he had to take to ensure that his brother's course schedule reflected his career interests. He understood that his role as an interpreter in his family resulted from school district staff not speaking Spanish or providing translation services so that his mother could call directly on her son's behalf. He referenced having to "speak for [his] mom" several times, noting that it was something that he had to do but also liked and wanted to do, evidenced by his description of his interpreter role as "earned." Xavier's multilingualism allowed him to champion his mother and brother's desires and ensure that their voices were not ignored by the English-only schooling system in their rural community.

Polo also described some of the ways his mother was excluded by the education system, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and online learning, when the larger study took place:

I think the only thing they had was ParentSquare, that's like this app that they had, but that's only if your parents had a phone, though. Only my mom has a phone, but she doesn't understand English. I didn't really need help with Internet and stuff, and none of my brothers neither, because they're going to school online, too, so I was there to help them, so there was no need for the school to come tell us what to do, so my parents didn't have to worry about that.

Polo noted that few resources were offered to his mother and other Spanish-speaking parents to support them in transitioning their children to online learning, except communication via the ParentSquare app. Polo suggested that using this app presented technological difficulties and language barriers for Spanish-speaking parents. He then elaborated how his parents "didn't have to worry" about the transition to online learning because he was there to support his family during this time by using his multilingual and technical skills.

Eliminating Linguistic Barriers as Future Multilingual Professionals

The various inequities that multilingual rural Latinx students experienced in schooling and witnessed their Spanish-speaking peers and parents navigate because of English dominance resulted in students wanting to enter professions where they could eliminate linguistic barriers and give back to their migrant farm working communities. Students'

career interests were primarily in the fields of law, education, and health. They argued that these professional spaces could significantly benefit from their multilingual identities.

In a plática with Antoine, he stated that his pursuit of a career in law was motivated by his desire “to help others, mostly people that are not seen as good people; people of different races, cultures, people that don’t speak English, people that are underrepresented.” His explanation of those who “are not seen as good people” revealed his understanding of how U.S. society has “othered” and discriminated against People of Color and Spanish speakers, including his family and community members. He continued to express his awareness of the inequities that Spanish speakers in his rural community face when searching for legal assistance:

Also, a lot of people are Spanish speakers, and a lot of the attorneys here don’t really know the language or don’t really get to fully talk to their customers because they don’t have the same relationship with them because, first off, it’s a language boundary. Second off, the attorneys here don’t really go out and do stuff. I feel like if I come back, people will know who I am. If I come back, I want to try to help the community, do stuff in the community, go to schools, talk at schools, and do stuff for the people that helped me.

Antoine acknowledged the lack of support Spanish speakers in his community received from local attorneys because of their monolingual English-speaking identities. He also suggested that their inability to speak Spanish prevents them from building relationships with local community members and engaging in service to build trust and give back. Unlike these English-speaking attorneys who are unknown to the community, Antoine’s community members “will know who [he is],” and his multilingualism will allow him to “help” his community, which is mainly composed of Spanish speakers.

Ximena, who had witnessed the “unfair” treatment of Spanish-speaking Mexican peers in her high school classes, was interested in becoming a bilingual elementary school teacher. She explained how this career would allow her to address the language disparities she witnessed and give back to her rural community:

I just want to help them learn what they need to learn when they go into high school and when they grow up. Basically, I want to give back

because I know that when I was in elementary school, I had very supportive teachers that helped you and were very welcoming, they always gave you support, and they were just always really helpful. . . , and I speak both Spanish and English. I want to be able to explain something very well for both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students.

Because of the disparities Ximena noticed her classmates navigate, she dreamed of becoming a bilingual teacher to support elementary school students in learning the subjects and skills necessary for high school preparation and adulthood. She hoped to emulate the support she received from her teachers when she was classified as an “English language learner” to enhance the educational experiences and linguistic identities and skills of both English- and Spanish-speaking students like herself.

Like Ximena, Sofia wanted to become a Spanish-language high school teacher because of her desire to give back:

I really want to give back to my community, and the way that I see myself doing that is by being a teacher because I feel like they play very important roles in our society, especially here, where you don’t have parents that understand the education system as much as you would wish they do.

In her rural community, made up primarily of Spanish-speaking Latinx migrant farm workers, Sofia noted that parents like hers were unfamiliar with the U.S. education system. As a Spanish teacher, she hopes to mitigate the exclusion and confusion Spanish-speaking parents experience. Sofia perceived her multilingualism as a cultural asset that allows her to play an important role in society, especially in her rural community, by eliminating linguistic barriers and facilitating understanding and relationship-building between teachers and parents.

Several students were interested in health-related occupations, such as Alyssa, who hopes to work in public health because of the difficulties her Spanish-speaking grandparents and parents had when navigating the U.S. healthcare system:

Well, cause I have my grandparents, and they were farm workers, and there is a very high rate in the Latino and Mexican community of like high cholesterol, blood pressure, all that, diabetes, we’re most likely to [get it], and seeing the healthcare system, seeing it through my grandparents, it’s very hard, especially cause they don’t understand. . . . It’s very complicated

for them. I want to be able to give support, and I remember we mentioned the last time, like with my dad, they go to sobadores, but that's only a short-term thing. They don't really know there are other options out there that can help you in the long run, so I want to be able to motivate them to get help.

Alyssa was conscious of the medical conditions and diseases that disproportionately affect the Mexican community. She also knew receiving treatment and care for such concerns was difficult when the healthcare system had rampant linguistic disparities. These difficulties compelled people like her father to pursue alternative healing treatments, such as by sobadores, who are traditional healers in Latinx communities who provide massages and typically speak Spanish and are culturally competent. While Alyssa understood sobadores' medical and cultural importance to people like her dad, she also wanted her migrant farm working community equitably served by the U.S. healthcare system. She saw herself as someone who could bridge the cultural and linguistic divide between Spanish-speaking migrant farm workers and U.S. healthcare by pursuing a health-related major and future career.

Discussion

In conservative and anti-immigrant agricultural regions like California's San Joaquin Valley, educational resources to support the large multilingual rural Latinx student population are scarce (Gallegos, 2023). Accordingly, English-only educational spaces are maintained despite progressive educational policies like Prop 58's being in effect for nearly a decade. The study's 16 multilingual rural Latinx students revealed the negative consequences of English-only practices on their educational experiences and opportunities. Because of the various language disparities that students had experienced and witnessed, they strongly desired to give back to their migrant farm working communities by returning and pursuing professions where their multilingual identities and skills would be leveraged to create more inclusive and equitable rural communities without language discrimination and barriers.

Much of the research on rural multilingual education has focused on the challenges educators face due to changing demographics in rural contexts (Coady, 2020). This article provides a student perspective on the challenges teachers and schools face and how such unpreparedness impacts students'

educational experiences and opportunities. The multilingual rural Latinx students in the study articulated an understanding of their marginalization within their schools, communities, and broader U.S. society. Yet many students also discussed the privileges afforded to them by their mere presence in U.S. rural communities, including learning English, being a citizen., and having access to an education to which many of their migrant parents did not have access. This dualism of belonging to multiple and conflicting cultures and languages prompted a consciousness to emerge within students that allowed them to identify unjust educational practices that disproportionately affect Spanish speakers and multilinguals. The deep awareness they demonstrated is an integral part of mestiza consciousness.

Anzaldúa's (1987) mestiza consciousness also emphasizes the importance of "healing the split" (p. 102) between dominant and oppressed identities. This study showed that English-only practices and policies in students' rural schools and communities also detrimentally impacted their Spanish-speaking parents, who were excluded from participating in U.S. institutions, such as high-paying industries, politics and government, and the education system. Previous research has found that Latinx students use their linguistic skills to assist their families and communities in navigating English-only contexts (Borreo, 2015). These multilingual rural Latinx students similarly served as translators in their families. Further, this article found that students were not merely passively translating for their parents; they were instead intentionally creating space for their parents' dreams, desires, and needs within exclusionary and English-only U.S. institutions in hopes of being a bridge between multiple cultures and languages.

The mestiza is also tasked with creating outer changes in society (Anzaldúa, 1987). As these multilingual rural Latinx students approached the end of their senior year of high school, most were committed to pursuing professions in which they could return and give back to their rural communities by leveraging their linguistic abilities and college degrees. Pérez Huber et al. (2018) found that Latinx students choose professions with high inclinations of social service and social advancement. Delgado Bernal (2001) similarly found that bilingual Chicana college students are committed to giving back to their families and communities. For the rural Latinx students in this study, the ability to speak multiple languages was a crucial way in which they planned to

give back, hoping to eliminate linguistic barriers in professions vital to the success and prosperity of their families and communities, like law, healthcare, and education. The rupturing of oppressive conditions and construction of new ways of being conveyed by the multilingual rural Latinx students exemplify “the mestiza way” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 104).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The changing demographics of rural schools and communities, which are increasingly racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, necessitate a response from policymakers and practitioners. The large and growing multilingual rural Latinx student population faces numerous ongoing educational challenges. It is evident from the pláticas with the students in this study that they require greater access to dual-language immersion programs. These programs, where they can engage with academic content in English and their home language while simultaneously affirming their racial/ethnic identities and belongingness to multiple cultures and languages, are crucial. Such programs should be led and taught by qualified bilingual educators, preferably those from the community who have a deep understanding and familiarity with the local context and unique needs of rural students and families. Scaling initiatives like the California Mini-Corps Program⁵, which recruits multilingual college students, typically from migrant backgrounds, interested in teaching in public schools, is necessary to support the large and growing multilingual migrant student population in the state and throughout the nation. Further, teachers who engage in culturally responsive curriculum and instruction will best support the education and development of multilingual rural Latinx students, requiring continuing professional development for teachers.

Another crucial aspect highlighted in this article is the need to engage Spanish-speaking migrant farm working parents, who often are excluded by the U.S. education system. It is imperative for rural schools and districts to actively listen to their needs, seek their input, and build trusting relationships. Leveraging families’ strengths and backgrounds to support student learning and advocating for equity and change inside and outside the school are essential

steps. Specifically, Spanish-speaking parents should have access to English-speaking classes at days and times that work for them. Involving rural multilingual students in the facilitation or instructional support of such classes can further enhance their multilingual identities and skills and nurture their commitment to their families and communities. Schools must also ensure that parents have access to staff members and administrators who speak their home language and, at the very least, have access to qualified interpreters and education-related information in multiple languages. Partnering with organizations like the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)⁶, which has a long history of engaging Spanish-speaking families in California and throughout the US, can significantly contribute to ensuring rural multilingual students’ educational success.

Rural schools and communities must position multilingual rural Latinx students as the assets they are, center and build on their linguistic and cultural strengths and backgrounds, and leverage their motivations to give back to their communities. Teachers and counselors must ensure that multilingual rural students and their parents are aware of their ability to attain the Seal of Biliteracy.⁷ Such students should also be encouraged to enroll in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses in their first and primary languages. Schools should provide multilingual rural students with awards, internships, and jobs for serving as translators. Rural multilingual students already engaged in the mutually beneficial practice of translating can officially serve as tutors to support Spanish-speaking peers and as interpreters at parent-teacher meetings. Students who are especially interested in pursuing careers in education or community engagement can assist with developing culturally relevant programming for parents and translating English-only education-related information. These opportunities would allow rural multilingual students to exercise their linguistic skills, feel a sense of pride in their multilingualism, and provide them an advantage when applying to colleges and careers by detailing their various work and volunteer experiences and commitment to giving back.

⁵ Learn more about the California Mini-Corps Program here: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r28/cmc24rfa.asp>

⁶ Learn more about the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) here: <https://www.piqe.org/>

⁷ Learn more about the California State Seal of Biliteracy here: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/sealofbiliteracy.asp>

Conclusion

Multilingual students in rural areas are rapidly growing across the US. In states like California, their presence has always been significant, but the educational resources to support multilingual students, especially in the state's rural areas, remain insufficient. As a result, multilingual rural Latinx students and their families experience English-only schools and communities. This study found that not only were multilingual rural Latinx students aware of language discrepancies and marginalization, but they

resisted the exclusion of their Spanish-speaking peers, parents, and community members by providing translation support and pursuing careers where they would one day serve as multilingual professionals and create more inclusive rural industries and communities. This study demonstrated that the functioning and well-being of today's rural communities, which include and rely on Spanish-speaking, migrant Latinx people, depend on social inclusion, educational success, and the development of critical consciousness and nurturing of desires to give back among multilingual rural students.

References

- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/la frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Borrero, N. (2015). Bilingual and proud of it: College-bound Latinos/as and the role of interpreting in their success. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 38(1), 6–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2015.1017027>
- California Department of Transportation. (2023). *Tulare County economic forecast*. <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/transportation-planning/documents/data-analytics-services/transportation-economics/socioeconomic-forecasts/2023/2023-pdf/tulare-2023-a11y.pdf>
- California Proposition 58 — Repeal English-only education — Results: Approved. (2017, August 1). *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/california-ballot-measure-58-repeal-english-only-ed>
- Californians Together. (n.d.). *English learners in the San Joaquin Valley*. Retrieved September 8, 2023, from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Kf_fKt030J4UXwGCdPwNwon6Y1y9I7ob/view
- CalMatters. (2020, June 16). *Proposition 58: Bilingual education*. <https://calmatters.org/politics/elections/2016/09/proposition-58-bilingual-education/>
- Celebrating the birth and life of Gloria Anzaldúa. (2019, September 20). *TexLibris*. <https://texlibris.lib.utexas.edu/2019/09/celebrating-the-birth-and-life-of-gloria-anzaldua/>
- Chapa, J., Sáenz, R., Rochín, R. I., & McConnell, E. D. (2004). Latinos and the changing demographic fabric of the rural Midwest. In A. V. Millard, & J. Chapa (Eds.), *Apple pie and enchiladas: Latino newcomers in the rural Midwest* (pp. 47–73). University of Texas Press. <https://doi.org/10.7560/702776-009>
- Coady, M. R. (2020). Rural English learner education: A review of research and call for a national agenda. *Educational Researcher*, 49(7), 524–532. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20931505>
- Coady, M. R., Coady, T. J., & Nelson, A. (2015). Assessing the needs of immigrant, Latino families and teachers in rural settings: Building home-school partnerships. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 6(1), 122–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26390043.2015.12067786>
- Coady, M. R., Lopez, M. P., Marichal, N., & Heffington, D. (2019). Preparing teacher leaders for English language learners in rural settings. *Theory & Practice in Rural Education*, 9(1), 44–60. <https://doi.org/10.3776/tpre.2019.v9n1p44-60>
- Crumb, L., Chambers, C., Azano, A. P., Hands, A., Cuthrell, K., & Avent, M. (2023). Rural cultural wealth: Dismantling deficit ideologies of rurality. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 17(2), 125–138. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-06-2022-0076>
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555–583. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48>
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), 623–639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059838>
- Economic Research Service. (2005, December). *Rural Hispanics at a glance* (Economic

- Information Bulletin No. 8). U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/44570/29568_eib8full.pdf?v
- Fierros, C. O., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2016). Vamos a platicar: The contours of pláticas as Chicana/Latina feminist methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 15(2), 98–121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43941617>
- Gallegos, E. (2023, August 16). *As a Central Valley foundation sunsets, it funds “cutting edge” work for region’s multilingual students*. EdSource. <https://edsources.org/2023/as-a-central-valley-foundation-sunsets-it-funds-cutting-edge-work-for-regions-multilingual-students/695614>
- González, F. E. (1998). *The formations of “Mexicaneness: Trenzadas de identidades multiples”*: The development of womanhood among young Mexicanas: Braids of multiple identities (Order No. 9925733) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- González, J. (2011). *Harvest of empire: A history of Latinos in America*. Penguin.
- Kandel, W., Henderson, J., Koball, H., & Capps, R. (2011). Moving up in rural America: Economic attainment of nonmetro Latino immigrants. *Rural Sociology*, 76(1), 101–128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.2011.00047.x>
- Krogstad, J. M., Lopez, M. H., & Passel, J. S. (2020, June 10). *A majority of Americans say immigrants mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens do not want*. Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/2MOaLEx>
- Lichter, D. T., & Johnson, K. M. (2021). A demographic lifeline to rural America: Latino population growth in new destinations, 1990–2019. In A. Dumont & D. P. Davis (Eds.), *Investing in rural prosperity* (pp. 67–80). Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/files/pdfs/community-development/investing-rural/chapters/chapter04.pdf>
- McGhee, E. (2020). *California’s political geography 2020*. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-political-geography/>
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Wiley.
- Mihalik, L., Pesce, A., & Welsh, B. (2016, November 8). California 2016 election results. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://graphics.latimes.com/la-na-pol-2016-election-results-california/>
- Moore, C., Tan, C., & Shulock, N. (2014). *Average won’t do: Performance trends in California higher education as a foundation for action*. Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED574485.pdf>
- Morales, S., Flores, A. I., Gaxiola Serrano, T. J., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2023). Feminista pláticas as a methodological disruption: drawing upon embodied knowledge, vulnerability, healing, and resistance. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1631–1643. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181441>
- Osoria, R. (2024). From institutional exclusion to internalized worth: Latina immigrant mothers’ experiences in the K–12 education system. *Literature Reviews in Education and Human Services*, 3(1), 1–18. <https://www.tamuc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/From-Institutional-Exclusion-to-Internalized-Worth.pdf>
- Passel, J. S., Lopez, M. H., & Cohn, D. (2022, February 3). *U.S. Hispanic population continued its geographic spread in the 2010s*. Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/3J28O2s>
- Pérez Huber, L. (2011). Discourses of racist nativism in California public education: English dominance as racist nativist microaggressions. *Educational Studies*, 47(4), 379–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2011.589301>
- Pérez Huber, L., Vélez, V. N., & Solórzano, D. (2018). More than “papelitos”: A QuantCrit counterstory to critique Latina/o degree value and occupational prestige. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(2), 208–230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1377416>
- Puente, M. (2022a). Ground-truthing en el Valle de San Joaquín: A mixed methods study on rural Latinx spatiality and college (in)opportunity (Order No. 29214456) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, San Diego]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Puente, M. (2022b). A critical race spatial analysis of rural Latinx students’ college (in)opportunities and conscious choices during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 21(3), 304–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2022.2051040>
- Puente, M. (2023a). “Essential workers” or sacrificial labor? Applying the concept of racial capitalism to Mexican immigrant farm workers’

- disposability during the COVID-19 pandemic. In M. J. Villaseñor & H. Jimenez (Eds.), *Latinx experiences: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 83–90). Sage.
- Puente, M. (2023b). “Central California’s completely different”: Theorizing racialization in the San Joaquin Valley through a rural Latinx epistemology. In E. Tuck, K. W. Yang, J. Williams, N. Hurd, & L. Doane (Eds.), *Moving against the tides of our disciplines: Reformulating our theories of Blackness, indigeneity, and racialization in research with youth* (pp. 43–58). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003303800-5>
- Puente, M., & Vélez, V. N. (2023). Platicando y Mapeando: a Chicana/Latina feminist GIS methodology in educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1659–1674. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181432>
- Sáenz, R. (2004, August 20). *Latinos and the changing face of America*. Population Reference Bureau. <https://www.prb.org/resources/latinos-and-the-changing-face-of-america/>
- Sáenz, R., Donato, K. M., Gouveia, L., & Torres, C. (2003). Latinos in the South: A glimpse of ongoing trends and research. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 19(1), Article 1. <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jrss/vol19/iss1/1>
- Solórzano, D. G. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24(3), 5–19.
- Solórzano, D. G. (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>
- Terriquez, V., Villegas, R., Villalobos, R., & Xu, J. (2020). The political socialization of Latinx youth in a conservative political context. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 70, Article 101188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2020.101188>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2023, July 1). *Quickfacts: Tulare County, California*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tularecountycalifornia/PST045222>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2023, August 24). *San Joaquin Valley*. Retrieved September 8, 2023, from <https://www.epa.gov/sanjoaquinvalley>
- Valenzuela, A. (2010). *Subtractive schooling: US-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. State University of New York Press.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

Author:

Mayra Puente, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Higher Education in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Contact: mayrapuente@ucsb.edu

Suggested Citation:

Puente, M. (2024). “I want to give back”: Examining the mestiza consciousness of multilingual Rural Latinx students from California’s San Joaquin Valley. *The Rural Educator*, 45(4), 1–14.

© 2024. This work is licensed under a CC BY 4.0 license. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>