DISCOVERING OUR EXPERIENCES:

Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

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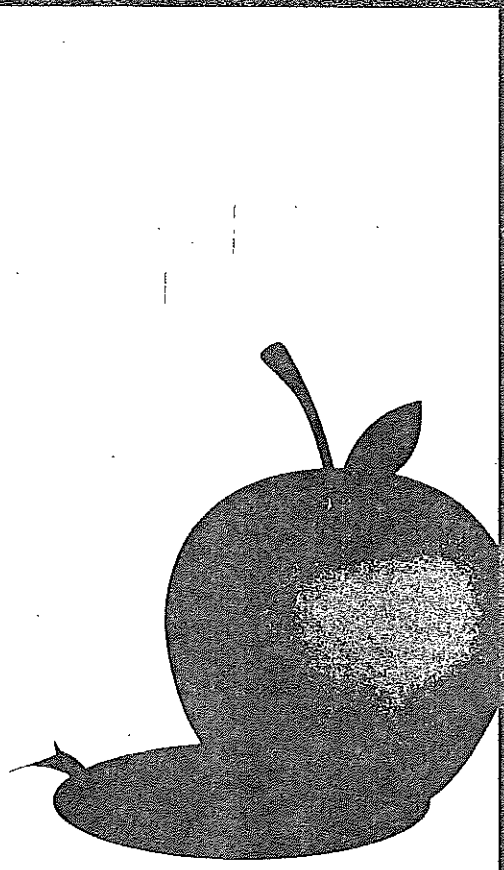

Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

Volume 3

Fall 1996

"Transforming Ourselves Through the Power of Mediated Instruction"

Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

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Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education
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Proverbs from Folk Wisdom of México by J. Sellers and A. Nelson, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1994.

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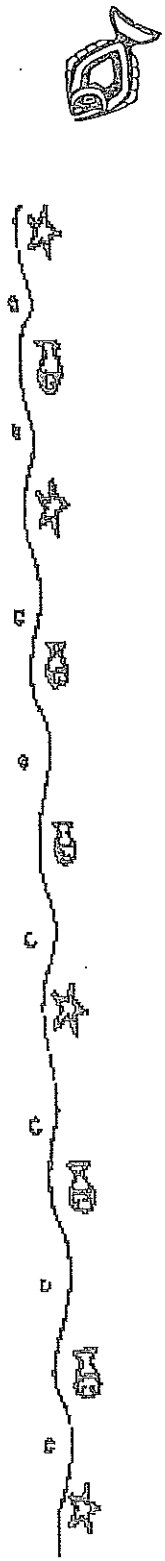
This volume is dedicated to the students and their families who struggle to find the meaning of democracy in our country and, in effect, remind us of its delicate balance.



Caminante, son tus huellas
el camino, y nada más;
caminante, no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace camino,
y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca
se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante, no hay camino,
sino estelas en la mar.

Antonio Machado

Machado, A. (1989). Poesías completas. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.

Introduction

The third volume of *Discovering our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education*, titled, "Transforming Ourselves Through the Power of Mediated Instruction," is about making curriculum meaningful for teachers and students. The stories herein are about teachers and students, and how they make sense of their worlds and attempt to bring about substantive change that impact their lives.

We purposely introduce language that is perhaps, unfamiliar to some teachers because we feel that there is a need to create new or fresh ideas to solve obstinate problems, or at least to study them in a different light.

As in the other volumes, we extend an invitation to our readers to become a part of a collegial exchange about real challenges and problems in actual classrooms and schools so that, in the process of sharing our problems and solutions we may learn from one another.

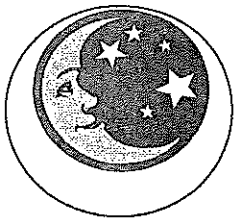
You will find *dichos* or proverbs throughout the volume to symbolize the wisdom that is inherent in practitioners who commit themselves to understanding and improving the educational programs of language minority students. However, we wish to emphasize the importance of learning about and from each other. This volume focuses on understanding the *issues* and in creating ways to *connect* with each other.

Irma N. Guadarrama & Lockie Kirksey, co-editors

Discovering Our Experiences Volumes:

Volume 1: "Leadership for Change in Bilingual/ESL Education
Volume 2: "Reflective Practice for Teacher Change"

La esperanza muere al último.
Hope dies last of all.



Critical Mediation: When Teachers and Students Connect in the 'Ecliptic Zone'

by Irma N. Guadarrama

Metaphors and visualizations are powerful tools to help us frame a particular perspective, especially the ones that seem to overwhelm us with their complexity. In this article, I discuss the *Ecliptic Zone* that represents the convergence of the two worlds—the student's and the teacher's—and describes a curriculum by which carefully planned and deliberate mediated instruction can serve as a powerful vehicle to transform students as well as the teacher. I focus on the construction of the *Ecliptic Zone* in the classroom and beyond, how teachers, students and others can work together to make meaning and engage in reflective experiences that serve to motivate each other, excel, and achieve well-planned goals. The ecliptic image signifies a curriculum that has been evolving gradually, much like the sun and the moon as they intersect during an eclipse. However, the new vision is a construct of a total eclipse that *illuminates* student success rather than dims it; it implies the importance of focusing on a *total* centering of the curriculum in which the student is the focal point. To accomplish this, mediation in its different forms by different players, is critical. When teachers mediate, for example, they provide the means by which students can use their own experiences and resources to transcend their state of *unconsciousness* and guide them toward internalizations that lead to transformations. But transformations in the classroom are never unilaterally achieved. Thus, the teacher as mediator plays an active role in the transformative process. Critical mediation in the classroom is collaborative, transformative teaching and learning by teachers and students in which new knowledge and understandings are shared, where the focus is on the student and the sociohistorical context in which education takes place.

To describe and explain the theory and practice that provides the framework for the *Ecliptic Zone* , I rely on data from a collaborative project called the Fable Writing Project, between myself (a university teacher educator), three groups of fourth and fifth graders and their teachers. The data includes the fables written by the students and transcribed interviews which I conducted with some of these teachers. The *Ecliptic Zone* framework is organized into six areas, many of which overlap with one another in the praxis state: (1) learning as a mutually transformative act; (2) teacher commitment; (3) language and mediation; (4) a responsive curriculum; (5) intersubjectivity; and (6) extensions beyond the school community. A brief history and description of the project follows.

> ***... the new vision is a construct of a total eclipse that illuminates student success rather than dims it; it implies the importance of focusing on a total centering of the curriculum in which the student is the focal point.***

Interactive/Collaborative Action Research: Contextualizing Theory

One very warm, humid Spring morning I made my way to an elementary school in a large urban school district in Southeast Texas. The school can be briefly described as relatively large, mostly Hispanic and situated in a busy neighborhood crowded with apartment housing. I don't recall the reason for going there in the first place, but I happened to hear about some children and their teacher who were here from Guatemala to talk about their project as part of Fotofest, a city-wide program that encourages and supports individuals to express them-

selves creatively through photography. Several classrooms of upper grade students and their teachers gathered in the cafetorium for the program. Four children, three boys and one girl between the ages of 10-12, and their teacher were waiting anxiously to share their experiences and insights. The teacher stood next to a slide projector and introduced herself and the children. She was of medium height, had long, light brown hair, and dressed casually. She spoke in English but translated everything quite well but with a noticeable accent. (Some of the children in the audience were still learning English.) She explained that she was originally from the United States, a professional photographer who had been living and working in Guatemala for six years. She described her role in the Fotofest project as a teacher who taught many of her young apprentices to take photographs, some as young as five years-old. The program consisted of a slide presentation of black and white photographs that she had developed herself, taken by her students who live in an economically-depressed area in Guatemala that she described as the "dump," where sewage and garbage were strewned throughout the residential area where her students resided. The four children sat together in one of the tables, each had a 35mm camera nearby. Besides appearing anxious, they were quiet and remained relatively so during my observation of them.

The children in the audience appeared as captivated and intrigued as I was with the slides presented by the Fotofest teacher who explained that the photographs were depictions of life as seen through the eyes of her students. I was too emotionally and psychologically involved to even remember to take field notes, but I will never forget the essence of the experience. I recall some details in the photographs. In one photograph, a woman lay in bed wearing a blouse, skirt and shoes, her legs dangling over the side of the bed as if she were sitting on the bed and had suddenly dropped her head on the pillow. Ironically, a bare bulb hanging above her from the ceiling seemed to brighten a very stark somber-looking room. She had in fact passed out from drinking too much alcohol. This photograph was taken by a student whom the teacher explained was extremely quiet and reserved. The young apprentice had very little to say, but his photographs said it all. At that point, I looked around the audience and wondered how many of these children had a lot to say but don't have an outlet or means by which to express themselves. Even if they do have some opportunities, how many, I thought, are capable of comprehending the insurmountable difficulty of experiences they have endured in their brief lives. The program opened my eyes and heart as I felt it had done to many in the audience including the children who, perhaps by learning how the young photographers dealt with their feelings and need for expression, felt enlightened over the possibility that they could somehow express themselves in similar ways. What an empowering thought!

The young apprentice had very little to say, but his photographs said it all. At that point, I looked around the audience and wondered how many of these children had a lot to say but don't have an outlet or means by which to express themselves.

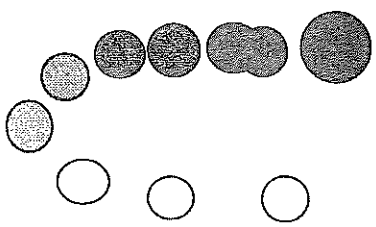
After the program, the four children and their teacher were escorted to one of the fifth grade bilingual education classes. After receiving approval from the fifth grade teacher, I followed along. The fifth graders were ecstatic to have in their prescence the four children and their teacher. They proudly showed them around the room, allowing them time to view the photographs that they had taken and had laid out on their desk tops. The photographs were in color; most of the subjects were properly posed; many focused on themselves and their family members. The four children seemed to enjoy studying the photographs as they moved briskly from desk to desk. It was obvious to me that the children enjoyed each other's company immensely. The fifth grade teacher asked his students what they would like to talk about. The fifth graders quickly volunteered to demonstrate some of the advanced math operations that they had learned. Then they asked questions. The Fotofest teacher of the four visiting children commented proudly that the young girl was bilingual; she spoke Spanish and her native Mayan language. In their excitement, some of the fifth graders asked her to say a few words in her native language. (All of the interactions

were in Spanish.) She was reluctant, an indication that she receives very few requests of this kind. I was very impressed by the respect, warmth, friendliness, enthusiasm and inquisitiveness of the fifth grade class. I sensed a strong bond among themselves and with their teacher. I wanted to learn more about these students and how the teacher had established the bonding and fostered such genuine enthusiasm in his students.

A few weeks later, I asked the fifth grade teacher if he would collaborate on a writing project with his students using fables to help them write their own and reflect on lessons relevant to their lives. (Two other articles in this volume focus on the use of fables in the bilingual education classroom: "Multicultural Literature in Bilingual Education: Exploring Story as Guide in La Nueva Fábula," and "Students Writing Fables: A Traditional Genre Gets a Modern Facelift.") The project would be conducted entirely in Spanish. Much to my excitement and elation, he accepted my invitation.

The Fable Writing Project

The idea of a fable writing project as a literacy experience to develop critical thought began as a paper presentation at the First Annual International Conference on the Emerging Literature of the Southwest Culture which I subsequently presented in the Fall of 1995 (reprinted in this volume). The project met the criteria for the following reasons: (1) the students are given the opportunity to develop and practice literacy skills using a genre that most had not worked with before substantially; (2) students and teachers, i.e., the classroom teacher and myself, have the opportunity to dialogue with students using their linguistic and cultural resources, (all of the activities were conducted in Spanish and the researcher is a native Spanish speaker) as well as previous experiences; (3) the use of fables allows students the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and the lessons learned from them thereby affirming the idea that they have a degree of control over their own lives; and (4) the project is an enrichment activity and seemed appropriate since it would take place at the end of year after all the texts had been turned in. Since I had worked with two other schools similar in student population, I invited two other classrooms to participate, one from each school. I initiated the project, but expected to learn about teaching and learning from the students and the teachers by means of a collaborative work arrangement. The culminating activity was the presentation of the student's original fable by inviting them to read or act it out in front of their peers. At the outset, students were informed that I would publish their fables and send them the publication at the end of the summer. In all, seventy students participated. (Some of the students' fables are included in an article in this volume: "Students Writing Fables: A Traditional Genre Gets a Modern Facelift"). Their teachers reported to me that their students' enthusiasm and motivation for this project exceeded their expectations.



I was very impressed by the respect, warmth, friendliness, enthusiasm and inquisitiveness of the fifth grade class. I sensed a strong bond among themselves and with their teacher.

How Teachers and Students Connect: The Ecliptic Zone

The theoretical works of Vygotsky (1962,1978,1986), Freire (1970, 1985, 1987, 1994), and Bakhtin (1981, 1986) are often acknowledged as relevant and appropriate. However, the conversion of theory into praxis often eludes teachers, attesting to the theories' logical but complex compositions. In this section I describe some of the theories and applications of Vygotsky, Freire, and Bakhtin as the *essential building blocks* that construct an Ecliptic Zone. I also select excerpts from an interview transcript of a teacher that illustrate his explanantions of the practical manifestations inherent in the underlying theories. I

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define the *essential building blocks* as conceptualizations grounded within a belief system from which action or behaviors follow a chain of events. In other words, the teachers' conceptualizations about how children learn, how mediation is made critical and how students become empowered serve to guide their course of action and behaviors in the classroom. Their understandings and constructions of learning and teaching intersect with every single aspect of the curriculum, oftentimes in multidimensional directions. The excerpts from the interview with the teacher follow the description of the *essential building blocks.*

1) Learning is a mutually transformative act. Learning is not just transactional, it is also transformational. Transformations that bring *consciensness* to acclivity foreground learning that is based on a teacher's belief that success is achieved when the teacher engages students in a mutual quest for understanding and for creating ways of problematizing. *Consciensness* is defined here as learning for transcendence, encompassing a deep, critical analysis of one's own life within a social context. Freire's concept of liberating pedogogy explains the need to help students focus on reconstructing conceptual understanding to achieve ownership of the knowledge. When students reconstruct knowledge and make it their own, their limitations for critical conscienceness is lifted and social responsibility and action ensues, freeing themselves from their own oppressions. Certainly, teachers must assume a purposeful, intuitive role in orchestrating mediation that supports a liberating context, one that moves farther and farther away from a transmissional, linear, and controlling model of teaching. The aim is for students to self-regulate their own process of learning as Vygotsky explains in his theory of how learning and teaching are organized within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Through the mediating process, students apply what they learn *interpsychologically,* i.e., through transformative interaction with others in a social milieu, to the next inner plane of learning that is *intrapsychologically,* i.e., application of tasks using their own cognitive resources. In order to help their students move continuously within their ZPD, teachers must be cognizant of a wide range of learning that their students have acquired as well as what they need to construct or reconstruct in order to achieve consciensness in relation to the instructional objective (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Through engagement in the process of *mediation* on the part of the teacher and *self-regulation* on the part of the student, both teacher and student are transformed to the extent that they each learn and benefit from the experience. In this way, education, not simply learning, is transformational.

Certainly, teachers must assume a purposeful, intuitive role in orchestrating mediation that supports a liberating context, one that moves farther and farther away from a transmissional, linear, and controlling model ..

2. Teachers play significant roles in the lives of their students. Many language minority children and their families in urban schools view their school as the most important aspect in their lives. It symbolizes a gateway to the "better life," or the only hope to realize any part of the "American Dream." Teachers who recognize this and make a genuine effort to understand their students' and families' perceptions and empathize with them are in a better position to design an educational program that clearly illuminates the needs of the students. Teacher commitment is signified by the acknowledgement that they will make a significant difference in the quality of the curriculum, and that their program will have positive affects in the lives of their students by design, not by serendipity.

3. Language is a strong mediator, according to Vygotsky (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). In a program of second language learners, language is vitally important. Critical mediation occurs in optimal states when teachers are cognizant of the levels of tension that students experience in the process of becoming bilingual and bicultural. On one level, the student must deal with the pressure of learning English and subject matter simultaneously. According to the research on learning a

Critical mediation occurs in optimal states when teachers are cognizant of the levels of tension that students experience in the process of becoming bilingual and bicultural.

second language, it takes school-age children 2-7 years to learn English well enough to function successfully in a classroom setting (see Collier, 1989). On another level, in a context where the predominant language of school is English, students who have a non-English native language experience daily confrontations in their battle over which of the two languages is more important, or, to put in another way, which language should they imbue with respect, power, higher class status, and devote more time learning. The struggle involves more than just language according to Bakhtin's theory. Every utterance in Bakhtin's view is full of meanings. The "voice" connected with the utterance always expresses a world view; both voice and utterance are not always focused and fine-tuned to neither the speaker nor the individual to whom the message is intended (Cazden, 1993). For a student the battle is over language as well as identity, with all of its social, political, historical and cultural ramifications (Wertsch, 1991). The classroom is the intersection at which the students' worlds collide and vie for domination, metaphorically aligned with Bakhtin's notions of the *centrifugal* and *centripetal* forces inherent in the social aspects of language (Yaegar, 1994). The *centrifugal* nature of language is evident in the use of the native language and in a mixture of both languages that is generated by students and teacher alike such as code-switching and borrowings at the phonological, syntactical and semantical levels. The *hegemonic* influence that positions English as the dominant language, or the language of power and social status, is represented in the *centripetal* force that is commonly exerted by the authoritarian figures, such as teachers and principals. Students readily predict which language or language variety is to emerge victoriously and, once they acquire the English language, they often perceive their achievement as a Pyrrhic victory for the loss and trauma they endure in the process (see Elizabeth Sugar Martinez' article in this volume). In this context, teachers can mediate the *dialogic* relationships between their students' two (or more) languages. The aim is for students to acquire a perspective in which they have control over their identities; to understand that becoming bilingual is not detrimental to their "selves" or to their native cultures. The mediation provided by the teacher is not unlike the Vygotskian notion of *semiotic mediation*, whereby the teacher guides the students from simple to higher level cognitive processes, (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Wertsch, 1991) but it is also extended by the incorporation of Bakhtin's notions of the sociocultural dimensions of language. This task can be challenging for teachers since they must have a knowledge of the student's ZPD and a clear understanding of the social, cultural and political contexts by which institutions such as schools make decisions and/or exert power over the curriculum.

The classroom is the intersection at which the students' worlds collide and vie for domination ..

In Freirean education, language is a powerful tool. Language allows the students and teacher to engage in meaningful dialogue by which students participate actively, determining the course of their education in cooperative and participatory formats, posing questions and reflecting, analyzing, and establishing agendas for action (Shor, 1993).

Freirean pedogogy encourages students to tell their own stories; stories that provide the structure or the means by which students voices may be heard, especially repressed voices (McLaren & da Silva, 1993). Oftentimes, children are unable to express their innermost feelings or make sense of their complicated lives. The Fable Writing Project is designed to allow students the opportunity to experience storytelling by reflecting on their own lives and to acquire a consciensness of control that may be missing from their lives. As a mediating filter, the fable represents a safety net that ensures students a degree of comfort in taking risks, in expressing themselves, perhaps, in unprecedented ways. It is as McLaren and da Silva (1993) mention,

> the task of the critical educator to provide the conditions for individuals to acquire a language that will enable them to reflect upon and shape their own experiences

The aim is for students to acquire a perspective in which they have control over their identities; to understand that becoming bilingual is not detrimental to their "selves" or to their native cultures.

and in certain instances transform such experiences in the interest of a larger project of social responsibility. (p. 49)

In creating fables, students who participated in the project reflected on their lives and artfully analyzed didactic elements within them and used their imagination to carve out lessons. Their fables are inspiring, affirming what McLaren and da Silva (1993) conveyed in their statement: "In fact, making an experience into a story is perhaps the most fundamental act of human understanding." (p. 73) Further, the contextual and conceptual dialogue propelled by the study and writing of fables formed the basis for the development of "interpretive understanding" that Gadamer (1984) describes as the essence of our human-ness. This kind of understanding that takes one beyond the imagined or preconceived situatedness in order to think critically is possibly a prime example of a potentially transformative experience.

A responsive and empowering curriculum is one that encourages critical thought in students, incorporates a process by which students can learn about their own personal and family histories as well as the political and social backgrounds and agendas of their immediate and global communities.

4. A responsive curriculum is embedded in the sociocultural, historical context that is made relevant to the students. The call for the development of *localism*, i.e., the incorporation of context in the curriculum by educators, has been a dominant theme among the work of prominent scholars such as Dewey (1966), Goodlad (1984, 1990), and Schwab (1996, 1983). The heart of the matter is that teachers have the strongest influence in shaping the curriculum in a way that is truly relevant to their students. But to engage students in the process of critical thought and consciensness, teachers must first become intimately knowledgeable with this experience through *dialectical* thinking, i.e., examining all possibilities of posing and solving critical problems at the individual and social levels. Each teacher must first experience *conscientization* to achieve the *knowing subject* role that Freire describes, alluding to immersing oneself in the learning phase in order to facilitate students through their self-actualization process. This clearly points to the need for teachers to comprehend broadly and multilaterally the social, cultural, political and economic issues in our democratic society that control and stratify the distribution of power and control, resulting in repressed mental states and oppressed social and political conditions for minority students in urban schools. These conditions are antithetical to an education that helps them think critically and resolve cultural and social problems.

A number of theorists and pedagogues (Bowles and Gintis,1976; Giroux, 1983; Apple, 1979; McLaren, 1986; Shor, 1987) have expounded on the *hidden curriculum* found in our schools that silently but insidiously inculcates the values, ideals, and rituals of the dominant ideology in our society. For students, already in marginalized social situations, this serves to further affirm their perceptions of self-acclaimed failure and acceptance of a bleak future. Manifestations of a hidden curriculum include the consistency of certain practices such as the emphasis on rule conformity, passivity, obedience, and the blatant disregard for the integrity of students and their abilities to think creatively and critically. Recognizing how the schools play an integral part in contributing to the repression or oppression of the students is essential if teachers are to take active, deliberate steps to ameliorate the educational pathways and oppose pernicious practices and actions in the school curriculum.

A responsive and empowering curriculum is one that encourages critical thought in students, incorporates a process by which students can learn about their own personal and family histories as well as the political and social backgrounds and agendas of their immediate and global communities. Teachers can greatly influence students by taking an active part in this process, and in effect, use inquiry and experimental modes to teach and learn along with the students. Acknowledging and validating students' native languages and cultures is crucial to students' self-acceptance and motivation that is necessary to build a future over which they have control.

The use of fables as a literacy

event highlights important goals in education that is empowering and liberating. It renders students the opportunity to analyze and critique their moral and ethical views, to examine their perceptions of control in regard to their lives, and consider ways in which they can assume a greater influence. It creates a venue for teacher and students to become focused on pondering over their own and others' perceptions, judgements, and for seeking the truth. Teachers can facilitate the process of critical analysis and, at the same time, learn about and from their students.

Involving parents in the education of their students is one of the most essential aspects of a program that aims for structural change in the system. The most important kinds of parental involvement are, like the curriculum, very localized. Thus, appropriate means to involve parents may include literacy or other functional, practical classes, depending on their needs and of the community. It may also mean that parents need to take an active leadership in helping others to understand relevant social and political issues and engage in the process of *enlightenment* and *social action* in Freirian terms. The means by which to shatter the preconception of school as an impervious institution varies, but the goal remains unchanged. Parents are more apt to participate in their children's education when they perceive their involvement with the school as genuine and productive.

A responsive environment characteristic of an Ecliptic Zone is a *whole school community* effort. It is the totality of the orchestration by teachers, students, parents, school leaders and community members that will make the greatest impact on the education of the students.

It is the totality of the orchestration by teachers, students, parents, school leaders and community members that will make the greatest impact on the education of the students.

5. Intersubjectivity between the teacher and students illuminates the important role of affect in education. The extent to which a teacher contextualizes meaning for students and genuinely shares understandings with the students determines the substantive degree of intersubjectivity between the teacher and students. From a students' point of view, intersubjectivity underscores the ease and extent to which the teacher embodies their lives throughout the curriculum. This the students consider as indicative of their teacher's acknowledgement and validation of them —their language, culture, and background. A teacher can organize an endless amount of strategies, techniques and activities to promote an affable pyschological climate and may implement them to achieve an overall effect. However, a teacher's greatest influence lies within the perception of her/himself as a symbol of trust and sincerity for his/her students. Perhaps, the best way for a teacher to exercise her/his influence is by creating a nexus, not only between him/herself and the students, but between students as well. A teacher's influence is so pervasive that one can argue that every aspect of teacher behavior is dynamic. A teacher may strengthen or weaken the bonds between herself and the students, depending on whether her actions or words are inviting or meant to delineate a distance between her/him and the students. Every utterance made by the teacher is measured by the student—psychologically, socially, and politically. A high degree of intersubjectivity is observable in the substantive, genuine discourse and consistent invitational language that the teacher uses and makes significant through example and encouragement.

6. A school community must embrace the past, present and future of its students. A localized school curriculum is affected in great part by the lives of the students and their families. The interactive relationship between curriculum and community must extend beyond the time frame that students spend in the school. In other words, the goals, mission, and qualities of the school curriculum must be framed by the characteristics of the students before they attend the school, during their enrollment, and after they leave. In this regard we can argue that a school community exists in space and time. A school curriculum, then, is transformative when it reaches students beyond the sphere of actuality, into the sphere of possibilities. As such, the students' futures are just as relevant, as are their pre-school years.

Every utterance made by the teacher is measured by the student—psychologically, socially, and politically.

Planning a curriculum for students before, during and after they leave school seems like an enormous task beyond the

capability of a school. However, unless a school embraces the educational lifespan of students it cannot be more than a transitional phase that only resembles an educational program. The basis for planning an all-encompassing program is the process used for collecting the data on the students. This process must achieve the dual task of informing and transforming. Teachers can systematically learn about their students and their families as they collect valuable data using the processual approach, most often referred as the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching project (González, 1995; Moll & González, 1994). A teacher, Cathy Amanti, reflects upon her experience with the 'Funds of Knowledge for Teaching' project in her article of this volume (p. 29). The experience of working as an anthropologist/teacher has affected Amanti in invaluable ways. Perhaps not every teacher can or should approach learning about her students as has Amanti, but the effort to learn about the students within the school community is essential and must be addressed individually by teachers as well as collectively by the whole school.

One Teacher's Example

The following excerpts are taken from an interview with one of the teachers in the Fable Writing Project. He is a fifth grade bilingual teacher, has been teaching for over five years and deeply cares about his students.

I asked Mr. Thompson (not his real name) about his philosophy and curriculum:

> I always think about being meaningful, being real, The first step that I do is re-establish journal writing; I will spend the first 2-3 months writing to each student; getting to know them; corresponding to them. Once they understand that we relate; that I am serious that I feel that I care about their future then, we can go from there. So, I see myself with the philosophy that I really want to empower my students, I want them to take positions, to take stands, to understand that even though you may be in a certain position at this moment but one day it will all be up to you, that you'll be in control, that you'll be able to partake within the system, no matter what country that you're living in, you're not just a person walking through life; so I try to establish first of all a sense of trust, a sense of identity and secondly, I talk about my experience living in this country, where I have been, and I try to expose them to the idea that there's more; you can have it all; you're young enough, you're bright enough, let's go for it; and thirdly, I look at what is it that a child in fifth grade needs, I do a needs assessment; I'm one of very few teachers that asks the child "What do you want me to teach you ?" "What is it that you want to learn?" And we go from there. Of course, you have the requirements. These are the things that I would like for them to learn.
>
> You have to go out and look for books, you have to brainstorm, you borrow, you ask others, "What are you doing?" "What do you think about this?" I had a teacher that I worked with for five years who was my mentor when I first started. I would always call him at the office,"What do you think about this?" What is it that these kids need, and more than anything they need to first of all have the joy of the love to read. Once they start to read and then you show them the penny words versus the five dollar words, vocabulary, that's very important. I tell my kids," You guys are so smart, you're the best class, you've got the best teacher." After they began to feel and see that they began to show it, so I do a lot of " positive brainwashing." And that's something that's not written anywhere.

I asked him to talk about how he helped his students with the Fable Writing Project:

> ***So, I see myself with the philosophy that I really want to empower my students, I want them to take positions, to take stands, to understand that even though you may be in a certain position at this moment but one day it will all be up to you, that you'll be in control ...***

> In this classroom there have been factions because I have transition students along with regular students; we have names, cliques within this classroom; we have incidents that will sit with some and that will not with others and they would change. I started out the year by writing sayings on the board; this summer we're reading a book on a person. I put on the board: don't judge a book by its cover and then we decide what that means later on; in social studies we read on the Pilgrims; what they said about education: the Pilgrims said that in order to please God a person needs to work hard; we talk about José Martí a lot from his philosophy on

"I will teach whatever it is that you want to learn, but more than anything else I will show you how you can teach yourself. I can only show you, but actually you're going to teach yourself; I'm just going to provide the opportunity."

what being honorable means; so I have brought that to the students; I have encouraged them to bring things to the classroom to share, so when you shared the fables their lights were turning; they understand; I think my kids are very mature beyond their years; I have an exceptional class; a lot of them bring a lot of unique experiences where they have been betrayed; in this classroom there are what an American would term as dysfunctional families; a lot of my students don't share a lot of things with me; to allow to tell me, "Its not easy to trust," especially when it comes down to men. They talk to me about that; a lot of them have had really bad experiences 'cause they don't speak English. So what I try to convey is "Yes, I understand but I hope you understand that not all people are the same."

This is a class of freedom, you can say whatever you want to say, as long as you are respectful; it doesn't matter how you say it; I encourage you not to hold anything in. Sometimes it appears that there's disorder, but there's order, even in the writing. First you start with disorder, hopefully by the end you'll have order within it. The kids are very bright beyond their years. I gave them a model in the beginning, I brought things in the classroom; I brought a parent to come and do a presentation on José Martí. We talk about freedom; everything is coming out of social studies and sometimes, we close the book and say, let's analyze this, what does this mean? It's the same process of summary, "Tell me what the person is saying in words;" I try to get inside the feelings; you don't do things unless its meaningful. So when they write it's personal: "Don't tell me what I want to hear, tell me what you feel; If you don't want to do it this moment, don't do it; come back and do it." That's what my biggest fear about the fables, that you came at the end of the year and then nobody wanted to do it. And when they said they were going to do it [write the fables] I was shocked; I felt that I had to plead the children of every single ounce and then, I was more shocked the other day when they wanted to invite you back again.

In my classroom I can say that I try to bring in things that give them opportunity to see themselves. I try to find books with Hispanic surname, books that are about their culture; these fables were fantastic, they could relate to them.

I asked him to elaborate on the kinds of expectations he holds for his students:

> "... don't imitate... We want the original thing here." You'll ask them what I stand for, they will tell you... imagination, what does "c" stand for, creativity. My basic expression is you want to do this in *color* [Spanish pronunciation]. If you write something I want to see some *color*, I want to see some flair; make me want to read. We talk about writing, their dream homes, describe it, make me want to read your story, bring me into it. They understand it. First, you give them an example. It's the same thing in everything; let's put a little color into it; put some music in it; when you read, when you do anything, I want to hear music. I will tell them sometimes, "I don't hear any music." Sometimes I'll stop the class and ask, "Do you hear it?" And they'll go, "¿Qué?" "Well, when you hear it, bring your paper back." And they say that I'm crazy.
>
> We learned that we have to laugh at ourselves; It used to be that they had to defend themselves; but now when you say something, we all have names; all my students have names; they're names that we have given, and have adopted. No one has ever gotten upset about the different names. My students have seen me cry on several occasions; there have been kids who have left my classroom, I couldn't take it. They would ask me, are you going to cry? I said yes, and I'd cry and that's just the way it is. When I'm upset, I won't

We talk about freedom; everything is coming out of social studies and sometimes, we close the book and say, let's analyze this, what does this mean?

hide it, they know it. But I let them know that its normal; whatever you'll feeling is normal. If one day you come into my classroom, you say, "I was up late last night and I really didn't do my homework." I say, "I understand." This is the first class I can say, all my writing projects have been completed.

I have a reputation of not knowing when to stop because it's something that I really and truly enjoy. I tell the kids and their parents, "I will teach whatever it is that you want to learn, but more than anything else I will show you how you can teach yourself. I can only show you, but actually you're going to teach yourself; I'm just going to provide the opportunity."

When I posed a question about how he deals with helping students express their ideas and feelings, he referred to the day the students presented the final draft of their fables. The students took turns reading their fables with a microphone while their classmates improvised them into skits. He responded this way:

> Everybody has an opinion, everybody has a voice, and everyone wants to hear it. You noticed that when you were ready to leave and I went to take everybody to anciliary, they were fighting to get on stage. I have a group of students that nobody wants to be last, to be disinchanted, left out. What I've always taught them if you think that it's right what someone says it's not, you need to address it; there's a right way and there's a wrong way to do it, so I'm teaching to write petitions, don't hold anything inside, because it will manifest itself later. If you have something to say and you don't understand it, let's talk about it, let's solve it. If there's a problem, there must be a solution. The writing is the most important part. You ask the students why do we write, and they will answer you; we write to be remembered. Anything they do, they want to see their names. What you say, people may forget, but what you write, people will remember.

"They can't do it; I don't know about this bilingual thing; you're just wasting their time; they'll never catch up." But it's been done over and over again because no one really knows the ability of the children.

Mr. Thompson maintains constant communication with many of the parents of his students. Parents often visit him in the classroom. He said the following about parents:

> I'm amazed by the amount of love and respect and loyalty that the parents have shown me over the years at Bradford [Mr. Thompson's school, not the real name]. When one of my students was having immigration problems, her mother asked me to adopt her daughter. I was shocked. It was really an honor that someone would actually think well of me to want me to adopt their children.

Mr. Thompson's comments regarding the fact that some perceive his students as underachievers or "cases of lost hope" echoes the concerns of many teachers who advocate for their students:

> Everyone of my students passed the English TAAS, except one did not pass the Math.
>
> I feel good because a lot of people look at the students and say "They can't do it; I don't know about this bilingual thing; you're just wasting their time; they'll never catch up." But it's been done over and over again because no one really knows the ability of the children. I say, "Look we'll do it in English and we'll do it in Spanish, and both of them well." It is a good feeling to know, yes, you're ready to go into the next phase of the program.

To the question of what he would change in education, he alternated with brisk and thoughtful responses:

> I think our TAAS should be revisited. I'm not saying just putting in Spanish surnames in the testing perspectives that appear token; I'm talking about authentic literature.
>
> I believe that bilingual education the way it's set up today, is set up in a segregationist type of environment where the kids are segregated. They don't have the opportunity to be involved with English-speaking students versus in a dual language program where there's an equal exchange of both of the languages. I would

mix the kids more; I would have a lot of distribution of typical Americans, African American, White American students in the same classroom, sharing. Students would be required to go to a lab. I would provide literature and books. I would spend more money on giving them choices. I would not require that every student read the same book. I would have several different types of books in the classroom. I would give the kids better contact with typical American students. The way it is right now at Bradford, if you're in bilingual education you're in a certain stigma, if you're in transition then here you are and if you're regular your better than in any of them.

The final comments accurately reveal Mr. Thompson's views about teaching in general and the transformative nature of critical pedogogy.

> I tell my students, "yes, I'm your teacher; I like you, I want you to learn the concepts;" but more than anything else, when a child comes into my classroom, I care about their person; I will never turn them down. If I cannot rebuild them or make them better, I'll just leave them alone. What's important to me is that you really care about the students, how they are as people. I feel like if they're whole, everything else will come in time; I want to build them up. This is an additive environment. I've learned so much since I've been here. They've made me whole. Everyday they make me want to get better, do better...it's a two way. I ask them for feedback: "What is it that I could do better?"

What's important to me is that you really care about the students, how they are as people. I feel like if they're whole, everything else will come in time ...

Conclusion

The inspiration that I received and the wealth of lessons learned as a university researcher/educator with students and their teachers in the Fable Writing Project played an integral role in my journey toward transformation. My views are very different now on how teachers and students strengthen one another—intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally—thus creating an environment that ensures everyone a place for making their voice heard and provides fertile ground for sowing and nurturing critical consciensness. I'm much more aware of how crucial the role of the school is for students, how it signifies for them a place that transcends what we normally think about in schools.

I described the learning and teaching process as the Ecliptic Zone whereby teachers employ powerful mediation tools that create and strengthen the bonds and nurture an environment where both student and teacher are transformed. Indeed, we are naturally connected to each other, but we must learn how to illuminate and strengthen the ties to achieve the desired effects. The Ecliptic Zone also signifies the historical, political, and cultural struggle to *localize* the curriculum and deliberately and authentically focus on the *student*.

I have also realized how important it is to construct a fresh perspective on critical issues and along with it, a *language* that signals the kinds of changes that should take place in our schools. This language can only emerge through collaborative means among, for example, teachers, administrators, parents, and university teacher educators. The intended outcome of the collaborations is twofold: 1) collaborators themselves develop the ideas, frame the problems, and design the action plans, thereby energizing, revitalizing, or creating the *language* through function and design; and 2) the originality fostered by the collaborations adds personal ownership that in itself is empowering.

However, not all collaboration is empowering, nor does it automatically lead to change. The framework for a transformative collaboration must include a focus on the school as an integral part of the lives of the students and their families. The collaborative engagement must result in action plans that are processual, long-term, and cross over the school's physical and temporal boundaries. Critical mediation, employed as a pedogogical tool that connects and illuminates the worlds of school and community, facilitates teachers in their important role to help students achieve success. It is like the journey described by poet Antonio Machado, "Traveler, there are no paths, by walking we make them." In our journey toward improving the schooling practices for our students, we travel down old, familiar roads with a fresh, exhilarating perspective, and we also embark on the creation of new pathways toward horizons and experiences never before imagined except in the hopes and dreams of students and their parents.

Note. An answer to the prevailing question of how to change or improve schools, as the case may be, is far from a rose-colored explication. As a final note, to reiterate the desperate conditions of our educational programs, I would like to add some disheartening news conveyed to me recently by Mr. Thompson. Just one month after his fifth-grade students were dismissed for the summer, he had learned that two of his students had returned indefinitely to their homelands, Mexico and Nicaragua. One of his female students had visible initiation markings, indicating membership into a gang. He had also heard from reliable sources that another one of his students is pregnant. She is just twelve years old.

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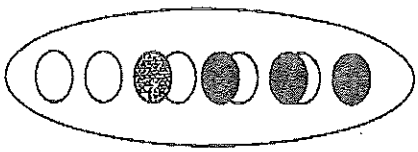
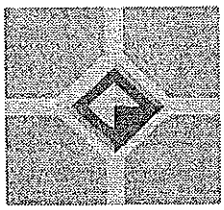


No hay peor lucha que la que no se hace.
There's no worse struggle than one that never begins.



Reflecting on Ideological Baggage: Latino Pre-Service Teachers and Their Experiences as Students

by Elizabeth Sugar Martínez

In daily classroom interactions, teachers can significantly influence students in many ways. Their professional training and personal background largely determine the nature of their instruction, for these are the resources that teachers draw upon when planning and executing lessons. Teachers' expectations and beliefs are reflected in their actions and speech and have a profound impact on the performance of students (Brophy & Good, 1974; Cooper & Good, 1983; Good & Brophy, 1991). According to Farber (1995), teachers are products of their own schooling process, and carry deep within them experiences that affect their classroom behavior. She refers to these experiences as "ideological baggage."

What kinds of experiences—or "ideological baggage"—do pre-service teachers carry with them that may drive their pedagogical approach? To what extent might their teaching be different because of what they themselves went through as students? This summer during a university methodology course on Spanish language arts for grade school children, pre-service teachers were assigned to keep a journal in which to relate some of their positive and negative experiences as students. One purpose of this assignment was to explore the nature of the pre-service teachers' experiences and to test Farber's "ideological baggage" hypothesis.

A major course objective was to create a supportive environment in which the pre-service teachers would feel comfortable sharing their experiences as students. Thus, class lectures and activities largely centered around validating and reinforcing the value of bilingualism and biculturalism. Spanish was the main language of instruction. Materials for the course included publications from well-known publishing houses as well as stories and poems in Spanish and English created by the professor.

Teachers' expectations and beliefs are reflected in their actions and speech and have a profound impact on the performance of students

Establishing a Climate of Acceptance

In order to establish a welcoming climate of acceptance from the very beginning of the course, the pre-service teachers engaged in an activity known as the "Spider Web." Everyone—including the professor—was asked to state one thing that they wanted to learn from the course. The first person made her statement, held on to one end of a ball of string that had been given to her by the professor, and threw the ball to someone else. This process was repeated until everyone had participated. As they stood in a circle holding a portion of the string, the professor pointed out that this "web" was a symbol of the interconnectedness between every member of the class, or community. She asked, "What would happen if just one person let go?" It was concluded that everyone—students and teachers—would be affected.

Often there is a distance between students and teachers that causes students to view teachers as infallible and not entirely mortal. The professor and her teaching assistant intentionally shared meaningful personal and professional experiences in an effort to communicate to the class that although they might have more education and life experience, like everyone else, professors

and T.A.s are vulnerable human beings who are subject to life's vicissitudes.

At the end of the term, course evaluations indicated that these pre-service teachers had felt a sense of support and camaraderie never before experienced in any other university course. Some attributed this fact partly to the homogeneous composition of the class—that is, that all 35 students, the professor and T.A. were Latino, and that Spanish had been the dominant medium of communication. Thus, the intersubjectivity index among course participants was very high (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Vygotsky, 1986). In this unique setting, the pre-service teachers shared stories about the kinds of teachers they had had in the past. They described some of them as inspiring, kind, respectful, and genuinely concerned about their well-being. Additionally, they shared compelling testimonials of negative classroom experiences, seven of which are narrated below. The authors of these seven entries were later interviewed to gain more in-depth knowledge about their experiences.

Pre-Service Teachers' Journal Entries and Interviews

At the interview, the pre-service teachers were shown a copy of their entry for reference, and were asked three questions: (1) To what extent will your teaching be any different because of what you went through as a student? (2) How did this experience affect your identity, particularly your cultural identity? and (3) Did this experience affect your academic achievement? If so, how?

The first entry is from Cristina, age 33. She related an encounter with a college counselor who gave her reprehensible advice. For over fifteen years it has lingered, as a wound that has never completely healed:

> My first negative experience happened my second semester in college, I was attending ___ College.... My parents were going through a divorce after 18 years of marriage. The large income my father was bringing home was no longer available. After 17 years of my mother staying at home and raising my sister and myself, she had to go out into the job market. My sister received child support but I had just turned 18. I joined my mother in a job search. Through these problems I was not doing as good in school as I had wished. I felt I should go talk to a counselor at school.
>
> The day I went there were many students needing to talk to counselors. Finally my name was called and I was directed to an older gentleman. Well, he was anything but gentle. I explained the problems I was having in school. I don't really remember how the conversation went, but all I do remember is what he ended the conversation with. He said if I was having problems I should just get married and have some babies. Nowadays if someone says that they can be sued. Well, I felt horrible, of course, but I did not let that stop me. I know I felt some hurt but if I had listened to him I would not be here [in college] today. I just hope there are not many people like him in schools giving that kind of advice.

He said if I was having problems I should just get married and have some babies.

Upon reflection, Cristina became cognizant of the fact that this man's counsel was grounds for sexual harassment litigation. Though she did not press charges against him, the impact upon her teaching style is unmistakable:

> My teaching, of course, will be definitely, definitely different. This experience is something I should have never gone through. Someone in that field should have never said [these things] to me.... It was awful.... School is hard ... any help anybody can give, if it's those few words, you know, "You're good!" "You're great!" "You can do it!" Even those simple words can help someone really achieve something big. At that moment I needed that little push.... It wasn't really, I think, too much, and that was his job to direct me in some way....
>
> As a teacher I feel that to build self-esteem and to give any kind of positive advice to the students will help them in some way.... Ever since then I can always encourage other people, even now, other students, to continue and to study...There are ways to overcome these problems. As a teacher I'm going to be there for them all the time, positive all the time. If there's a problem, there are certain ways to approach it, to say things about it to help them. Negative is just not the right answer....

Cristina asserted that school

personnel should be optimistic when interacting with students and that words of encouragement, albeit brief, are extremely important for students to hear. She contended that sexism and racism could severely damage a student's confidence and self-esteem:

> I felt he thought that as a Hispanic woman, our culture, that that's basically what he thought we could do—not go to school, not be able to make good grades, but stay home, get married, and have children. And of course, that's beautiful in itself. But what he was implying was that's all I could do, which was not true.
>
> My identity, it affected me, of course, my self-esteem. Here I am, a person with some problems going to someone for some help, and all they can do is say, "No, you can't do it." My self-esteem just dropped ... I had to step back and say, "Is he right? Can I do it?" I had to reorganize my thoughts and say, "This man is absolutely wrong."

Challenging the exhortations of school administrators can be daunting for a student. Cristina learned that sexist and racist attitudes exist among school personnel. Sara, age 21, has also contended with racism. For Sara, the battle has been lifelong. She is a Puerto Rican of African ancestry, and considers herself a Latina. This claim of identity has sometimes been met with antagonism by students and teachers alike. Sara talked about her ethnic origins and consequent difficulties that some people have had accepting them: (translations follow)

> Yo nací en Puerto Rico y vine a los Estados Unidos cuando tenía ocho años. Cuando llegué a [los EEUU] empecé en una escuela que era mayormente de estudiantes afroamericanos y latinos. Me pusieron en una clase bilingüe pero durante ciertas clases, como inglés y estudios sociales, tenía que ir a una clase regular. En la clase regular tenía una muchacha que me ayudaba a traducir. El problema era que la maestra no podía entender como era posible que una niña "negra" no supiera inglés. Las maestras afroamericanas
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> Mi maestra empezó a darme malas calificaciones en la escuela y yo lloraba cada vez que tenía que ir a la escuela porque la maestra siempre me miraba feo y me trataba como basura. Cuando mis grados empezaron a caerse, mi madre se preocupó y hablo con mi tía a ver si ella podía averigüar qué era lo que estaba pasando. En la escuala le dijeron a mi madre y a mi tía que lo que pasaba era que yo no me portaba bien en el salón. Pero la maestra de mi salón bilingüe decía que ella no tenía problemas conmigo y no entendía. Allí fué cuando la maestra bilingüe y mi mamá se dieron cuenta que era algo personal entre la maestra afroamericana y yo.
>
> Me cambiaron de escuela a mitad de año y mis grados empezaron a cambiar. Gracias a Dios que esta situación no me afectó mucho porque las otras maestras que tuve de ese punto en adelante fueron muy cariñosas conmigo y siempre me trataron de ayudar.

My identity, it affected me, of course, my self-esteem. Here I am, a person with some problems going to someone for some help, and all they can do is say, "No, you can't do it." My self-esteem just dropped ... I had to step back and say, "Is he right? Can I do it?"

> [I was born in Puerto Rico and came to the United States when I was eight years old. When I arrived in [the U.S.] I started in a school that was made up of mostly African American and Latino students. They put me in a bilingual class but during certain classes, such as English and Social Studies, I had to go to a regular class. In the regular class there was a girl who helped me translate. The problem was that the teacher could not understand how it was possible that a "black" girl didn't know English. The African American teachers could not understand how this was possible.]
>
> [My teacher began to give me bad grades in school and I would cry when I had to go to school because the teacher always looked at me in an ugly way and treated me like trash. When my grades began to drop, my mother became worried and spoke to my aunt to see if she could find out what was going on. At school they told my mom and my aunt that what was happening was that I was not behaving myself in class. But the teacher from my bilingual classroom said that she didn't

have problems with me and didn't understand. That was when the bilingual teacher and my mom realized that it was something personal between African American teacher and me.]

I'm Hispanic, and Hispanic is what I am, and nobody is going to tell me any different. And I will never, ever let anybody question me like that, or destroy the way that I see myself....

[They moved me to another school halfway through the year and my grades began to change. Thank God that this situation did not affect me much because the other teachers that I had from that point on were very kind to me and always tried to help me.]

When I asked Sara how these experiences would affect her teaching, she said that first and foremost she would be a more sensitive to the child's culture:

> Every culture is a little bit different.... I would never give up on a student.... My teachers didn't have very much faith in me.... They didn't understand the background that I came from.... I felt I was a nobody, that I really didn't know what I was doing, when in fact I really did, I just didn't have positive feedback... It affected me a lot. I didn't feel I could do it, I felt dumb.... It wasn't until that teacher [Her new teacher] started working with me, and talking to me, and giving me positive feedback and telling me, "Yes, you can do it," and pushing me—that's when I started getting back on my feet ... But at the very beginning, yes, definitely: It definitely affected me in a negative way. I felt I couldn't do anything.
>
> This experience definitely made me question who I was and where I came from .... something I'd never questioned before.... To have teachers question who I was, and tell me I'm something that I'm not, was very disturbing to me.... I was paraded around as some kind of freak— "A child trying to act like something that she wasn't."
>
> My life would have been a whole lot simpler if I would have just said, "Oh yes, I'm African American." But because I'm proud of where I come from and I'm proud of my culture, it made it very difficult for me.... It definitely affected me a lot. I had to regroup my thoughts and search deep into my family tree and my culture to try to figure this out, but at the end, I still feel the way I did back then: I'm Hispanic, and Hispanic is what I am, and nobody is going to tell me any different. And I will never, ever let anybody question me like that, or destroy the way that I see myself....

To destroy a person's identity is tantamount to genocide. This may sound sensationalistic to some, yet one must consider the typical setting in which this cultural erosion occurs. Gradually, over the span of many years, the death process unfolds. It is usually perpetrated in seclusion, with a roomful of children who are subject daily to venomous ideological baggage carried by their teacher. It is she who largely determines to what extent she will infect the receptive minds and hearts of her unprotected young pupils.

Many students endure a decade or more of such a debilitating learning environment, being expected to succeed by the school system. Pedro, age 27, is one of the relatively few Latinos who has made it through, and into college, though not without considerable adversity. His interview revealed some of the challenges faced by a newly-arrived immigrant boy, submerged in the culture of an American second grade classroom:

> La peor experiencia la tuve en el segundo grado. Tenía una maestra hispana, pero eso no importaba porque me trataba con mucho desprecio. Recuerdo que casi por la nada me agarraba de los brazos y me estrujaba, lo cuál me dejaba con sus uñas marcadas en mis brazos .... También me pegaba con una regla y lo hacía en frente de toda la clase. No sé por qué lo hacía. ¿Sería porque era inmigrante? Realmente no lo sé.
>
> [The worst experience was in the second grade. I had an Hispanic teacher, but that didn't matter because she used to treat me with a lot of contempt. I remember that for hardly any reason at all she would take me by the arms

To destroy a person's identity is tantamount to genocide.

and would squeeze me, which would leave me with her nail marks in my arms .... She also used to hit me with a ruler and she would do it in front of the entire class. I don't know why she did it. Was it because I was an immigrant? I truly do not know.]

When we arrived [in the U.S.], we got spit on. They spit on my sister. They did.

When I asked Pedro to what extent the above experience would affect his own teaching approach, he spoke intently of building self-esteem and helping students appreciate cultural differences in others:

> Definitely I would change it, very differently.... I think this teacher was not very sensitive. Maybe she didn't have any multicultural understanding. She probably didn't appreciate diversity. Although she was Hispanic, I think she probably had an anti-immigrant attitude.... My approach would be to raise [students'] self-esteem and appreciate cultural diversity within the classroom ... accepting yourself, accepting your culture and other people's cultures and opinions....
>
> Through this experience, I felt shame ... a rejection of my cultural identity, of being mexicano, of speaking Spanish. I was ashamed of speaking in Spanish to my peers ... We [the mexicanos] were also discriminated against by our Mexican American neighbors. It was a rejection of my identity, something I didn't want to be—you know, called a mexicano, a Mexican—you didn't want to be called that. This experience added to that, because I knew that the teacher was also Mexican American, and it was a rejection of my culture, my background....
>
> When we arrived [in the U.S.], we got spit on. They spit on my sister. They did. They beat up on my brother.... My sister was 6 or 7 when that happened. My brother was 13 or 14.... They would call you names.... There was always conflict between my brothers and the Chicanos.

I asked Pedro if his experience had affected his academic achievement. He replied that it had affected him totally:

> I would have been more successful had I felt more comfortable going to school or being in the classroom. I would have participated more. I held back a lot from participating in the classroom simply because of the language barrier.... I felt left out.I didn't feel in the right place because I was an immigrant, being a foreigner in another country. I didn't feel like I had the right to participate or to get involved in the classroom. It totally did [affect me], I think so.

Pedro's teacher, herself a Latina, subjected Pedro to a powerful dose of self-rejection. This phenomenon is consistent with the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire (1993), in which he claims that the victim becomes the victimizer:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages...The first stage must deal with the problem of the oppressed consciousness and the oppressor consciousness, the problem of men and women who suffer oppression. It must take into account their behavior, their view of the world, and their ethics. (Freire, pp. 36-37)

A teacher's view of the world can influence a student even if the student is exposed to it only once, as was Roberto, age 22. He shared a moment from a day with a substitute teacher:

> En el sexto grado, una vez tuve un substituto muy malo. Tenía mucho prejuicio contra los hispanos, especialmente contra los mexicanos. No sé qué o quién le hizo que se enojara y comenzara con sus insultos racistas, pero estuvo hablando sobre eso por un buen rato. Dijo que las calles estaban llenas de "mojados" que no trabajaban y vivían de la caridad de otros y del gobierno. Decía que él cargaba un revólver en su carro porque tenía miedo que los mexicanos lo asaltaran. Este hombre también era una minoría él mismo. El próximo día, unos estudiantes le relataron a la maestra lo que había dicho el hombre, pero ella no les creyó y no se hizo nada...

My approach would be to raise [students'] self-esteem and appreciate cultural diversity within the classroom ...

[In the sixth grade I once had a very bad substitute. He felt a lot of prejudice against Hispanics, especially against Mexicans. I don't know what or who made him angry so that he started in with his racist insults, but he talked about that for a good while. He said that the streets were full of "wetbacks" who didn't work and lived off of others' charity and the government. He said that he carried a revolver in his car because he was afraid that Mexicans would assault him. This man was also a minority himself. The next day some students related to the teacher what the man had said, but she didn't believe them and nothing was done....]

Roberto also recalls physical abuse in the first grade:

Cuando llequé a primer grado, todavía no hablaba mucho inglés. No tuve una clase de educación bilingüe y mi maestra se portaba como que le daba coraje que no hablaba mucho inglés. Me gritaba en frente de todos, y a veces simplemente por no comprender lo que me decía, me sacaba del salón para darme "swats" con la tabla. Aunque odiaba a esta señora, creo que aprendí mucho porque me acuerdo que al llegar al segundo grado, ya entendía todo.

[When I got to the first grade, I still didn't speak much English. I didn't have a bilingual education class and my teacher behaved as if she were angry that I didn't speak much English. She would yell at me in front of everyone, and sometimes simply because I didn't understand what she was telling me, she would take me out of the room to give me swats with the paddle. Although I hated this lady, I think I learned a lot because I remember that when I got to the second grade, I already understood everything.]

Though it may be possible for some children to learn under duress, it is obviously abominable pedagogy. This teacher needed to reflect on the reasons behind Roberto's behavior. During his interview, Roberto commented on the value of multicultural awareness and sensitivity:

To me it's very important to know the cultural diversity, the backgrounds, of other people, because when you know a lot of background on each individual ... you know where they're coming from, and you know why they're, in certain ways, different .... People are different because of where they come from. Everyone needs to be more sensitive towards that, and I don't think either of these two people were. Because of what I saw within them and what I've seen happen to other people, I think that I will always have that cultural sensitivity, more so than I guess someone else would that didn't go through this experience....

First grade was really, really hard for me. The one [experience] in the sixth grade, I felt very insulted and angry, but I felt more helpless in first grade ... She had absolutely no sensitivity. I can't believe she was teaching ... I dreaded her class.... She would give me swats at least two or three times a week ... and she would scream at me in front of other classes....

I remember this one incident where we were playing a game ["Telephone Operator"] ... and I couldn't do it because I didn't know what the guy was saying. I said something else and she took me out there in front of—and she started screaming at me.... and then she... swatted me.... I couldn't relay the [message]—I didn't have that ability yet. It was awful. First grade was awful.

That experience made me want to adapt and conform to Anglo ways.... I wanted so hard so be able to speak English and to interact with everyone else, and English and Anglo ways were the only way to do that.... I want to be a teacher because I don't want to see more teachers like these two.

It should come as no surprise that someone who was hurt by a teacher—physically as well as emotionally—would want them to be replaced. Pedro and Roberto were not the only ones to report this kind of abuse. Jasmín, age 22, endured similar treatment from her teacher:

Mi maestra de primer grado no era muy buena. En esos días se usaba "corporal punishment" en las escuelas. Ella nos castigaba con "the paddle" cuando hablábamos en español. Nunca olvidaré cuánto me dolían esos golpes y las lloradas que daba.

[My first grade teacher was not very kind. In those days, corporal punishment was practiced in the schools. She would punish us with the paddle when we spoke in Spanish. I will never forget how much that paddle hurt me and all the crying that I did.]

As a result of this school experience, Jasmín has strong views regarding punishment. She does not espouse it:

> My teaching will be really affected by what happened to me when I was younger. When it comes to punishment, I don't believe in it. I believe there are alternative methods.... I think I'll be a very supportive teacher, understanding when it comes to a child's needs, and where they're coming from. It's not their fault what ethnic group they are, and I won't take it out on them. I'll try to be the most understanding kind of person that I can possibly be.
>
> When I was smaller, you don't know that everyone's different. You just look at everyone like they're the same. This teacher made me realize that I was different, that my family was different, the way I talked was different. I never knew. When I would go home, my dad would tell us to speak Spanish. When I would go to school, my teacher would tell me to speak English. Half the time I didn't know what English and Spanish was. I was just trying to communicate my needs and my ideas.
>
> It affected my identity as a Mexican because I knew, from the time I was six years old, that I was different, and I was Mexican. That's great and all, but I don't think it should be thrown in a child's face that way—that they feel that they don't fit in.... In first grade, I remember crying a lot ... I think it was because of the teacher... I was very scared of her....
>
> Most of us that are in Education are in it for a special purpose... We want to make a difference in a child's life....We can identify with these children that enter classrooms not knowing English, and need help, need a guide, need understanding. Because we identify, I think that children will have a better experience than what we had back in the '80s. That's what I hope—that me and my peers will produce a more positive classroom for these students, and a more positive experience.....

I will encourage my students not to lose their roots, to continue speaking in Spanish ... to realize that it's all part of a child.

Jasmín's struggle with her Mexican identity has also been an issue for 21-year-old Olivia, a university student and part-time singer. Olivia describes the manner in which she, as a kindergartener, was physically and emotionally chastised by her teacher:

> Sin saber el inglés empecé la escuela. No era porque mis padres no sabían el inglés, pero porque en la casa hablábamos en español. Yo aprendí, al puro tirón, el inglés. No fué una experiencia positiva o bonita, sino fué una que me hizo escojer esta carrera de estudio [de maestra]. En el kinder no tuve a nadie—ni maestro, ni voluntario, ni teacher's aide—que me ayudara. Sí hubo una niña, que terminó siendo mi mejor amiga, quien me ayudaba. Me traducía la lección, pero después la maestra nos regañaba por hablar sin turno. Me pegaba con una regla de madera, me mandaba "to the corner," porque hablaba cuando no debía. ¿Pero cómo la iba a entender? No me dolió, pero la vergüenza sí ... Por esto, yo voy a ver que, aún que sean uno o dos estudiantes, que no pasen por lo que yo pasé, la vergüenza y distancia.
>
> [I started school without knowing English. It wasn't because my parents didn't know English, but because we spoke Spanish at home. I learned English as if I'd been yanked and shoved into it. The experience was not positive nor pretty, but rather one that made me choose this field of study [teaching]. In kindergarten I had no one—not a teacher, not a volunteer, not a teacher's aide—to help me. There was a girl, who ended up becoming my best friend, who would help me. She would translate the lesson, but afterward the teacher would scold us for speaking without permission. She would hit me with a wooden ruler, she would send me to the corner because I would talk when I wasn't supposed to. But how was I to understand her? It didn't hurt me, but the embarrassment did ... Because of this I will see to it that, even if it's just one or two students, they will not go through what I went through, the shame and the distance.]

Olivia concludes that this experience made her realize how essential it is to nurture a child's search for identity and validation. She herself had strayed from her cultural roots, and was now returning to them

through her singing:

> Although I did speak Spanish when I visited my cousins in Mexico or when I would see Grandma and Grandpa ... I knew when to speak [Spanish] and when not to. But I felt that you shouldn't speak too much in Spanish, or sing too much in Spanish, because you would show too much of your culture—that you were still too much associated with your culture. What they were trying to do was leave that behind, and make you become one big melting pot. I see that now, but back then I didn't notice that. I realized that I had been displaced, or disassociated, when I got to college. I became aware of Mexican American studies, of Tejano music, and the music that my parents would listen to as Iwas growing up, mariachi music.
>
> Being that I sing, I've changed my singing style to sing songs in Spanish. Before I would just sing [songs by artists such as] Debbie Gibson—pop music is what I would perform. But now I've gone back to singing in Spanish, which has also made me aware of things that I'd missed out on—writers, singers, or just anything in general that has to do with Hispanic groups—the people that I was supposed to be connected with, but was disconnected from. I think it had a lot to do with the school system....
>
> You don't fit in, and so you try everything you can to make yourself un-Mexican, or un-Hispanic, and make yourself more mainstream. But then I realized that I am who I am, and there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with speaking in Spanish with my friends.... I used to speak Spanish whenever I had to, whenever I needed to. But now I feel free to speak in Spanish....
>
> It has stuck in the back of my mind how I was treated, so I felt that I needed to do something [that is, become a teacher] in order to maybe ease another child's pain, and to keep that pattern from happening over and over again.... Hopefully with research we can let people know what needs to be done, [about] materials that need to be created, [and that] we need minds to come forward with ideas... Hopefully we can send out [a message] to the rest of America, [to those] that don't understand why we're bilingual teachers, why we're doing this and why we have chosen this [profession].
>
> They need a little boost, with materials, with understanding the culture that they come from, and having compassion as far as the circumstances that led them to the United States. Or even those who were born here, like me, who went into the school system without knowing the language.... I will encourage my students not to lose their roots, to continue speaking in Spanish.... to realize that it's all part of a child. You just can't take one part out ... You have to let them manifest it, let it grow....

Hopefully we can send out [a message] to the rest of America, [to those] that don't understand why we're bilingual teachers, why we're doing this and why we have chosen this [profession].

The sense of mission is a common theme among the preservice teachers' entries. Another common theme is initial rejection of one's culture. Rebeca, age 46, is now rediscovering her heritage after twenty years of disregard:

> Yo crecí pensando que taquitos, hablar español, y tener piel obscura no era una cosa buena para tener. Al fin se me olvidó mi idioma [el español]. Nunca supe que los mexicanos tenían una cultura única y nunca celebré fiestas mexicanas. Hoy en día estoy aprendiendo español y mi cultura....
>
> [I grew up thinking that taquitos, speaking Spanish, and having dark skin was not a good thing...In the end I forgot my language [Spanish]. I never knew that Mexicans had a unique culture and I never celebrated Mexican holidays. It is only now that I am learning Spanish and my culture....]

In the interview, Rebeca reflects on how her life experiences will influence her teaching and on her new journey of self-discovery:

> I think that it's going to help me [with] students that come in from other countries, I'm going to be able to actually identify if they're having any real problems in the c lassroom.... My native language was Spanish for six years, which I never spoke again,and lost it completely,

which was terrible, and I'm coming back to it....

I never realized that I had one [an ethnicity], I never realized that I had an identity. I knew there was something missing, I didn't know what it was. I tried real hard to be like the Anglos. It wasn't obvious, but I think underneath I did. I tried real hard to get rid of an accent that I had. I didn't speak out a lot when I was going to school because I knew that sometimes I'd have a word that would slip out with an accent. For twenty years I tried to be very, very—I hate to say it—I tried to be very, very White, and now for the next twenty years I'm going to be Spanish [Laughter]. I find it humorous because I think that I finally made a complete assimilation to the White world and can pass their "test," you know, their System "test," which Hispanics find very hard to do, and it's no big deal, and I've passed it down to my children....

I knew I was Mexican, but I never lived it.... My parents died young.... I don't know if I'm second, third, or fourth generation... I think I'm third or fourth....

Rebeca still recalled the perplexing sensation of feeling constantly lost during class. I asked her if her school experiences had affected her academic achievement:

I think so, because when I started school I didn't know any English, so it was "sink or swim." You either learned it or you didn't. I can still feel that feeling. I was in the dark all the time in Elementary. I had a hard time....

I feel like an outsider in my Spanish world now. I think I'm changing it. I think my husband and I are changing it.... He made a turn-around, too. All his life he was doing the same thing I was doing. He was—you can say—lucky because he had the light eyes and he was able to go in the "right" class while his friends were put in another class. It happens. You know, the "darks" were put over here, and the "lights" were put over here. He experienced a lot of that, even more so than I did because his grandmother was White, and when his father used to go visit his grandmother, his brother and him were left at home because they looked more Mexican than his big brother and big sister, who looked very White. They got to go because they were able to mix in with the family....

Latino children represent the future America. Their success is our success as a nation.

Conclusion

The family plays a central role in establishing a value system for its members. Together with teachers, families model standards that are often assimilated and reproduced by children. The focus of this article, however, is not to judge the mores of the family members or school personnel described in the above excerpts. Rather, its focus is the preservice teachers' perception of their experiences. Based on their perceptions, what implications emerge that will directly affect teachers throughout the United States? Are there sweeping changes of which they should be aware?

The rapidly shifting demographics in this country unveil a new face of the "typical" American. In the fall of 1989, the U.S. Census Bureau predicted that while the White American population will grow by 25% between 1990 and 2030, during that same period the African American population will increase by 68%, the combined Asian American, Pacific Island American, and Native American populations by 79%, and the Latino American population by 187% (Barrett, 1991).

Latinos and other ethnic minority groups comprise the majority of public school students in two of the nation's largest states. Latino and other minority K-12 students account for over 50% of the public school enrollments in California and Texas (García, 1991; Valencia, 1991). The fastest language minority group in the United States is Spanish-speaking. Spanish-speakers are projected to increase to more than 22 million by the year 2000 (Macías, 1993).

Latino children represent the future America. Their success is our success as a nation. School, then, should be a place where teachers serve as mediators, imparting the curriculum in a way that best serves the needs of its local student constituency. Specialized training could be provided by school districts, in a supportive environment where teachers would feel free to express concerns and ideas to colleagues, reflecting and planning appropriate strategies for implementation in classrooms. These pedagogical strategies would be tailored to

match cultural contexts in which the students live and learn.

Making connections to our own world is a key to successful reflection. It is a transformative process through which an educator can cultivate the ability to more accurately assess her performance and improve it, both on a personal and professional level. Over months and years, a treasure trove of knowledge is gathered and stored within each teacher. Yet this information most often remains unexamined and, subsequently, underdeveloped. Through reflective practice, teachers conduct a self-evaluation in which they may make valuable discoveries, such as a change in teaching philosophy, a need to re-align goals, or more effective alternatives for dealing with a troublesome situation at school. When a teacher shares her findings, her colleagues conjointly benefit from the new insights she has gleaned.

Reflective inquiry allows teachers to understand more specifically how their ideological baggage affects students. Each student—and teacher—bring a unique set of characteristics into the classroom. Teachers who are aware of these complexities can use them to modify their instructional behavior accordingly. Otherwise, as the pre-service teachers would wholeheartedly attest, educators are dangerously prone to scarring young minds and hearts for life.

Note: All names in this article are fictitious.

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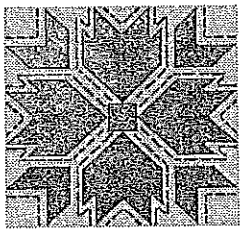
También de dolor se canta cuando llorar no se puede.
Sorrow also sings, when it runs too deeply to cry.



A Special Kind of Knowledge: When Teachers Do Research and Parents Teach

by Cathy Amanti

The inclusion of parents in the curriculum is crucial to the success of students. In this article, Cathy Amanti describes her involvement in a program, "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching," that brings teachers and parents together in unique roles: the teacher as researcher and the parent as teacher.

It was drilled into my head during teacher training that tapping into student background knowledge is critical to the learning process. I was admonished to build new learning on my students' prior knowledge. But it was not until I began to teach that I found something was missing from the equation. What was missing was how to determine what exactly that background knowledge is. Actually, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what it is already. I had lived in South America, minored in Latin America and my head was full of research data about Mexican-Americans, the principal population of students I work with. I smugly assumed I knew everything I needed to know about my students. It was not long before I began to realize how misguided I was. First of all, assuming that all Latinos share a similar culture, even if members of a single community, represents a narrow, monolithic view of culture. I have come to see that culture is, in fact, heterogeneous and that though my students may have been lumped together by researchers into one category — "Hispanic" — they in fact reflect a wide range of cultural variations related to their family— geographic and social history. Second, I have come to realize that second-hand data, such as that produced by researchers whose reports I had read in teacher training, is often unreliable, and may, in fact, be as guilty of constructing stereotypical beliefs about a population as anything else.

One of the catalysts that has helped me to make these realizations has been my participation in the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching (FOK) project, jointly facilitated by the University of Arizona and the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology and Department of Language, Reading and Culture. I began participating in this experiential project during my second year of teaching. The project had begun several years earlier as a "Community Literacy Project." In this precursor project, graduate students from both of the above departments visited homes of local elementary students to gather different kinds of information about their families, including types of literacy practices. This information was brought back to the teachers of these elementary students in the hope that they could use this information to improve their educational practices. After a few years, it was decided that teachers should be involved in the home visits, as well, as they were in a better position than the graduate students to make a direct link between the home and the classroom. I began to participate in this project the first year that teachers were trained to go into their students' homes for the purpose of gathering the kind of information about their students and families that was hoped could enhance teaching and learning for the students involved.

There are four principal components of the FOK project. The first component is ethnographic training. Teachers are trained in qualitative research methods, principally participant observation, which is the field method that is the hallmark of anthropological research. In this method, researchers attempt to put aside any pre-conceived notions they may have about the people they are studying and let the people themselves reveal who they are through interviews and observations.

The second component of this project is the research itself. Once

teachers have gone through several training sessions, they make arrangements to visit the homes of some of their students as researchers themselves with no other agenda than to get to know students and their families in depth. Questionnaires have been used to carry out this research but the questions are open-ended and are designed more to elicit personal narratives and family histories than to gather specific data. Teachers have been encouraged, in particular, to question families about their family and labor histories, as these topics are very revealing of their "funds of knowledge," which in this project means *those historically developed and accumulated strategies (e.g., skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's functioning and well-being*.The type of students involved in this project, mostly minority and working class, come from households too often described in educational research as lacking in *social and intellectual resources* . Yet all of the participating teachers have come away from their students' homes continually amazed at the variety of academically valid funds of knowledge and experiences their students have had outside the school context.

The third component of the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching project is reflection. This is accomplished through teachers' written reflections after their home visits as well as ongoing dialogue with other project participants in study groups. The study groups have been a critical component of the project. What teachers are observing in their students' homes often directly contradicts what they have learned in teacher training and inservices. The study groups provide the support teachers need as they examine and reflect on their role in education, provoked by their new understanding of their students' households. Personal experience in their students' homes forces teachers to radically shift from focusing on what background knowledge their students are lacking to a focus on how to tap into the wealth of background knowledge the students are bringing to school. With a shift in teacher thinking about students' households comes the need to rethink how students are being taught. Instead of spending an inordinate amount of time filling in perceived gaps in their students' knowledge (i.e. through rote memorization, drill and the learning of facts), teachers often feel freed to implement a more critical and challenging pedagogy using their students' prior knowledge as the stepping stone.

It has been my experience of getting to know my students' family experiences that has provoked profound changes in the way I think about schools and teaching.

The fourth and final component of this project is the classroom implementation of the new insights teachers have gained about their students and themselves. This has run the gamut from changed relationships between teachers and the community in which they teach, to thematic units developed around topics that have emerged from home visits. In my classroom these topics have included candy and nutrition, horses, business and mining.

Probably one of the most significant ideas that has become a central focus in my work as a result of participating in this project is the importance of personal experience, both mine and that of my students and their families. It has been my experience of getting to know my students' family experiences that has provoked profound changes in the way I think about schools and teaching. I have found parents, typically blamed for their child's educational difficulties, to have in-depth knowledge on everything from horticulture, mining, and medicinal plants to business, animal husbandry, and education. I have found mothers running their own businesses and fathers that can build houses without a blueprint. I have also found every parent to be deeply interested in their child's education and to have strong opinions about the best way to achieve it. While recognizing the strengths of my students and their parents I have also begun to recognize my own strengths as an educator and to value my classroom experiences, as well, in structuring my pedagogical practice. I no longer rely solely on *educational experts*, far-removed from my classroom, to guide me as I go about my work as a teacher. I now rely on the lessons I have learned from my classroom as well as those I have learned from my students and their families through the visits I have made to their homes.

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El que es buen pato, hasta en el aire nada.
A good duck can swim even in the air.

An Interview with Cathy Amanti

Editors' Note: The need for bilingual education teachers is a serious issue in numerous school districts in the Southwest and throughout the nation. In view of this, it is important to consider the quality of our teacher education programs. We present this interview between Cathy Amanti and Irma Guadarrama that reveals Ms. Amanti's considerable knowledge base and insightful understanding of critical pedogogy and its application to Bilingual Education. We consider Ms. Amanti an exceptional teacher model that teachers and teacher educators can learn from.

IG: Tell us about yourself; where you grew up, where you studied; why you decided to become a teacher.

CA: It wasn't that I ever felt to be driven to be a teacher; as a child it never even occurred to me. School was something that I did. My father was a history professor and so it was just an accepted part of family life—you go to school and you go to college.

My father got his Ph.D. in Latin American history and became an historian at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico at the time the military was doing testing in preparation for sending people into space. My earliest memories are of standing on the white sands and watching the scientists strap men into rocket sleds and shooting them down a track. This was before I was in kindergarten at the time.

Then my father got a job as professor of Latin American history at the University of Florida. What I think contributed to my becoming a bilingual teacher is that ever since my father was a child he has been interested in Latin America. He became enthralled with Latin American history and culture, and he passed his passion on to me. When we lived in New Mexico I remember driving for many miles to México to spend the day in Juárez. It was a family adventure and a very positive experience. We had a great time. We'd go shopping, spend the day around Juárez and then come home.

In Florida, my father got grants to do research in Latin America. He had specialized in Colombian history, so we went to Colombia for a number of summers. Again, it was a positive experience because of my father's passion, respect, interest and excitement. These experiences had a tremendous impact on my attitude toward Latinos and their history and culture. There were other summer trips to Colombia and then, during my second year of college, I spent my fall semester attending the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá. But I came back to the U.S. and dropped out of school, got married and had children. I didn't think about going back until my husband did. He was a carpenter and his back started bothering him a lot. That's when he decided to go back to school. Then I decided to go back when he finished.

Fortunately, there was enough experience in my childhood that alerted me to discrimination against minority students or language minority students in our school system.

I went to the University of Arizona, and I got my degree in bilingual education. I had originally gone to college with the intention of becoming an anthropologist, but I decided to become a bilingual teacher for the practical reason of finding a job.

I knew Spanish; I had studied it in South America and studied it all through high school and took classes in Spanish literature in college. Fortunately, there was enough experience in my childhood that alerted me to discrimination against minority students or language minority students in our school system. I think about The Bell Curve, how the authors are trying to rationalize the belief that somehow having darker skin is associated with lower intelligence. I believe that the opposite is true—that having white

skin and being male makes you stupid because they keep you from having experiences that make you aware of what people are going through. It's easy to deny that other people are being discriminated against if you have not experienced it yourself. I reached a point in my life where I wanted to be a bilingual teacher, but I wasn't really politically motivated because I hadn't had the experience that would make me politically motivated. My political motivation has grown with my experience from my education.

IG: How would you describe the kinds of experiences that have helped you become more aware, more sensitive?

CA: My colleagues, who were bilingual education teachers, were Latino, so after hearing of their experiences in school I began to learn. It's funny, but my mother also told me when I decided to go into bilingual education that when she was a kindergarten teacher in New Mexico in the early 50s that schools would automatically hold back one year those children with Spanish surnames. The case just began to build.

IG: How did you get interested in anthropology?

Teachers have to get a master's degree before they can get a teaching certificate in Arizona. I was accepted in the anthropology department. But also, anthropology has always interested me because I love traveling and learning about other people and experiencing other ways of life. I can still vividly remember arriving at the hotel in Barranquilla, Colombia for the first time and it was like paradise—the tropics. Those are the most vivid memories and they are the strongest memories.

Anthropology has changed dramatically since the early 70s when I first went to college. It was a completely different field, much more keeping a distance, observation. I believe I'm correct in saying it was much more ethnocentric. The early anthropologists were in many ways like imperialists. They established a standard and they viewed everything from it.

IG: What did you find that you liked so much?

CA: The course that had the biggest impact on my work and on me personally was called "Culture and Power," taught by Ana Alonzo. It was a tough course; it was all new to me and yet I got enough out of it that it changed my thinking about everything. We didn't talk about schools so much in that course but I applied the concepts to schools. And it made so much sense.

People can get away with placing so much blame on the teachers for educational failure because we're women and we don't have political power and we're not used to standing up for ourselves.

IG: Do you recall some of the earthshaking things that helped you turn around?

CA: The whole idea that knowledge is constructed, that culture is not neutral, that in our country mainstream or middle-class culture is quite entrenched in our institutions and viewed as the standard to judge all others by.

IG: How did you get into feminism?

CA: In the same class—seeing that the differences between men and women are culturally constructed. It caused me to reflect and question all my beliefs about who I am; why I am who I am. The course provided me with a very empowering experience. And that's why I'm so interested in gender in the schools, not just in regards to students, but in regards to teachers as well. This was the topic of my master's paper. I reflected on what was being said about teachers in light of the fact that most are female, and how that relates to control issues in the school—working conditions, etc. I found that the fact that most teachers are female has a very powerful impact. For example, teachers are blamed for low student performance in math because they supposedly have "math phobia" and fail to teach the subject adequately. But typically women are not encouraged to study math and science in their educational process, and blaming the teachers is a convenient way to sidestep the deeper structural issues that are going on. It is blatant sexism. People can get away with placing so much blame on the teachers for educational failure because we're women and we don't have political power and we're not used to standing up for ourselves. Also, teaching is not our only job—we also have families. And there are many other areas of life we are holding together for other people—it has a huge impact on our ability to focus on fighting these attitudes in our professional lives.

IG: Tell us about your teaching career.

CA: I've taught for four years—sixth grade for two years, and in a mult-iage classroom for two more years—all in the same school. The school is primarily Hispanic, but the population is very diverse—we have kids whose families came to Tucson before the Anglos came, and we have kids that started school in Mexico and have been here only a year or less.

As far as my development as a teacher, I kind of "polish" one area at a time. I focus on developing certain areas of the curriculum and do a lot of reading, reflecting and searching in those areas. In the beginning I was much more textbook oriented and maybe that was because I wasn't so sure of myself. My undergraduate training encouraged me to be pretty dependent on the curriculum and on classroom practices developed by the experts.

As far as how I deal with the issue of bilingualism, I believe that kids need to develop their native language along with their second language. They need to learn to read and write in their native language. I always structure my classroom such that the kids do most of their work in the beginning in their native language with the goal being proficieny in two languages toward the end of the school year. One day I teach in one language and the next day I teach in the other with a modified review/preview strategy so that the kids who are monolingual in one language aren't totally lost. I've always had a classroom with students ranging from monolingual English to monolingual Spanish with every variation in between. By the time many kids get to the intermediate grades a lot of them can actually follow along in both languages.

It's really exciting to see that the whole school is supportive of bilingualism. Bilingual education is supported completely from the administrator on down.

45 minutes each day the kids go to intensive language instruction in whatever language is their second language. My kids go to different teachers depending on which language they are working on and at what level of proficiency. It's really exciting to see that the whole school is supportive of bilingualism. Bilingual education is supported completely from the administrator on down. I never have been challenged for being a bilingual teacher. Most of the people that I socialize with have never been challenged either.

It's also exciting to see kids speaking in class for the first time in their second language and to see kids talking to each other despite the fact that they do not share a dominant language.

I do the writing process and I allow a lot of time to write because I think it is so important. We have writing conferences and one student who may have tried writing in his second language will receive proofreading assistance from another student who is a native speaker of that language.

IG: Can you tell us about any resistance you've encountered among your students toward speaking Spanish?

CA: There has been some confusion on the part of the parents and surprise for some of the kids to be put into a bilingual class. The complaint or the question has been that they thought their child had been misplaced because they were in a classroom where Spanish was spoken. It's hard to believe that only one generation ago these same parents were told they could not speak Spanish at school and now their kids are in school where they have to learn Spanish! It may be confusing to some people. But Arizona has passed the law that says that a second language will be taught all the way down to the primary level and of course, it makes sense that it would be Spanish. Even though in some cases teachers just show a videotape Spanish lesson, it's always been our goal to teach English to the Spanish speaking kid and Spanish to the English speaking kid.

I always try to listen and respect what the parents are saying, but the struggle I have is when parents choose not to put their kids in a bilingual classroom, what my role should be. Should I try to persuade the parents toward my point of view? I still feel the parents should have the choice.

IG: What about the students when they finish school....how will their bilingualism help them in their lives?

CA: I hope that the students have a lot of opportunities if they stay in school. One thing about a bilingual classroom that you can't get anywhere else are the

two language jokes. I remember the first year I taught we were studying instruments, and there's one instrument called a *contrabajo* in English. Well, some of the students would joke about it—*contrabajo* is someone "with work." We teachers need to instill in students a pride in knowing two languages. I always have my students write for essay contests. I reward students who write in their second language. If they stay in school I feel the world will be theirs, I really do...

IG: Describe the teaching models you use?

CA: I lean toward whole language strategies where you are tying learning to real purposes and real experiences, rather than isolating learning and just teaching facts and doing rote, drill types of activities. My goal is to give the kids all kinds of experiences; for instance, we go on a million field trips a year. I start at the beginning of the year taking the kids to the public library and getting them ibrary cards. I try to bring the kid's world into the classroom. I'm a process-oriented teacher rather than fact oriented. I don't worry as much about teaching my kids a particular set of facts as I do about getting kids writing, researching, becoming capable, self-sufficient, reflective learners where they don't feel intimidated by anything. I think about what the kids are going to be—what they need for middle school and high school and also what I wish they had. And I keep coming back to writing and research—and not just writing research but writing about their own experiences, finding their own voices. Also, math is very important to me, because math is used to track kids more than anything else.

The best way to teach is to just teach very holistically, activating all their background knowledge, bringing what they know into any learning situation. But I also believe that middle schools, high schools and colleges don't teach like that. Students still have to take standardized tests, so they need experience with those things too. I take some time to get them used to the more traditional methods, too.

IG: What is it that you do that works well for your students in light of the fact that they are Hispanic, etc.?

CA: I build on their background knowledge because I think that gives them confidence and security. I have been in totally new situations and I have no idea what the professor is talking about. I feel incredibly insecure and I have no confidence in my abilities. But if it's something that I'm a little bit familiar with I have so much more confidence in what I do. I think you can really see confidence grow in kids if you tap into something they're familiar with, if you're drawing that out and making the connection to something that they have lived or experienced. Then, they believe they can learn.

IG: How important is your work in the "Funds of Knowledge" project to your role as teacher; how has that experience shaped your teaching; how important are these skills for all teachers to have?

CA: It has had a profound impact; it's been very important. I would say that the training in social science has given me a completely different orientation toward school. It's like taking the blinders off. It's too easy to get drawn into the way things are in education and never question why we do the things the way we do them. I really think that teachers should be encouraged, unless undergraduate education for teachers has changed, to include a broader liberal arts education, a broader array of courses in other fields. I think that teachers at the master's level should be encouraged to get degrees in other fields, because it gives you a different perspective. It helps you to see that knowledge is contestable. When I got my undergraduate degree, I believed that the textbooks and teachers' manuals were all I needed to be a good teacher. But they don't train you to question.

Teachers are trained to believe that they should control the classroom and that they are the ones in the position to deliver knowledge to the students. In school, we had been told about whole language but I had no idea how to implement it; I couldn't explain what it was. We were exposed to it and we even debated phonics vs. whole language. But I couldn't begin to tell how to teach reading. I should have been able to do that. It's been really important for me to understand how you can be tricked into believing that the current educational psychologist has the best interest of you and the students in mind—that he has no political motivation. It is easy to believe that the educational theories are universal and generalizable and that you can count on educational psychology to tell you everything you need to know about your students. So, stepping outside of education opened up a brand new world for me and it gave me more confidence in myself to make decisions.

I think that once you understand that there is a lot to debate and that there is a dialogue going on, then you start to realize that it's

OK to question; it's OK to challenge. No knowledge is neutral, no knowledge is produced in a vacuum. It's OK for you to bring your own values into your teaching. It's good to base your teaching on your personal values.

IG: Think about other teachers who don't have this understanding...

So, when I think about teachers teaching in a way that I don't agree with and that I think is harmful to students, I remember that they have been victims of the system as well.

CA: It depends on who they are teaching. There are some kids that can go through the school system without reflective teachers and survive; but there are always going to be kids that can't. I work with teachers who believe the way that I do, and we support each other so much that we kind of shelter ourselves.

IG: But there are teachers who don't even consider ever visiting the student's homes...

CA: Well, I think that's partly a problem with the system because teachers are overwhelmed with busy work. To a certain extent I think that teachers who are not interested in visiting their students' homes are protecting themselves. This would be an added burden on top of all the other things that they have to do. Most teachers are women; they have overwhelming responsibilities. So, when I think about teachers teaching in a way that I don't agree with and that I think is harmful to students, I remember that they have been victims of the system as well. They have been shut down, too and have become alienated from the whole process of educating, from the whole human perspective of education. Instead, they have become the technicians in delivering and implementing the curriculum. I have thought about a way to reach these teachers. If I were in a position to train the teachers, I would begin with reflections on their own experiences. I think that the potential for them to understand what's going on will come from their reflecting on their experiences as women in our society. That our schools shut kids out and kill their spirits is not new to them. So I would try to get them to dig into themselves and find those moments and experiences and reflect on them. And once they understand the way that they have been treated unjustly because they're women, they will have the empathy to begin to understand what's going on with their students. I would have them read all kinds of literature by and about women, and look at teaching as a profession and its historical development. There was a time when most teachers were men but as schools expanded and became universalized they needed a cheap labor force and they got it in women. To look at these things would have a huge impact on teachers and how they view themselves and their roles. It could be really threatening, not only to the teachers but threatening to the system, once you get all of these women who have reflected on their experiences in the schools and are trying to encourage their own students to reflect on their experiences.

IG: It's not such an easy task; people don't easily think creatively.

CA: But the potential is there. As women we have all had experiences of not being valued for our skills and our knowledge and being denied opportunities. As women we are involved in our own oppression. It's very hard to stay vigilant all of the time and analyze everything you do and decide—"this is contributing to my oppression, and this is not." It's very difficult. To a certain extent it's easy to fall into a role that's comfortable just because our minds have been trained to work that way so it's hard to stay vigilant. I like the idea of teachers writing; that has a lot of potential for helping teachers to reflect more and start looking at what they are doing because writing is one way that helps me to think and reflect. I have kept a journal since I came back to teaching after getting my master's degree. I take notes at faculty meetings and I noticed that we rarely discussed issues

As women we are involved in our own oppression. It's very hard to stay vigilant all of the time ...

related to educational philosophy; most the discussions deal with maintenance, with discipline, scheduling, evaluation procedures—the details of the organization. We rarely reflect on how we're teaching, why we're teaching the way we do. That's not a part of schools; you don't get an opportunity to think about how you teach, why you teach; what is your own educational philosophy. It seems like a newsletter where teachers contributed may start the process.

Knowledge is never produced in a vacuum; that it's not neutral; it encompasses the values and beliefs of the person or the people that are producing it. This has made a huge impact on how I think ...

IG: Reflect on your training in the social sciences.

CA: To me the critical thing is the study of the production of knowledge. Teachers need to be exposed to the whole foundation of knowledge. I also think teachers need a course in philosophy because that would get to the production of knowledge and social theory.

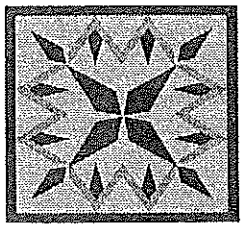
IG: When you refer to the production of knowledge, do you mean that everyone has something to contribute?

CA: Yes, but also that there is a political nature to the production of knowledge. Knowledge is never produced in a vacuum; that it's not neutral; it encompasses the values and beliefs of the person or the people that are producing it. This has made a huge impact on how I think about what I'm teaching; which is why I'm much more concerned with teaching learning processes rather than facts because everything you read in school is frequently biased. Sometimes we use the text but I often find what is presented as fact actually is constructing certain images of whatever you're talking about. For example, in the history book there is a reference to Native Americans as savages. I know it's hard to believe, but this reference was in one of the readings. The kids would have just read it and not been challenged to think about that—it's a textbook and these are the facts. But because I had been exposed to the whole idea that knowledge is constructed, I'll stop with the kids, and say, "How does the author feel about Native Americans when he says things like this? What is he saying?" I try to challenge the kids to look beyond the words and never to take what they read at face value but to get behind it and underneath it and think about it.

For instance, a couple of years ago, we did a unit on Columbus; I had the kids read a lot of these books about Columbus. As they were reading they had to think about whether the author believed that Columbus was a hero or a profiteer, an exploiter. The goal was not to teach facts about Columbus. I wanted them to read and find out as much as they could about Columbus and for each book think about what the author's view point was.

I try to challenge the kids to approach things that way. I think it's good to be exposed to the fact that there are a lot of social theories, understandings of society, understandings of human beings—how they learn, what they learn, why they learn what they do, what is the motivation for relationships, the construction of government. I think that that is very important, particularly looking at social theory in relationship to education because underlying everything we do, every action we take, is based on our world view, our understanding of society.But we are not just looking at it at that level. So underneath every known technique for teaching are assumptions about the world, about society; being exposed to different social theories will help teachers understand what are the assumptions and theory underneath that's motivating. And they may find that they don't agree with some of them like they thought.

De médico, poeta, músico y loco todos tenemos un poco.
Of doctor and poet, musician and madman we each have a trace.



Multicultural Literature in Bilingual Education: Exploring Story as Guide in La Nueva Fábula

by Irma Guadarrama

Since the middle of the 1900's, multicultural literature has been the source of enjoyment, inspiration, and enlightened thought for students and teachers alike. It has filled a huge void in children's literature that had systematically excluded the voices of children of color, the underrepresented, or otherwise marginalized people. Even though the journey toward improvement is far from over, multicultural literature has contributed widely to the knowledge base of diversity in its portrayals of people based on culture, gender, language, physical and emotional handicaps, etc. Multicultural literature has often been metaphorically described as a window and a mirror (Sims-Bishop, 1994). The book as window is an appropriate affirmation of its well-defined purpose in describing a wide range of people realistically and accurately. Another metaphorical depiction of multicultural literature, the book as mirror, alludes to the quality of the characterizations in the stories that invite the readers to see themselves in these characters who are often assigned heroic roles. A third metaphor, the subject of this article, is the book as guide, so described in terms of how the literature serves to help students acquire specific skills such as problem-solving and reasoning within their sociocultural and linguistic context. The inherent quality of multicultural literature that serves as a guide is associated with stories that deliver a didactic message not unlike the moral lessons in traditional fables. In this article I discuss the role of multicultural literature in bilingual education, in particular how the traditional fable can be transformed into a powerful vehicle to help students learn important literary sociocultural lessons that equip them to deal successfully with identity and cultural issues inherent in the bilingual/bicultural process. This type of fable is referred as *la nueva fábula*, or the new fable, since it retains its traditional teaching quality, yet focuses on the issues, concerns, and problems relevant to the students in bilingual education programs today.

This type of fable is referred as 'la nueva fábula,' or the new fable, since it retains its traditional teaching quality, yet focuses on the issues, concerns, and problems relevant to the students in bilingual education programs today.

The Rationale for Multicultural Themes

Since its inception in the 70's, multicultural education has suffered innumerable defeats by many schools because they refuse to accept it as a legitimate curricular component, or worst, attempt to incorporate it into the curriculum at a superficial level (La Belle & Ward, 1994; Banks, 1994). At the heart of its principle, multicultural education is fundamentally a call for commitment to improve the socio-cultural climate of our schools and strengthen the understanding and perspectives among our students as a way to construct a better future for our country, one which reduces and strives for elimination of injustices, biasness, discrimination and racism (Baruth & Manning, 1992; Banks & Banks, 1993; Banks, 1994). This is, of course, a tall order for schools that have a marked tradition of systematically discriminating against underrepresented groups. For language minority groups, potential for discrimination is still evident in policies against students speaking their native

language on school grounds, and punishment for those who defied them is often detrimental (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988).

Curricular models for multicultural education have been developed widely in the last decade. Banks (1994) provides several common goals in which teachers can base their decisions in developing and selecting instructional activities. Among these goals are the importance of developing decision-making and social-action skills, the ability to analyze events from various perspectives, developing cross-cultural competencies that students need in order to function in a our diverse society, helping students develop clear, reflective, and positive ethnic and national identifications, and on acquiring literacy and computational skills (pp. 61-62). Sims-Bishop (1994) provides a criteria for selecting and developing multicultural literature. The important points are that the literature should contribute positively to one's understanding and appreciation of all people, it should offer positive visions of a pluralistic society, it should promote empathy toward the adoption of new perspectives, and it should offer children opportunities to recognize and value differences and similarities in people. Very few experts will refute the consensus that multicultural education theory and thought have indeed mushroomed in the last twenty years.

However, multicultural literature for children has lagged behind at an inexplicable rate. For example, of the 15,000 to 18,000 children's books published in 1990-1992, only three to four percent were books related to people from diverse backgrounds and 20% of the books were folktales (Sims-Bishop, 1994). The shortage of multicultural resources leave teachers with fewer opportunities to apply the important goals of multicultural education.

Unfortunately, there has yet to be a Latino author to receive the Newbery Honor or the Caldecott Award. Furthermore, there are fewer books about Latinos cited in multicultural literature ...

The Story as Window

A perusal of titles in children's literature with multicultural themes reveals that most books focus on describing aspects of life, with the intent of accurately and poignantly bringing out the human qualities of its characters (Sims-Bishop, 1994; Day, 1994). Indeed, this is the most prevalent, well-defined focus of multicultural literature, and an important one in attempts to promote positive images of under and ill-represented groups such as Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, etc.

The emergence of multicultural literature in this country can be traced back to a milestone in 1932, when Waterless Mountain by Armer, a book about Native Americans, won the Newbery Medal (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson 1993). In 1950, Song of the Swallows won the first Caldecott Award given to a book with a Latino protagonist and in 1975, the first book by a minority author, Virginia Hamilton, was awarded the Newberry Award. Examples of criteria for assessing multicultural literature titles for quality include the following:

- Students of diverse backgrounds feel pride in their own identity and heritage.
- Both mainstream students and students of diverse backgrounds learn about diversity and the complexity of American society.
- All students gain more complete and balanced views of the historical forces that shaped American society.
- All students can explore issues of social justice. (Au, 1993, p. 178)

Unfortunately, there has yet to be a Latino author to receive the Newbery Honor or the Caldecott Award. Furthermore, there are fewer books about Latinos cited in multicultural literature lists than any of the top five U.S. minority groups (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1993).

The paucity of children's literature titles in general and for and by Latinos in specific, is an indication of the lack of understanding of the purpose and need for these titles. The need for purposeful multicultural children's literature is evident when we consider the broader goals of multicultural education.

The Story as Mirror

However lofty the efforts by many authors of children's literature, their focus is shortsighted in the consideration of the array of problems that children of color encounter as they attempt to construct meaning in a society where racism is institutionalized and social issues abound with tones of

prejudice, inequality and biasness. That is not to say that multicultural books focused on social themes are not available. Indeed, many excellent writers and illustrators have produced a collection of well-written, focused books, such as Laurence Yep, Jamake Highwater, Virginia Hamilton, Walter Dean Myers, Sheila Hamanaka, Rita Williams-Garcia, Angela Johnson (Harris, 1993), Alma Flor Ada, Carmen Lomas Garza, Gary Soto, Sabine Ulibarri (Hudelson, et al., 1994), Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, and others (e.g., Pérez & Guzmán, 1995). Unfortunately, the list is meager in relation to the immense need in meeting the goals of a multicultural curriculum. Most importantly, the need is evident for a wider array of literature that guides teachers and students into a dialogic excursion focused on an exchange of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and opinions that examine relevant issues, frame problems, and pose solutions.

... the need is evident for a wider array of literature that guides teachers and students into a dialogic excursion ...

The use of books as an aid in dealing and solving problems that are social, developmental and even clinical has been a topic of many research studies in recent years. Advocates of bibliotherapy trace its history to ancient Greece with a manuscript titled, either, "The Healing Place of the Soul," (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993) or "The Medicine Chest for the Soul" (Cecil & Roberts, 1992). As a recognized treatment, bibiotherapy is determined to be an effective method in which to help students reflect on their situations and generate thought-provoking discussions. For example, a child who has lost a parent may find an opportunity to understand his/her grief by reading a book about a similar child. The mirror technique inherent in this approach becomes a tool which can be used effectively by teachers to help students deal with relevant social issues. When applied purposely, bibliotherapy can be a means by which to use multicultural literature to help students acquire perspectives, insights, and skills needed in today's multicultural society.

It is also important to mention here that an aspect of Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reading includes discussion on two distinct purposes of reading. The first purpose, efferent reading, refers to perusing literature for specific knowledge, a practical and prevelant use of books in most curricula. But the second purpose, aesthetic reading, is more closely aligned with Rosenblatt's notions of the transactional view of reading and with the concept of story as mirror, in which the reader takes as much from the text as he/she brings to it. A reader who reads for the aesthetic purpose is psychologically connected to the text, and can even assume the identity of a character in the story.

In its design to help students acquire an understanding of their role as members in our multiethnic society and offer avenues to discuss issues of concern, la nueva fábula combines the ancient tradition of using literature as a therapuetic tool with focused, current topics. In addition, inscribed in the native language of Spanish speaking children, la nueva fábula serves as a powerful catalyst to engage teachers and students in a meaningful transaction that is culturally appropriate. In an era where quality Spanish language materials are scarce but critically needed, la nueva fábula serves to help fill this void.

Multicultural Literature in Bilingual Education

Literature with multicultural themes for use in bilingual education follow the same criteria as for all classrooms. The difference of course, is that children in these programs are in the process of learning a second language, and culture, and these significant characteristics must be taken into consideration.

The reasons for the lack of sufficient, quality titles in the students' native languages are not easy to explain. The need for Spanish language literature for children is well-documented and described by Hudelson, Fournier, Espinosa, and Bachman (1994). The issues raised by the authors in this article point to the failure by publishers and distributors to acknowledge and capitalize on teacher input as a major resource in the selection and production of Spanish language literature. Instead, bilingual education teachers seek and find children's

In an era where quality Spanish language materials are scarce but critically needed, 'la nueva fábula' serves to help fill this void.

literature through their own ingenious resourcefulness. Specifically, the authors state three other issues of major concern to educators. Besides the significant lack of Spanish language titles, there are only a few award-winning English language titles that are translated into Spanish; some of the translations are shoddy, and many of the Spanish titles tend to be unreasonably higher in cost than the English titles. Although the authors cite the importance of quality translated books, their preference are those that are, written originally in Spanish.

But of great concern to many educators is the lack of children's literature in Spanish written by Latinos from the U.S. Of the 157 Spanish-language children's literature titles cited by Alma Flor Ada (1990), only 17 were published in the U.S. The majority of authors of Spanish language books are extraneous to the U.S., and even though some of them provide children with quality literature, there is obviously a point of view missing from this literature landscape. When children are denied access to quality literature in their native language as many of our language minority students, one must examine the social and political context to draw an appropriate analysis. Consider the historical account of "forbidden literacy" among African Americans at the time of slavery (Babb, 1993). They had no access to literacy; it was considered a crime to acquire literacy. Slave owners acknowledged the power of literacy among their slaves as a means by which they could gain social advanatage, or even freedom. They feared reprisals from the people they held in captivity and treated as subhumans. African American slaves also perceived literacy as a vehicle to freedom, as documented so eloquently in their narratives found in rare manuscripts of the late 1700's. The fact that the majority of language minority students do not have adequate native language resources in the form of literature begs the question of whether our schools are providing these students with an equitable education.

When viewed within a hegemonic relationship, language minority students are clearly at a disadvantage, and not unlike the perpetuation of illiteracy among African American slaves, are systematically and continuosly denied adequate and sufficient access to resources in their native language, which is essentially important in their literacy development. Social literacy historian, Harvey Graff, provides cogent accounts of how the pedagogic process of the working classs has been controlled by the dominant class throughout time and in many societies, including the U.S., to manipulate behavior that would be too dangerous if literacy was not accessible or too radical if literacy led to empowerment (Gee, 1990). Not only do language minority students experience a kind of controlled pedagogy by virtue of reduced or denied access to native language literature, the entire group's culture (and language) of which the students are members is devalued in the process.

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Classroom Application: The Story as Guide

The task of developing a literacy curriculum that focuses on multicultural education themes is immense when considering the social, cultural, historical and linguistic factors of the school and community. The topic is well beyond the scope of this paper, however, certain practical principles toward literacy program development are proposed, following the next section. In the course of developing a criteria for the development and integration of la nueva fábula, I first expound upon a broad definition of literacy that encompasses the above mentioned factors, then, examine the relationship between discourse patterns and literacy as a means by which to underscore the importance of using the students' resources as a basis for literacy instruction. Finally, I propose the criteria for using la nueva fábula, provide an example of one and ensue a discussion on la nueva fábula literacy event and the crucial role of the bilingual education teacher.

The idea of literacy bestowing upon individuals the capability of performing a wide variety of cognitive feats, of influencing society toward more justice, democracy and compassion, and of becoming the ideal citizen that reaches out for the common good is called the literacy myth by Harvey Graff (Gee, 1990). What matters the most in literacy is what students do with it. The focus on literacy as a function based on societal need is central to the work of Scribner and Cole's (1991) work with the Vai people in Liberia on the western coast of Africa. This study

consisted of assessing the relationship between schooling and literacy of 700 Vai adults, some of whom had formal schooling; others did not. They found basically that the Vai literates are not cognitively superior over their nonliterate counterparts on any of the measures they used . Therefore, the evidence collected substantiates the argument that literacy in and of itself does not produce the kinds of cognitive capabilities mentioned in the mythical view of literacy. In addition, the authors make keen observations that suggest that different literacies require independent analysis, that reading and writing need to be focused on the desired achievements. Whereas one cannot draw general conclusions, there are lessons that can be extrapolated from Scribner and Cole's study that clearly point to the fact that literacy is a social phenomenon; it is borne out of need and nurtured within a society's norms and expectations. Gee (1990) summarizes this idea in this analogy of literacy as a loaded gun:

> ... [C]ontrary to the literacy myth, *nothing* follows from literacy or schooling. Much follows, however, from what comes *with* literacy and schooling, what literacy and schooling come wrapped up in, namely the attitudes, values, norms and beliefs (at once social, cultural and political) that always accompany literacy and schooling. ...A text whether a written on paper, or on the soul (Plato), or on the world (Freire), is a loaded weapon. The person, the educator, who hands over the gun, hands over the bullets (the perspective), and must own up to the consequences. There is no way out of having an opinion, an ideology, and a strong one, as did Plato, as does Freire. Literacy education is not for the timid. (p. 42)

Another important observation resulting from the research on

... literacy is a social phenomenon; it is borne out of need and nurtured within a society's norms and expectations.

the relationship between schooling and literacy is the extent to which oral and literate language is tied together. As pointed out in the Scribner and Cole research, the constructions of orality and the information structure within, rendered the Vai the competencies needed to function within their reality. Researcher Shirley Brice Heath (1983) also found a close relationship between oral and literate language in her work with the African American and White rural families in the Piedmont Carolinas. Orality and literacy function hand in hand and are at the disposal of the speaker depending on the specific need or occasion. Both forms constitute an integral part of each speaker's total communication pattern.

In a similar line of research, linguistic anthropologists Ron and Suzanne Scollon (1981), focus their work on how differences in discourse patterns (i.e., the ways in which individuals use language to communicate) contribute to breakdowns in interethnic communication. In their research on the Athabaskan-English interethnic communication patterns among the Athabaskans in Alaska, they identify areas of confusion from the points of view of both the English speakers (about Athabaskans) and Athabaskans (about English speakers). For example, English speakers view that Athabaskans do not speak, keep silent, avoid situations of talking, they never say anything about themselves and they are slow to take a turn in talking. In contrast, the Athabaskans view English speakers as talking too much, always talking first, they don't give others a chance to talk, and they only talk about what they are interested in (p. 36). These differences in communication take on a life of their own in social contexts, producing a variety of consequences not the least of which is the problem of reading and writing for the Athabaskans.

The Scollons reflect upon the difficulty that the Athabaskans have in adjusting to the English-speaking discourse which they refer to as the essayist prose style. This essayist style best describes what they perceive as literacy in general, and is characteristically decontextualized. From the Athabaskan viewpoint, the essayist style is closely aligned with the mainstream English-speaking discourse mode, and learning to read encompasses a broader social task than for the English-speaking child. Scribner and Cole explain it this way: "We suggest from this that because learning to read and write in the essayist manner is in fact learning new patterns of discourse, literacy for any Athabaskan is experienced as a changing of ethnicity as as well as in reality set" (p. 52).

Similarily, the markedly different discourse patterns between the school and the children of three groups of families which Heath (1983) describes resulted in learning difficulties for the children, albeit for different reasons. Two of the

three groups of families, Trackton and Roadville, share many discourse characteristics. For example, both groups share a disregard for decontextualization while the more successful third group, the mainstreamers, did; both groups also share an experiential, wholistic view of learning whereby children learn by doing wholistically, while mainstreamers seem to relate to an analytical approach. But there are differences. For example, the Roadville families share with the mainstreamers, but not with the Trackton families, the practice of parents tutoring in language and literacy; the Trackton families and the mainstreamers value imagination and fictionalization (ability to identify and accept different points of view as author and audience), but the Roadville families do not. The Trackton children experienced failure early in their formal schooling, even though many of the children could read and continued to read. The Roadville children experienced failure as well, however at a later time than the Trackton children, specifically, when their school tasks require them to use creativity, fictionalization, etc., more frequently and at a higher level.

Writing difficulties are experienced as well by the Athabaskans due to the mismatch between their discourse patterns and the school's, according to the Scollons (1981). The researchers made the observation that the Athabaskan speakers, when they deem it appropriate to speak from position of authority, create coherent "texts" on subjects which are familiar to them. However, on tasks that require writing, the Scollons contend that the Athabaskans cannot write easily about Athabaskan things. They conclude: "It is only to the extent that he or she is modernized, has come to identify as an English speaker, that he or she can operate within the essayist ideal of literacy" (p. 53).

The issue here, of course, is that there is no set prescription that can be applied to every classroom; to do so would defeat the purpose of social literacy research. What works with the Tohono O'odham children in Arizona may not work with Latino children in Houston, Texas.

Yetta Goodman (1992), who worked with the Tohono O'odham children in Arizona in a two-year writing project, made the following observations: "We also began to understand the many forces, including many that are not even overtly present at the moment writing occurs, that influence writers and their compositions. These include parental, cultural, and community values about writing; attitudes of the larger society toward the young author as a learner; personal relationships in the classroom (both teacher-learner and learner-learner); and the personal life history of the writer" (p.218).

Research studies like Goodman's, the Scollons's, Heath's, and Scribner's and Cole's, and others, help broaden our understanding of the meaning of literacy and the importance of context. But our understanding lacks depth and breadth when it comes to applying what we know. The issue here, of course, is that there is no set prescription that can be applied to every classroom; to do so would defeat the purpose of social literacy research. What works with the Tohono O'odham children in Arizona may not work with Latino children in Houston, Texas. However, the following discussion proposes, above other ideas, the integration of orality, in its true form as possible, in a literacy program. The concept of la nueva fábula provides a vehicle by which to meet an important criteria that emphasize appropriate literacy activities using culturally embedded literature in the student's native language. The two-point criteria is:

1. The instruction must reflect a sensitivity to the discourse patterns of the students, an understanding of how the families use literacy and for what purpose, and consolidate this knowledge with the school's discourse patterns.

2. The instruction must emphasize the importance of teachers, parents and students engaging in literacy that is transformative, that focuses on relevant multicultural issues, that problematizes them and is action-oriented.

The issue of how social and cultural factors affect literacy development has been analyzed from cognitive perspectives as well. There is strong evidence based on research that cultural and social discrepancies between home and school, as in the case of the Athabaskan youth who experience an identity crisis in acquiring literacy, can have an adverse effect on the school achievement of students (Erickson, 1984; Trueba, 1991), or

that they learn best in contexts that are meaningful, culturally and linguistically (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Au, 1993). Ferdman (1991) makes a strong claim that success or failure in literacy development by language and culturally diverse students depends on the strength of individual cultural identity. He states:

> It would appear, then, that the impact of literacy education as a socialization agent on individuals' cultural identity can be either destructive or constructive. When the person loses the capability to derive and create meaning in a culturally significant way, he or she becomes less, not more, literate. (p. 364)

Ferdman argues on the importance of students' maintaining a healthy self-view as well as a positive, open-minded perception of others. However, in order to do this successfully, students must maintain a positive self-view and self-acceptance as a requisite to extending their appreciation and valuing to others, an important goal defined in multicultural education (Banks 1994). The ability toward self-acceptance, then, is tied closely to how students respond to the literacy curriculum. Ferdman (1991) explains:

> In a more subte but no less powerful way, the reading and writing activities that children are asked to engage in at school, to the extent that they are accepted, will ultimately affect not only the children's sense of who they are, but the ways in which they can figure out their cultural identiy. (p. 363)

It is important, then, to consider appropriate literacy activities from the perspective of the family to determine the incorporation or the consolidation of these activities with the school or mainstream literacy program. In a ground-breaking ethnographic study, researcher Concha Delgado-Gaitan (1990) investigated 20 Spanish-speaking families, self-identified as Mexicans, from a small community in California. Delgado-Gaitan provides essential data that reveals how home literacy is embedded in the various day-to-day activities and social interactions "in forms ranging from emotional support for the children to pursue schooling to storybook reading by parents" (p. 105). Exchanges between children and parents demonstrate how parents successfully transmit their values, beliefs, attitudes, etc. through multiple discourses. She provides excerpts from transcripts in which parents and children engage in a variety of oral literacy activities. In one scenario, the mother and her three children, sharing a photo album, exchange comments as they reminisce about living in 'el rancho' (the ranch) and how different it is from living in the city. In another scene, the father engages in playful dialogue with his young son and daughter using as a base the story of Caperucita Roja (Little Red Riding Hood), embellishing it with absurd details, much to the squealing delight of his son. There is ample evidence to suggest that the families engage in very typical literate and oral behavior; in this case the dominant language of communication happens to be Spanish.

The ability toward self-acceptance, then, is tied closely to how students respond to the literacy curriculum.

Delgado-Gaitan also observed that when attempts are made by the school to respect and incorporate the family's culture as part of the curriculum, and when parents play decision-making roles, everyone involved becames empowered. The domino effect ensues: parental involvement increases, more parents become informed, they in turn inform other parents, and leadership and organizational skills increase. Children are also affected through this empowerment process, as are teachers.

The Delgado-Gaitan study helps one to recognize the role of culture in forming home-school partnerships, and the importance in understanding the literacy behaviors of the students and their families. Embedded in the context of home, one can readily observe how oral and literate behaviors, which share invisible boundaries, weave through the socialization process within the family unit. It is within this family-school context as well as the broader context of literacy that I substantiate the appropriateness and usefulness of la nueva fábula in the school literacy program.

Social speech is often accented with oral strategies. For example, Delgado-Gaitan's transcriptions reveal that langauge plays a major role in the development of familial relationships, such as in solving problems. The parent responses to their children's displeasures or capriciousness very often include displays of negotiations and authority. Among Delgado-Gaitan's families, moral development of children is the reponsibility of the parents from birth on.

The researcher explains the parental viewpoint in this statement: "One father elaborated that the reason children show respect when they get older is that they had been taught how to obey in their early years" (p. 88).

Other oral strategies that Spanish-speaking families employ to convey messages of morality and responsibility is the use of dichos (proverbs or sayings). It's not uncommon to find classroom activities that focus on the teaching of dichos (e.g., Ada, 1990). Dichos are loaded with wisdom, and some are used freely, but purposely, in social interactions with children and adults alike. But when used with children, the intended meaning is usually always didactic in nature.

Fables fall under the same didactic category as dichos. Developed for the sole purpose of teaching a moral in a entertaining way, a fable is a simple story that features characters, typically animals. Generated from ancient times, one of the most popular compilations is Samuel Richardson's Aesop's Fables, published in England in 1740 (Noel, 1975). At the turn of the nineteenth century, the fable began to lose its literary lustre, however, it has remained a staple among children's literature genres. Among the most noted Mexican fabulists are José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi and José Rosas Moreno; from Spain, Tomás de Irarte and Félix María Samaniego (de Pina, 1963).

As a literacy genre, the fable is recognized for its utility and simplicity in form. It follows a simple formula, "...pithy narrative using animals to act out human foibles and consequent moral, either explicit or implicit..." (Noel, 1975, p. 1). Unlike a simple narrative, imagination is the most important element in the fable. The results of using the fable formula with a multicultural lesson produces a literary piece that serves as a vehicle to engage children in meaningful dialogue that is potentially transformative. An example of this type of fábula follows, in both Spanish and English. You may notice that it begins like a folktale.

La hermosa mariposa y sus amigos *

Había una vez una oruga que cayó desde un árbol. La oruga se sintió un poco mareada por el viaje largo hacia el terreno mullido, pero de otra manera se sentía bien. Rápidamente comenzó a buscar algunas hojitas para comer.

La oruga pronto creció y creció hasta que llegó a ser muy grande. Creció tan grande que no podía moverse por mucho más. Entonces, un día, decidió descansar sobre una hoja ocultada detrás de un arbolito lejos de los ruidos y peligros de las ardillas, pájaros y otros insectos. De tanto comer se puso muy soñolienta y se tomó una siesta larga. Accurrucada dentro de una hoja, la oruga se tapó con la cáscara que había tejido, y allí se quedó dormidita en su capullo.

Una mañana soleada la oruga sintió una sensación extraña. Se dio cuenta que tenía algo nuevo y diferente. Sintió unas alas gigantes sobre su cuerpo pequeño. Quiso moverlas pero no pudo en el espacio tan apretado de su capullo. Sin embargo, hizo un esfuerzo implacable hasta que finalmente, su cáscara se quebró y pudo forzarse con alzaprima. Se sintió muy extraña. Pero pronto onduló sus alas de aquí para allá y se dio cuenta que hasta podía volar. La oruga, gordita y arrugadita, se había transformado en una bella mariposa. Y ahora la hermosa mariposa veía al mundo brillante y con una belleza extraordinaria.

Cuando se dio cuenta que necesitaba buscar alimento, notó algo muy colorido cercano. Al acercarse vio que era una hermosa azucena amarilla e inmediatamente supo que podría beber su nectar. De ahí en adelante, la mariposa voló de flor a flor: de una caléndula, a la petunia, a la impaciente, a la celosía, a la gloria de mañana, a la rosa, y a la margarita; de cada una bebía su nectar dulce y delicioso.

A la mariposa también le gustaba jugar. Pero se sentía sola, sin un amigo en el mundo. Buscó por todos lados del jardín, hasta que se encontró con el Sr. Pájaro Azulejo. El Sr. Pájaro Azulejo no le puso mucha atención a la mariposa, pues ya tenía muchos amigos. Entonces, fue a visitar a una tortuguita. Pero ella tampoco estaba interesada en hacerse la amiga de la mariposa porque iba a jugar con sus amigas las tortugas.

La mariposa se puso muy triste al no encontrar una amiga. Pensaba que tenía un defecto, o que era demasiado fea, y que sus alas eran demasiado grandes, y su cuerpo demasiado pequeño y amarillado. Se puso a gemir y llorar.

En ese momento, el Sr. Topo de repente sacó la cabeza de su poso terrestre y oyó los sollozos doloridos de la mariposa.
"Por qué estás llorando?" le preguntó. La mariposa lloró que nadie quiere jugar con ella. "Yo quiero ser un pájaro con plumas azules, o una tortuga con una cáscara dura y verde," dijo. "De esa manera puedo tener algunos amigos."

El Sr. Topo estaba confundido. "Yo siempre he pensado que las mariposas son las criaturas más hermosas de este planeta," dijo él. "No puedo comprender por qué te sientes tan triste. Yo estoy seguro que pronto vas encontrar algunos amigos."

La mariposa no le puso atención al Sr. Topo. Se sentía sola y furiosa. Quizo volar lejos, muy lejos del jardín, de su hogar. Y eso fue lo que hizo. La mariposa voló hasta que ya no pudo más.

A lo lejos la mariposa podía ver una luz que reflejaba detrás de unos árboles. Quiso saber que era, y al acercarse encontró que era el sol que se reflejaba en un lago. Como nunca había visto un lago, no sabía que esperar. Al llegar sobre el agua vio su propia reflección. Al principio pensaba que era otra mariposa, pero pronto descubrió que era su propio reflejo.

Estudió su reflejo. Por primera vez se dio cuenta de su propia imagen. Vio las multi-coloradas alas con matices de azules, violetas, anaranjados, amarillos y negros. Vio su cuerpo delicadamente formado con dos antenas que la hacía a ver tan gallarda. Aunque nunca había visto otra mariposa, pensaba que la imagen de sí misma era muy hermosa. De repente se sintió mucho mejor al convencerse a sí misma que no era fea, y que era tan bella como los pájaros, las tortugas y los otros animales.

La mariposa regresó a su jardín muy contenta, y se puso a jugar entre las flores, matas y árboles. El Sr. Pájaro Azulejo notó que tan feliz y alegre se veía la mariposa, y come se divertía en el jardín que quiso jugar con ella. Sin decir ninguna palabra la mariposa empezó a jugar con el Sr. Pájaro Azulejo. !Qué contenta estaba la mariposa ya que tenía un amigo nuevo! Los dos jugaron todo el día.

El próximo día, el Sr. Pájaro Azulejo volvió a jugar con la mariposa. Y con él vinieron sus amigos, y ellos trajeron a sus amigos, y pronto, la mariposa tenía muchos, muchos amigos nuevos. La mariposa aprendió que si quería tener amigos nuevos, primeramente tiene que ser su mejor amiga propia.

The Beautiful Butterfly and Her Friends *

Once upon a time there was a little caterpillar that fell from a tree. She felt a little dizzy from the long drop down to the soft ground, but otherwise she was fine. She quickly began to look for some chewy leaves to munch on.

The little caterpillar soon grew and grew to become very large. She was so large that she couldn't move very much anymore. Then, one day, she decided to take long rest on a leaf hidden behind a bush away from the noises and dangers of squirrels, birds and other insects. She soon became very sleepy and took a long nap. During her nap her soft body turned into a shell that was to become her new home for a while.

One bright sunny morning the little caterpillar felt a strange sensation. She realized she had something she didn't have before. They felt like giant wings on her small body. She wanted to move them but felt very cramped. Nevertheless, she kept trying and trying, until finally, her shell cracked and she was able to pry herself out of it. She felt very funny. But soon she was waving her wings back and forth and realized that she could even fly. She tried out her new wings and had so much fun that she forgot how hungry she was.

When she realized she needed to find food, she noticed something very colorful nearby. She quickly flew toward it. It was a beautiful daylilly and she immediately knew that she could drink its nectar. From then on, the little butterfly went from flower to flower, a marigold, petunia, impatient, celosia, morning glory, rose, and periwinkle, drinking their sweet nectar whenever she could, and enjoying their beauty.

The little butterfly also liked to play a lot. But she didn't have any friends. So, she decided to find her new

friends. She first went to Mr. Bluejay. He wasn't very interested in the little butterfly because he already had a bluejay friend. Then, she went to Miss little turtle. But she also had another turtle friend.

The little butterfly soon became very sad because she couldn't find a new friend. She began to think that there was something wrong with her. She thought she was too ugly, and that her wings were too big, and that her body was too small and too yellow. She began to cry and cry.

Mr. Mole accidently popped his head above the ground and heard the sobbing sounds of the little butterfly. "Why are you crying?" he asked. The little butterfly mumbled that no one wanted to play with her. "I wish I were a bird with blue feathers, or a turtle with a green hard shell," she said. "That way I can have some friends."

Mr. Mole was puzzled. "I always thought that butterflies are the most beautiful creatures on this planet," he said. "I can't understand why you feel so sad. I'm sure you will soon find some friends."

The little butterfly didn't believe Mr. Mole. She felt lonely and mad. She wanted to fly away, far from the garden that was her home. She flew and flew until she was too tired to go any farther.

In the distance she could see a bright light reflecting from behind some trees. She made her way toward it and found that it was the sun reflecting in the water. She had never seen a lake before, so she didn't know what to expect. As she approached the water she looked at her own reflection. At first she thought it was another butterfly, but soon discovered that it was her own reflection.

She studied her reflection. It was the first time she truly saw herself. She saw the multi-colored wings with hues of blue, violet, orange, yellow and black. She saw her delicately shaped body with her two antennas from her head that made her look so elegant. Even though she had not seen another butterfly, she thought the image of herself that she saw in the reflection was very beautiful. Suddenly, she felt a lot better when she convinced herself that she wasn't ugly and she was just as beautiful as the other birds and animals.

The little butterfly flew back to her garden and played around her flowers, bushes and trees. Mr. Bluejay noticed that the little butterfly was very happy and having a lot of fun playing in the garden. He went up to her and asked if he could play with her. She was happy to finally have a friend to play with. The two played hide and seek and chase until they were very tired.

The next day, Mr. Bluejay came back to play with the little butterfly. But this time he brought his friends, and they brought their friends, and soon, the little butterfly had many, many new friends. The little butterfly learned that if she wants to make new friends, she first has to be her own best friend.

The lesson in this story is that children must first value themselves as they are and because their self-view is positive, others will want to be their friend.

In this fable, the butterfly represents the child who feels shunned by her/his friends because she/he is different. She learns that others don't want to be her friend because they have friends that are like them. For many chldren this type of experiences is common. For the child who is "different" because of skin color, or culture or language, the nature of differences is inclusive of societal views. As such, the problem cannot be fixed in practical terms, and the child must learn to realize that resolving it is much different from fixing ordinary things. The lesson in this story is that children must first value themselves as they are and because their self view is positive, others will want to be their friend. In order for children to "own" this notion, they must comprehend it from their personal experiences. Each child perceives it from his/her own reality, and take from the story what is important to them.

The key to meaningful dialogue akin to the critical analysis that Freire and Macedo (1986) describe as an integral part of critical literacy, is unquestion-

ably the teacher. To do this successfully with students, the teacher must be keenly aware of their cultural, social, and political milieu. Understanding the oppressive power relations of the larger society is imperative if the teacher is to engage students in a transformative process integral to la nueva fábula. In this process, the teacher is enabling the student to acquire the kind of literacy that allows the student to read and understand his world, and is willling and able to take on the responsibility and courage to change what is needed. But the transformative process is never a one-way street. A true transformation will only occur when the teacher experiences similar enlightenment, not at the same level as his students, but an authentic one nevertheless. The teacher then, must also own up to a similar courage that Gee stated above in his loaded gun analogy, "literacy education is not for the timid."

The transformative nature inherent in the pedogogy that results from the literacy event using la nueva fábula has the potential of creating the language of "hope and possibility" which Herman García (1995) alluded to in his keynote speech to the Texas Association for Bilingual Education conference participants. He states:

> Nuestra lucha pedagógica tiene que llevar en sí un lenguaje de esperanza y posibilidad, que nutra a las nuevas construcciones de docencia y aprendizaje, y que nos permitan realizar el potencial académico e intelectual, que necesitamos desarrollar para nuestras perspectivas instruccionales. (p. 9)
> [Our pedogogical struggle has to include a language of hope and possibility, that nurtures the new constructions of teaching and learning and that allow us to realize the academic and intellectual potential that we need to develop for our instructional perspectives.]

La nueva fábula offers teachers and students a venue by which

> ***... the transformative process is never a one-way street. A true transformation will only occur when the teacher experiences similar enlightenment, not at the same level as his students, but an authentic one nevertheless.***

to deal with important themes relevant to our society today. These are not unlike the universal themes which are characteristic of the philosophy for children curriculum (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980), such as truth, friendship, caring, nature, and the natural such as in growth and change, self-confidence, conflict mediation and resolution, self-analysis and reflection, and problem-solving. The potential of la nueva fábula to create change is an example of the classroom environment that Miller (1993) suggests in her statement:

> If all students are to become more powerfully literate in our complex, multicultural world, I believe we must begin by creating classroom contexts, where motivated discussion supported by teachers at points of need, provokes the dialectic of critical reflection. The problems of social justice, intercultural and interethnic contacts and peaceful coexistence of peoples are central issues in contemporary societies. (p. 262)

Like Freire's (1986) notion of education that is more problem-posing than answer-giving, the concept of la nueva fábula poses more questions than provides answers in terms of its utility to help teachers and students and their parents focus on reflective and critical analysis of social issues. Its potential lies in teachers' understandings of the power of literacy inherent in la nueva fábula, and are willing to write their own fábulas (and become *fabulistas* in their own right), help children write their own, share with their parents, and request that parents write their own fábulas as well. Then, use these fábulas with students as vehicles to explore, analyze, reflect, and, of course, as a community of inquirers, transform themselves and the world.

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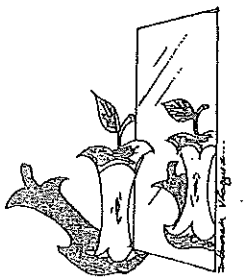
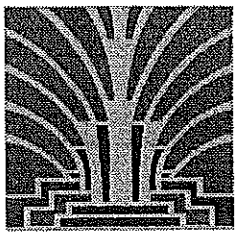


Ojos que no ven, tienen menos que sentir.
Eyes that don't see have less to lament.



Students Writing Fables: A Traditional Genre Gets a Modern Facelift

by Irma Guadarrama

The oral tradition of storytelling is deeply embedded in many cultures, including the Hispanic or Latino cultures. People of many ages can often recall a story, a proverb or dicho, a fable or a parable that someone, usually a family member, related to them in an oral tradition custom. The use of fables as a literacy event in the bilingual education classroom is a natural continuation of this tradition. Used as a means by which to help students write original works in their native language, fables are also powerful vehicles to help students learn how to self-educate or self-edify. I provide the rationale for using the fable, which I distinguish as *la nueva fábula*, along with a literature review in another article, "Multicultural Literature in Bilingual Education: Exploring the Story as Guide in La Nueva Fábula" (Guadarrama, 1995, reprinted in this volume). In this article I describe the Fable Writing Project, in which 70 fourth and fifth grade students participated by listening to fables, discussing them—their content and form—and writing their original works.

The first part of the article summarizes the Fable Writing Project in some detail. Secondly, I include descriptive profiles based on interviews of the lives of some of the young *fabulistas*, along with their fables. Lastly, I provide an overall analysis of all of the fables by focusing on thematic strands.

The Project

1. Goals of the project. The project had two main goals. One was to engage participating students in a literacy event that included listening, discussing, and creative writing, using the fable genre. Another goal was to form a collaborative between myself, a university teacher educator, and the teachers of the participating students.

2. The participants. A total of 70 fourth and fifth graders participated from three bilingual education classrooms in three schools. The schools, with the majority of students being Hispanic, were in urban areas in one of the state's largest school district. The classrooms that met the criteria were selected randomly. The criteria were that the students and teachers be bilingual, in the fourth or fifth grade, and interested in collaborating with the university educator. The sites selected were schools which I had a prior working relationship and/or planned to have one in the future. The intermediate grades were selected because of the likelihood that the students would have had prior knowledge of the fable genre from their lanaguage arts program.

3. Method or procedure. After selecting the classrooms, I discussed the project with each teacher and gave them a written outline of my plan. The project was divided into three consecutive days plus an additional day for which students presented their fables. Each session lasted about an hour and was conducted entirely in Spanish. On Day 1, I introduced myself and the project to the students. I began with a cooperative learning activity. I divided them into small groups and asked to line themselves up in alphebetical order according to their last names. I asked them to reflect on the lessons learned from this activity. We discussed the significance of a *lesson* and how *lessons* serve as guides throughout our lives. Then, I read and dramatized three fables from Arnold Lobel's book, Fábulas. I selected the ones that I felt had relevancy to the students' lives since my intention was to generate a dialogue with students after reading each fable. I also looked for fables that lent themselves to the use of improvisation and simple costumes. I informed the students that I wanted them to write their own fable and that we would share

these on the fourth day. I also explained my intention of "publishing" their fables in a book and mailing each a copy over the summer.

On Day 2, I read more fables, dramatized them and discussed their lessons and their relevance to our lives. I also introduced the structure of the fable as a literary genre, using a transparency to point out the main elements of the fable. I called on different students to assume the role of teacher and lead a discussion on identifying the elements of the fables we had discussed. The students enjoyed their role and their classmates responded positively.

Day 3 followed a similar agenda as Day 2 with few exceptions. I shared with the students a fable that I had written, titled "La hermosa mariposa" ["The Beautiful Butterfly"]. By then, many students had already written a fable and read it aloud to their classmates.

Day 4 which was about a week after Day 3, was specifically planned for the students to present their fables to their classmates. Two of the classes opted to use a karaoke microphone which I furnished. The third class decided to go to the cafetorium and use the stage and the stand-up microphone. I was pleasantly surprised when two of the classes performed skits to dramatize their fables.

Each student received a certificate for participating in the Fable Writing Project. Also, each student received through the mail a copy of the entire collection of fables. Additionally, six fables were selected from each group and the student authors received a book as a reward. The title of the book was Fábulas y leyendas Americanas by Ciro Alegría.

4. Conclusion. I asked the teachers for their impressions of the project—how well the students learned, the value of using fables to achieve instructional objectives, and my role in the project. Their responses were in general very positive. The overwhelming response was on how well the students responded to the fable writing assignment. They were even surprised by the positive response of some of their students. They also remarked on the brevity and the inappropriate timeliness of the project. Their consensus was that I should have started it at the beginning of the year and extended it for a longer length of time.

In all, I collected 79 original fables from 70 students. I observed most of the students read and/or act out their fable. In some cases, I observed students who courageously struggled to read their fables, after much coaxing to read in front of their peers. They seemed to have conquered their reading difficulties, at least for the moment.

I was very pleased with the student discussions on *lessons*. The students seemed to catch on to the idea of a lesson—how we learn them, who teaches us lessons— and how a fable is structured to illustrate a lesson. The students seemed to reflect intensely on their own life experiences to think of the lessons that they have learned. It seemed that the students were quite capable of generating appropriate lessons to guide them safely and wisely throughout their lives.

Besides working with the students in the Fable Writing Project, another goal I wanted to achieve was to work collaboratively with the teachers. At best, our working relationship was cooperative rather than collaborative, primarily since I initiated the project. Also, the brief time frame and the straightforward procedure disallowed us the flexibility to elaborate on the project. However, one teacher prepared a notebook containing excerpts of the fables from Lobel's book and transparencies to use as teaching aids. Two of the teachers commented on their intention to focus on the fables more in the future.

The Fables

In this section, I summarize the interview transcripts of five students who participated in the Fable Writing Project. After each summary I include each student's fable. Since the fables are written in Spanish, I provide an interpretive summary in English. For purposes of this publication, all of the fables have been edited slightly.

Beatriz Sánchez

Born in El Salvador thirteen years ago, Beatriz is the youngest sister of a family of five children. Her parents came to the United States to work when she was a little girl, leaving Beatriz with her grandmother while the other siblings stayed with the other set of grandparents. Her grandmother was no longer able to care for her, so she was the first of the children to join her parents in their new country. If she were in El Salvador today she wouldn't be in school. She thinks that teachers there don't care if children go to school and they don't keep students from fighting each other. She likes her fifth grade teacher where she attends school today because he tells a lot of jokes and is the best teacher she has ever had.

Beatriz has aspirations to become a lawyer to defend the rights of others. To the question of whether there are many injustices in El Salvador, she replied that *there are many*. She and her grandmother witnessed

a man shooting to death another in what appeared as a vengeful attack. She felt afraid but wanted to scold the man and tell him that someone could do the same to him. She also recalled a frightening experience of being followed by a man presumably to kidnap her. She had heard of this man that ripped the hearts out of little girls.

What she wants most in the world is that people respect and love one another so they won't fight and kill each other. Beatriz knows that she will have to stay on track to stay in school. She recalled one of her sister's frightful experience in which she was forced to join a gang, "el salvadortuche," but she resisted and came to join her parents in the United States. Now, all three of her sisters are in high school and they each have a part-time job. She is often alone at night while her family works. She watches television and is afraid to go out of her apartment.

The following is Beatriz's fable. The fable titled, "The Lost Swan," is about a swan that gets lost trying to return to his home. He asks a dog, cat, and a duck for help, but each one directed him to the other. Then, he asks the owl, who was very kind and helped the swan find his way home. For his help, the swan gives the owl a special place in a tree and assurance that if he were ever to get hungry, the swan would surely feed him. The lesson is, " you ought to know where you are going, where you are, and where you come from so you won't get lost; don't be embarrassed to ask others for directions even if they laugh at you."

El cisne perdido

Había una vez un cisne que salió del agua y decidió salir a a la ciudad. Cuando él trató de regresar a su lugar, no pudo porque él no sabía donde estaba. Entonces el cisne se sintió triste y solo. De repente él miró a un perro pasar y le dijo "¿Querido amigo, tú no sabes dónde queda las islas de las maravillas?"

"No, porque no oigo el agua," dijo el perro. "Pero yo te puedo ayudar, te llevaré a donde mi amiga; tal vez élla conoce.

Entonces el perro se lo llevó a donde su amiga, la gata. El cisne le preguntó lo mismo pero la gata dijo, "no, yo no conozco porque yo no salgo de mi casa, pero si quieres te llevaré a donde mi amigo; tal vez él te puede ayudar.

El cisne muy afligido le dijo al pato, "por favor, ayúdame a regresar a las islas de las maravillas" Y dijo el pato al cisne, "yo no conozco porque no paso de este lugar." Entonces el cisne empezó a zollosar y se sentía con mucho miedo y muy afligido. Luego en la noche el cisne no paraba de llorar. En eso el cisne miró a un buho y se desmayo porque les tenía mucho miedo.

"Por favor, no," dijo el buho. "Mira, amiguito, yo te puedo ayudar."

"¡Sí!" exclamó el cisne. "Mira, yo te llevaré de regreso," dijo el buho. Entonces el buho se lo llevo de regreso a las islas de las maravillas.

"Gracias," dijo el cisne,"por haberme ayudado, te permitiré a dormir en ese árbol; ese árbol será tuyo de aquí en adelante y si quieres comer, nadamás me pides comida y yo te la daré.

Desde entonces fueron buenos amigos y nunca se separaron.

Debes saber a dónde vas, en dónde estás y de dónde vienes para que no te vayas a perder, y no te avergüenses de preguntar a la gente dónde queda tal lugar, y ellas se rían de tí.

Marcos San Miguel

Marcos will turn thirteen this August. He enrolled in his school in December, just six months ago. His parents moved to the United States long before Marcos and his younger brother joined them. They had lived in a farm in Guanajuato, Mexico. He and his brother had stayed with his aunt and uncle.

Marcos doesn't like the United States. He misses his friends; he doesn't know whether he wants to stay or not. He likes to read but is not enthusiastic or excited about school. However, if he stays in the United States, he will continue his education.

Marcos spoke very little during my conversation with him. He seemed sad and frustrated and I assumed it was primarily because he is just learning English.

His fable is about an eagle and an owl. The two meet and strike a friendship. The owl is hungry and the eagle is lonely. By helping each other the owl satisfies his hunger and the eagle is no longer lonely. The lesson is that one should be able to trust your friends and not your enemy and that one should not have to go hungry.

Una águila y un tecolote

Había una ves un tecolote que andaba en el campo y no tenía que comer y venía una águila, sola y muy triste y le dijo el tecolote, "¿por qué estas así?"

La águila dijo, "es que no tengo amigos; "¿qué te parece hacemos yo y tu amigos?"

El tecolote dijo, "sí, seremos amigos. "Pero sabes, pero tengo un poco de hambre; vamos a buscar comida."

"Sí, vamos a buscar comida. Sí, vamos," dijo la águila."Cuántos ratones casates tu?

La amiga la águila contestó, "yo sólo casé cuatro ratones y ¿tú, amigo tecolote?"

"Pues mala suerte, me ganastes con uno," le dijo el tecolote a la águila. Tres ratones casé yo. Tengo mucha hambre, amiga águila y tú?

"Yo estoy contenta porque al fin me encontré un amigo bueno como tú."

"Oye amiga águila, ¿tú tienes hambre? ¿No me das tus ratones?" preguntó el tecolote.

"Sí, cómetelos," dijo la águila.

"Ahora tengo siete ratones." Se los comió y le dijo, "tengo más hambre."

"Vamos pues a buscar más ratones," dijo la águila.

"Ahora tú ¿cuántos ratones casates, amigo tecolote?" le preguntó la águila.

"Cuatro ratones casé yo," dijo el tecolote.

"Ahora sí, tengo hambre, amigo tecolote. Dame un ratón."

"Sí, con mucho gusto, amiga águila. Yo me como otro."

Se comieron dos y los que sobraron los dejaron allí.

"¿Qué te parese si vamos a mi casa, aguila?" le preguntó el tecolote.

"Sí voy con mucho gusto y luego me llevas a la tuya, tecolote," le contestó la aguila. Pero las dos casas estaban en el campo.

Hay que confiar en los

amigos y no en los enemigos y no hay que quedarse sin comer.

Araceli González

Araceli is a precocious ten year-old who arrived at the school one year ago. She and her family, consisting of her parents and a five-year old sister, are from Monterrey, México. Her father had been in the United States for eight years before the rest of the family could join him. During that time she would see him only at Christmas. To the question of why he came to the United States, she simply replied for the same reason as everyone, *freedom*. The family is here to stay but plan to visit Monterrey occasionally.

Compared to her previous school, her current school is very similar except that here there is a cafeteria and school hours are longer. She likes her fifth-grade teacher a great deal and credits him for helping her do well in math even though it has always been her worst subject. He makes learning fun and interesting by using dramatics and making them think. She has learned a great deal of English in the year that she's been here; she believes that bilingualism is important. Eventually, she would like to finish college and own a business.

She doesn't like the political corruption in Mexico and the fact that the dollar is worth more in the U.S. than Mexico. She thinks that there are too many children buying drugs and other dangerous things. She recalls the violence that she has seen around her apartment complex and how hopeful she is that in a few years her father will be able to buy a house for them.

If she had one wish it would be that the violence in the world would stop. She thinks people fight mostly because of greed.

I asked her how school can be a better place for students. She responded by saying that teachers should listen more to their students and make them work harder. Also, if teachers would make the books "come alive," children would pay more attention.

Araceli had written an essay about immigration in the United States. I asked her to elaborate on her ideas. She has analyzed the hostility that Americans have toward immigrants and has concluded that Americans don't like them because they steal their *space*, and immigrant families have too many children. But, what would the United States look like without immigrants? Immigrants help to harvest the food we eat; they help make the clothes we wear; they contribute fundamentally to our lives that if immigrants stopped coming to the United States, it would not be so wealthy.

She believes that everyone deserves an opportunity. I asked her about what opportunities she had as a student. She claims that students have the opportunity to

go to school, to college, to learn English. Her parents don't have that opportunity. When students refuse those opportunities, they are making a big mistake.

But why do some students take advantage of their opportunities and others do not? To that question she responded by saying that sometimes the violence in the homes drives students to become involved in gang life. Once they do, they stop attending school, or if they do go to school, they are easily distracted and their grades suffer. All this because they don't get the love and affection they need at home.

This is Araceli's fable. It is about a squirrel and a turtle. The squirrel is the hard worker and the turtle is the slacker. When winter came, the turtle didn't have a place to live or food to eat. The squirrel admonished the turtle but nevertheless offered him a place to live and some food. The lesson is that persons should fulfill their responsibilities to avoid getting sick or dying from the cold.

La ardilla y la tortuga

El verano se estaba acabando y el invierno estaba en camino. Es tiempo de trabajar para poder sobrevivir el invierno. Mientras la ardilla trabajaba, la tortuga estaba jugando. Un día la tortuga le prguntó, "¿Por qué no dejas el trabajo y vienes a jugar?"

"!NO!" exclamó la ardilla. Tengo que trabajar para conseguir comida para el invierno, tú deberías hacer lo mismo.

"No, gracias," contestó la tortuga.

Esa misma noche empezó a hacer frío. La ardilla dejó de trabajar y regresó a su casa calientita. La ardilla escuchó algunos llantos y salió. La ardilla preguntó, "¿Qué pasa?"

"Tengo, tengo frí-frío," dijo la tortuga.

"Te lo advertí," dijo la ardilla, "te dije que no jugaras, que te pusieras a trabajar. Ya vez las consecuencias. De pura suerte hice un abujero debajo de mi casa. Ahí puedes vivir. Te traje algo de comida para que vivas."

Siempre has tus responsabilidades si no te

quieres enfermar y morir por el frío.

Magda Flores

Magda has attended school here as a non-English speaker since she was in kindergarten. A fifth-grader, she is eleven years-old, has an eighteen year-old sister, two younger sisters and a brother, ages six, seven, and nine. Her parents are from El Salvador but she and her younger siblings were born here.

At the time that I talked with Magda, she was looking forward to her annual visit to El Salvador. I asked her to describe where she will be staying for over a month. She will play with her cousins in an open area, more spacious than what she has in the apartment complex where she lives. They will go to the fields to milk the cows and pick fruit such as oranges. She commented that she has forgotten many of the Spanish words. She will also visit her other set of grandparents who live nearby fields of banana and mango trees. She also enjoys swimming in the river.

I asked her if she wants to go back to live in El Salvador. She replied that she would because she feels so much happier there—she can go anywhere she wants. It's too dangerous to do that here.

Her parents emigrated to the United States before she was born. Her older sister has never lived with them. She is waiting for her visa papers. Meanwhile, she lives on her own with the money her parents send her.

Magda also wants to live in Boston, even though she's never lived there. Her aunt, uncle and cousins have lived there for many years and they occasionally come to visit Magda and her family. She says that from the stories they tell her, Boston seems like a nice place to live even though it's also dangerous. She likes the idea that it snows in Boston.

Her college plans are to study law because she wants to defend people.

Magda's fable is about three circus animals: a dog, a lion and a bear. The dog is mad because the bear told him he was too fat. He confided in his friend, the lion, who assured him that he wasn't fat at all. Why, then, did the bear tell him that? So, they confront the bear and press him for answers. The bear responded that he wanted to make him mad but he still wants to be his friend. The dog remains his friend, the lion also remains the dog's friend and they have fun playing together. The lesson is that people need to believe in themselves and to resolve your problems with others by talking to him/her.

El circo

Un día el circo llegó a Houston. Todos estaban felices porque el circo va a salir el sábado. Pero uno de los perros chistosos estaba

enojado. Uno de los leones le preguntó, "¿Qué te pasa?"

El perro le contestó, "estoy enojado."

"¿Por qué?" dijo el león? "Porque el oso me dijo que era muy gordo.

"No," dijo el león, "no estás gordo."

"¿Entonces porque me dijo eso el oso?"

"Porque sólo pasa diciendo mentiras. El sólo quiere enojar a los animales del circo porque son mejores que él y él estaba sólo jugando. Vamos hablar con el oso."

"Okey," le dijo el perro.

Cuando llegaron al cuarto del oso le dijieron, "¿por qué me mentiste?

"Es que yo sólo quería enojarte. Pero sigo siendo tu amigo," dijo el oso.

El perro dijo que sí iba a ser amigo del oso.

Vino el oso, el dueño del circo y dijo, "ya van a empesar los ensayos."

Cuando estaban practicando el león le dijo al perro si se sentía bien, el león dijo que sí. Y se pasaron buen tiempo juntos.

Hay que siempre creer en ti

mismo, no en otros. Y resuelve los problemas hablando con esa persona.

María Elena Rodríguez

Twelve year-old María Elena has been attending school here for only seven months. She and her 10 year-old brother came from El Salvador to be with their parents. A 7 year-old brother still waits to join them at a later time.

María, a fifth-grader, likes her school but feels frustrated because she's just learning English. She likes her teacher—he's a good person and makes them laugh. In El Salvador, there were as many as fifty students in a class. If students misbehaved they were punished by getting swatted on the hands with a ruler.

María has experienced her share of pain, disappointments and fear in her brief life. She talked about the numerous gangs, called "maras" who were involved with drugs and violence. Some of the gangs are known to force girls to join them. She was threatened by one gang who wanted to beat her up if she didn't join them, but she was able to fend them off.

The harsh economic conditions were distressful for the entire family. People suffered, she said, because everything costs so much and the jobs don't pay very well.

Her worst experience, however, occurred when she was six years-old. She recalled the fierce shooting around the city. One day, she and her family witnessed a horrifying death. She remembered she had to stand on her bed to reach the window. They saw men with knives slitting the throats of other men, decapitating them. She and her family had to sleep outside because the bullets were going through their house.

Another source of pain for María is the memory of her father. She has not seen him in nine years. She talked about him with mixed emotions of confusion, disappointment, pain and yearning. When I asked her to tell me her one biggest desire in the world, she replied that she wanted to see her father, and to learn English. María Elena loves to write. She wants to work in a profession where she can write. Maybe even become a teacher.

This is María's fable. It is about a flea who was known as the racing champion. A horse challenged the flea in a race and he accepted. The horse called the other animals together and told them they must beat the flea so she could get out of town. During the race, the flea was at the front of the line and jumped on the back of a dog, and won the race. The horse got angry and killed the flea. The lesson is that you shouldn't be a bad sport if you lose your bet. The title of her fable is, "The Flea Who Won a Trophy."

La pulga que ganó el trofeo

Yo voy a escribir una fábula de una pulga que ganó un trofeo.
Había una vez un parque. Allí en el campo vivía un caballo, un coyote, y una pulga. Allí a la pulga le llamaban campeona porque ningún animal le podía ganar ninguna carrera a la pulga. Un día el caballo le dijo, "mira pulga a tí te llaman la campeona porque nadie te puede ganar, pero te apuesto que los otros animales te pueden ganar.

Le dijo la pulga, "Así le dijo, yo les puedo a ganar a esos animales feos."

El caballo dijo, "si tu ganas te daré una casa para que vivas y también un trofeo. ¿Acepta?"

La pulga dijo, "si acepto la apuesta."

El caballo salió corriendo a decirles a los otros animales que corrieran con la pulga y que ganaran para sacar a la pulga del campo. Todos los animales dijieron si aceptamos y al siguiente día todos los animales estaban listos. La pulga estaba primero esperando alos otros animales.

El caballo dijo, "corran," y la pulga quedó parada y

caminando despacio. Estaba esperando a un perro para subirse y irse. El caballo se estaba riendo de la pulga. La pulga vio a un perro y se montó la pulga en el perro y la pulga ganó. El caballo enojado mató a la pulga. Colorín, colorado, esta fábula se acabado.

Que nunca hay que enojarse por si apuestan algo y tu amigo gana no te enojes ni se peleen.

Analysis of Fables

For purposes of analyzing the thematic strands in each of the three groups, I selected 61 fables that had discernible lessons. I categorized them by themes, and tabulated their recurrences. The results are listed in the three tables in the following page. The fables of a fifth-grade class, which I called *Los Fabulosos*, are analyzed in Table 1. Fables from the fourth-grade class, *Los Maravillosos*, are analyzed in Table 2, and another fifth-grade class, *Los Fantásticos*, are in Table 3.

A general analysis of the themes reveals the influence of the students' experiences as they attempt to shape their notions of *lessons* into the fable genre. The themes are varied and reflect ideas or feelings of compassion, distrust, responsibility and practicality. Some are comical such as the one in the group, *Los Maravillosos*: don't hurt an extraterrestial creature. Certainly, it's very good advice. I didn't expect the high degree of originality that I found in all of the groups. Students usually imitate literary patterns in their attempts to create original compositions. These students seemed to create fables with confidence and understanding. As I pointed out earlier, their teachers indicated how surprised they were in the quality of their student's work and their understanding of the purpose of the fable. This could be due to the students' familiarity with the fable as an oral tradition genre.

Conclusion

When I first met the students who authored the fables presented above, they appeared happy, enthusiastic, and friendly. But I didn't realize how involved their lives were; their worlds were anything but simple. In actuality, they seem to be trying to make sense of their two worlds: the present one and the one they left behind. They seem to possess a magnetic, psychological pull toward their homeland. I'm struck by the commonalities of their lives—they have each experienced a traumatic interruption in their childhood marked primarily by the separation from family members. The uprootedness from a home that signifies their cradle, is a traumatic experience that surely has taken a toll on their emotional and psychological well-being. It is also important to note how they seem to want to "grow-up" quickly, as if to flee their childhood that has left them with psychological scars, and is painful and frustrating.

But once in their new country, the road doesn't get any easier. They must battle through the language barrier and arrive at some sense of the contradictions and conflicts they experience in their new cultural environment. They must deal with societal perceptions that bombard them with hostile, negative messages. The climb up the mountain of success is extreme and the stumbling rocks are plentiful.

I have learned so much from the students—by observing them, through our dialogues, and their fables. They have revealed to me a world that was partly familiar to me but there was so much I didn't know. In our conversations I noticed how often I would relate my own life story to them as a way of sharing an understanding—*a situated definition* (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). In this way I was serving as mediator, to smooth the paths, or soften the blows, so to speak. I too couldn't speak English when I entered school for the first time, and I remember a lot of painful experiences because I was the daughter of immigrant parents. María and I also shared a moment in which we could talk about the experience of losing a father through abondonment.

The Fable Writing Project allowed us the opportunity to share our lives with one another and as a result, opened a door that will never be closed, not as long as we think about how much we *learned* from each other.

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Table 1 Los Fabulosos

No.	%	Theme
4	18.1	Self-confidence
3	13.6	Don't believe your friends
2	9	Be responsible, work for what you deserve
2	9	Don't hold a grudge against others
2	9	Feel good about yourself
1	4	Forgive your friends
1	4	Provide food to those who need it
1	4	Confide in your friends
1	4	Seek help from your friends when you need it
1	4	Help others in need
1	4	It's better to learn from others instead of making fun of them
1	4	Put your umbrella away when you don't need it

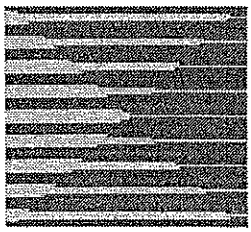
Table 2 Los Maravillosos

No.	%	Theme
5	26.3	Don't confide in your friends
5	26.3	Don't be presumptuos
1	5.2	Don't be fooled by your enemies who contend they are your friends
1	5.2	Don't believe your friends
1	5.2	Some of your friends are good friends
1	5.2	We need to share with others
1	5.2	Seek out your friends when you need help
1	5.2	Take care not to be in danger
1	5.2	Don't hurt extraterrestial creatures
1	5.2	Take your time to do things well
1	5.2	Everyone has something special that no one else has

Table 3 Los Fantásticos

No.	%	Theme
3	13.6	Always be prepared
3	13.6	Don't lie to others
2	9	Don't try to be what you are not
2	9	Don't believe what strangers tell you
1	4.5	You should try to make new friends
1	4.5	Don't believe your friends
1	4.5	Don't be fooled by others
1	4.5	Watch out for your enemies
1	4.5	Don't be a bully
1	4.5	Listen to advice your family gives you
1	4.5	Help others for someday you may need their help
1	4.5	Heed your mother's advice not your friends'
1	4.5	You should respect others
1	4.5	Don't roller skate in the street
1	4.5	Don't let your dog run loose
1	4.5	Watch over the food you bring your child

Aunque la jaula sea de oro, no deja de ser prisión.
Though the cage be made of gold, it's still a prison.



A Teacher's Story on Becoming Critical

by Samuel D. Sarabia

Editors' note: Sanuel Sarabia narrated this story through an interview.

I grew up in Fort Stockton, a very small town in West Texas. I was the middle child, one of five. My first memory of kindergarten was not being allowed to go to the "real" school—we went to another small school about two blocks away designed as a very intense [English] immersion program. It was a very frightening experience. For example, after nap we knew we were going to have to ask to go to the bathroom in English, and the teacher was very concerned about pronunciation. I remember spending nap time talking to myself: "This is what I'm going to ask. This is what I'm going to say." Kindergarten was not a positive experience whatsoever. I remember by first grade I was speaking, reading and writing in English. It's funny, but I can't remember how I learned it. But from then on, I excelled in school work. I was always in the top group or in the top classroom. Even at that age everyone knew that if you were in Ms. So-and-so's class, you were one of the smart students. And I always seemed to be in that group. I loved reading and I always have—anthologies, Greek mythology, Roman mythology even as early as third grade fascinated me. I think it was because I was a concientious student and my mom's constant push to be educated that I was so successful in school. When my dad worked late, he worked for the sofa company; we would drive out of town 15 miles to go leave his supper. Mom would make sure I would go with her and she would say, "I want you to notice how tired he is. Look, he's so tired because we didn't have an education. We are forced to work like this." She would always end it up very positive by saying that they were sacrificing so that I could be educated. She instilled the value of education in me from the very beginning. She took us to the library. When it was time for la siesta, she would read her novela and I'd read my library book. The whole family enjoyed reading for that reason.

... after nap we knew we were going to have to ask to go to the bathroom in English, and the teacher was very concerned about pronunciation.

If you're in West Texas and you want to go to a university you have to move away, but that is difficult because culturally speaking we're all expected to get married and raise a family in the same town. My parents were dying to be abuelos. Everything they had learned and had dreamed of, they were sacrificing to send us to college. In my case it was to San Angelo, 168 miles away. At the end of my first year of college I had this crazy idea that I wanted to be a priest. So I transferred to Houston to St. Mary's Seminary and St. Thomas University. As a result of the training at St. Mary's, I have a background in theology, philosophy, and religious education. I also tutored students and taught religious education during that time. The emphasis I selected for my training was working with deaf people. I learned some sign language. It was a beautiful experience. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Upon graduation from seminary I felt I wasn't ready to enter the priesthood, so I decided to take one year of absence, which has turned into something like

fifteen now. During that time I asked myself, "What am I going to do? I have a degree in liberal arts with a major in philosophy, what can I do with that?" My first position was director of religious education for two small communities. I was responsible for organizing their educational programs for religious instruction, recruiting teachers to serve as catechists, and training them. I was having to travel seventy miles one way, so I was faced with the choice of either moving to one of the small towns, or finding another job in the city. I decided to stay in the city and I got a job at Foley's department store. I moved up to supervisor and then to manager, and then I went to the corporate buying office. That experience taught me so much about organization—keeping on top of tasks, delegating, checking, reviewing, how many sweaters sold, what sizes, what colors, what stores, what fabric is selling at this store.

At the same time I was working at Foley's I found a part-time job directing a religious education program for an inner city school. When I first started, we had about 30 catechists for 400 students. I would say about 90 percent of them were in English classes. There was really nothing being done for the Spanish speaking population. So immediately I saw my challenge—recruit Spanish speaking catechists and start servicing those children who need religious instruction in Spanish. We increased the program to about 750 students. It was awesome because we now had religious instruction being offered from kinder up into high school for the students that really needed it. It also brought the entire community of Spanish-speaking people in to participate. Up to that point they had felt like all they could do was work in the kitchen. They realized they had expertise as catechists because of their experiences in Mexico. They realized they were needed.

I saw that already some of the students were dropping out of the educational process. And it was O.K. with the teachers.

I continued to love teaching very much, so when I heard of the alternative certification program, I jumped at the opportunity. I was accepted and started as a third grade bilingual teacher. And that was eight years ago. My first year I was the new teacher of the year. Since then I've been elected bilingual teacher of the year twice and teacher of the year twice. I wound up being one of the top three educators for Houston Independent School District. That is a big honor I think. I believe my success can be contributed to my background in religious education.

My first year as a third-grade teacher I felt that I was just keeping it together—classroom management and giving some solid instruction. At least once a week I did a hands-on activity to continue motivating and bringing in the parent support—to make them come to school; to make them see the value. At the same time I continued to attend workshops. I also do a lot of self-directed reading, and subscribe to different journals. All this was very helpful in getting ideas. Eventually I enrolled in a master's program at the University of Houston. I received my master's in bilingual education and during that time I was exposed not only to the teaching of professors, but to the sharing with other professionals, other peers, other districts. That really was very, very helpful to me.

After I felt a little more comfortable teaching, I asked to be moved to fifth grade. I was concerned with what was happening in the upper grades as far as the management of students. I saw that already some of the students were dropping out of the educational process. And it was O.K. with the teachers. When I moved to fifth grade, I remember one little boy in particular I'd seen for two years being put outside the classroom. Every time he got in trouble he'd sit outside. He would wave and I'd wave back. And in fourth grade it was the same thing. I'd wave and he'd wave back. When I saw he was in my room for fifth grade, the first day I had a conference with him. I told him that I would never send him outside if he got in trouble. I don't do that. He knew from that point on that he couldn't push a button and get ejected so that he could sit outside and enjoy the weather and enjoy the waving. He was going to miss out on instruction and that was not acceptable. It was little things like that—little strategies that I had to work with the fifth graders. It was very different than third grade. I had to make sure that even when disciplining students or using some kind of approach that I maintained their dignity. If it meant speaking to them afterwards, or pulling them aside as everyone else was engaged in instruction, I would have to do it. In some cases it meant we had a secret signal. If I gave a student the secret signal, it meant, "Stop and think about what you're doing. Something's

not right."

Then I was asked to work in the content mastery center, which is working with either learning disabled or slow learners, children who are not mastering a certain objective. And sometimes yes, teachers send students here not because of instructional issues, but because of behavioral

I've got to set up an environment in which they become self-directed learners and critical thinkers faced with real-life problems.

issues. And I think here again, my strength is the rapport I have with those "very difficult to handle children". I'm able to build up a level of trust. I have very high expectations of what they already know, but also the conferencing techniques I use build trust and respect. I think more than anything they can tell I have their best interests at heart.

My students know it's O.K. to be honest with me when they are bored. My sixth grade boys this past year said they wanted to read about low-riders. So I said, O.K., let's look on the Web (Internet). We hooked up with some car clubs from California. We set ground rules and they knew what the finished product was going to have to look like. They knew the writing process. They knew what it would entail in reading. It was an area in which I was totally ignorant so it was a learning experience for me. It keeps one as a teacher from getting bored and just pulling out the same lesson every year.

As a facilitator, I am not and can not be the only bearer of knowledge and teach what I deem important to the students. I've got to set up an environment in which they become self-directed learners and critical thinkers faced with real-life problems. They observe, they analyze, they collect data, they process, and they come up with possible solutions. My job as the facilitator is to incorporate the objectives into the activities. It has to be meaningful to them. It has to be something relevant—something that they can share with mom and dad because the project has to do with the neighborhood or the school community. My goal is to empower the students by teaching them how to be learners. I keep stressing, "You'll learn your whole life, not only in a formal classroom. You'll have to know where to search for information, for resources. You've got to be motivated to ask why. And if no one can answer your question, look it up yourself. And if you can't find any information, then think it out. Maybe you're the one with the answer. Maybe you're the one that needs to publish the book." One of the most empowering learning experiences we had happened almost by mistake. We were doing a writing exercise outside. We were going to use our senses observe everything and write it down. So we were sitting in the playground area which had been off limits because new playground equipment had been installed but it wasn't ready yet. There some wonderful observations. All of a sudden this first grade teacher took out her students and they started using the playground equipment.

And of course everyone is glancing at each other because we knew it was off limits. The P.E. coaches were coming out to conduct their next class and one whispered to the other and one of them left. And one of my kids said, "Mr. Sarabia, they're going to go get the principal. Sure enough, not even two minutes later our principal came and was very directive with the teacher, "You know it's off limits." She got the students off the playground equipment and they walked away. Well, then my kids started writing furiously. I knew what they were writing about but I could only speculate what angle they were taking. Were they taking the point of view of the teacher? Or were they taking the point of view of the principal? At the end of the writing activity, we regrouped and processed and celebrated our writing. There was a lot of anger—"Why did he have to do that? P.E. gets to use the equipment and if it's ready for P.E. to use then everyone should be able to use it."

At that point you have to start showing them how to deal with anger— how to plan it out. They wanted to talk to the principal. I asked them, "What's going to be your approach? It has to be appropriate. You have to remember you're going to speak to a principal, and there's a certain way you need to communicate. You have to be respectful of anyone and everyone even though you may not be in agreement with them." Then I played devil's advocate and helped them role play their meeting with the principal. They said to the principal, "It's not fair

My goal is to empower the students by teaching them how to be learners.

that you got Ms. so-and-so off the slide." And I said, "Well, she knew the rule was that know one could go on." "Yes, but why is P.E. being able to use it?" Then I said, "Well P.E. has two teachers and Ms. so-and-so is only one." The students responded, "Yes, but there are two or three P.E. classes out there."

I was ecstatic because the person who said that already knew division; there's more students per adult in P.E. than in Ms. so-and-so's class. So that argument wouldn't stick. Then I said, "Well I'm afraid of people getting hurt because there are nails and glass out there." Their response was, "You're not concerned if P.E. students get hurt?" We were very well prepared. We decided the next day we would invite him to class, which entailed sending an invitation. I incorporated into our plan a lesson about how to write a small letter. I'm always trying to tie everything as much as possible into the curriculum. That's what I mean by facilitating. You don't know what's going to come up but you take advantage of every opportunity, using the enthusiasm and energy generated by the project. We wrote the letter and the principal had agreed to come the next day. At the end of the day I saw a group of my students in the office with the principal—a group of very action-oriented students decided to jump the gun. They wanted answers now. He was very gracious and said, "I will meet with you tomorrow, but let me know quickly what this is all about." And they shared a lot of what was going on. So by the next day when they met, he had already instructed all the custodial staff to remove all the glass, rake the sand so it's smooth, and make sure everything's ready because they were going to open up the playground to everyone.

At the meeting, he heard their arguments and discussions for the sake of including the whole class. He told them, "Well, I think that you're right. This is what we've done. It will be open." They felt so empowered. They felt they had made a difference for every single classroom on this campus. No, they didn't change something for the whole country, but for them it was meaningful. It was very relevant. The meeting brought wonderful closure to our writing assignment because then we wrote about what had happened. The writing process we were utilizing was a lot more effective than any typical writing assignment that may not be relevant to students' lives. Sometimes those can be a little fake, a little meaningless. And the child sits there trying to think up of something. He spends a lot of time thinking about what he is going to say instead of writing about something that naturally came up.

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I think there are three things that really have helped me grow as a teacher. One is my own observations. At the beginning of my teaching career I was very cautious and faithfully used the suggested curriculum and materials. I would experiment once a week with a fun activity and I noticed that even those who ordinarily didn't participate came to life. They would have a lot of questions—the energy level in that room skyrocketed. Then I knew this was the kind of instruction I had to start moving towards even though I didn't feel comfortable doing it. So that was the first step. The second step in my professional growth was going to in-services. Sometimes the workshops were wonderful; sometimes unfortunately they would be horrible. But regardless I was always led to other resources. That's where the importance of being an independent learner comes in. You have to be excited about being a learner and I think that comes across to your students as well. I do a lot of follow-up reading on topics presented at in-services. I wouldn't adopt new ideas immediately because I'm dealing with a different population, different culture, and background. These students bring different experiences, so I would have to make adaptations. This is the third thing that helped me develop professionally—the adaptation process. That's where my transformation came from. It was not overnight, but by the beginning by my second year I was noticing a change. I was doing more grouping, providing more choices, providing more activity.

Sometimes we forget that fifth graders are still children. They have the same desire for pats on the back, compliments and understanding as other kids do. I think another thing they need is to know is that they will have problems with the school system. Sometimes it seems like it's really not working for minorities. We talk about the level of expectation teachers have for them and it's surprising, but they already know when a teacher has pre-conceived notions of how they can perform. But they also know that there are teachers who are different and have high

We talk about the level of expectation teachers have for them and it's surprising, but they already know when a teacher has pre-conceived notions of how they can perform.

expectations for them, and what I try to instill in students is to have high expectations for themselves. I tell them, "If you get "Ms. A" next year who does not care about you, will not teach you, you need to be prepared to be successful." I try to convince them to take learning into their own hands. I also try to teach them how to handle anger and look at their options for responding to unfair treatment.

Mi vieja cultura

Por qué te alejas de mí,
Cuando sabes bien que eres mi toda
Desde que nací en tu cuna; eres mi
Alimento que me da vida y amor.
En los rostros de las calles solitarias te
Veo, escondida, y a veces oigo tus dolores,
Que me aprietan, hasta que no puedo,
Y lloro, lloro lágrimas de los ríos antiguos.
En mi joventud me hacías reír, eras
Un mambo en mi alma, una
Cobija en el frío; y tus colores una sombrilla
De cielo y estrellas que brillaban en mis ojos.
Mi vieja cultura, veo tus ojos llorosos,
Arrugados, marcados por el sentimiento,
Duermes en mi corazon, y juegas en mis sueños,
No te dejo; tu eres mi velita de vida,
Y apagarte me muero contigo.

Irma Guadarrama