

The authors in this international volume use the imaginaries and strengths of various perspectives to aid in addressing justice in ways that have not previously been considered to create more just worlds for those who are young, as well as for the rest of us. The first set of chapters place at the forefront the lives of those who are younger who are commonly situated in positions of invisibility, disqualification, and even erasure. In the second section, the authors acknowledge that needed (re)conceptualizations of those who are younger, along with appreciation for human diversity and entanglements between the so-called human and nonhuman worlds, are the foundations for more just care and education environments. From the critique of neoliberal reform discourses to reconceptualizing human relations with nonhuman animal and material worlds, care and learning environments are rethought. The set of chapters in the final section take-up the 20th century critical concerns with constructions of "child" that have dominated and continue to govern perspectives imposed on those who are younger. Suggestions for becoming-with those who are younger through resources like reconceptualist scholarship, Black and Indigenous Studies, and various posthuman perspectives are provided throughout.

"This is a timely and important book. The contributions take up the critical task of inquiring into what it might look like to centre justice in the worlds and worldings of young children in current times of intensified and unevenly distributed precarity."

—Fikile Nxumalo, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,
Ontario Institute for the Studies in Education, University of Toronto

"This timely and evocative volume traces how historical, political, and developmental discourses continue to influence how we mobilize justice, equity, and care in the lives of young children across the globe...caring for children is not about protecting children or using them as props for our own political agendas, but deeply understanding their entanglement with adults, the material world, nonhuman creatures, and our global communities."

—Haeny S. Yoon, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University

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Childhoods in More Just Worlds: An International Handbook

Cannella and Kinard, Eds.

Childhoods in More Just Worlds

An International Handbook

Edited by Tim Kinard and Gaile S. Cannella

CHAPTER 10

“Your Children Are Having Too Much Fun”: Teaching Literacy With Radical Hope

Luz A. Murillo

We cannot reduce children to a pair of eyes that see, a pair of ears that listen, a vocal mechanism that emits sounds, and a hand that clumsily squeezes a pencil and moves it across a sheet of paper. Behind (or beyond) the eyes, ears, vocal cords and hand lies a person who thinks and attempts to incorporate into his or her own knowledge this marvelous medium of representing and recreating language, which is writing, *all* writing. (Ferreiro, 2003, p. 34)

IN THIS CHAPTER, I describe attempts to teach against the literacy miseducation of emergent bilingual children, a challenge that, together with fellow scholars, colleagues, and students, I have been wrestling with for many years. As a biliteracy scholar, I am specifically concerned here with classroom instruction as a site of historical and contemporary subjugation of children whose home languages and literacy and cultural practices are viewed as deviant from English monolingual norms. For reasons that will be apparent to many readers, teaching literacy against racial and linguistic discrimination and in support of young bilingual children is no easy task. And yet, as I hope to show, there are reasons to be hopeful, despite the many barriers facing bilingual children and their teachers, that education through literacy—this “marvelous medium of expression, of representing and recreating language” (Ferreiro, 2003, p. 34)—can contribute to educational justice long overdue.

To tell this story, I share the example of Nina, a second-year teacher in Central Texas, beginning with a vignette from her kindergarten classroom. I ground the work of bilingual children, literacy teachers, and teacher preparation programs in a review of selected literature in three areas: children's responses to literate environments, the emerging field of raciolinguistic ideologies and racioliteracies, and how dominant forms of literacy instruction have been shaped by "reading science" and capitalism. I describe an ethnographic case study of literacy instruction and learning in Nina's classroom in which we extended the concept of "kidwatching" to "teacherwatching." Through this example, I explore literacy instruction as a form of "radical hope" (Lear, 2006) with potential to transform teacher practice and preparation in favor of bilingual children. The chapter concludes with thoughts for literacy educators, teacher preparation programs, and researchers interested in challenging raciolinguistic ideologies through sustained collaboration with new literacy and bilingual education teachers beyond the time limits of their formal teacher preparation.

Literacy before Schooling

Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky (1982) emphasized the central role of language and cognition in children's early development of reading and writing. In the United States, where schools have historically envisioned and promoted literacy as a practice that occurs only in English, the great majority of children from Latinx/immigrant backgrounds and Spanish-speaking households are confronted with the task of learning without the benefit of their home language (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Foley (1997) urged researchers to challenge and deconstruct the deficit thinking and culture-of-poverty orientations that continue to inform the education of bilingual and working-class racialized children. Similarly, Flores, Tefft, and Diaz (1991) invited scholars to transform deficit myths about learning, language, and culture. Despite more than a quarter century of scholarship exposing harmful racist and English monolingual ideologies underlying literacy instruction in the United States (Dyson, 2015), Latinx students and their teachers remain subject to forms of linguistic discrimination that narrow opportunities for learning and teaching and limit the literacy development of bilingual learners.

In this chapter, I draw on theories of raciolinguistic ideologies (Chaparro, 2019; N. Flores & Rosa, 2015; García & Otheguy, 2017; Rosa, 2019) and racioliteracy ideologies (Saldivar, 2019) to understand the risks that novice teachers must take to comply with state mandates to help Spanish-speaking children develop literacy while simultaneously navigating the contradictory mandates that frame bilingualism and biliteracy as tools to transition children into English-only instruction. This ethnographic case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) is based on the words and actions of Nina and her kindergarten students, as well as their interactions with school administrators, fellow teachers, and bilingual families. The study demonstrates how literacy teachers of Latinx children can

practice epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) in order to help linguistically racialized students thrive despite the colonizing forms of literacy education that persist in many school settings (N. Flores, 2017; Lear, 2006).

"Yo Soy un Lector y un Escritor": Fostering Radical Hope in a Bilingual Kindergarten

In the fall of 2019, I was invited, along with another of Nina's former professors, to read bilingual books with her kindergarten students. Because the date of the invitation coincided with our university's graduation ceremonies, we decided to visit while still dressed in our regalia. Our university prides itself on serving first-generation college students, and it has been designated by the U.S. federal government as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. In electing to share a bit of the university's symbolic capital with the children we were reminded of the ideological contradictions that aspirations of higher education can pose for Latinx and linguistically diverse children. On previous visits, we noticed that the hallways were decorated with pennants of famous universities and that the name and logo of the teacher's alma mater were displayed at the entrance of each classroom. In this early-exit transitional bilingual education program, the most common type of bilingual education in Texas and in the United States, children are expected to master English literacy before the end of third grade. The end of reading and writing instruction in Spanish is a linguistic and cultural sacrifice Latinx children are expected to make in the name of academic achievement. Given research indicating that young bilingual children are quite aware that school success will require them to study only in English (Moll, 2008), we were conscious of the ideological weight of our regalia.

As the children took turns trying on our caps and the colorful "Educación Bilingüe" sashes worn by our Bilingual/Biliteracy Education graduates and faculty, they asked many questions about the university. They eagerly showed us their notebooks and the portfolios Nina uses to document their growth, as well as their writing about tamales, pozole, and other foods made with *maíz* (corn) posted on the classroom walls. We were struck by the enthusiasm and literate confidence of these 5- and 6-year-old children. Clearly, they saw themselves as capable readers and writers. While telling us about their writing and drawings, the children made detailed connections to their families, homes, and pets in Texas, Mexico, and Guatemala. We were also impressed with the way Nina spoke with the children to instill in them the idea of being literate. We noticed that on the few occasions a student said, "Yo no puedo escribir/leer esto" (I can't write or read this), Nina pointed to a large poster she had created with the phrase "Soy un lector y un escritor" (I'm a reader and a writer) and invited the student to read it with her. By allowing students to read and write about ideas that interest them and by encouraging the children to identify as readers and writers, Nina was guiding them to develop a love of written language and confidence in their own biliterate abilities. This is a practice

that Emilia Ferreiro, Frank Smith, and other literacy researchers have been telling us about for many years.

Synthesis of Selected Literature

Historical Background: The Vancouver Conference

In 1982, at the invitation of Frank Smith, 14 scholars from around the world and representing different disciplines met at the University of Victoria, Canada to participate in the symposium *Children's Response to Literate Environments: Literacy Before Schooling*. The aim of the symposium was to discuss the intellectual work of preschool children from perspectives in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education (Goelman, Oberg & Smith, 1982). To organize their discussion, researchers grouped the topics and subsequent publication of their papers into three themes: literacy and culture, learning to be literate, and literacy and cognition. The interdisciplinary nature of this scholarly dialog highlighted multiple roads to literacy among bilingual children.

Notably, the research presented at the symposium had been conducted in different countries and in different languages and these multilingual and international perspectives made the conclusions relevant for literacy education around the world. Key ideas from the symposium included play and children's creative and imitative involvement with literacy activities as a key developmental stage in becoming literate; "children's contacts with literacy, literate adults, and literacy activities occur between a wide range of social domains within the family" (Goelman, 1982, p. 202); and the principle that children's encounters with literacy in different environments without formal instruction demonstrate that literacy is firmly embedded in the home and other social contexts. One important discussion centered on new research challenging the ideology that literacy develops only in the context of formal schooling, as presented by Glenda Bissex (1982):

Children encounter literacy within meaningful social contexts and learn (as distinct from being taught) to view literacy as a way of making sense of the world. Formal instruction in literacy tends to be linear and devoid of much of the real-life social and meaningful contexts in which literacy has been observed to develop. From a child's viewpoint, real-life contexts are more powerful and meaningful than those which formal instruction tends to offer. (p. 204)

Another set of papers focused on cognitive processes and emphasized the central role the brain plays in literacy acquisition and development. Frank Smith introduced the foundational ideas that reading is primarily a matter of making sense of print, that prediction is a "natural" strategy available to all children, and that children use these behaviors while developing literacy. Although novel at the time, Smith's conclusions

about reading development continue to inspire teachers and researchers who strive to understand how children learn, as brain research and language studies continue to support the original insights (Compton-Lilly et al., 2020; Smith, 2011). Jerome Bruner described the cognitive processes involved in reading and argued that literacy development is connected to the social contexts and lived experiences of children, emphasizing the relationship between cognition and culture described by Scribner and Cole (1981) as the psychology of literacy.

Among the invited scholars was Emilia Ferreiro, whose classic work with Ana Teberosky (1979/2012) *Los sistemas de escritura en el desarrollo del niño*, had just been published in English under the title of *Literacy Before Schooling*. Psychogenesis, the history of an idea or concept as influenced by the learner’s personal intellectual activity (Ferreiro, 1990, pp. 12–25), was a central concept in Ferreiro’s research, following the work of her former professor, Jean Piaget. Adapting Piagetian principles of psychogenesis to children’s literacy development, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) analyzed the development of writing among Spanish-speaking children in Argentina and Mexico. They proposed that children develop literacy by building on their own knowledge and argued that it is not through school tasks such as repetition and memorization but, rather, by taking risks and understanding errors that children become literate. Ferreiro’s (2003) position is that research and literacy instruction must consider the child “a person who thinks” (p. 34) and is engaged in a rich process of cognitive, social, and linguistic development while simultaneously learning to represent ideas in print.

Another important contribution at the symposium was Shirley Brice Heath’s research on how White and Black middle-class and working-class families socialized their children into distinct literacy practices. Heath (1982) described the language practices in three communities in rural Piedmont Carolinas. One was a middle-class community with a history of formal schooling; one was working class, predominantly Black; and one was working-class, predominantly White. In following the children into school, Heath found that their different language practices had implications for academic success. She argued that the difficulties linguistically diverse children, including those who speak different varieties of English, encounter in schools were not due to a lack of exposure to literacy practices in their homes and communities, as was commonly assumed, but, rather, due to the schools’ construction of standardized English as the norm for literacy instruction. Heath was among the first ethnographers of literacy to articulate the connections between socioeconomic class, race, language, and literacy. Although the sociolinguist William Labov wrote as early as 1969 about the educational injustices faced by African American students resulting from educators’ ignorance about African American Language, it was only in 2003 that he made a direct connection between the failure of schools to acknowledge the role of language variation in literacy development and the failures of “ordinary children” (as he called African American and Latinx children in his study) to learn to read and write in schools.

Of course, a great deal of important research on early literacy has been conducted before and since 1982. I have chosen to begin with the University of Victoria symposium, designed by Frank Smith to foster interdisciplinary discussion of the interrelationship among language, cognition, and culture in the early literacy development of multilingual children. I have highlighted the seminal work of Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky on children's writing development and research by Shirley Brice Heath on the relationships among social class, language, and literacy. Collectively, these understandings form the pillars of subsequent work with Latinx children's literacy and biliteracy development, such as the Funds of Knowledge for teaching research projects conducted by Luis Moll and Norma González (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005), as well as emerging scholarship on racioliteracy ideologies.

Racist Linguistic Practices as Barriers to Literacy Learning and Teaching with Emergent Bilingual Children

Alim (2016) challenges majority discourses that describe the United States as a post-racial society. He examines how the hyper-racialization of U.S. society has shaped language and education research perspectives over many decades and, relatedly, investigations into the intersections between race and language examine how language is used to construct race and how racist ideologies influence language (see Alim et al., 2016 for research examples). This work further adds to problematizations of the abilities of multilingual and multidialectal children, the latter group being especially tied to socioeconomic and regional diversities and other issues connected to constructions of race and racial identity. For many years, deficit assumptions have, largely from a biological point of view, assumed that children from low-socioeconomic groups, African Americans, Latinxs, and some immigrant groups were intellectually inferior to their White, middle-class, English-monolingual peers. From an anthropological point of view, Douglas Foley helped us understand how the rejection of biology-based models of deficit thinking unfortunately led to deficit models based on culture. Foley (1997) explained how effectively deficit thinkers, based on the work of U.S. anthropologist Oscar Lewis on what he termed the "culture of poverty," moved from the idea of genetic inferiority to the idea of cultural and linguistic deficiencies. Specifically, these assumed deficiencies were found in African American and Latinx families and communities who lived in poverty. Although the work of Lewis was extensively disputed by scholars of different backgrounds, a pervasive idea that still informs language and literacy policies in school settings is that the "poor had a restricted, less abstract, simpler language code and cognitive reasoning style" (Foley, 1997, p. 119). This is particularly important to emphasize because language has been used to create educational programs, in general, and literacy programs, in particular, to correct the language children use in their homes and communities. These programs aimed to remediate the supposed deficiencies linguistically racialized children bring to school. An example is the work of Carl Bereiter and Siegfried

Engelmann, who initiated a direct instruction school curriculum focused on “perceived deficits in poor children’s oral and written language” (Dyson, 2015, p. 200). (For a sample lesson, see a 1965 video produced by the Anti-Defamation League and archived by the Institute for Advanced Instruction at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9dg1kKdR1Q&t=82s>.) It is important to note that, although many early childhood researchers have disagreed strongly with these findings, instruction based on deficit ideologies continues to dominate the public education of racialized children.

In the case of Latinx children, Spanish-dominant emergent bilinguals were featured in the work of Flores et al., (1991), who offered a rigorous analysis to debunk the assumed deficiencies of linguistically racialized children and to challenge school practices defining them as targets of remediation. These researchers explained that *habitudes*, “habitually unexamined attitudes, which form the basis of this deficit view of students who are not from an Anglo-middle class world,” (p. 369) are harmful and have contributed to the “literacy problems” of many Latinx children. Later, Flores (2005) traced the presence of the deficit view of Spanish-speaking children in the educational literature throughout the 20th century, as summarized in the following:

100 years of deficit views of Spanish-speaking children

1920s: The problem is “Mental retardation”

1930s: The problem is “Bilingualism”

1940s: The problem is to change Mexicans through education

1950s: The problem is a dual handicap and language barrier

1960s: The problem is cultural and linguistic deprivation

1970s: The problem is culturally and linguistically different child and family

1980s: The problems are semi-lingualism and Limited English

1990s: The problem is that these children are “at risk”

2000s: The problem is lack of English

2010s: *The problem is “bad teachers”*

2020s: *Who do we blame next?*

I have modified Flores’ model by adding the decade 2010 to include “new” deficit discourses in which teachers are blamed for their students’ low performance on standardized tests (de Saxe & Favela, 2018). I want to point out the perpetual cycle and historic hypocrisy of blaming Spanish-speaking children and families and their teachers for educational failure while ignoring structural inequalities and the lack of accountability among leaders of education agencies at the state and federal levels. As Edelsky (2006) points out, for many years, influential corporations and publishers have been shaping literacy instruction in the United States through the marketing of reading programs that fail to take into account the systematic disparities in the education of racialized children, but which inevitably portray bilingual children from a deficit perspective. As we begin the 2020s, it remains unclear who will be blamed next.

The factors behind the educational underachievement of racialized children have been well documented for many years (Kozol, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2017). Insidiously, the normalization of this underachievement has been used to justify the creation of intervention programs intended to “help” these children do better in schools (Avineri et al., 2015; Blum, 2016). Building on years of scholarship showing that the practice of racialized linguistic discrimination is toxic for young children and harmful for their educational futures (Murillo & Smith, 2011), critical analyses of the relations between race and language make clear that the racialization of minority language speakers contributes to forms of schooling that fail minoritized students. In addition to studies of contemporary conditions of schooling, they allow us to look back upon and interrogate past practices and to see how, historically, U.S. federal, state, and local education policies and curriculum have used language as a proxy for race preventing Latinx and other non-White children from receiving a strong education (Monzó & Rueda, 2009).

The field of literacy education has recently begun to reframe understandings of the intersecting challenges linguistically diverse and racialized children encounter in schools. Within educational research more broadly, linguistic anthropologists Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) have led an emerging field of study of raciolinguistic ideologies to explore how language use and speakers are racialized in and out of school. A key theoretical innovation and what distinguishes raciolinguistic ideologies approaches from earlier efforts to create more equitable conditions of schooling is the emphasis on “the White listener,” who continues to hear and frame speakers of minoritized languages as perennially deficient, as a subject (Rosa, 2019; Sosnowski, 2020). Thus, raciolinguistic ideologies approaches to the study of language and literacy focus not on racialized learners, but rather on the ideologies and practices of White, English monolinguals whose views and interests dominate literacy education.

Recently, scholars have begun to focus on the connections between the study of raciolinguistic ideologies and literacy. Saldivar (2019) explored how particular literacy practices produce race and how race produces particular literacy ideologies in a Spanish heritage language education program for middle school students. She found that the program, and world language teaching and learning more broadly, have been “conceptualized in ways that maintain systems of domination . . . racial and linguistic oppression” (p. 182) and argued that failure to consider broader systems of power, like racism, results in the re/production of deficit discourses. These discourses frame bilingual Latinx students as lacking language and literacy proficiency. The study documents how the rich language abilities Latinx students bring to school are evaluated almost exclusively in terms of exclusionary indicators of proficiency such as measures of grammar, functional language use, and reading proficiency.

Similarly, Chaparro (2019) describes the intersectionality of language, race, and social class in a dual language kindergarten. Using raciolinguistic ideologies theory, the

study documented classroom practices as forms of language and literacy socialization aimed at young emergent bilinguals. Chaparro (2019) states:

The term *raciolinguistic socialization* captures how race and class impact the way language and literacy abilities are evaluated, both formally in educational settings, and informally, in adult reflections of children’s growth. . . . Indeed, evaluations of linguistic abilities in schools become intertwined with school literacy skills in ways that place students from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds at an advantage. (p. 2)

Chaparro expands on the works of Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa to demonstrate how students, teachers, and families contribute to reinforcing *raciolinguistic ideologies* and, as a consequence, *racioliteracies*. Describing the linguistic backgrounds and practices of three children, one biracial and one White (both emergent bilinguals dominant in English), and one Latinx emergent bilingual dominant in Spanish, Chaparro observed a common practice in the bilingual program, of praising the White middle-class children who are doing well in Spanish while dismissing what Latinx children can do in both Spanish and English. Furthermore, in her analysis, the White child is given the power to “help” the Latinx child to read in both Spanish and English. In contrast, “for working class immigrant children, both their Spanish and their English come into question” (Chaparro, 2019, p. 8).

This chapter draws on scholarship on *raciolinguistic* and *racioliteracy* ideologies to examine ways linguistically racialized children are taught reading skills in isolation. I argue that long-standing beliefs about such children result in literacy curriculum and instruction that severely undervalue the impressive language abilities all children bring to school, despite the extensive body of research showing that *phonocentric* approaches to literacy development are detrimental for emergent bilingual children (Edelsky, 2006; Garan, 2007; Noguerón-Liu, 2020). Teaching the so-called basics (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension) in the absence of rich linguistic context results in confusion and school failure for many children. These deficit-based practices, typically justified in the name of “scientifically based research” and, more recently, “the science of teaching reading” (Compton-Lilly et al., 2020) contribute to the fourth-grade slump, reinforce the literacy injustices linguistically racialized children face in school-based literacies (Gee, 2007; Meyer, 2002; Smith, 2006), and ignore the linguistic flexibility that multilingual children develop in their families and communities and which is necessary to read and write successfully in school (Genishi & Dyson, 2009).

Dominant Forms of Literacy Instruction Shaped by “Science of Reading” and Capitalism

Literacy “has been used, in age after age, to solidify the social hierarchy, empower elites” (Gramsci, 1971, as quoted in Gee, 2015, p. 42), and literacy instruction is the primary mechanism through which schools produce workers for contemporary forms of capitalism. Reich (2001) describes three types of workers required by “fast” or “global” capitalism: poorly paid service workers; “knowledge workers” who must bring technical, collaborative, and communication skills to the workplace and commit themselves body and soul to the company and its “core values” under conditions of little stability; and leaders who create innovation and core values and who will benefit most from the new capitalism (pp. 280–281). Gee (2015) estimates that three fifths or more of workers will fall into the first category. Given the historical positioning of immigrants and minoritized populations generally, we shouldn’t be surprised that linguistically racialized children will fit in the category of “poorly paid service workers” (Gee 2015, p. 61). Elaborating on the connections between racioliteracies and poorly paid workers, Edelsky (2006) states that “one area that must be controlled is the literacy of students, more precisely of future workers (p. 5) and adds that

corporate America (in an intensified neo-liberal world) has a new literacy requirement: It needs a labor force with the ability to read, without questioning, for technical information. Inducting youth students into school literacy through intensive phonics instruction fits the narrow type of reading . . . that emphasizes the encoding and decoding of the language of software and hardware and various wares in between. Reading done freely and volitionally . . . for one’s own interests . . . is to remain the private school curricular privilege of the already privileged. (Edelsky, 2006, p. 5)

In this sense, the narrow literacy curriculum and instruction imposed on working-class children, approximately the great majority of emergent bilingual children, can be seen as an intentional practice to concentrate human capital within privileged groups and maintain class divisions that keep poor children in low-end employment (Watkins, 2015).

A further example of the reductionist literacy curriculum and instruction practiced in the schooling of bilingual children can be found in the popular program Accelerated Reader (AR), used in thousands of U.S. elementary school classrooms to document and ostensibly promote children’s progress in reading. AR is a computer-based program purchased by school districts, including Nina’s, to quantify the number of words children read and to rank children based on “comprehension” tests of selected children’s books. Each title is assigned a predetermined number of AR points, and schools commonly give individual prizes such as candy or rewards such as pizza parties to classrooms that have

met established goals for the number of books children read. Although it is not specifically designed for emergent bilinguals the AR program is commonly used in bilingual education programs and classrooms in which most children are designated as English learners. In the following email sent by the school principal to Nina and the other bilingual kindergarten teachers, we see how the use of AR shapes literacy instruction:

After thinking about the meeting yesterday, I would like for ya’ll to get together weekly to review the writing samples from each week & AR totals. The expectations for writing and AR are:

- * Working on handwriting correctly (proper size and letter formation)
- * Kinder (independently) will write 3 sentences (capital letter w/end punctuation)
- * AR: each student should try to get 500 words per week

Please let me know what day/time ya’ll will be meeting weekly. (Nina, personal communication, February 17, 2020)

It is disheartening, to say the least, to see the ignorance informing administrators’ decisions about how literacy is taught, as well as the surveillance of children and teachers (“Please let me know what day/time ya’ll will be meeting weekly”) promoted through the use of AR. Like other repackaged reading programs, AR has been shown to be an ineffective means of creating “life-long readers” (Garan, 2007, p. 59). The emphasis on form (“correct” handwriting, including letter size and shape, capitalization, and punctuation) and quantity of reading (“500 words per week”) and the disregard for children’s ability to make meaning of what they read is inappropriate for emerging readers, especially for emergent bilinguals. Such practices are part and parcel of the “nonsense” (Smith, 2006) that continues to inform literacy curriculum and instruction in many schools.

Broadening the narrow view of reading and disrupting harmful forms of literacy instruction we observe in schools are urgent challenges for teacher preparation programs. How do we prepare bilingual teachers to resist and avoid reinforcing harmful raciolinguistic and racioliteracy ideologies and practices in their classrooms? “In these very hard times, there are glimmers of what might be hope” (Edelsky, 2006, p. 15) in preparing better equipped literacy and biliteracy teachers (Hoffman et al., 2020). As a biliteracy researcher and teacher educator, I want to call attention to the dangers associated with acritical literacy courses and superficial field experiences (Hoffman et al., 2019) typically required of preservice teachers in Texas and across much of the United States.

My critique and subsequent recommendations for healthier, more productive forms of literacy instruction are grounded in two decades of research and teaching experience in bilingual teacher preparation programs. In my experience, teacher education programs often reflect and promote deficit ideologies similar to those practiced in schools.

For example, faculty conversations about students' reading and writing typically revolve around the performance of pre-service teachers and program graduates on state certification tests. Program evaluation by state education agencies center on low passing rates, call on institutions to raise test scores, and remind program faculty of the state's ultimate authority to suspend teacher preparation. Each of these actions parallels the pressures that preservice teachers face to teach literacy skills in isolation.

In the same fashion, ideologies of reading and writing as practices that take place only in English and that are disconnected from children's language development are central to teacher preparation programs. The normalized literacy "problems" of linguistically racialized children are largely unquestioned within teacher preparation programs and in the state-mandated reading programs that continue to fail the emergent bilingual children they purport to educate (Burns, 2014; Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). In his analysis of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, (Snow et al., 1998), commonly used in literacy teacher education programs, James Gee (2007) describes how issues of racism and power are intentionally excluded from literacy education:

It is widely believed that such issues are "merely political," not directly relevant to reading and reading research. PRD is certainly written in such spirit. But the fact of the matter is that racism and power are just as much cognitive issues as they are political ones. Children won't identify with—they will even disidentify with—teachers and schools that they perceive as hostile, alien, or oppressive to their home-based identities. (p. 12)

While critical literacy scholars are not opposed to the idea that standards can guide meaningful literacy instruction, it is important to recognize that standards tell us *what* to teach but should not be interpreted to dictate *how* teachers must teach (Moustafa, 2008).

Further complicating the relationship between standards and reading programs is that linguistically diverse and racialized students are largely absent in the standards discourse except as perceived targets of remediation. This omission is arguably by design. Certainly, many early childhood researchers and educators have long understood the importance of supporting children's home language and literacy practices (Dyson, 2015), and in too many cases, these views have been silenced or rendered ineffective by the dominance of for-profit interests (capitalism) within the public education system, in combination with racial and anti-immigrant discrimination. Furthermore, dominant views of literacy hold that reading and writing are best taught in bits and pieces and through ideologies of "grammatical correctness and mandates that are linguistically unsound" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 144) with pernicious effects, especially for linguistically diverse children. Similarly, dominant views treat reading and writing as skills that can be taught from a script and disconnected from children's language development or contexts of use, making room for competitive and dubious practices in the marketing and delivery of teacher education programs which signal that practically anybody can

teach children to read and write. Given this backdrop, it is not surprising that even well-intentioned early childhood and emergent literacy practitioners may approach their work with bilingual children and families as a form of remediation that will eventually result in English monolingualism. How can we help support and sustain literacy teachers who wish to teach against such a view? In the following section, I describe kidwatching and teacherwatching as sensible and caring approaches to preparing teachers to promote biliteracy and serve bilingual children.

From “Kidwatching” to “Teacherwatching”: Strategies for Promoting Healing Forms of Literacy and Literacy Teacher Preparation

Kidwatching (Owocki & Goodman, 2002) and ethnographic case studies (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) are critical pedagogical practices for preparing teachers to recognize and contest racial ideologies. Kidwatching, or “spending time observing, gathering data, interacting with children to understand how language and literacy develop” (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 3), is at the core of conducting ethnographic case studies with novice literacy and bilingual educators. In my university courses, I combine these approaches by requiring preservice teachers to observe an emergent biliterate child over the course of a semester. It is important to note that many preservice bilingual teachers begin, often unconsciously, to reproduce the same colonizing racioliteracy practices they themselves experienced as children. By providing concrete tools for observing and listening carefully to children as they read and write, kidwatching can greatly impact how future teachers will work with linguistically racialized children.

With this background in mind, I want to extend the idea of kidwatching into teacherwatching as a critical component of using epistemic disobedience and engagement with decolonial epistemologies (Mignolo, 2009; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) in teacher preparation. This teacherwatching would acknowledge and seek to contest deficit ideologies regarding the intersections among language, race, and literacy. Epistemic disobedience, in this case, means rethinking ways of teaching literacy and reconceptualizing linguistic differences to include students’ worldviews and build on the linguistic strengths derived from their home and community literacy practices. To practice epistemic disobedience in literacy instruction and research we must ground our work in the understanding that legitimate forms of language and literacy exist in languages other than standardized American English. To work toward this goal, it is necessary to continue supporting teachers after they enter the profession and to accompany them in the creation of meaningful reading and writing practices for engaging racialized children. Unlearning and undoing colonizing forms of literacy instruction, where commercial reading programs maintain dominance over the particular needs of emergent bilingual children biliteracy education, requires time and teacher courage, but it is an urgently needed decolonial tool

(Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020) or anticolonial practice (Rivera Cusicanqui & Greidel, 2020).

Accompanying a New Teacher in Her First Years of Teaching

To illustrate the power of teacherwatching, I return to the story of Nina, the kindergarten teacher and former student who invited me to study her bilingual classroom. I chose to write about Nina's classroom for multiple reasons. She was the most engaged and dedicated student during the semester she took my university literacy classes for prospective bilingual teachers and conducted a thoughtful case study of the reading and writing development of a kindergarten student from Mexico. As an immigrant from Central America, Nina could see the talents and promises inherent in children who are developing literacy in two languages. By kidwatching and reflecting on her own history of language and literacy schooling, she became conscious of the educational and ideological limitations she experienced in high school English as a Second Language (ESL) classes upon her arrival in the United States. Furthermore, unlike many of her U.S.-born classmates in the teacher education program in Texas, Nina had not been linguistically colonized through English-only schooling at an early age. Thus, she was able to draw on her experiences as a student in Central American schools to recognize the linguistic strengths of Spanish-speaking and immigrant families. In addition, once she had her own classroom, Nina reached out for guidance in designing the best possible literacy program for her bilingual kindergarten students. In the following section, I describe how together we practiced teacherwatching to inform her practice.

Nina teaches at an elementary school in a small city in Texas with a rapidly growing population of emergent bilinguals of Mexican and Guatemalan origin. Because the school uses an "early exit" model of transitional bilingual education, Nina's first-year assignment—third grade—required her to teach primarily in English. In her second year of teaching, Nina was excited to be reassigned to a kindergarten classroom where she was permitted to teach bilingually. Knowing the importance of a bilingual classroom library, Nina borrowed 30 bilingual children's books from me, and we met often to discuss her plans for her second year of teaching. In a letter written in the first weeks of the year, Nina described her students' reaction to reading these books and her impressions of the impact on the children's engagement with reading. Her letter was written in Spanish, and I provide an English translation here:

Buenas tardes, Dra. Murillo. Ayer empezamos a usar los libros que usted nos prestó. Hoy quedé sorprendida en ver la diferencia que existe al darles la oportunidad a los niños de escoger el libro que les gustaría leer primero. Hoy escogieron *La Llorona*. Estaban tan interesados, espantados, asustados, había de todo. Tenía ganas de llorar al verles sus caritas mientras escuchaban la historia.

Lo mejor de todo, es que en el transcurso del día los niños continúan leyendo los mismos libros y siempre con muchas ganas y entusiasmo. Hoy se dieron cuenta que los libros tienen su nombre. Me decían, “maestra, aquí dice ‘Luz’ y aquí también.” Y les conté que usted se los había prestado para que los leyeran y los amaran. Gracias por enseñarme cada vez que se puede un poco del montón de cosas que todavía me falta por aprender.

Good afternoon Dr. Murillo. Yesterday we started using the books you loaned us. I was surprised today to see the difference that takes place when children have the opportunity to choose the book they want to read. Today they chose *La Llorona*. They were so interested, surprised, scared, all sorts of emotions. I almost cried seeing their faces as they listened to the story. Best of all, throughout the day the children kept reading the books with interest and enthusiasm. Today the children realized that your name is written in the books. They said, “Teacher, it says “Luz” here and here too. And I told them that you’d loaned us the books for them to read and love. Thank you for showing me that it is always possible to do a little of the many things I am still learning.

To learn about Nina’s classroom, I spent each Friday during the fall of 2019 reading with students and observing her literacy instruction. I also sent some of my preservice teachers to do participant observation and help in the classroom. We met periodically with Nina to debrief about her instruction, my observations, and the university students’ participation. Together we reviewed state-mandated standards, the materials the district required kindergarten teachers to use, and examples of her students’ writing. Following the ideas of Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) and Genishi and Dyson (2009), we provided notebooks for each child in order to record their daily writing and binders to collect their drawing and writing. We were engaged in a decolonial literacy project, in which we took risks to support the literacy development of the children in this kindergarten classroom, for example, minimizing the use of “Estrellita,” the district-mandated prescriptive literacy program used to develop phonemic awareness in Spanish, and supplementing it as much as possible with bilingual books and teacher-designed activities based on principles from research informing the teaching of literacy for emerging readers and writers (Compton-Lilly et al., 2020; Dombey & Moustafa, 1988; Edelsky, 2006).

Based on the culturally sustainable pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017), she had developed in her teacher preparation program, Nina wrote a successful grant to buy books for her classroom library. These Spanish/English bilingual books, written mostly by Latinx authors and prominently displayed in her classroom, portray topics related to Latinx cultural and linguistic practices. The collection, along with a large poster Nina created with the words “Soy un lector y un escritor” (I’m a reader and a writer) was one of several features that caught the attention of all who visited her classroom. Another was the creation of a *tiendita* (neighborhood store) supplied with empty food packages

children brought from home. In this favorite center, children experienced reading and writing as fun and commonsense practices needed to create a shopping list, calculate a food budget, and transact sales as shopkeepers and customers. Each time the university students and visiting professors entered the classroom the children ran toward us with a book to read or to share their notebooks and portfolios in great excitement. Furthermore, on several occasions, children have written letters inviting us to read with them and to attend a holiday potluck lunch with food prepared by their families.

In all these literacy encounters, Nina's students seemed to be making great progress in reading and writing and they were obviously developing a passion for reading bilingual books, including the big books which Nina created based on these stories. Unfortunately, the school's administration soon expressed concern that the students were not using the assigned phonics program or the worksheets adopted by the other kindergarten teachers. In November, only 3 months into the school year, Nina's teaching was observed by the assistant principal, who told her, "Your children are having too much fun and we want them to learn." Her observation and formal review did not mention the dynamic biliteracy classroom environment Nina had created or her students' enthusiasm for reading bilingual books and writing about them. A few days later, the principal sent her the email message quoted earlier, emphasizing the expectation that reading and writing instruction should focus on word counts, letter formation, capitalization, and punctuation.

Practicing Literacy Teaching and Teacher Preparation as "Radical Hope"

Through the accounts in this chapter, my intent is to encourage teachers to expect the best from Latinx children by providing opportunities to read and write on their own terms and become long-life readers and writers, even if it appears to some that their students are "having too much fun." I began the project with the hope of supporting a new teacher with limited classroom experience and much promise and to see what I could learn by extending my university teaching of preservice teachers beyond certification and into the early years of teaching. Now in her third year of teaching, Nina has been reassigned to a first-grade classroom, where she works with many of her former kindergarten students and is adding to her growing collection of bilingual books and materials she has created. In this strange and unsettling year of remote-teaching learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nina and I continue to collaborate virtually to document and reflect on her growth as a literacy teacher of racialized bilingual children. She continues to receive preservice teachers from the university and has begun to mentor them as they conduct their own ethnographic case studies by reading and writing with her first-grade students. We should be grateful for the persistence of teachers like Nina, given the pressures they face to teach literacy only in the limited, reductionist ways we know are

not helpful for emergent bilingual children (Garan, 2007) and the lack of recognition of their dedication and creativity, factors that cause many to leave the classroom (Petrón et al., 2019).

My hope for teacher education and early childhood literacy programs is that we develop the wisdom and courage to undertake the task of preparing literacy teachers who will challenge the racialized and language-based deficit ideologies that persist in many school and university classrooms, educators who will recognize the power orientations, marginalizations, and oppressions that are revealed through the study of raciolinguistic ideologies. A radical hope is at the center of this important work. Jonathan Lear (2006) writes that what makes hope

radical is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it. What would it be for such hope to be justified. (p. 104)

The long history and widespread practice of deficit thinking in schools about emergent bilinguals and other linguistically racialized children mean that few educators have experienced or taught in schools where the vision of literacy equity is fully realized. Thus, we can say that we are preparing teachers in the hope of moving toward this “future goodness” rather than in expectation of its immediate realization. Lear (2006) goes on to say that “the question of hope . . . [is] intimately bound to the question of how to live” (p. 105), which can be extended to the practice of literacy for better futures. I am proposing that those of us who prepare literacy teachers approach our work with radical hope.

In conclusion, I invite scholars and practitioners to question, challenge, and decolonize literacy pedagogies that claim to be based on exclusive and limited views of “science” that ignore or discriminate against bilingual children. Efforts to prepare literacy and biliteracy teachers using an anticolonial framework may be met with reluctance but they are critically important (Lyiscott et al., 2018) for the dignity and school success of racialized children. As I have tried to show here, a hopeful first step is engaging with beginning teachers as researchers (Curry & Bloome, 1998), potential mentors (Hoffman et al., 2019), and, most of all, people who think (Ferreiro, 2003) rather than simply as conduits for the delivery of “new” reading programs that do not work for emergent bilingual learners.

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