Community Engaged Research as Relationship Building: Multilingual Parent Funds of Knowledge Stories

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural and linguistic *funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Moll, 2019) of multilingual families shared by parent authors in bilingual children's books integrated into culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014) shared in formal and informal learning contexts -- including elementary schools, public libraries and parks, teacher education university courses, and digital platforms. This study practices community-engaged research in which the experiences and perspectives of participants and researchers shaped how data was collected, understood, and shared with others (Bay & Swacha, 2020). Parent authors were invited to partner in generating, reflecting on, and sharing stories as educational community experiences, and as part of a study focused on fostering appreciation, understanding, and preservation of cultural and linguistic heritages as a significant aim in in our multicultural, multilingual world. As part of this, the study supports teachers, schools, and community stakeholders in including diverse languaging features (García, 2009) in curricula and instruction. Community engaged research highlights the complexities of the human experience and results in a valuable outcome beyond quantifiable data: community *relationships.* This collaborative inquiry into the development and sharing of multilingual parent books revealed relationship building as an artistic, authentic, and humanizing practice of bridge-building.

Introduction

This study examines the cultural and linguistic *funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Moll, 2019) of multilingual families shared by parent authors of bilingual children's books integrated into culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014) shared in formal and informal learning contexts -- including K-12 classroom settings, in-person and online public library story times and community events, and public park story walks. In this community-engaged research, the lived experiences of participants and researchers intersect and shape how data is collected, understood, and shared with others (Bay & Swacha, 2020). Parents as participants partner in generating, reflecting on, and sharing community-engaged products in partnership spaces at and beyond the university. In this, research outcomes aim to benefit directly participants and their communities. Community engaged research welcomes the complexities of the human experience and results in a shared outcome beyond quantifiable data: *relationship.*

This study places at the center identities bridging cultures and languages, identifies that are navigating cultural and linguistic margins in public settings in a largely rural Midwestern state. This centering process has required the university researcher to move to the side at key moments, so participants have opportunity to lead their narration and sharing of stories with meaningful audiences. This community-engaged scholarship generates findings involving both content and process. Key findings include insights shared in the stories (*content*) and how the stories are shared among communities (*process*). The findings include author reflections on what they hope audiences to glean from their stories (*content*), and how they hope their stories might be shared in future formal and informal learning settings (*process*). This emphasis on content and

process within the findings is part of a community-engaged scholarship approach. The university's *data imperative* (Bay & Swacha, 2020) favoring traditional research methods producing quantifiable data as results, is resisted through this art-based, community-engaged inquiry. This collaborative work recognizes and honors the centrality of participant experiences and voices.

Literature Review

This research builds on foundational work by Moll, et al., (1992) developed initially with Latinx communities at the University of Arizona in the early 1990s. Moll et al.'s (1992) work brings together "ethnographic analysis of household dynamics," classroom practices, and teacher study groups to establish "joint household research between classroom teachers and university-based researchers" leading to "ethnographically informed classroom practices" (p. 132). This work concluded that there is tremendous value in home-visits during which teachers "assume the role of the learner" and "help establish a fundamentally new, more symmetrical relationship with the parents of the students" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 139). The authors highlighted in the 1992 study that the concept, *funds of knowledge*, does not "replace the concept of culture," but emphasizes more specifically the "strategic knowledge and related activities essential in households' functioning, development, and well-being," and the "social, economic, and productive activities of people in a local region" that teachers might integrate meaningfully in classrooms (Moll et al., 1992, p. 139). More recently, Moll (2019) has described *funds of knowledge* as including the "social history of families and their productive or labor activities," which may include "farming, construction, gardening, household maintenance, or secretarial work," and take place in the

"primary and secondary sectors of the economy" (p. 131). Moll (2019) also has described a process for teachers to engage family funds of knowledge in classroom life. This process is to:

> (a) initiate relations of trust with families to enable discussion of their practices and funds of knowledge, (b) document these lived experiences and knowledge that may prove useful in defining households, individually and collectively, as having ample resources or assets that may be valuable for instruction, and (c) establish discursive settings with teachers to prepare them theoretically, methodologically, and analytically to do the research and to assess the utility of the findings for classroom practice. (132)

A number of studies since Moll et al.'s (1992) foundational work have taken up the call to integrate funds of knowledge into classroom and school environments. Wang, Bernas, and Eberhard (2005) examined mothers' teaching styles across four cultural communities as important parental funds of knowledge for teachers to consider and integrate into classroom curricula and instruction. Specifically, the researchers examined Chinese middle class (Nanjing, China), American white middle class (Chicago, USA), Hutterite (South Dakota, USA), and Native American (South Dakota, USA) parent distancing strategies observed in mother-child interactions and aligned cognitive benefits. A key finding was parents across all four contexts utilized teaching strategies in different ways to maximize learning for their own child. This led to four important conclusions. First, teachers need to take time to learn about the complex parental teaching approaches used in their students' homes and incorporate these *funds of knowledge* into their classroom curricula, instruction, and environment. Second, teachers need to draw on their students' cognitive strengths, as it "takes years for a child to form his/her learning style" and time to "adapt to a new one" (Wang, et al., 2005, p. 284-285). A third conclusion is that teachers

need to become familiar with diverse cultural beliefs and practices regarding child rearing and education, and to integrate this knowledge into their teaching practices. Finally, it is vital for teachers to recognize that the "diversity our children bring to early childhood settings enriches the learning environment, both for the teachers and the children" (Wang, et al., 2005, p. 285).

Sugarman (2010) is a second-grade teacher serving a student population of 90% language learners and 95% of students on free and reduced-price lunch. She challenges "deficit-laden descriptors" used in education settings, including *limited English proficient, underprepared,* and *resource deprived* (p. 96) and contends that such terms contribute to problematized views of students, families and communities as lacking assets and having many "problems which must be addressed and gaps which must be filled" (p. 96-97). Sugarman (2010) conducted an inquiry into one student's funds of knowledge to replace her own deficit thinking. She concluded that deficit thinking does not recognize the valuable funds of knowledge, or "bodies of knowledge and skills derived from household and community life," that can support student learning when integrated meaningfully into classroom settings (p. 97). Sugarman (2010) drew upon Friere's (1998) call to bridge students' *reading of the world* with their *reading of the word* as an ongoing dialectic by learning to "use 'what they can do' – what they have learned from reading the world – to support 'what I need to have them do' – what they need to do to read the word" (p. 108). Similarly, Vardanyan, Ernest, and Perkins (2018) recognized in their case study of a Syrian immigrant student's language acquisition process that immigrant children learn a new language most effectively when utilizing both the home and new language in a social context involving both native and immigrant peers. The researchers' observations at school and during home visits recognized supports and challenges in becoming bilingual and in adapting culturally to a new national school setting. Vardanyan et al. (2018) encourage teachers and parents to use a context-

based, naturalistic, whole language approach to language learning, and to engage home and new languages in formal, informal, and digital learning settings – findings applicable to this study.

Fewer studies have engaged the parents of K-12 learners as the focus of funds of knowledge studies. Larrotta and Serrano (2012) engage 35 Spanish-speaking parents of middle school students in central Texas in a similar context-based whole language approach to language learning by inviting the parents to develop story books sharing funds of knowledge rooted in their home cultures. Akin to the work of Sugarman (2010) in a second-grade classroom, Larrotta and Serrano (2012) observed parents establish "connection between what they were learning in class (vocabulary, language functions, and grammar) to what was happening in their real lives" by integrating their "funds of knowledge in the classroom" (p. 323). This study concluded the book assignment supported parent learners in practicing communication skills by writing about their "neighborhoods, families, pets, and children," and that sharing stories in class helped to "connect as learners and as people" by promoting an atmosphere of collaboration and ownership (p. 323). This current study addresses two limitations noted in Larrotta and Serrano's (2012) work. While their study engaged the parents of multilingual learners, it focused on the parents' English language development, rather than engaging their full linguistic repertoire. Moreover, parent funds of knowledge observed in the study reflected the more specific concept of learning assets – "learning motivation and goals; perseverance and resilience in learning the language; extracurricular activities and strategies they used to learn and communicate in English" (Larrotta & Serrano, 2012, p. 323) -- in contrast to Moll et al.'s (1992) conceptualization of *funds of knowledge* infused with sociocultural, linguistic, professional, historical components. This current study builds on their work by engaging bilingual parents in developing bilingual stories sharing cultural, linguistic, etc. funds of knowledge to build connections and understandings.

Summary

Building on Moll et al.'s (1992) research, this study collaborates with parents, teachers, librarians, and other community members to articulate and integrate multilingual family funds of knowledge into school, library, park and other community settings. As parental approaches to teaching will vary across home settings (Wang et al., 2005), this study recognizes the importance of bridging learner *reading of the world* with their *reading of the word* in the classroom (Friere, 1998; Sugarman, 2010), for K-12 and adult learners. This study builds on the work of Larrotta and Serrano (2012) by engaging parents in story creation and sharing that connects the content and process of learning at home to the content and process of learning in the classroom. This study also seeks to model community-engaged research that engages art-based inquiry, and thereby promote alternative modes for knowledge production beyond traditional measures.

Methods

Purpose

This study contributes to growing practices in qualitative research of art-based and community-engaged inquiry. While these practices result in publishable findings for academic communities, these practices prioritize transformative aims. This study aims to co-construct innovative approaches to community transformation, with the participants and researchers learning from and working together in collaboration. Methods for data collection, interpretation, and presentation of the findings, have required imagining alternative approaches to inquiry and what research can and might mean. This art-based, community engaged inquiry specifically invites parents within multicultural, multilingual families, including parents of

English/multilingual learners to develop bilingual *funds of knowledge* stories to share in formal and informal learning spaces. This study seeks to understand and learn from the cultural and linguistic insights shared in the stories.

Research Questions

The key questions guiding this study include the following:

What funds of knowledge stories do parent authors choose to share in their books?

What cultural, linguistic insights are shared through these funds of knowledge stories?

What community settings do the parents share these stories in? Who is the audience?

What reflections do parents share on the significance of their stories and their impact?

What is the broader value of authentic story development and sharing in a community?

Community-Engaged Research

This study is conducted amidst a global academic climate growing in understanding and appreciation for art-based inquiry prioritizing community aims. Berman (2008) conducts community-engaged research in South Africa and describes this work as committed to "local, trans-local, and contextual analysis" as well as to "social and institutional transformation" requiring a "new approach to knowledge seeking" and "new tools for evaluating research outputs (p. 516). She describes community-engaged research as emphasizing the political and pragmatic impact of research that regards and strengthens the agency of participants and their communities.

This study practices community-engaged research that "approaches communities as living meshworks of embodied human beings, material circumstances, and affective environments," within which the lived experiences of participants and researchers intersect and affect how data is collected and understood (Bay & Swacha, 2020, p. 136). In contrast to the university's "data imperative" for researchers to provide evidence of the impact of their work (Bay & Swacha, 2020, p. 122), community engaged research seeks to "make visible the affective and material complexities of the human experience," which may or may not lead to "measurable, quantifiable data" (p. 136). Rather, community engaged research tends toward a mutually sustaining and valuable outcome for participants and researchers alike: *relationships.* This study practices Bay and Swacha's (2020) described methods by inviting participants and researchers to partner collaboratively in generating, understanding, and sharing community-engaged products also serving as data. This approach steers away from viewing participants as data collection sources, but rather attends to "the human dignity of research participants and see their lives … as rich, vibrant intersections that provide openings for moments of connection and social justice" (Bay & Swacha, 2020, p. 136). Participants are collaborators to be regarded with great respect.

Researcher Subjectivity & Study Limitations

In community engaged research, the subjectivity of the researcher is critical to consider throughout the entire process of study formation, study implementation, data analysis, and development of the findings and implications for future practice, research, and policy. The researcher for this study had lived herself in an international setting while raising children in school settings with a dominant culture and language that their family was learning together. In this complex space, the researcher developed her own funds of knowledge story as a way to stay

connected with and as a discovery of her home culture to share in the form of a children's book. The formation of this current study evolved in relationship with multilingual parents navigating American, English-speaking cultures of U.S. schools while parenting youth in this journey. The researcher appreciated the overlap across their experiences, while also noting unique challenges the parent authors navigated in U.S. school systems after recently immigrating to the U.S.

Community engaged research offers unique benefits in the authentic, community-impacting insights it offers, while also presenting limitations. If authentic inquiry led by participants is based in a particular locality, it is more challenging to attain generalizable findings. However, there is potential for a similarly inquiry process to be transferable to other community settings. Another limitation is the inherent researcher subjectivity, while also recognizing that this very subjectivity is what enables and supports community relationships to be a research outcome.

Data Sources

This study takes place in a mid-sized Midwestern urban town, a nexus of rural-urban, local-global communities. Data sources include ten parents' bilingual children's books sharing cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge, parent reflections on the books' messages and how they hope their stories might be integrated into funds of knowledge lesson plans designed for formal and informal educational settings. Data sources also include the presentations of the parent books in formal and informal settings, including K-12 and university classrooms, virtual and in-person public library story times, park story walks, and community events. Parent stories and voices are the central data source driving the findings. Following suggestions made in the foundational work of Moll et al. (1992), this study includes parents as collaborators, who may

initiate or be invited to take on leadership roles as the project progresses. This includes

imagining and implementing presentations of stories in formal and informal learning spaces, and

supporting fellow parents in developing their own bilingual paper and digital children's books,

Data Collection

Developing and sharing the 10 books and interviewing the authors in this study lasted

roughly 18 months. Parents were invited to participate in a four-session bilingual children's book

workshop, including three online sessions (1.5 hours each) and one final in-person session of 3-5

hours in length. The first online session introduced the project and supported parents in

identifying a funds of knowledge topic. In the second session, parents developed a story plotline

and story board (Appendix A) offered in multiple languages. In the third session, parents shared

drafts of their stories and received feedback from other parents in the group. In the final in-

person session, parents created their books using paper scrapbook materials and/or digital tools

(e.g., Adobe Illustrator). All paper books were scanned to create a digital version. If more time

was needed, the researcher met with the parents and/or loaned materials to support completion of

the books. In a follow-up session online (1.5 hours), parents shared their final stories with one

another and participated in a focus-group dialogue about the funds of knowledge themes in their

stories and if/how they might like to see their stories integrated into formal or informal learning

settings. The faculty researcher recorded anonymous parent responses during this focus-group

dialogue.

Data collection also has involved gathering lesson plan designs around the parent stories.

However, future analysis will explore this component of the study upon further progress. The

researcher gradually is connecting parent participants with teachers interested in designing

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lesson/unit plan or learning activities around the stories. To identify interested teachers, the researcher contacted previous university teacher education students who had earned their licensure for supporting multilingual learners in schools. In addition, a few of the parent authors have expressed interest in designing curricula around their own stories. In this case, the faculty researcher or another teacher will be able to provide a supportive role. The researcher also worked with public librarians and staff members of organizations in the community who played a role in the design of learning activities implemented in informal learning settings.

Data Analysis

In this art-based, community engaged inquiry, constant comparative analysis, as defined by Merriam and Tisdell (20105), seeks to identify convergent and divergent themes across stories and story-sharing events. Data recorded in an Excel chart included book titles, author linguistic and cultural backgrounds, funds of knowledge topics/themes, book presentation audiences and contexts, lesson design approaches, author interview insights on the book topic and how they might like to see their books integrated into formal or informal learning settings. Any parent reflections on societal impact also were noted to highlight the broader community impact of the stories. A multicolored highlighting tool was used in the Excel chart to identify themes and sub-themes noted in the data. Similarities and differences that emerged across the data were noted, including any transformational change resulting from the project in the authors, the community, the researcher, and others involved in the project (e.g., librarians, teacher candidates).

Results

Funds of Knowledge Stories & Insights

This study includes ten bilingual children's books with collected data on the book titles, cultural and linguistic background, funds of knowledge themes, presentation contexts, and instructional approaches (Appendix B). The findings learning from and celebrate the complex cultural, linguistic, sociopolitical, and other funds of knowledge practiced by parent authors and their communities. Funds of knowledge identified included immigration journeys, heritage culture celebrations and traditions, navigating dominant vs. heritage cultures/languages, stereotypes and strengths, bridging cultures and languages. Funds of knowledge identified in the stories included protagonists learning to navigate sociocultural political tensions experienced by hybrid identities that are bridging cultures, languages, and nationalities, and insights gleaned through this identity work. The stories involved supporting youth in learning new cultures and languages, while fostering connections with and instilling values from their home cultures and languages. A key theme across stories is learning to courageously and proudly identify with one's heritage.

The funds of knowledge topics and themes across the stories included:

a. Stories of immigration

    a. courageous journeys from youth and parent perspectives

    b. recognition of within group diversity of heritage cultures/languages

    c. recognition of an American culture experienced by immigrant families

    d. support strategies upon arrival in a new cultural home

b. Heritage cultural celebrations, traditions and meanings

    a. understand meaning of heritage celebrations, traditions, foods, symbols, songs

      b. engage in celebrations across generations to celebrate life and grieve loss

c. Popular vs. heritage culture/language

      a. participating in new culture/language while holding onto heritage culture/language

      b. appreciating heritage foods, including nutrition and traditions

      c. heritage foods connecting generations

d. Stereotypes and strengths

      a. Discussing stereotypes with culturally and linguistically diverse youth

      b. Navigating stereotypes as a parent in a new culture/language

      c. Forging new cultural/linguistic identities in response to stereotypes

e. Bridging cultures/languages

      a. Learning to appreciate/bridge 2+ cultures/languages shared by parents

      b. Guiding elementary youth to learn to become cultural/linguistic bridges

Funds of Knowledge Presentations & Contexts

Presentations sharing eight bilingual books demonstrate enriching cultural, linguistic, and sociopolitical *funds of knowledge* shared by the parents in their home communities and beyond. Presentation contexts included formal settings, such as an elementary classroom, and informal learning settings, such as a public park story walk. Presentations involved in-person and virtual formats and reached audiences from pre-school to university course settings. The purposes for presentations were to celebrate, connect, educate, and forge shared global-local identities.

Specific presentations aligned with story themes are included below:

a. Stories of immigration

    a. Public library park story walk display

    b. Public library Spanish bilingual story time reading

    c. Elementary school multicultural festival booth

    d. 6th grade class reading

    e. University teacher preparation course

    f. Self-publication of children's book

    g. Community event reading

    h. Parent English class

b. Heritage cultural celebrations, traditions and meanings connecting generations, celebrating life, grieving loss

    a. *Día de los Muertos* bilingual Spanish story time with public library, second implementation part of university state-wide *Spirit & Place Festival*.

    b. University teacher preparation course

c. Popular culture vs. heritage culture

    a. Bilingual virtual Chinese public library story time

d. Stereotypes and strengths

    a. 6th grade class reading

    b. University teacher preparation course

    c. Community event reading

e. Bridging cultures/languages

    a. 6th grade class reading

    b. University teacher preparation course

    c.   Community event reading

Author Reflections on Stories & Impact

Focus-group interviews invited parent authors to reflect on the meanings within their funds of knowledge stories and the impact the stories might have on K-12 students, teachers, and broader communities. Analysis of parent responses revealed foundational work involved in bridging home and new cultures as *fostering new connections while honoring family heritage*. This work involved the practices of *maintaining heritage connections while balancing new and home cultures, navigating difference by teaching and learning about culture*, and *encouraging inclusion and correcting misconceptions*. In their stories and shared reflections, parent authors emphasized different practices in fostering new connections while honoring heritage.

Maintaining Heritage while Balancing Cultures

Parent reflections expressed hope and practices for maintaining heritage connections while balancing cultures. The author of *Makeup or No Makeup?* 化妆还是不化妆？ described this work as challenging, and observed, "sometimes we can blend the cultural traditions and thinking, to blend the cultures together and to make things balanced and to settle the conflict" (Fall 2021). This author described her approach to this balancing act: "When there is an issue that arises from different traditions, cultures, and values, then you will put yourself into others' shoes to rethink about it, which is the best way to balance." (Fall 2021). She explained that she was not "against makeup," but that in her home culture, students use makeup "sometimes, but not every day," as the purpose of school is to focus on studying (Fall 2021). Yet, this parent also recognized that wearing make-up for her daughter was part of developing personal expression.

Together, they reached a middle ground. Her daughter wore make-up but did not spend a lot of time on it. This resolution is expressed in the final page of the children's book (Figure A).

Figure A. 化妆还是不化妆？ *Makeup or No Makeup?* by Yan Chen

Two parents emphasized maintaining cultural connections by remaining connected to one's heritage foods, as well as teaching others to not criticize another's heritage foods. In *Food for Thought*, one parent reflects on her daughter's journey to becoming an expert in preparing her own heritage cuisine as a young adult, after weathering seasons of disdain toward home prepared lunches in elementary and middle school. Her mom persisted in preparing culturally infused meals at home (Figure B) while sending American style lunches with her daughter to school. Another parent expressed hope youth might "try different tastes and foods from different cultures" and "not be negative to other people's special food," including classmates (Fall 2021).

Figure B. Food for Thought by Ming Chu Wang

Both parents encouraged teachers to teach youth about different foods through books and sharing ingredients in class, like ginger and green onion, to expose students to different tastes and to help students "compare different smells" between spices, such as "cinnamon and barley" (Fall 2021). This parent expressed hope her children and other youth would not "close the door on trying new things" from heritage cultures (Fall 2021). Author of *Hasta que te vuelta a ver* (*Until We Meet Again*), similarly advocates for learning from and "leaning on" one's heritage culture, specifically to process grief in losing a family member (Fall 2021). This parent writes about coming together as a family for *Día de los Muertos*, and how this holiday was helpful across generations to process grief, particularly for her teenage son growing up in the U.S. She shows through her book how "practicing Mexican traditions" provided her son with tools to "commemorate his grandfather" and replicate his cultural legacy" (Fall 2021) (Figure C).
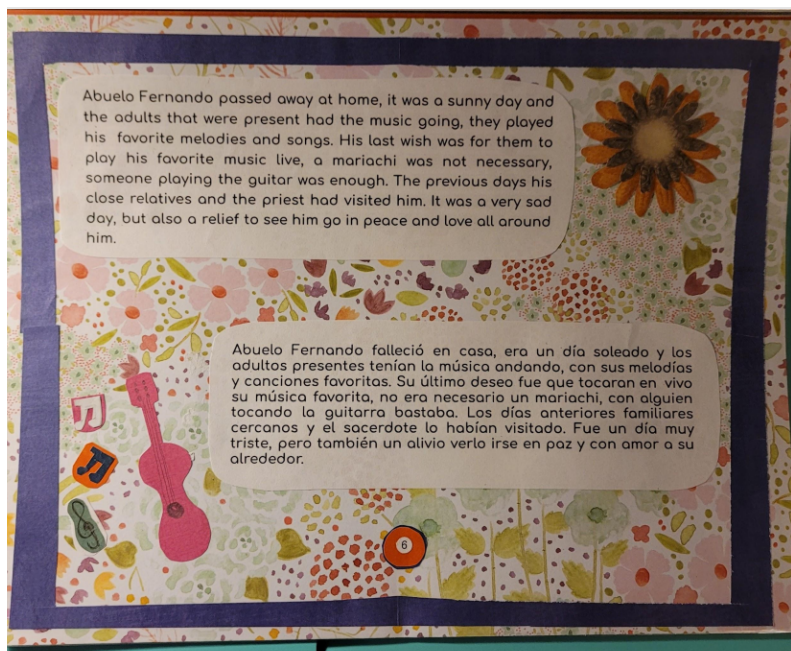
Figure C. Hasta que te vuelta a ver (*Until We Meet Again*) by Verónica Wong-Tovar

The author of *La Gran Aventura de Gabriel* highlighted the beauty of friendship forged across national lines, while maintaining connection to one's national and cultural heritage, as seen in the flags on t-shirts worn by youth holding arms (Figure D). This visual depicts the diversity present across Spanish speaking cultures, through the flags representing different Latin American countries. The parent author reflected on her difficulty when younger "to appreciate her own culture" while simultaneously trying "to integrate and be part of this one" (Fall 2021). The final image in her book depicts the beauty found in forging friendship across lines of difference. She reflected on "the need more acceptance in this world," and expressed hope her book might help readers "accept each other" and "learn to love and appreciate" those from different cultures.

Figure D. La Gran Aventura de Gabríel (Gabríel's Great Adventure) by Anakarina Hurtado

The parent author of *Two cousins, two games, a church, and a temple* reflected on the many gifts of being raised by her African-American father and Japanese mother. She also noted challenges faced by her mom in moving to the U.S. as an immigrant immersed in a second language while raising children in a cross-cultural family. This author reflected on growing up in a bilingual, cross-cultural home and how this experience broadened her life experiences and perspectives, and positively shaped her identify formation. She shared that a key message in her book is to be open to seeing commonalities across cultural differences, as "the world now is such a blend of so many different cultures, with moms and dads from different cultures" (FA22). She reflected that her cousins in Japan and the U.S. always accepted her for who she was, and that it was not until elementary school when she noted, "I do not look like a lot of the other kids," and now, through her book, she would like all students "to be aware that love conquers all" (FA22). The final image of the author's book depicts bridging love across cultures beautifully (Figure E).

Figure E. Two cousins, two games, a church, and a temple. by Nancy Boatner

Navigating Difference by Teaching and Learning

A shared emphasis across parents was navigating difference by teaching and learning. As noted above, one parent described make-up as "inappropriate" and time-consuming for teenagers: "In my culture, we did not have makeup accessories" because "as a student, your main focus is to study" (Fall 2021). She expressed that makeup takes "more time" and can "distract others in the classroom," and that "chemicals in makeup is not good for the skin" (Fall 2021). Another parent author expressed dismay that her children always wanted her to make Mac & Cheese and were not interested in the traditional Chinese noodles she prepared and loved as a child. These authors navigated these differences by learning a new culture and trying to find a middle ground with their children. The author of *Makeup or No Makeup?* 化妆还是不化妆？ reflected that she and her daughter "were born and raised on different cultural traditions and

values" and that this led to "different perspectives" and ways of "thinking" (Fall 2021). She hoped teachers might support students in learning about and respecting one another's different cultures and languages, including different "mindsets," to "help students appreciate different ways of thinking" (Fall 2021).

The author of *La Gran Aventura de Gabriel* hoped that teachers might support families in sharing their diverse cultures and languages, specifically with the next generation. She noted, "we are all immigrants and have different stories, so mine is different from my husband's" and it is important to pass on to our children and others "how we migrated from a different country, to understand each of our cultures … our journeys" (Fall 2021). Her book shared her husband's journey as a 5-year-old, immigrating from Cuba to the U.S. on a boat. An image of a 5-year-old steering a big ship emphasizes the great burden carried by children making this transition, as well as the great courage demonstrated (Figure F). This author hoped teachers might recognize that children who have recently immigrated are carrying "a lot more weight on their shoulders" in learning a new language and culture, while also learning academic content knowledge that all students are learning (Fall 2021). She encouraged class activities inclusive of quiet students who may feel like they "do not have a voice" or "speak differently than others" (Fall 2022).

Figure F. La Gran Aventura de Gabríel (Gabríel's Great Adventure) by Anakarina Hurtado

In *4 Seasons*, a parent author from Brazil shares about the courage also required by parents immigrating to a new nation. Her book shares about her culture shock through both her literal and metaphorical experience of seasonal change (Appendix E). She encourages teachers to gain greater understanding of families by inviting them into the classroom, and to be patient in noting that language learning is hard for students and "much harder for the parents" (Fall 2022). She shared her experience in a parent-teacher meeting without an interpreter and noted the need for schools to provide interpreters to support effective communication with families. She also described a positive experience when teachers took time to ask questions and learn about differences across education systems in Brazil and the U.S. She hoped teachers might realize that American schools have a culture distinct from the school cultures of immigrating families, and to teach immigrating families about American school culture while learning about their cultures.

Encouraging Inclusion and Correcting Misconceptions

Parent authors reflected on their roles in the community to encourage inclusion and correct misconceptions, which often was a challenging role to play. One author encouraged families to be mindful that "if we are in a multicultural environment or family, then conflict exists," and that "we cannot ignore it to resolve the conflict" (Fall 2021). Another parent sharing about Mexican traditions in *Día de los Muertos* hoped her book might help correct the misconception that the holiday is about celebrating the dead, as the holiday is about celebrating the lives of loved ones who have passed away (Fall 2021) (Figure G).
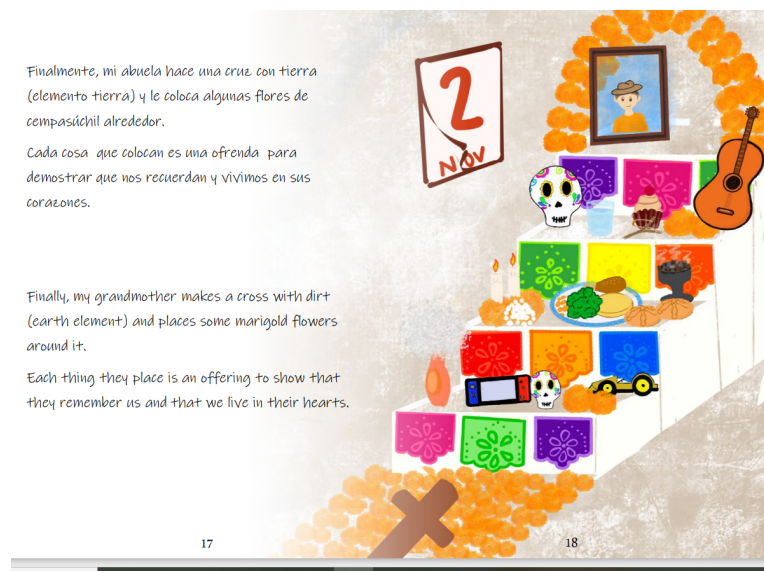

Finalmente, mi abuela hace una cruz con tierra (elemento tierra) y le coloca algunas flores de cempasúchil alrededor.

Cada cosa que colocan es una ofrenda para demostrar que nos recuerdan y vivimos en sus corazones.

Finally, my grandmother makes a cross with dirt (earth element) and places some marigold flowers around it.

Each thing they place is an offering to show that they remember us and that we live in their hearts.

Figure G. El esqueleto que ama bailar (The Skeleton that Loves to Dance) by Selene Dávila

Another parent author noted misconceptions may be corrected most effectively through building relationships with families. She encouraged teachers to invite multilingual families to school meetings and events, and when parents do attend, to "be curious … ask questions," and have an interpreter to help with communication (Fall 2022). She hoped teachers might help multilingual families "feel heard and valued" (Fall 2022). The author of *4 Seasons* reflected on her first year as a recent immigrant and mom of two elementary children to share that "the first

day of school was terrible," as she "cried a lot every single day" (Fall 2022) (Figure H). She encouraged her children to "not worry, be calm, and ask for help." She reflected on the great difficulty of this first year for her entire family, and now encourages teachers to use gestures, visuals, and colors to communicate with students learning English.

Figure H. 4 Seasons by Fabiana Costa

The author of *Colores* described her own preschool teacher as inclusive. This teacher shared M&Ms with the class and encouraged students to learn from each other as this will "color you so strong that you will never forget that person" (Spring 2022). This author encouraged teachers to "make your classroom safe where [students who have recently immigrated] can learn as they try to assimilate to the American way" (Fall 2022). She coached teachers to encourage students to "not let it go, but "to celebrate [their heritage cultures] so they will hold on to and be

proud of who they are" (Fall 2022). This parent shared *Colores* with three 6th grade classes and reflected, "some people are not ready to have uncomfortable discussions about difficult topics" (Fall 2022). She would like to see her book shared with teachers for professional development training and encouraged teachers to know "what the policies are, wherever you teach" because "we are living in a time when parents will message you and tell you they did not appreciate that lesson, and you have to cover yourself as an educator, if education is your passion" (Fall 2022). This parent encouraged teachers to "advocate for [all] children," including and particularly for any youth who may be navigating the stress of a difficult immigration status. She highlighted the value of home visits with an interpreter, as school open houses can be intimidating (Fall 2022).

Discussion

Community-Engaged Inquiry as Artistic

This community-engaged study inquired into the cultural and linguistic *funds of knowledge* (Moll, et al., 1992; Moll, 2019) shared by parent authors of bilingual children's books as culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014) in formal and informal learning settings. Throughout this study, the experiences and perspectives of participants and researchers intersected and shaped how the data was collected, understood, and presented so the study might directly benefit participants and their communities (Bay & Swacha, 2020). Art-based community-engaged inquiry supported a key outcome extending beyond traditional research: relationship. New relationships developed across participating parents, across parents and university teacher education students/faculty, and across parents and community members and organizations where stories were shared. Connecting over stories supported the formation of community relationships bridging cultural and linguistic identifications. The school district's

literacy taskforce volunteered to fund a publication of all parent authored stories in one collection to share with schools and libraries in the region and beyond. The community-engaged study took on a life of its own, as parents reached out to organizations and schools to share their stories. One parent author self-published her book. Another parent author shared her story with three 6th grade classes where she worked. Three parents shared their stories with teacher candidates in the researcher's university course. One of the parents shared her story with an English class for adults who immigrated to the region. The researcher connected parents and teachers who designed lessons around the stories, with plans to initiate a website where posed lessons might benefit teachers within the region and beyond.

Bilingual Stories as Authentic

This study aimed to support parents in developing bilingual children's books as authentic community stories, then bring these stories into classroom and community spaces, where the students might develop greater understanding of, appreciation for, and connection with the families, cultures, and languages in their region and beyond. This study builds on the work of Larrotta and Serrano (2012) who engaged 35 Spanish-speaking parents of middle school students in developing story books sharing cultural funds of knowledge. These stories were written in English with English development as a main goal of the project. In contrast, this study centers heritage languages as critical funds of knowledge included in *bilingual* books fostering culturally *and linguistically* globally-minded student-citizens. During this study, parents presented stories in formal and informal learning settings. Home languages were *integral to – not marginalized from –* the contexts and relationships built through the story sharing process. Audience members adjusted as needed by reading English subtitles or waiting for provided translation. This

experience supported greater understanding for what it might feel like to be a language learner in a new linguistic context, for audience members who had not experienced this. The authenticity of the stories also increased audience engagement with and regard for stories shared.

Bridge-Building Practices as Humanizing

Sharing stories builds bridges between the storyteller and the audience by fostering new understandings, connections, and identifications – a humanizing process. Ravitch (2020) further highlights in her research on *flux* pedagogies that "lived problems" can serve as "radical learning towards informed action," and that stories of "global, national, and local struggles" can become "texts of critical inclusivity that support humanistic and equitable schooling, teaching, learning, leading, policy-making, and professional development" (p. 2). In this study, parent reflections on authored stories and their impact in the community were recorded and coded for convergent and divergent themes. This analysis revealed key practices involved in fostering new connections while honoring family heritage, specifically: *maintaining heritage connections while balancing new and home cultures, navigating difference by teaching and learning about culture*, and *encouraging inclusion and correcting misconceptions*. This study goes beyond the work of Wang et al. (2005) in that it evidences unique homelife practices, and emphasizes *skills generated by families who are navigating two cultures and languages as part of an identity integration process*. Park (2013) describes the emergence of hyphenated identities resulting from the immigration process. She reflects that "narrating my own story was a difficult task but it was a task I had to start" to begin sharing "my experiences and identity constructions" while "navigating the web of relationships interconnected by race, gender, social class, and language

ideologies" (Park, 2013, p. 16). She noted this journey *humanized* (Hanauer, 2012) her teaching practice and classroom as a welcoming space for multilingual learners and families.

As authors and audience members connect with their own struggles, they are able to appreciate and empathize more effectively with the struggles of others. In this study, authors resonated with their shared struggles of maintaining heritage connections while identifying with a new cultural home and language, as well as feeling pressure to correct assumptions about one's home culture while in the new context. This role can feel like serving as a constant political ambassador who builds peace by maintaining and establishing new connections. Navigating identities that often 'mean against' one another (Gee, 2017) is a theme that bridged author-audience identities, a shared struggle that in itself became a point of shared humanity.

Conclusion

This community-engaged inquiry on the development and sharing of bilingual parent books revealed relationship building as an *artistic, authentic*, *humanizing* (Hanauer, 2012) practice. This community-engaged research regards and honors participants, their stories and sociocultural contexts. This study resists university *data imperatives* favoring traditional research methods leading to quantified results (Bay & Swacha, 2020). This study encourages community-engaged research that fosters connective relationships and helps community members to see and value all identities, including hyphenated (Park, 2013) and marginalized identities facing unique sociopolitical challenges. This study encourages future research to learn from the insights of such community members, including elementary students building bridges among peers in K-12 settings. Such research might explore the unique burdens felt by community members bridging two or more cultures and conflicting identities, and to highlight the greater regard and support

Community Engaged Research as Relationship Building

needed by these community members for their vital civic roles. Such research might explore how community members bridging two or more sociopolitical identities can help others recognize how diverse cultures and languages are a *shared societal strength*. Appreciation, understanding, and preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity are vital aims in research, practice, and policy. Teachers need to foster these qualities in K-12 learners as global citizens in our multicultural, multilingual world. Moreover, teachers, schools, and community stakeholders need to include "features of people's languaging in policy, curriculum, and instructional planning" (García, 2009, p. 39). Diverse cultures and languages must be recognized as valuable and vital resources for all. Art-based community-engaged inquiry supports this recognition.

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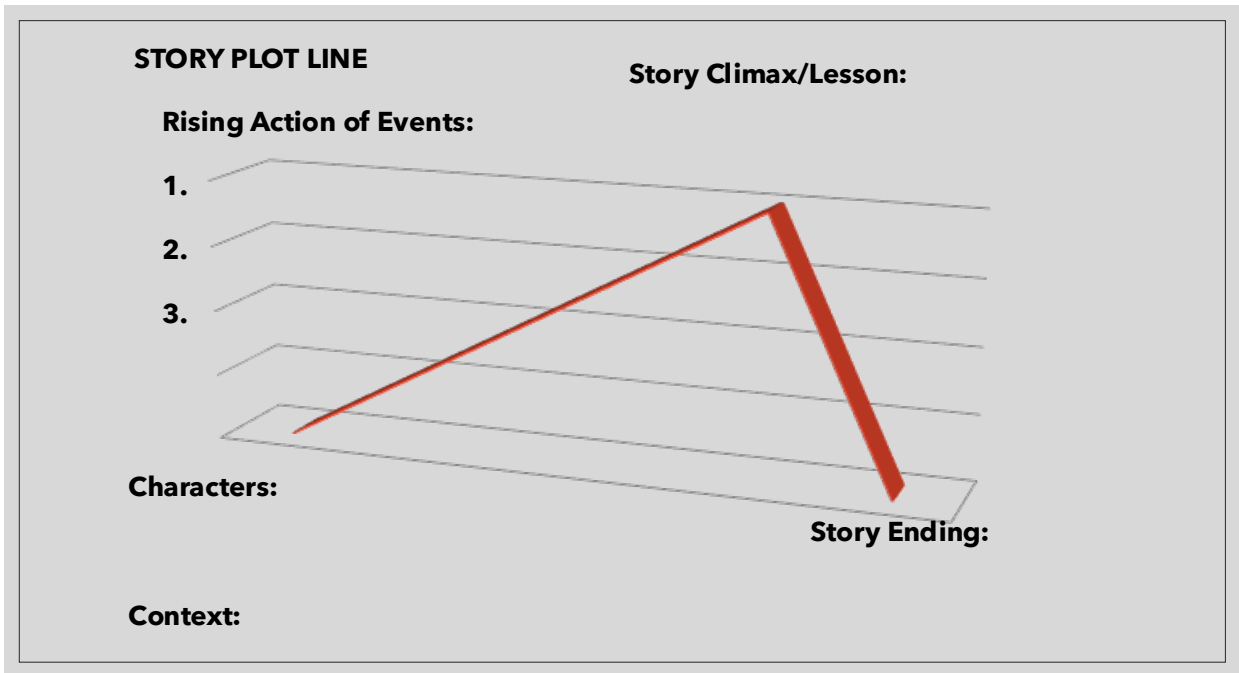
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Appendix A
Story Plotline and Storyboard

STORY PLOT LINE

Story Climax/Lesson:

Rising Action of Events:

1.

2.

3.

Characters:

Story Ending:

Context:

PLAN YOUR STORY! ☺

Page 1 Introduce Characters	Page 2 Introduce Challenge	Page 3 Rising Action
Page 4 Rising Action	Page 5 Story Climax/Lesson	Page 6 Story Ending

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Appendix B
Book Themes & Presentations

Title	Language & Nationality	Topics/Themes	Presentation Context	Teaching Strategies
Colores, Colors	Spanish & English, Mexico & U.S.	Engaging youth in learning from each other's diverse backgrounds	Three 6th grade class lessons; Community literacy festival; University class reading	Invite students to draw images for and finish the story
El esqueleto que ama bailar, The Skeleton that Loves to Dance	Spanish, Mexico	Traditional practices of *Día de los Muertos* to celebrate the lives of loved ones	*Día de los Muertos* library bilingual story time; University *spirit & place* festival; University course reading	Library audience creates a felt altar and draws individual altars in memory of loved ones
Food for Thought	Chinese, Taiwan	Valuing and learning from diverse heritage cuisines	University course reading	Share book to teach youth to appreciate diverse foods of classmates
Hasta que te vuelta a ver; Until We Meet Again	Spanish, Mexico	Family gatherings connecting generations and helping members to grieve loss	*Día de los Muertos* bilingual story time at public library	Parents reflect in a journal about loss of loved ones and coping strategies
化妆还是不化妆? *Huasheng haishi bu huasheng? Makeup or No Makeup?*	Chinese, China	Cross-cultural, intergenerational views on wearing makeup to school	Lunar New Year public library bilingual virtual story time	Introduce Lunar New Year concepts, phrases, traditions in English and Chinese
La Gran Aventura de Gabríel. Gabríel's Great Adventure	Spanish, Venezuela & Cuba	Journey from Cuba to America by boat, through the lens of 5-year old boy	Self-publication; Public park story walk; Public library bilingual story time; 6th grade class reading; Literacy taskforce	Participants create books imagining immigrating to another country to empathize with classmates who have immigrated

			presentation; Elementary school multicultural festival; University course reading; Community literacy festival; TESOL state conference	
娜娜和爷爷奶奶，*Nana he yeye nainai, Nana & Her Grandparents*	Chinese, China	Appreciating heritage cuisine across generations	[None yet]	Students create class family recipe book
Picture Day	English & Yoruba, U.S. & Nigeria	Being proud of and sharing cultural heritage with classmates	University course reading	Students draw what might wear for picture day to share culture/self.
Two cousins, two games, a church and a temple.	English & Japanese, U.S. & Japan	Bridging two cultural heritages of parents	Community literacy festival; University course reading	Students create origami and consider folds as identity layers
4 Seasons	Portuguese, Brazil	Enduring seasonal change of immigration	Community literacy festival; University class reading; TESOL state conference	Parents share immigration journeys as seasons.

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