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In Dialogue/En Diálogo

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Executive Editors

Yesenia Fernández, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, College of Education
School Leadership Program
California State University Dominguez Hills

Margarita Landeros, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
School and College Counseling Department
California State University, Dominguez Hills

1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, CA 90747

Original Artwork by Helena Donato-Sapp
Journal Design Layout by Ana K Ramirez

CSUDH
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

About In Dialogue/En Diálogo

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Executive Co-Editors

Yesenia Fernández, Ph.D., Co-Editor

Associate Professor

School Leadership Program

California State University, Dominguez Hills

yfernandez@csudh.edu

Margarita Landeros, Ed.D., Co-Editor

Assistant Professor

School and College Counseling Department

California State University, Dominguez Hills

mlanderos@csudh.edu

Review Board

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Editors' Dialogue

Yesenia Fernández, PhD., Associate Professor, School Leadership Program
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Margarita Landeros, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, School and College
Counseling Department, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Without a community of care, we cannot care for our communities. Webs of care have long shepherded our building of solidarity with one another to foster endurance during our most difficult times. This solidarity building and flow of reciprocity in webs of care as defined by the concept of comadrismo is what strengthens us to endure and fight back. Barragan Santoyo & Perez (2023), explain that comadrismo describes the relationship between

"...women who share common goals, values, and seek to utilize their bond to advance the betterment of their surrounding community." (p. 44)

and that women use their lived experiences to build community and trust while taking care of each other. We extend this spirit of comadrismo to describe the webs of care we develop to resist current attacks on our communities. In addition to the presence of federal law enforcement agencies which racially profile and violently kidnap and sometimes disappear members of our communities, we are experiencing a top-down hegemonic xenophobic distrust in education, in educators, and in critical thinking, coming from a place of fear and racist ideologies often masked in Christian conservatist ideals (Miller et al., 2023).

It is movements like the Civil Rights Movement, A Day without Immigrants, and other grassroots movements such as the recent resistance as response to the attacks on our educational system and our immigrant communities which ultimately define generations. Indeed, our response to these racist and ill-informed attacks fueled by the current sociopolitical turmoil will continue to inform generations to come. Public K-12 schools were created to be institutions for learning for our youth to become informed participants and contributors to society as they begin to develop their identities; whereas institutions of higher education have historically served as vessels for liberation in learning and self-expression, self-exploration, and finding one's purpose. Schools and community spaces attempt to insulate young people from the toxic political landscape we are experiencing as well as prepare them for it, but this work has become increasingly difficult to navigate in a climate that criminalizes this very work. Our young people will inherit what ultimately becomes of our institutions as a result of this tension.

It is through the webs of solidarity which we form with colleagues, families, and community members, that we can find the strength to resist, fight back, and ultimately change the trajectory of our generation. This journal has created its own web of care as it brings into dialogue/diálogo the perspectives and leaders who shape our educational settings:

students, teachers, counselors, researchers, practitioners, and community members. In this issue, *juntos*, we want to extend the ideology of comadrerismo, to harness its spirit and attempt to describe our newly created realities by webs of care, endurance, and solidarity which folks are creating to resist the ongoing assaults on our communities. In the following pages, we highlight experiences, contributions, and *tejidos* across K-16 that serve as testament to the endurance of our collective communities.

This current issue is being released during a time when schools, colleges, and community spaces are at a crossroads and feeling immense pressure. These places which aim to foster liberatory experiences that include culturally-responsive curriculum, and protect free speech, defend students' rights to a free and public education and also serve as shelters during ICE raids to continue to live out their purpose of being safe havens for all students, must now do so while managing decisions that may impact federal funding streams. We are witnessing moments that feel familiar to previous historical events but are even more heightened as communities of color are under attack from multiple angles- their liberties are being threatened at the same time as they or members of their communities are being violently stripped of their freedom, at the same time as their livelihoods are threatened, at the same time as there are rising prices in the cost of living and at the same time that their children's access to an equitable education is uncertain. Yet, we are continuously shown how in the midst of this, our comadrismo has built a movement of love thy neighbor, fight for those who are living in fear, and take care of your communities especially since we know those in power who were tasked with caring for us have continuously forsaken us and are even often the aggressor. Together, we are also combating the mischaracterization of these webs of endurance as lawlessness though we know these webs of solidarity are truly signs of hope for change.

Tejidos exist because of those who find the courage to lead and respond to the needs of their communities. In our schools, we see teachers tirelessly developing curriculum that addresses educational standards and explore teaching methods that scaffold their students' strengths, identities, and stories. There are teachers who serve as trusted adults when their students have no one else to turn to as they struggle with the pressures in their lives, and who are creating safe spaces for learning. School counselors are deepening the opportunities for students to explore how moments in their lives manifest in their academic selves, and equipping students with skills and mindsets that translate into behaviors that contribute to their academic success. College counselors serve as connectors to resources, opportunities, and goals. There are also higher education faculty who are promoting collective consciousness and preparing their students to inspire hope.

Cultural centers on campuses have become hubs of safety and resistance not only for students but also for their families as well as faculty and staff on campus. Community spaces continue to fill the voids left by sometimes inept and ineffective city politicians and policies that fail to provide resources for and protect our communities. Together, we are community members who create webs of care and resistance—and one without the other cannot persist.

The offerings in this issue underscore this interconnectedness. We highlight multicultural voices from the field, educators, students, who wrestle with the realities of the persecution we continually experience on campuses and off, and develop networks of care, exemplify comadrismo, and remind us that together we are stronger and that it is our responsibility to protect one another. The pieces include poetry which reflects the raw emotions of teachers as well as counter-storytelling to center students' empowered voices. This issue highlights that the educational journeys of young people on school campuses intersect with not only one another, but also with teachers, counselors, administrators, and other campus staff. It takes each one of us to craft the experiences with them and the resulting tejidos, the tapestries, would not be possible without each one of us.

To begin, in a time where innovation in education is being hindered, Minhye Son engages in diálogo through a collection of poems from her teacher education classroom. The poems are expressions of the essence of comadrismo – care, community, and support – and allow future teachers to reflect on their own identities, their longing for justice, the power of education, and "show a little madness" (Gloria as quoted in Son, 2025) as they "strive to learn and improve their minds" (Jennifer as quoted in Son, 2025). They use poetry to convey their frustrations, hope, dedication, and pursuit of justice, equity and care.

Aubrey Uresti depicts a counseling group of middle school Chicana girls as a

"network of care and comadrismo."

"Counter-storytelling Archetypes: A School Counseling Intervention for Chicana Girls" illustrates how a Chicana school counselor helps them embrace their own identities and utilizes counter-storytelling as the girls use Mexican archetypal female characters to narrate their own journeys. Uresti's piece brings two critical matters in education into practice, creating culturally inclusive and responsive spaces in education that are also culturally sustaining, and fostering student empowerment to encourage them to show up as their authentic selves.

Aligned to the spirit of *comadrismo,* Margarita Landeros, Karla Celeste Martinez, and Janet Garcia deepen this insight into the role of the K-12 and higher education counselors as webs of endurance with reflections on their own work. In "Counselors as Webs of Endurance in Higher Education," they highlight the choice one makes to show up in service of others as a calling and how counseling is "a practice of love." Together, they capture counseling as a profession that facilitates student empowerment, champions success for their students amidst uncertainty, engages in radical empathy, and creates "visual representations of alliance" to "foster trust and safety the moment students walk into academic space." These reflections of practitioners as they grapple with the reality of a profession that means so much to students and their families and the emotional toll it takes on them to navigate the toxic political climate remind us to be resilient because the stakes are so high.

Similarly, Cristina Stephany, Alohilani Okamura, and Sarah Lara, further illustrate how they use place-based education to integrate Hawaiian principles: pilina, kuleana, and aloha. "Aloha 'Āina and Place-based Education as Transformative Practice with Students from Los Angeles Urban Schools" examines how using pilina, kuleana, and aloha offer students the opportunity to reflect on their own identities by centering "alona 'āina, a reciprocal relationship with place," and Hō'ike as a form of assessment that is culturally meaningful for their students to develop their own identities. Moreover, students were able to notice shifts in dominant power structures and develop relationships between students and their communities, and their land- a shared bond with the community which includes the land as part of that comadrismo.

Anna Baird extends the notion of empowered authenticity in educational settings that Uresti and Stephany, Okamura and Lara highlight in their contribution.

"Empowered Authenticity: Promoting Collective Consciousness Raising in Educational Settings,"

proposes two ways in which raising collective consciousness empowers students to deepen their connection to their learning and their classroom community. Baird shows us how bringing vulnerability through creative expression in the classroom enables students to feel safer and embrace showing emotions in their classroom engagement and assignments. She also highlights how drawing connections between the content and relevant student experiences further contrasts the traditional forms of learning that reinforce patriarchal structures and impede emotional expressions in classrooms. Classes become spaces

where students see themselves as part of the curricula which is the ultimate form or community care in the classroom.

Finally, in "Preventing Bullying of Students with Disabilities: Teachers' Definitions of Bullying and Use of Anti-bullying Strategies," Jenny C. Chiappe and James Koontz provide context to ways in which teachers are defining bullying in their classrooms and creating more inclusive spaces. They call on educators to meet the moment and address students' respective needs as they reveal them to be not what our assumptions of their needs are. The current sociopolitical climate has attacked diversity, access, as well as equity and inclusion efforts that support students with disabilities. These attacks have also heightened student-to-student harassment and bullying in schools. Through this contribution, Chiappe and Koontz offer an opportunity for teachers to address bullying in their classrooms to promote more positive leaning environments. They also highlight the tejido between teachers and administrators to ensure teachers receive training and support to address increased bullying in schools.

As you read through the voices of our authors, we invite you to become part of the dialogue by extending your thoughts, questions, reflections and learnings onto your own work. Consider how you are part of the *tejido* in the educational settings around you, and how you can further foster communities of care today and tomorrow. Take this issue as our own call for us to collectively

"generate a new social fabric for change,"

engage in comadrismo, and actively resist the attacks on our communities.

2

Building Solidarity through Collective Poetry: A Pedagogical Approach in Teacher Education

Minhye Son, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Teacher Education Division, California State University Dominguez Hills

Abstract

In response to the rising tide of xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments, fostering solidarity and resilience in educational spaces has become essential. This project explores the use of collective poetry as a pedagogical tool to cultivate community and resistance within a teacher education classroom at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Grounded in the framework of comadrerismo—centered on care, community-building, and advocacy—teacher candidates use a "Social Justice Cypher" activity to share their beliefs, struggles, and aspirations for social justice in education. Through poetic expressions, future teachers engage in critical discussions on identity, belonging, and resistance, fostering agency and empowerment. This project demonstrates how collective poetry not only enhances social and emotional learning but also supports teacher candidates in navigating and challenging oppressive sociopolitical forces.

Keywords: social justice cypher, teacher education, comadrerismo, collective poetry, solidarity, multilingual education

Introduction

In an era marked by heightened xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments, creating spaces that foster solidarity and resilience among teachers and learners has become essential. Educational settings, particularly those focused on teacher preparation, hold potential for cultivating agency and empowerment through community-driven practices. This project showcases how collective poetry, specifically through a "Social Justice Cypher" activity, serves as a pedagogical tool for fostering solidarity and resistance in a teacher education course at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH).

In this context, the cypher (or cipher), rooted in hip-hop's participatory culture, creates a communal, egalitarian space—typically arranged in a circle—where participants express themselves both individually and collectively through rapping, dancing, and other creative forms (Alim, 2009; Love, 2014; Lyiscott, 2019; Lyiscott et al., 2020; Petchauer, 2009; Spady et al., 2006). The cypher allows the community members to engage in open, expressive dialogue, thereby challenging conventional pedagogical norms and empowering teacher candidates to explore issues of identity, belonging, and justice (Love, 2014; Lyiscott, 2019; Wells, 2019).

Theoretical Framework: Comadrerismo in Education

Another central concept that we embraced in the course was comadrerismo, rooted in collective experience, emphasizing the importance of relationships, empathy, and mutual support. Centered on care, community-building, and advocacy, comadrerismo provides the theoretical foundation for this project (Fernandez & Stacy, 2023; Santoyo & Perez, 2023). This framework is particularly relevant in the current sociopolitical climate, where educational spaces are often sites of resistance against anti-immigrant and anti-multilingual ideologies. By centering care and community, comadrerismo cultivates emotional resilience and encourages individuals to openly share both challenges and achievements. Grounded in this ethos, the cypher activity aims to foster a space where teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds can share personal narratives, building solidarity and collective strength.

Background: The Social Justice Cypher and Its Origins

In 2021, the author participated in a "Social Justice Cypher" activity led by a critical literacy scholar Jamila Lyiscott at the Reimagining Education Summer Institute (RESI) at Teachers College, Columbia University (RESI, 2025). Dr. Lyiscott's approach, which draws on hip-hop practices

rooted in West African traditions, encourages participants to share freestyle or written reflections over a beat (Lyiscott, 2019). Her method uses rhythm and community-based performance to amplify marginalized voices and foster critical conversations. Participants engage in dialogue, emotion, and self-expression to co-construct understanding and disrupt dominant narratives in education (Love, 2019). This activity emphasizes participants' rhetorical and lyrical skills, disrupting Eurocentric pedagogies, and expanding what is considered effective teaching (Alim, 2009). By allowing students to engage with their cultural identities, this method enriches the learning experience and transforms the classroom into an inclusive space.

Implementation of the Cypher Activity at CSUDH

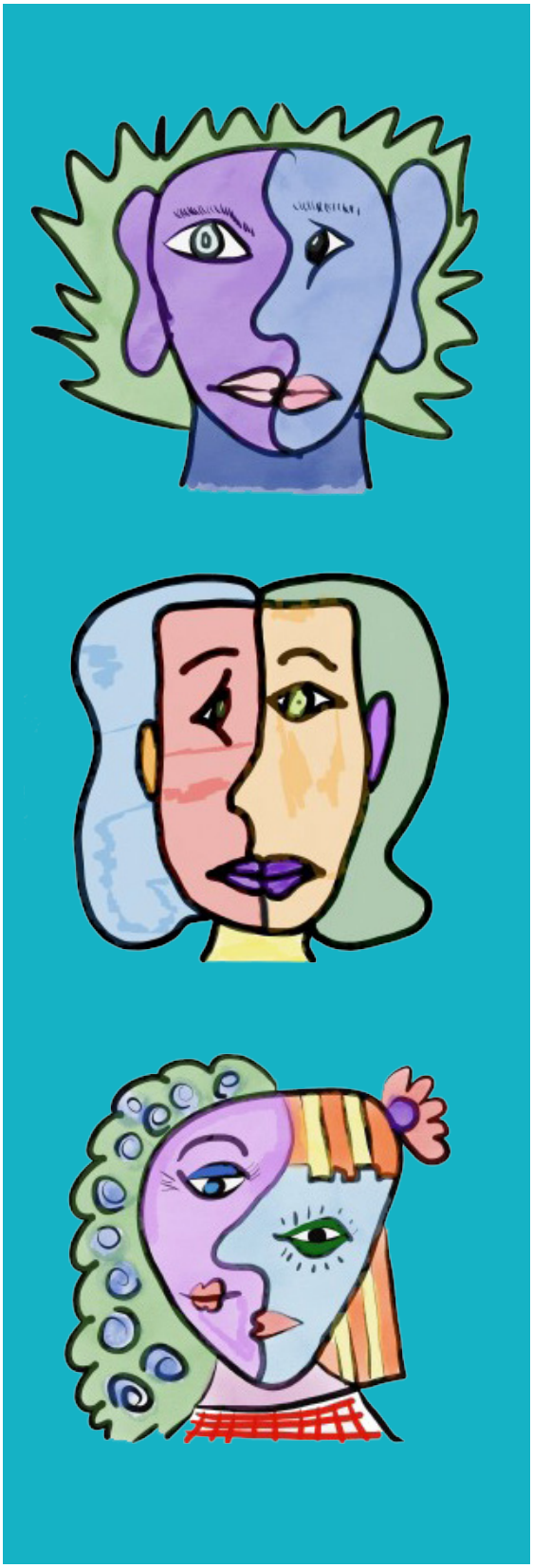
Inspired by Dr. Lyiscott's cypher, the author adapted a similar activity using a "Rhyme Association Poetry" method in a teacher education course at CSUDH during the summer of 2023 (see Appendix for the assignment). The students, all teacher candidates, were encouraged to explore social justice themes by selecting their own anchor words—such as *change, equity,* and *opportunity*—to create their cyphers. The author, instructor of the course, provided the following assignment prompt: "Choose a social justice-oriented anchor word and write a six-line poem that reflects your personal or professional experiences, hopes, or concerns related to this word. Use any language(s) you are comfortable with, using the method".

Students were encouraged to use translanguaging, tapping into their full linguistic and cultural repertoires to express themselves (Son & Kim, 20224). Translanguaging refers to the dynamic use of multiple language features by emergent bilinguals and multilinguals to make meaning, challenge monolingual norms, and affirm their identities (García & Wei, 2015; Otheguy et al., 2015). Rather than separating languages, it embraces bilingualism as a fluid and empowering stance that values students' lived experiences as linguistic and cultural resources (Son & Kim, 20224). One way this came to life was through collective poetry activities that fostered communal and critical learning spaces.

Creating Communal and Critical Learning Spaces through Collective Poetry

The instructor first modeled creating a cypher by writing an anchor word on the board and generating six lines that either rhymed with or were meaningfully connected (thematically associated) with the anchor word, alternating between the two. The class then collaborated to create one cypher by coming up with an anchor word together, with students calling out

words or sentences while the instructor wrote that on the board. For homework, students then crafted their own individual cyphers. In the next session, we gathered in circles, where each student performed their cypher to a four-beat cadence while others cheered them on. These sessions emphasized community care through shared responsibilities and supportive feedback, reinforcing the joy of collective learning. The following poems, created and performed by teacher candidates, reflect the themes of identity, justice, and community that emerged through the cypher experience. The poems included here are not presented as research data but as illustrative artifacts of collective poetry pedagogy, shared with students' explicit consent and with identifying details removed to protect their privacy.



Collective Poetry

Adrianna
All we want is justice,
but we live in madness,
They think speaking languages is insanity,
But this class knows its commonality,
We see it every day,
and we know it is okay

Jeovanni
I want to learn-Yo quiero aprender
if you teach me right-tu me das todo el poder
se batalla mucho-getting here took all my might
pero me gradue-My degree was worth the fight
nos seguimos mejorando-so our kids won't have to struggle
generational wealth-we'll make sure to make it double!

Patricia
Talking about community cultural wealth
Capitals that add to your health
From social and linguistic to aspirational
Resistant and familial to navigational
Facing individuals, groups, and institutions with grace
Continuing to make strides at a steady pace

Yarelli
Throughout time people have fought for Human rights
But in present day society continues the fight
Humanity is divided by conflict
Just like political parties always contradict
It's time for change but who will take the challenge
It is a big task but we can heal the damage

Adriana
Left my home, call it immigration
The American Dream, in hope of transformation
30 years go by, and no modification
My throat so dry, I arrived at my location
Please try and put yourself in my position
All I want is for them to grant me my admission

Madeline
Education needs a change
It's all a lil deranged
New gen on the rise
We've got a lil surprise
Education is power
Look how we devour.

Pepe
We need to fight for equality
To achieve good life quality
So we enjoy peace and love
All around this beautiful globe
Nobody needs a Louis Vuitton
If we really promote educación

Gina
We fight for equality
It's top notch quality
We'll get it with time
We're in our prime
We hold the key
It's not time to flee

Daniel
You've Heard of Mathematics
It Deals With Quadratics
Multiplied By Itself, X ^squared
Just Don't Be Scared
I Know You're Frightened
But Let's Become Enlightened

Monica
I'm in the field of STEM
Historically for white men
Racial and gender oppression
Our work, robbed of possession
–DNA, nuclear fission
Our findings built on precision
Enduring indignities
By so-called scientist thieves
Now is the time to show
Gotta let your brilliance glow
You are one of a kind
Solutions awaiting to find

Gloria
Do not hesitate to aspire
Go forth and light your fire
Set a blaze that internal light
Do not cower in the night
It's easy to hide in darkness
But show a little madness

Annalisa
I've heard all you need in life is self-esteem
I'm still trying to get to what that might mean

Believe in yourself but don't be too proud
Cheer for yourself but don't make a crowd
Stand up for yourself but don't cause a fight
I'll just sit and stay quiet, am I doing this right?

Jose
Craving some new innovations
Show the world my creations
Need some inspiration for my building blocks
Clearing my head with some thrilling walks
I'm here to make my own path
But first I have to learn my math

Grace
Society needs more equality
Without racial bias subtlety
The new generation can learn fairness
They would just need some more awareness
Everyone with a different voice
This becomes a simple choice

Jennifer
We strive to learn and improve our minds,
To unlock potentials of all kinds
Education is more than just a degree,
It's a lifelong journey to become who we want to be
Shaping the leaders of tomorrow we foresee

Cristal
Some say it's a bad Affliction
When they can't understand your Diction
Even those who can't yet Read

Will grow up with the ability to Lead
Through the chaos they will bring Order
They are not weak because they crossed the border

Carlos
I'm worth more alive
Truth is that I doubt it
Social justice warrior
Social justice sacrifice
If it means something
I ain't scared of giving up my life

Maria
I was born to survive
Thank you mom and dad for the perfect guide
With direct instruction in my life
I learned to protect
And shield my path to success
Revealed is the truth as I am standing in front of you.

Kevin
You've heard of Dominguez Hills
The best students with all kinds of skills
We like to think critically and have fun
Don't forget to exercise in the sun
Believe in yourself because no one else will
So always when needed have a thrill

Efrain
We live in the land of opportunity
And we are part of a community.

All of us are one people,
Therefore we shall all be legal.
We have rights, we have freedom,
That is what gives us wisdom.

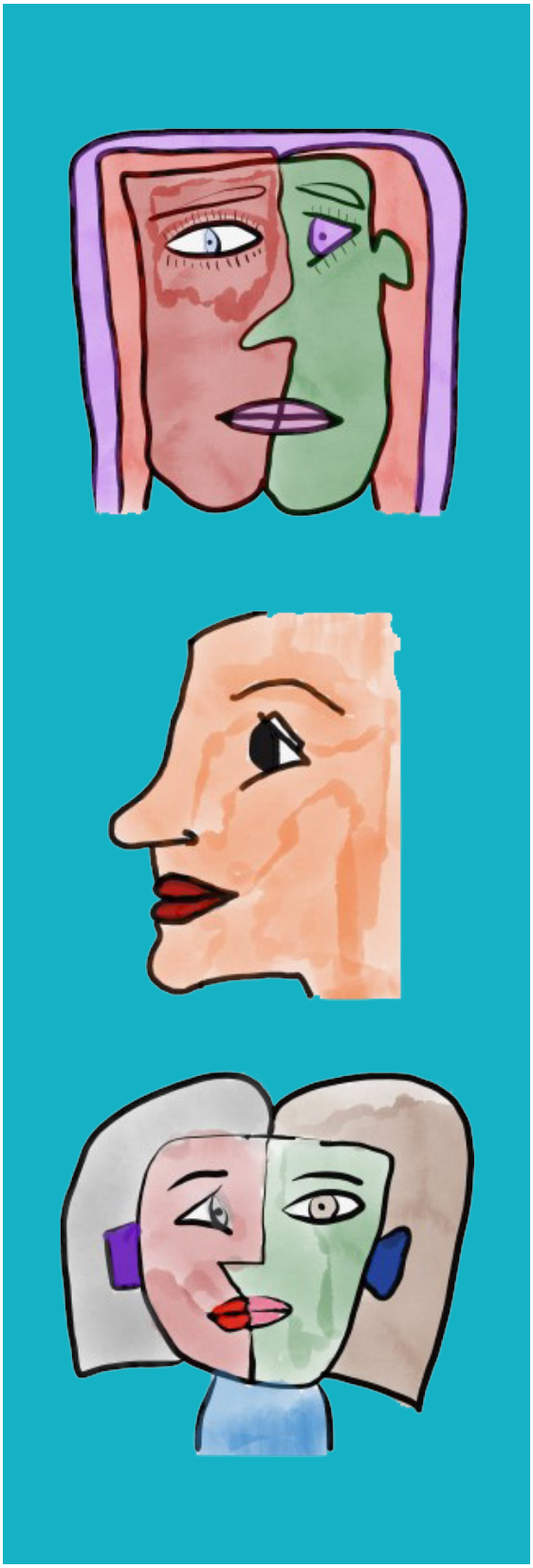
Karina
We as educators are committed to equity.
In all its complexity.
We fight for our students with love.
So that they can rise above.
We teach them to be brilliant.
And they show us that they're resilient.

Suzette
The main objective of the school is to create a community of wealth
and not let your community down.
Aspirational Capital is the hope and dreams of the future around.
Linguistic Capital are all the students of color with multiple communication skills in town.
Familial Capital will always be with you and never let you down.
And many more that you will learn.

Tamia
I am a visual learner.
Today's students are tomorrow's earner.
I have a lot to achieve.
There's no time to be naive.
Do not think I'm innocent.
I will be your equivalent :)

Sara
Student turn educator.
Will always be both.

Sara
Student turn educator.
Will always be both.
Learning and teaching
Seeking and reaching
It's the duo life.
Dual language
Duo stride
Up up
We thrive
Fly high
Like an eagle.



Though composed individually, the poems collectively represent the shared experiences of aspirations within the classroom. For example, Adrianna R., Yarelli, Pepe, Carlos, and Grace confronted inequality, and systemic oppression, emphasizing the role of educators' resistance and advocacy. In addition, Jeovanni, Suzette, Cristal, and Sara recognized multilingualism as power, resisting monolingual and monolithic ways of languaging. Finally, Patricia, Gina, Suzette, and Karina emphasized a deep sense of solidarity, shared struggle, and embodying the relational ethos of comadrerismo in practice. Taken together, the Social Justice Cypher illuminates how collective poetry, grounded in comadrerismo, can transform teacher education into a critical space to reflect, connect, and stand together for justice in education.

In the poetry circle, teacher candidates shared stories and drew strength from one another's identities, countering xenophobic rhetoric and affirming multilingualism and diversity (Alim, 2009; Kelly, 2013; Love, 2015) which led to these poems. Their poems embodied the values of comadrerismo—care, persistence, and community—and prompted deep reflection and metacognition around their learning and collective growth. Reflection and metacognition, key aspects of comadrerismo, became central as candidates assessed their learning and community-building experiences.

Reflections on Comadrerismo and Social Emotional Learning

After each performance, peers offered feedback, often connecting with lines that resonated personally (Kelly, 2013). These discussions sparked reflection and dialogue that went beyond the content of the poems, touching on shared experiences and dreams. Through this, the cypher became more than an artistic exercise; it was a space of reflection. This experience gave candidates a chance to reflect their identity, belonging, and resistance—topics that may be overlooked in traditional teacher education.

The transformative social and emotional learning fostered by the cypher activity extends beyond the boundaries of typical educational frameworks. As participants shared their poetic expressions, they explored complex questions of identity, belonging, and resilience. This reflective process supported their growth as educators and as individuals navigating a challenging sociopolitical landscape. Reflection within comadrerismo-based spaces tends to be holistic, addressing the emotional and relational dimensions of learning that are often overlooked in conventional education. These spaces provide essential support for teacher candidates facing adversity, fostering both personal and collective growth.

Implications for Teacher Education and Advocacy

The collective poetry created in this teacher education class at CSUDH embodies themes of resistance, communal strength, and aspirational visions for a better education. By highlighting the voices of teacher candidates, this project illustrates how comadrerismo-based practices counteract anti-multilingual policies and xenophobic sentiments. As teacher candidates share their struggles and hopes for the future of education, they are empowered to advocate for change within their communities. By cultivating spaces that value care, community, and advocacy, this pedagogical approach enables educators to build strength and endurance in the face of conservative attacks on multilingualism and diversity. This project highlights the importance ofintegrating culturally relevant and community-driven practices into teacher education, empowering future educators to transform their classrooms into inclusive, resilient spaces.

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3

Counter-storytelling Archetypes: A School Counseling Intervention for Chicana Girls

Aubrey Uresti, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
Counselor Education, San José State University

Abstract

Through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) composite counter-storytelling, this manuscript explores the academic, social, and mental health issues faced by adolescent Chicanas, and the impact of internalized and institutionalized racism and sexism on their development. Four Mexican archetypal female characters—La Llorona, La Virgen, La Malinche, and La Adelita—representing the majoritarian narrative inform a school counseling intervention grounded in literature on anti-racist and emancipatory school counseling, narrative therapy, and cuento therapy. The counter-story focuses on the transformative impact of the group counseling experience and the potential for increased self-awareness and capacity for meaningful connection, resistance, and self-determination for Chicana adolescents.

Keywords: counter-storytelling, Critical Race Theory, adolescent girls, school counseling

With rates of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidality that are higher than their White counterparts, adolescent Chicanas are a vulnerable population (Cruz et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2019). In school, these young women navigate typical challenges, while also holding multiple layers of marginalized cultural identity (e.g., gender and race) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). This intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2019) means that Chicanas carry a compounded cultural complexity that can interfere with healthy, normative development.

This essay utilizes Critical Race Theory (CRT) composite counter-storytelling (Gonzalez, 2024; Pizarro et al., 2018; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a, 2002b; Yosso, 2006) to explore the perspectives of Chicana youth and to present a counterstory about Chicana identity, voice, and resistance (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Specifically, this paper profiles one Chicana school counselor who develops a group counseling intervention for four Chicana adolescents. The construction of composite characters was informed by a theoretical synthesis grounded in CRT (Taylor et al., 2009)—a framework established more than four decades ago that has been misrepresented and maligned by political conservatives in recent years. In addition, relevant research in school counseling, education, and Chicana adolescents was systematically reviewed as part of the composite character development process. Issues of race, class, and gender were considered and deliberately embedded into the narrative descriptions of the composites. The characters were also intentionally linked to popular Mexican stories about women (Arrizón, 1998; Paz, 2008; Reséndez Fuentes, 1995). Representing the majoritarian narrative, these archetypal female characters provided the springboard for counter-storytelling within the context of the intervention.

Issues that commonly arise in the literature, and that are woven into the narratives for the characters in this paper, include academic struggles, behavioral problems, anxiety, self-esteem, experiences of racism and microaggressions, and parental involvement (e.g., Balanga et al., 2013; Jeynes, 2003; Ramirez et al., 2009; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso, 2006). As such, the composite characters evolved out of a combination of theoretical synthesis, and the literature and empirical research reviewed. Through the development of the counterstory, the adolescent girls presented in this paper gain powerful insight about themselves, cultivate their own agency and voice, and, together with their school counselor, discover what Milena Ribero and Arellano (2019) describe as comadrismo, a community of reciprocal support.

La Consejera: Ms. Cora Vasquez ("The One Who Tends the Sheep")

Ms. Vasquez ("Ms. V") is the only credentialed school counselor at Cardinal Middle School (CMS), where she has worked for five years. She has 600 students on her caseload, a ratio that exceeds the national recommendation of 250:1 (ASCA, n.d.). Ms. V works hard to meet the academic, career, and social emotional needs of her students (ASCA, 2021a). It is important to Ms. V to be a culturally sustaining, anti-racist school counselor (Holcomb-McCoy, 2021), and she aims to create an environment where all identities and experiences are recognized and honored. Before coming to CMS, Ms. V's first job was at a high school where she worked with a veteran counselor who was a White woman. Ms. V witnessed firsthand some negative stereotypical messages but felt intimidated about speaking out. She sought consultation from a former professor, saying "I don't want to just carry out a stereotype." Ms. V began reading about CRT, microaggressions, institutionalized racism and sexism, and integrating that material with her prior training in multicultural counseling competencies (ASCA, 2021b; Sue et al., 2007). When Ms. V started her job at CMS, she decided to work through a culturally sustaining, emancipatory lens on behalf of her students, to challenge the oppressive system, and to consciously incorporate an awareness of power, culture, and identity into her work as a school counselor (Love, 2019).

Dolores: "Full of Sorrows"

Dolores is a 13-year-old seventh grade girl who maintains a 2.7 grade point average and plays clarinet in the orchestra. Known as "Lo" to her friends and family, she lives with her mother, Celia, and her younger brother, Sammy. Lo does not have any contact with her biological father because he abandoned Celia while she was still pregnant with Lo. Over the years, Celia has had several serious boyfriends, one of whom was Sammy's father. Although the couple split, they remain friendly, and Sammy has regular contact with his dad.

When Lo was in fifth grade, her mother had an accident at work and injured her back. Celia needed surgery and was prescribed Oxycontin to manage the pain. Lo began taking on additional responsibilities at home as a way of helping her mom. It has been two years since the surgery, and even though she does not show any signs of pain, Celia is still taking Oxycontin. Lo worries that her mother is addicted to pills. Lo and her mother have always had a challenging relationship because Lo thinks that Celia favors Sammy over her, but now they barely speak.

At school, teachers have noticed Lo's increased anxiety. She has always experienced more fears and worries than her peers and struggled to sustain meaningful relationships. Her friends sometimes forget to include her in their plans or take advantage of her (e.g., copying

her homework and asking for money at lunch). Desperate to have friends, Lo puts up with the lack of consideration and poor treatment. In the past couple of weeks, Ms. V has noticed Lo transition from being in the mix with her friends at lunchtime to reading or doing homework instead. When Ms. V caught up with Lo and asked her about the recent change, Lo responded, "Wow, nobody else even noticed. It's like life just goes on without me. I could disappear and no one would even notice."

Beatriz: "Blessed"

Beatriz is a 13-year-old seventh grader whose standardized test scores were below proficient in both English and Math at the end of elementary school, resulting in additional academic supports and special education inclusion services. Although Beatriz was born in the United States, her parents are undocumented Mexican nationals. Because of their status, Beatriz's parents find it hard to get steady employment and often work in restaurants during the week and clean houses or do landscaping on the weekends to make ends meet. It is not unusual for Beatriz to accompany her parents on these weekend jobs. Over the years, her parents have taught her how to perform all of the tasks that they do—from cleaning floors to planting flowers.

Beatriz enjoys art and recently learned how to use a graphic design program in her computer class. She decided to make business cards and flyers for her parents' housecleaning and landscaping businesses as a class assignment in the hopes that her parents might make more money in these jobs. Beatriz is teased and bullied about her clothing and her looks. Sometimes people make snide comments about her parents getting deported. Her family cannot afford to buy name brand labels, and Beatriz often wears her cousin's hand-me-downs. Beatriz really wants to fit in and look more like the other girls. She says,

"The other girls have smooth hair that always looks good and can wear skinny jeans and tank tops without looking fat and slutty. I hate these stupid curves!"

In an effort to help her fit in, Beatriz's mom dyed Beatriz's hair at home this week. Unfortunately, the product turned Beatriz's hair a bright copper color. Beatriz's mom told her that they would have to wait a few days before they could dye her hair back, but in the meantime, she could wear a hat to school. She was humiliated in class when her teacher forced her to remove the baseball cap that covered her hair. Ms. V found Beatriz sobbing in a stairwell after school.

Citlali: "Little Star"

Citlali is a 12-year-old seventh grade girl who transferred to CMS when her family moved. At her last school, Citlali maintained a 3.6 grade point average. Citlali is the youngest of four children and lives with two older siblings and her mother and father. Her oldest brother, Junior, is a freshman at UC San Diego. During early childhood, Citlali participated in the Head Start program. Her mother, Emilia, is a dental assistant. Her father, Arturo, is a bricklayer for a masonry company. Citlali has always done well in school and thinks that she might like to go to college someday like her oldest brother.

When Citlali started at CMS, she took a dance unit as part of her physical education class. She caught on to the choreography quickly and was asked to try out for cheerleading. She felt flattered, as she never imagined herself as being "one of the cool girls." At her last school, she was always seen as "a smart kid" and never felt like she could get good grades and be popular at the same time. Once she joined the cheerleading squad, Citlali found herself being invited to hang out with people after school and on the weekends. Usually, Citlali and her friends just go to Julia's (the cheer team captain) house and play video games or practice their cheer routines. Julia's parents work and are not usually home until evening. Julia's grandmother lives with the family but tends to stay in her room and does not interact with the girls. On a few occasions, the girls have taken alcohol from the liquor cabinet. Recently, Julia stole some money from her grandmother's room and bought some weed from a kid at school for the girls to try.

At school, teachers are confused by Citlali's behavior. Ms. V overheard two teachers in the lunchroom talking about how Citlali seems to "play dumb" in class and is regularly off task, never being able to answer questions when called upon, but turning in thorough homework. When Ms. V caught up with Citlali and asked her about how the transition to CMS was going for her, Citlali started to cry and said,

"My parents would be so disappointed in me if they knew what was really going on. It's like I do these things and I don't even know who I am anymore. And, like, if my friends really knew me, like how I really am, I'm afraid that they wouldn't want me to hang out with them anymore. "

Alejandra: "Defender of the People"

Alejandra is a 14-year-old seventh grader who prefers the nickname "Alex." She lives with her aunt and two younger cousins. Alex's parents died in a car accident when she was in the second grade. In school, Alex earns C's and B's in her classes and excels on the soccer field. She has played soccer since she was a young child. She remembers playing soccer with her dad and feels connected to him through soccer.

When she was in the sixth grade, Alex's uncle died of lung cancer related to exposure to carcinogens in his work environment. He had been a father figure to her since her parents died, and she felt devastated by the loss. Alex went with her aunt and sat with her uncle every time he had chemotherapy. In spending so much time at the hospital, she noticed how many other families were there, going through the same kind of experience. She saw how the nurses always tried to make people feel comfortable and have a positive attitude; even when things seemed bleak, they always tried to be inspiring.

During that time, Alex began meeting with Ms. V to talk about her uncle's illness, which also led to discussions about her parents' deaths. In her meetings with Ms. V, Alex would say, "It's just so unfair, and I wish there was something I could do. I mean, I know I can't change it, but I just wish I could help make it feel less bad." Alex thinks that maybe she'd like to be a nurse someday, and Ms. V tells her about a hospital volunteer program. This year, she was able to begin the program, and she really loves volunteering one day after school and on Saturdays. Recently, Alex's aunt's work schedule changed, and she is unable to pick Alex up at the hospital after her volunteer shift, so Alex rides the bus home. The bus ride takes about 30 minutes and has been extremely unpleasant because there are often inappropriate, aggressive men on the bus who leer at her and make sexual remarks. Alex does not want to stop volunteering, but she does not know how to handle the situation, and she is often scared. Alex trusts Ms. V and decides to confide in her about what has been going on.

Intervention

Each of the four students is invited to join a counseling group by Ms. V. The group process follows Corey's (2023) four stages (i.e., initial, transition, working, and termination) and functions as a collective, consciousness raising experience that purposefully combines the principles of CRT counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a, 2002b; Yosso, 2006), narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), and cuento therapy (Ramirez et al., 2009; Villalba et al., 2010). This intentional tejido of approaches is particularly effective with adolescents because school-based group counseling is an efficient intervention that promotes peer connection and normalizes

experience, while the specific integration of three theoretical perspectives (i.e., CRT counter-storytelling, narrative therapy, cuento therapy) encourages the development of authentic voice in marginalized populations through a culturally sustaining framework. Participation in this group includes being supported in identifying an impeding archetype, engaging with the cuento, and counterstorying the narrative.

Initial

One by one, the four girls enter the room, their emotions ranging from lonely and sheepish to carefree and calm. Ms. V invites the girls to take a seat, and the first group session begins. Although Ms. V had previously met with each girl individually to screen them for potential group participation and to review informed consent and the limits to confidentiality, she revisits the process with the group as a whole. "Ok, but how does this work?" asks Citlali. "Like, if I, like, how do I know that people aren't gonna just tell everyone what I said in here?" "And, so it begins," thinks Ms. V. She takes a deep breath and responds, "you feel uncertain about whether or not you can trust others in this space." "Well, I mean, yeah. I don't really know y'all like that. I can't just say everything that I'm thinking and then have people betray me," Citlali counters.

Transition

After a few sessions, the group members grew in their comfort with each other. Through tears, Beatriz says quietly,

"I'm just so tired of being embarrassed. I'm self-conscious of my clothes, my shoes, hair, skin, accent. If I'm really bein being Mexican."

After a brief pause, and with strength in her voice, she asks, "For what?! Because some racist assholes have taught me to hate who I am?!" "You're not the only one Beatriz." Alex discloses. "I feel like that too sometimes about being a girl. I wonder what it would be like to be a boy—to not have to be constantly looking over my shoulder when I'm walking down the street; to not have to deal with all of the inappropriate comments that I hear from guys; to not have to worry, feel scared, or hide because I think that there is always a threat lurking; to be able to just be in my body and feel safe."

Just as Alex is finishing her statement, Ms. V hears a sigh coming from Lo. She turns in time to catch Lo rolling her

statement, Ms. V hears a sigh coming from Lo. She turns in time to catch Lo rolling her eyes. Without hesitation, Ms. V says, "Lo, I noticed you rolling your eyes as Alex was talking. If that eye roll had words, what would it say?" Instantly flushed, Lo puts her heels onto the edge of her chair and draws her knees to her chest. Hugging her shins and looking down, she is undoubtedly embarrassed that her unconscious gesture has gone noticed. "Well, you gonna answer her?," Citlali demands. Before Citlali can push further, Alex interrupts, "Leave her alone Lali, can't you see she's too chingona for this? I guess we're just too boring for her, or at least what I have to say, opening up about how I really feel, is too chillona for her. Isn't that right, Lo?"

After Alex's challenge, the entire group is quiet for a few moments. Recognizing the potential power in silence, Ms. V refrains from filling the void and waits, doing a quick assessment of group members: Alex's voice sounds strong, but there's hurt in her eyes; Citlali appears serious, her gaze shifting from Alex to Lo; Lo hasn't moved from the fetal position, and is now crying; Beatriz seems deep in thought with a furrowed brow. Just as Ms. V is about to speak, Beatriz takes a deep breath. Extending her arms, she touches her right hand to Lo's shoulder and her left hand to Alex's knee. Gently exhaling, she offers, "ya."

Working

The next couple of weeks progressed with a type of awkward tension, as group members tried bravery, authenticity, and/or vulnerability, testing how and if others would handle it. In time, wounds were repaired. Lo apologized to Alex and explained that her reaction was not about what Alex was saying, but about her own feelings of disillusionment about being a girl in the U.S. Lo expressed that she grew up with people saying that "girls can do and be anything" and that "girls are equal to boys," but that "what people say and what they do don't ever match." Lo revealed the effects of patriarchy and misogyny in her family system, explaining, "Boys and men have always and will always treat girls and women like crap. That's not new in our culture. But, what really pisses me off is when girls turn on girls, when mothers turn on their daughters. I mean, I expect that my mom is gonna treat my brother better than she treats me. That's the way it has always been. She treats her boyfriends better, too. Even though my dad was the one who bailed before I was born, he is free of any blame. It's like, he will always be 'the one who got away' and I am the one she's stuck with. The fact that I was born a girl means I am destined to be unhappy, like I am stuck, you know. And, Alex, honestly, I don't think it would matter if we had been born boys because we wouldn't be us as boys. We would be what they make all boys—rough and reckless, but still cherished and powerful."

Termination

Each group member offers the following reflection during the termination session. Lo: "I chose La Llorona as my archetype. I've always thought that my mom was like La Llorona, left by a man, burdened by her children, and living in deep sadness. I guess that made me one of La Llorona's kids, drowned in the river. But, I understand it differently now. My mom is not La Llorona, I am. I am the one who drowned my self-confidence, joy, and hopes in the river by letting others define me and my value. I have been living my life feeling like I am stuck on the shores of this stupid river, living with sadness and anxiety and wallowing in self-pity, because I am looking for someone who will love me. But, that was wrong. I have to be willing to get into the river and to find what I've lost to feel whole. I guess my counterstory is an affirmation, something I can say to myself as a reminder of what is true: *Forgiveness - I let go of hurt through forgiveness. Love – I give myself the gift of love. Discovery – I am open to discovering what the river holds."*

Beatriz: "I feel like an important part of my story is my struggle with what it means to me to be Brown and to be a girl. I think about the messages coming at me from social media and my family and friends and culture and religion and this country we live in, and I just feel fed up. I feel tired of it and I'm sick of how much it has affected me over the years. You all know I feel more comfortable with art and design than words, but I thought that I should try something out of my comfort zone because we are all trying to be brave here. I asked Citlali to read it for me to make sure that I was using the big words right, but I wrote it. I chose La Virgen as my archetype because, like La Virgen, I want people to recognize that I am a Chicana who has many talents. I wrote my counterstory as a letter, like a letter for when you are absent from school."

To Whom It May Concern:

> *Beatriz will not be showing up today in the way that you expect her to. She experienced too much of your racism and hatred toward women and has come down with a terrible case of gaslighting. She will not be available to babysit your kids, or scrub your bathroom, or mow your lawn. For the "Karens," she will not gas you up and tell you how amazing you are, even though you make racist comments about her parents. For the cochinos, Beatriz will also be unable to satisfy your nasty fantasies. She will not be wearing a bikini and shaking her butt for your social media posts. Other than to block you, she will not be responding to your requests for pics. Please excuse her from all racial trauma and patriarchy.*

In the immediate future and for however long it takes, Beatriz will be recovering from the effects of internalized racism.

Sincerely, me

Citlali: "For me, it is La Malinche. I chose this story because it is really complicated, and honestly, because I liked the challenge. It isn't just black and white. It isn't easy and straightforward. In the story of La Malinche, I feel like two sides are already represented. The one view is where she is seen as a horrible person who sold out her country. The other perspective is that she was a fool who was played by Cortés and the Spanish. But, what I realized is that those perspectives only highlight the black and white. She either has to be a bad bitch or a basic bitch. She is victim or violator. But, let's face it, there is no way she could have had the power to do any of that back in the day when we still struggle with our power today. Instead of continuing to define her through the eyes of those who traumatized her, I tried to imagine another possibility. I'm not totally sure how the story ends, but maybe that's because it doesn't have an ending yet. I wrote my counterstory as a poem."

Survivor: Una Historia Complicada
They told us the story of La Malinche
Una traidora con el poder de una esclava
There was no question that she was smart,
No sólo para una chica
She could learn new things faster than anyone,
Nuevas palabras bailando en la lengua
But in a world where your value is measured in servitude
Su mente valía menos que su trabajo
You become property
Se esperaba tu cooperación.
You learn to fit in, to do what is expected, to say "yes," to stop asking questions
Para silenciar sus miedos, su dolor, su duelo, su soledad
Because when you are powerless, you do as you are told
Te pierdes para sobrevivir
But, you need to be found in order to go on living
Despierta su mente curiosa
What would she say if she knew the stories that they told about her,
¿Y en qué idioma lo diría?
They told us they story of La Malinche
Pero ella nos ruega que escuchemos su cuento
Let's listen and learn
Ella vive en la verdad si la escuchamos.

Alex: "I know we've gone back and forth about this, but I still believe women have to be at the center of the revolution. People will say women aren't tough enough, or that we aren't capable of making important decisions, but that just tells me that they aren't paying attention. Women lead with wisdom, empathy, strength, and courage. Women are inspiring. And, while women are caring and compassionate and are capable of showing emotions, women are savage when they need to be. Look at the soldaderas, like La Adelita. She was a soldier, a medic, and a rebel. She didn't wait for someone else to save her or to rescue her, she fought for herself to defend what she believed in. I thought about my journey in this group—what I put into, but also what I learned about you all. My La Adelita counterstory is a playlist."

Las Rebeldes Playlist
If I Were a Boy (Beyonce)
What Was I Made For? (Billie Eilish)
Just a Girl (No Doubt)
The Man (Taylor Swift)
GIRL (Maren Morris)
Redesigning Women (The Highwomen)
Brave (Sara Bareilles)
Roar (Katy Perry)
Fight Song (Rachel Platten)
Rainbow (Kacey Musgraves)
Creo En Mi (Natalia Jiménez)

Discussion

This counterstory examines female archetypes from Mexican history, literature, and culture that reinscribe themes of patriarchy, misogyny, racism, and colonialism. Table 1 reviews the profile for each of the composite characters—highlighting salient themes associated with their archetype and counterstory, as well as their presenting issue in counseling. By engaging with and disrupting these narratives through the voices of the four composite characters and centering an anti-racist school counseling intervention, we can more deeply understand the potential impact that internalized forms of oppression have on the development of healthy attachment, body image, self-concept, and coping strategies. Beyond cultivating critical consciousness and authentic voice, the transformative potential in counter-storytelling can be witnessed on an individual-level—for Lo, there will be a recognition of her own importance in the world; Beatriz will embrace her identity as a young woman and as a Chicana; Citlali's intellect will be valued by both herself and those around her; and Alex will realize her ability to push through challenges bravely.

Table 1

Thematic Profile of Group Members

Group Members	Mexicana Archetype	Internalized Majoritarian Narrative	Counterstory Motif	School Counseling Issue
Dolores "Lo"	La Llorona	"I am destined to be unhappy and alone."	Self-worth	Intrapersonal & Interpersonal Growth
Beatriz	La Virgen	"Everything would be perfect if I was White."	Identity & Pride	Body Image
Citlali	La Malinche	"You can be smart or popular, but not both."	Critical Consciousness	Self-concept
Alejandra "Alex"	La Adelita	"I'm afraid and powerless as a girl."	Bravery & Feminism	Resilience

The group as a collective represents a network of care and comadrismo that will continue to support and sustain the girls as they move through adolescence. These four will undoubtedly be impacted by their relationship with Ms. V as their school counselor comadre and the internal representation of her that they will continue to hold long after middle school. Comadrismo may also manifest in various ways between the girls: friendship may result from the trust built in the group counseling experience, mentoring may be demonstrated by tutoring each other in school, advocacy may be emergent when standing up for each other against peer victimization or other forms of harassment. Regardless of how they stay in each other's lives, their vulnerability in a group and the depth of their experience together means that they will always be connected, even if only in memory. Their connection is reminiscent of a quilting circle, a community of individuals who come together on a consistent basis to make a quilt that will be gifted. Each person may have a particular role— cutting, planchar, piecing, sewing—but all are needed to move the project from a stack of fat quarters to individual blocks, to a complete quilt top, to each quilter taking a turn at hand stitching the binding. Quilting circles also add laughter, a little chisme, companionship, and love into every project. Like a quilting circle, the four girls worked through individual tasks to create one cohesive

story, a treasured heirloom that belongs to all of them, connects them, and forever binds them together as comadres.

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4

Counselors as Webs of Endurance in Higher Education

Margarita Landeros, Ed.D., M.Ed., PPSC
Assistant Professor, School & College Counseling Department
California State University Dominguez Hills

Karla Celene Martinez Treviño, M.S.
Alumni, School & College Counseling Department
California State University Dominguez Hills

Janet Garcia, M.S.
School & College Counseling Department
California State University Dominguez Hills

Abstract

This reflective piece raises the voices of a counselor educator and two higher education counselors who inspire hope at their campuses because of their commitment to advocate and serve their students. The first voice is a counselor educator and former school counselor framing the current state of the counseling profession and offering her own brief reflection as a counselor and counseling faculty. The second voice is from a four-year university counselor who opts to hold themselves accountable to be a source of community for colleagues and students. The third voice is a community college counselor who speaks to how the attacks on immigrant communities have provoked fear and how they have chosen to make sense of them. The paper concludes by drawing connections across the three voices and how they are generating a tejido of change through their work with students.

Keywords: counselor, higher education, minoritized communities, liaisons

The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth a heightened focus on the need for more counselors in educational settings to support student social emotional needs and retain them in our schools and colleges. At the turn of the new administration, the blatant attacks on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access surfaced questions about how and what we are funding in our schools and colleges. Suddenly, our politicians began to assess who works where and why. During times of budgetary crisis, counselors are often deemed expendable despite them being the tejidos (webs of endurance and liaisons) between instructional professionals and administrations. Counselors across K-16 guide students to make sense of the negative experiences during classroom conversations, the feelings of not belonging, and the opportunities that exist for them to prosper. Counselors in higher education work behind the scenes to increase student retention and graduation (Tovar, 2015) and remind students that they are exactly where they belong. Still, the counselor's role and value are often misunderstood. Hence, as much as we say we need more counselors and frequently ask them to implement and explain policies and happenings to students, we are also quick to forget how much we truly need them in our institutions. Counselors in K-16 are more than another person you employ; they are the glue that holds spaces of learning together and provide the support our students need during times of angst, uncertainty, loneliness, and celebration. This paper includes three reflections, one from a counselor educator and two from her counseling students who are counselors in higher education settings. All three underscore the impact of their identity as Latina counselors and how their experiences make their work personal. All three have also become each other's comadres in this work!

Counselor Educator: Counselors as Webs of Care

Dr. Margarita Landeros

Being a counselor of color, Latina, specifically, during this political climate also means having to defend our own belonging and merit in the roles we occupy in schools while still being strong enough for our students to serve as a source of endurance for them. The attacks on education are not just attacks on my students, they are attacks on my own identity as a person and as a professional. As a first-generation college graduate Latina counselor educator, I am preparing graduate students to do the very work I do with them. In this work, I focus on how they will use their own experiences and identity to be a source of strength (Brown et al., 2020), hope and support to their own students. I offer not only my own reflection but also reflections of two current Latina counselors about their own experiences as professionals in higher education in

urban settings with Hispanic Serving Institution designations. These counselors are charged with keeping it all together because this is the calling of our profession: to serve our students and empower them when everything else feels like it is against them. Students in higher education rely on faculty who look like them and validate their experiences (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020), as they guide them through their journey in higher education. They need interactions of care and connection that directly and indirectly support their retention and success in higher education (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020); and this is the role of counselors in higher education. I am experiencing the very literature my students and I read about. Together, we are all working to change the outcomes for students like us and show the impact and power of educational counselors. The comadrismo my students and I share serves as our tejidos of solidarity in a service-oriented profession. My counseling students' reflections that follow are a testament to students shaping the future, today, and counselors being a symbol of webs of endurance in educational settings.

Counselor Reflection 1: I Choose to Show Up as a Counselor

Karla Celene Martinez Treviño

"y en la calle codo a codo
somos mucho más que dos".
(Benedetti, 1997, p. 43)

In 2021, a year after we were globally forced to stay at home, that period of introspection helped me recognize that after several years of working in student services at a four-year higher education institution, I was ready to do more. Being of service to students and those around me was not just a job, it became a calling that I was committed to carry out responsibly. As shared by Nuñez (2023), being an educator sometimes includes negotiating your beliefs and "protecting [your] livelihood." Today, as a new college counselor, I tap into the counseling skills I have learned to make sense of the current political climate while responding to its impact upon my students and me.

As minoritized communities are increasingly targeted, I choose not to let anger be the response, but rather the fuel that drives me to use counseling as a practice of love. Reflecting on the intersecting identities that feel threatened, I hold space for myself to digest my feelings as a Latina woman, an immigrant, an adoptee, and a lesbian. I, myself, am a symbol of resistance during this political climate. My students being in a space that was not built for them, which is the reality of higher education, is a form of resistance and an affirmation of what is possible when we develop a new social fabric of access in higher education. Every fiber is touched, so I choose to show up for my communities as a counselor, drawing strength from the stories of resiliency that live within us. From counseling students on their academic success to being an

Equipped with the counseling skills and professional values that I have learned, as well as guided by a moral inner compass, I aim to be a safe space for students to unpack their concerns and engage in meaningful dialogue during difficult conversations. In a polarized political climate, I choose to resist rhetoric rooted in antagonism. By holding myself accountable to practice self-awareness and by committing to being a responsible member of the counseling field, I choose to build others up by standing with my colleagues and empowering our communities. I do this by offering solace through dialogue, fostering retention, and nurturing resilience among students.

Inspired by the voices of social justice movements led by diverse communities, I strive to engage in meaningful action as a college counselor. As we grapple with a shifting reality that defies us daily, I remain committed to finding my place and my voice as a college counselor in higher education, so I can help students reach their academic goals. I also look forward to joining my colleagues in supporting students with ease and care as they navigate their educational journeys, while also championing degree attainment during these times of uncertainty.

My recent experience paving a professional path reminded me of the transformative power of education, and why it is worth fighting for. This fight is for students, their families, and our communities at large. As immigrant and LBGTQ+ communities continue to be threatened with erasure, ocean names may change, but the power of unity and the knowledge that education provides cannot be divested.

Counselor Reflection 2: Creating Visual Representations of Alliance as a Counselor

Janet Garcia

As a first-generation Latina professional and daughter of immigrant parents, my work is shaped by resilience and systemic inequities. My career in education began supporting high school students in Title 1 schools and now I serve in higher education settings by working with community college students with diverse backgrounds. The students I work with are navigating the complexities of financial hardships, educational needs, and pressure of being successful in a system designed to marginalize many communities.

My personal and professional experiences have strengthened my commitment to building webs of endurance in radical empathy, care, and advocacy for communities I serve. Based on Isabel Wilkerson's (2020) definition of radical empathy, it is the active practice of listening with humility, educating myself beyond awareness and seeking to understand other's realities

that anchor my practice. What this looks like is being fully present by slowing down and listening when students share their narratives.

One student story that remains with me is supporting an undocumented student who was informed by their lawyer that their pathway to citizenship was unlikely. While devastated, the student was determined to continue in their studies while creating a class schedule that best fits them to care for their younger siblings. My role in that moment was not to paint over their story with silver linings, but ensuring them I would be present, acknowledging the weight they carried and honoring their experience. Radical empathy meant recognizing and accepting the truth of their reality and letting the truth fuel my dedication to advocate with heart. The experience has served as a reminder that my presence grounded in trust, humility, and deep listening can be empowering and impactful intervention.

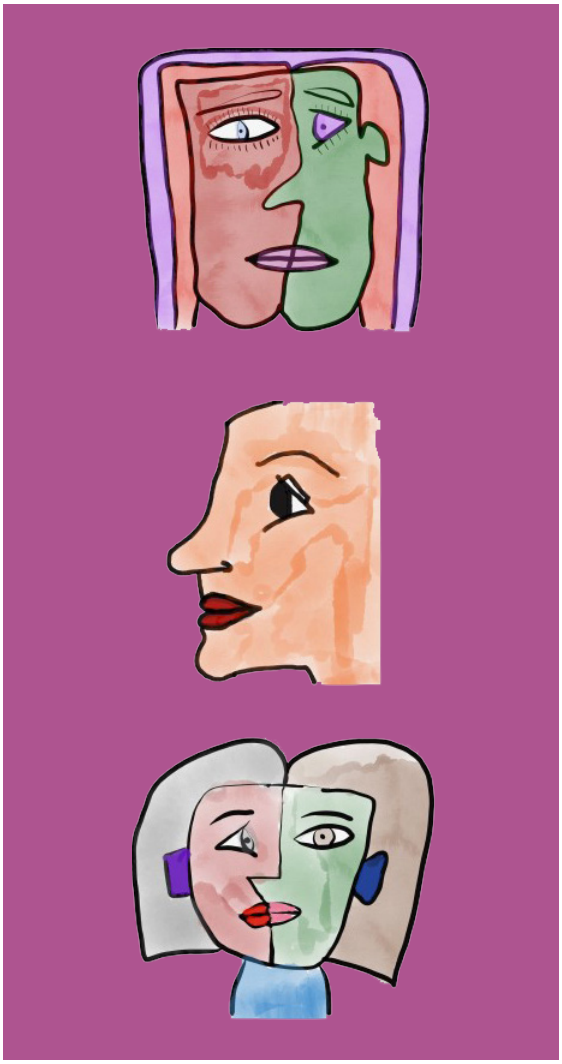
Witnessing the attacks on civil rights, education, and dehumanization of underserved communities, I am flooded with anxiety and fear for the safety and well-being of my family, students, peers, and communities. My mind immediately focuses on actions that are within my grasp, from informing myself on how to navigate conversations with ICE, laws, and policies that provide protection, gaining insights from experts in the field through social media, and checking in with family and peers.

At my worksites, I focus on creating visual representations of alliances that promote community, belonging, and emotional safety for students. For example, ensuring to have plenty of Red Cards, a resource that informs students of their rights when interacting with immigration enforcement, visible and available in the office. I also maintain a dedicated resource board tailored to first–generation, undocumented, and LGBTQ+ students with information and affirmations. While the efforts can be glossed over, the visual support sends an empowering message to students: You are seen, belong, and are supported here. By creating the visual representation of an alliance, I hope to foster trust and safety the moment students walk into academic spaces.

However, as I had to purge and cling on for the safety of what I can control, I began to look inward to assess my feelings and thoughts about the turn of events and how I am showing up in my workplaces, personal life, and for myself. My personal web of endurance is constructed daily with care. It's grounded in self-awareness and reflection. I create this web of endurance through a journal where I can honor my own emotional responses, and through physical movement to help connect with my body. Additionally, connecting with trusted peers and mentors who have fostered a safe space to process and feel understood without judgement has been critical to my wellbeing. Connecting with trusted individuals serves as a reminder I am not isolated in

Webs the Bind Us as Counselors

Aligned to Brown's (2020) call for first-generation faculty and counselors to use their experiences and serve as role models for their students, this counselor educator and two counselors share with us how they use their own identity to encourage their students. Counseling requires self-awareness so that counselors can be responsible members in the profession, create action, and serve as champions for students without imposing their own perspectives. Still, this does not mean that counselors cannot stand up for their beliefs and advocate for their students to earn their degree and create this same cycle of hope for others in their communities. As Martinez shared in her reflection, *I Choose to Show Up as a Counselor,* counselors have their own stories and values that they bring into their work, and this cannot be disentangled from the service they provide to others. Similarly, Garcia highlighted in her reflection, *Creating Visual Representations of Alliance as a Counselor,* that it is our personal and professional experiences that serve as our tejido of endurance so that we can be fully present to support our students. When our students and communities are under attack, we are there to be active listeners and honor their experiences. While students are not in the classroom, counselors provide another space for learning, reflecting, planning, and connecting. This is the power of education. We are more than educators; we are connectors, resources, and sources of care for our students. In partnership with our colleagues, one another, and our students, we are creating a new tejido for social change in education. Our students are evidence that when we resist the attacks on our communities, choose to reclaim spaces not made for us, we can create a new generational fabric for our communities. This is the purpose of counselors in higher education - we are webs of endurance for our students and their communities!



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5

Aloha ʻĀina and Place-Based Education as Transformative Practice with Students from Los Angeles Urban Schools



Christina Stephany, Ed.D.
Independent Consultant
Stephany Educational Consulting LLC

Alohilani Okamura, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Teacher Education, Secondary, University of Hawaʻi at Mānoa

Sarah Lara, Ed.D.
Faculty
Teacher Education, California State University Dominguez Hills

Abstract

Place-based education (PBE) has been envisioned across liberal, critical, and Indigenous perspectives. Within this piece, we unravel our reflections, planning and teaching a pre-college seminar grounded in critical and Indigenous perspectives of PBE for secondary students from Los Angeles urban schools. Grounding the course within the Hawaiian principles of pilina, kuleana, and aloha (relationships, responsibility, and care), we gave time and space for students to develop their identities by studying the complex interactions of a community rooted in a place of their choice. Drawing upon the methods of duoethnography, we share how centering identity development through the study of place shifted dominant power structures within K-12 education and how the focus on relationships across generations makes the process the product of students' learning. As teachers and teacher educators, our reflections share our transformation and the potential transformation for students to develop Aloha ʻĀina, a reciprocal relationship with place.

Keywords: place-based education, Aloha ʻĀina, Indigenous epistemology, duoethnography

In the 1990s, place-based education (PBE) grew in opposition to neoliberal educational reforms that decentered cultural connection, community, and environmental sustainability (Semken & Freeman, 2008). PBE is an umbrella term for pedagogical practices that recenter experiential, context-based learning to cultivate a deeper connection to one's local community through cultural, ecological, social, political, and economic study. Yet, in a systematic review of PBE research from 2002 to 2022, Yemini et al. (2023) found a large subset of articles focused on improving students' academic outcomes through PBE interventions, alluding to the difficulty in avoiding neoliberal tendencies within educational initiatives. As an alternative pedagogy, PBE has been envisioned across a range of perspectives from what Seawright (2014) classifies as liberal, critical, and Indigenous.

Seawright (2014) claims that liberal PBE is defined mostly by Sobel's (2004) work to promote greater balance between humans and their environment through education that centers on the relationships between one's home ground and the larger ecological and social world. Yet, according to Seawright (2014), liberal PBE does not critically engage with the alternate meanings of places for different individuals. Bang and Medin (2010) argue that people live culturally; they draw upon sense-making practices to navigate everyday life and cultural practices must be central to a community-based curriculum. Additionally, McInerney et al. (2011) contend that in practice rather than theory, PBE can become problematic through a focus on localism and romanticizing students' notions of their communities as always promoting democratic ideals. Additionally, a focus on local activism without considering how broader economic and political events shape local issues limits students' opportunity to question the structures of society (McInerney et al., 2011).

Seawright (2014) contends that critical PBE is centered on David Gruenewald's thinking, which addresses these criticisms of liberal PBE. To describe his critical pedagogy, Gruenewald (2003) refers to a process of decolonization and reinhabitation. According to Gruenewald, our educational institutions are embedded in deeper cultural patterns that are common to Western development. Education is also linked to the globalization of economic markets, culture, and the environment. With this understanding, Gruenewald (2003) envisions students first learning to question and challenge dominant perspectives that harm their lives and the lives of community members. Students learn to critique the local through an examination of how colonization and the misuse of power affect the inhabitants and natural resources tied to the land. Then, students learn reinhabitation, or the steps to revitalize and restore the environmental and social practices that promote sustainability and development of their community in the present and future. Thus, according to Seawright (2014), the

critical perspective focuses on challenging assumptions about the purpose of schooling as rooted in local community development, rather than closing global achievement gaps through improved school outcomes.

Although PBE has been envisioned as a separate pedagogy, Seawright (2014) views Indigenous epistemologies and education as the longest-standing form of PBE. Bowers (2008) and Seawright argue that describing critical PBE to be a pedagogy of decolonization and reinhabitation assumes that every place adheres to these terms that communicate generalizations regarding emancipation from capitalist, Western domination. He contends that place, framed by Western knowledge systems such as settler colonialism and anthropocentrism, socializes individuals into roles created by a discourse of domination. Seawright argues that Western settler traditions establish dominant and subordinate social interactions within a locality through the creation of an ideal social actor that determines the ideal ways of knowing and being. He contends that for PBE to be a critical pedagogy, the deeper, foundational way in which we are differentially socialized into epistemic structures must be part of the pedagogy enacted. Furthermore, Bowers (2008) asserts that critical pedagogy does not communicate the complexity of educating students about place, since aspects of local cultural commons have been carried on for generations and are part of patterns within Indigenous societies that retain mutual support systems within communities. In addition to questioning the underlying assumptions of critical PBE, Bowers (2008) believes that thick description of cultural histories and commons promotes understanding of what practices must be conserved, avoiding change initiatives that may simply replace existing hegemonies.

The Hawaiian principles of pilina, kuleana and aloha portray how PBE is endemic to Hawaiʻi and illustrate Seawright's (2014) claim that PBE is rooted in Indigenous epistemology. Pilina is a strengthened sense of belonging, the connection between the individual to the land, the individual to others in the community, and the individual to ancestral knowledge and wisdom. A Hawaiian proverb that demonstrates these connections is He pili wehena ʻole, a relationship that cannot be undone (Pukui, 1983). Kuleana is a strengthened sense of responsibility. In Hawaiian it is stated as, ʻAuamo au i koʻu kuleana no ka hoʻokō pono ʻana i ia kuleana mai ka mua a ka hope (Pukui, 1983), or to carry the responsibility to fulfill that which serves in the best interest of the community. Central to connecting in place-based education is the intentionality seen through a disposition of aloha. Cultivating a strengthened sense of aloha is depicted in the proverb, E ʻōpū aliʻi (Pukui, 1983) or to have the heart of a chief. Aloha is a deep caring and concern seen through acts of service above self.

Grounded in these three Hawaiian principles and the tension between liberal, critical, and Indigenous notions of PBE, we share our reflections on designing and enacting a course for rising eleventh-grade students in the Upward Bound summer program at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). As teachers and teacher educators, we came together to provide an opportunity for students to unravel the complexity of places as economic, ecological, social, and political to reflect upon their identities in relation to their communities. By reflecting upon our relationships with one another, our students, and the richness of our locality, we share how centering place in learning creates space to develop our identities and shift asymmetrical power structures in schooling. This, in turn, offers opportunities to understand our kuleana to one another and develop reciprocal webs of aloha with the hope of building tejidos or webs of endurance amidst the current socio-political turmoil within our communities.

Background and Context

Upward Bound is a federally funded program that serves high school students from families with limited financial resources, in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education. During the fall of 2022, Dr. Cristina Stephany served as the Coordinator of School Partnerships and Clinical Practice, for the College of Education (COE) at CSUDH. As part of her role, she met with the Executive Director of School Partnerships and the Director of CSUDH's Upward Bound program to determine how the COE could collaborate. The outcome was that she would teach a college seminar during the June to July 2023 program, in which rising 11th and 12th grade students from local school districts attended college courses on the CSUDH campus, culminating in living on campus for one week.

The intention of piloting a course taught by a COE faculty member was multilayered. At the time, the COE was placing student and intern teachers in the districts served by the program: Centinela Valley Union High School District, Compton Unified School District, Inglewood Unified School District, and Los Angeles Unified School District. Collaborating with Upward Bound was an opportunity to develop deeper partnerships within the surrounding districts. The collaboration also allowed COE faculty to work directly with students in local schools. Since the only objective of the course was for students to explore their responses to the University of California (UC) application personal insight questions (PIQs), there was much space for faculty to develop meaningful curricula and methods in partnership with students through this collaboration.

Course Design

With only the parameters of exposing 22 rising eleventh graders to the PIQ application questions and a schedule from June 21 to July 26, 2023, of 11 course sessions, each about 2 hours, we engaged in designing the course. We drew upon the classifications of PBE (Seawright, 2014), Hawaiian culture- and place-based learning (Kawaiʻaeʻa, 2012), Youth Participatory Action Research (UC Berkeley, 2025), and the Social Justice Standards (Teaching Tolerance, 2017), to develop the curriculum for the course. In addition, we reached back across our decades of experience teaching secondary students through project-based learning.

Within our course titled "The Ecology of Place" students were asked to think about the importance of place as a complex web that includes the physical, social, structural, and economic interactions of a community. Throughout the course, students explored their identity as they uncovered the history and community assets rooted in a place of their choice. While planning, we worked backward to provide students with the resources to complete their final project, which was to design a website to share what they have learned about themselves, the community, the place, and the questions that have emerged from their studies. The required components of the website included a title, about the author page, reflections on 2-3 PIQs, history of the place, community challenges, questions for further inquiry, and a site symbol/logo.

The course sessions were chunked into four sections. Two sections focused on the development of a collective website capturing the whole class study of CSUDH to model research methods and thought processes. In addition to choosing credible and reliable sources to research the history of their chosen place, students were also required to interview a community member to include lived experiences from alternate perspectives. As practice, they interviewed the CSUDH Director of the American Indian Institute and the COE Multiple Subject Credential Clinical Coordinator to understand their perspectives of the university. After engaging in collective work on the CSUDH website, during the other two sections, students researched a place of their choice and developed their websites. On the last day of the course, students presented in a hōʻike showcasing their learning to classmates, CSUDH faculty, and staff.

Authors' Positioning & Methodology

As teachers and teacher educators, we came to the experience of designing and teaching the course with different backgrounds and funds of knowledge. Dr. Cristina Stephany is a teacher induction coordinator and a former English teacher. While working at the Ministry of Education in the Cook Islands as a learning and

teaching advisor, she completed her dissertation focusing on teachers' perceptions of technology integration in relation to their Cook Island Māori to Western epistemic stances (Stephany, 2017). Her dissertation was built upon Dr. ʻAlohilani Okamura's dissertation, which focused on teachers' perceptions of school accountability from a Hawaiian epistemological lens (Okamura, 2015). Dr. Okamura is a teacher educator at the University of Hawaiʻi Mānoa, a large land and sea-grant research university. As an Assistant Professor, she focuses on language, culture, and place-based education. She previously taught in K-12 urban and Hawaiian immersion schools on Oʻahu, Kaua'i, and the island of Hawaiʻi for 25 years. After reconnecting, Cristina asked ʻAlohilani to act as an advisor for the course design. Additionally, Cristina recruited Dr. Sarah Lara to co-design and co-teach the course for her background and experience as a first-generation Latina, born and raised in South Los Angeles, a current science teacher at Ánimo Venice Charter High School, as well as a mentor teacher and teacher supervisor for CSUDH.

As we engaged in reflection more than a year and a half after teaching the course, we drew upon the tangled methods of duoethnography, "a collaborative research methodology that invites researchers to serve as sites of inquiry. Through juxtaposition, the voices of each researcher are made explicit, working in tandem to untangle and disrupt meanings about a particular social phenomenon" (Burleigh & Burm, 2022, p. 1). Thus, as both researchers and participants, we simultaneously generated, collected, and iteratively analyzed the data to make meaning of our shared experience. We recorded our initial meeting to discuss our experience planning and teaching the course. We continued to review course materials and generated written individual reflections. We then engaged in dialogue during two recorded subsequent meetings to discuss our reflections, fleshing out our perceptions, representations, and changing perceptions, producing data and simultaneously making meaning of that data as process enveloped product (Sawyer & Liggett, 2012). Between these meetings, we each chose three themes that emerged from our interactions. During our last meeting, we negotiated our individual themes into two collective themes. We then engaged in the deeply metacognitive work of independently analyzing our own course materials, written reflections, and the transcripts of all our meetings, identifying quotations that embodied each theme. Finally, we compiled the commonalities across our independently chosen quotations for each theme, which is shared in our hōʻike. In our limited duoethnography, we sought not to "'uncover findings,' but rather to promote more complex and inclusive social constructions and re-conceptualizations" of our experience (Sawyer & Ligget, 2012, pp. 630-631).

Hōʻike

Hōʻike is a method of assessing knowledge through performances and presentations (Chun, 2011; Kanaʻiaupuni and Ledward, 2013; Keehne, 2017), to evaluate learners' knowledge and skills in culturally meaningful ways. Here, we weave our interconnected reflections, which serve as our findings and discussion, to showcase our deepened, complex understanding of how centering place within learning created space for our students and ourselves to develop our identities. Our themes emerged from our multidimensional discussion of power and the webs of relationships that develop when interactions are not framed by dominant and subordinate social interactions.

Shifting Power in Place

At the beginning of our seventh-class session, we showed the TED video, *How to Understand Power* (Liu, 2014), as a frame for analyzing community member interviews and determining the strengths and challenges within our students' chosen place. While reflecting, we remembered discussing the second law of power, "power is like water," with our students:

> Sarah: We were talking about water being fluid. It just goes wherever it can...We were asking the students to be fluid, which was actually what we were doing ourselves. It had to do with power and power dynamics.
> Cristina: Power is fluid. It actually can move from one person to another. And the underlying bonds are what you talked about with the hydrogen.
> Sarah: And even the fact that water is one of the only compounds that can become solid, liquid, and gas. And we talked about its ability to transition from different forms. And how powerful and important that is for life.

We open with this dialogue to share our reflections upon the tensions that we and our students experienced when we situated learning between critical and Indigenous perspectives of PBE (Seawright, 2014). These multidimensional tensions surfaced when the power dynamics between Western and Indigenous

perspectives, process and product, teachers and students were blurred.

We intended to ground the "Ecology of Place" course within Hawaiian place-based approaches through ʻAlohilani's guidance and support. In our dialogue, we recognized that this in itself created tension within our teaching, since both Cristina and Sarah operate from Western perspectives. As Cristina shared,

"There are separations that I think are very Western, and oftentimes not questioned, unless Indigenous ways of thinking are intersected into your thoughts."

Additionally, we thought about Seawright's (2014) critique of PBE and questioned established dominant and subordinate social interactions. We had to think of power as fluid, which made us realize how we were operationalizing this epistemic introspection.

While planning the course, Cristina and Sarah would meet for 1-2 hours every week sharing resources and negotiating content and delivery methods. Sarah explained, "In our first planning session, we became overwhelmed with all the great ideas we considered and hoped to incorporate into the course." We were ambitious and free to develop the course with only the restriction of the PIQ questions. Yet, continuing, Sarah stated, "As educators, we initiated the planning of the curriculum with very specific and concrete standards for the course. As the course evolved, we realized we needed to be flexible in our planning." In our dialogue, this tension between process and product emerged. ʻAlohilani named it, "Start thinking, how the process is the product, which is a mind shift from what they're used to in K-12 education, right? What K-12 education is saying is, gotta show this, this and this."

As K-12 teachers, we had been socialized into normative habits of aligning instruction to standards-based academic outcomes and results. Initially, we planned for students to find a solution to a problem in their community that they uncovered. Instead of finding solutions, through ʻAlohilani's guidance, we chose a different outcome for our students. Cristina wrote in her reflection, "Changing this development of a solution to instead asking more questions about the strengths and challenges that they found within the past, present, and future of their chosen place, really does teach that we sit in tension in the world. To really think through the complexity and to take time to understand–that's what we asked our students to do, not have some kind of solution to the problem that they are starting to understand."

As we reflected on letting go of traditional K-12 student outcomes to focus students on building identity and community, we also recognized that we as teachers were continuing to hold dominance over our students. Through this process of examining our own perspectives while we were planning and teaching, we let go of directing students' learning. ʻAlohilani identified, "Shifting power to kids. The idea of power, that seems like it's another big idea. Because how does and or did power materialize in community and ourselves is almost how you had to switch the power dynamics back to them. And it's something that they are not conditioned to do, which made it really uncomfortable and almost hard." Sarah elaborated, "It makes me think about how students are trained throughout their entire life. When we were doing this project, we left it so open-ended and kids were asking us, 'Can I do this? Can I say this?' They were waiting for us to tell them…The fact was there were no actual boundaries–it was just more, 'What do you think? What is valuable to you? What is of utmost importance in your community?…What would you like to learn?' You get to research your own history." In further reflection, she said, "We don't spend enough time teaching our kids or allowing them the time and the space to learn about what the history means for groups of people, just talking about oppression…a new found appreciation for the land they stand on, or the communities that they live in. That was really big for me."

In providing the time and space for students to study their identities through the complexity of place, we saw shifts in dominant power structures. In essence, we remained "in place" in our roles, yet we were able to allow power to be fluid, like water. And, like water, we saw the potential for transformation in the state of K-12 education, our epistemic stances, student-centered pedagogy, and the student's perceptions and perspectives. ʻAlohilani summarized how our interactions provided space for transformation. "I think it was a boy who had said when he was talking about the history of Dominguez, 'Oh, can I say that, that it was five dollars for [Native American] scalps, they were given compensation.' And I thought that was really profound, right? How they want to be respectful, and for us to offer this, but then it's fact. It's not even my opinion, but is it okay for us to share this now? And of course, the two of you were like, absolutely. And how freeing that could be for him. I think of those kinds of moments, when the two of you talk, were so transformative for them and potentially for you too, where something innately that you would not even give it a second thought, but in that moment, it was given attention because of that student question."

Pilina in the Past, Present, and Future

Pilina is a strengthened sense of belonging, the connection between the individual to the land, the individual to others in the community, and the individual to ancestral knowledge and wisdom. Through the collective study of CSUDH, our interactions, and sharing stories, we developed a sense of belonging and relationships with one another in the classroom setting. Sarah articulated, "I was sharing a lot of my experiences, I remember. I was able to connect with them at a community level, in terms of I came from South Central, and I grew up in a lot of these areas, and I never questioned the system. I was just taught to be grateful. And there was a lot of, just agreement, or a lot of them resonated with my experience…because you don't want to get in trouble…and there's a lot of inequality that they experience, and a lot of inequality that I acknowledged when I would talk about my experience. So even just that connection was really positive." Connecting through where we were individually raised or the communities that we identified with or how we were collectively connected to CSUDH was central to students' learning.

Additionally, our reflections showed that through the study of place, we had a desire to develop within ourselves and students a relationship to knowledge that is intergenerational. Reflecting on when she was a classroom teacher, ʻAlohilani shared how her students were central to the rebuilding of the hale pili. This traditional house is in the middle of Bishop Museum on Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi. Thinking of her students, she remembered, "It's reawakening in them something that maybe in their whole lifetime they've never done but generationally it is part of their DNA. So, how do we reawaken that in them and develop that side of them that they didn't even know was there?" By choosing a place that had meaning or significance to them, we hoped students would build deeper relationships with the knowledge that they were uncovering.

For example, we offered ways for students to engage with the history of their chosen place by first engaging in the collective study of CSUDH. On the CSUDH website, the campus history starts with the land grant to Juan José Dominguez. Cristina remembered collectively studying CSUDH's history with the students. "Reaching back to the history of CSUDH and then thinking how the narrative begins with the owners of the land as the Dominguez family, not back further to the Tongva, I think it shows what I really started to understand myself–the interconnections through history of different people, and the struggles that people go through over time. That's what connects us too." Utilizing resources from the Director of the American Indian Institute, students added to the history of CSUDH, starting with the Tongva. To make connections between the history and land that they were physically occupying, we had students consider kilo practice. In Hawaiian, kilo means to forecast, watch, observe, and

examine (Pukui, 1986). Students consistently took time to sit and observe in the garden landscapes of CSUDH during their break with an opportunity to kilo.

In the relationships that they were building with us, between one another, with the campus, and with their chosen place of study, we hoped that they began to see the complexity, richness, and value of these relationships. Cristina explained in her reflection, "We also wanted them to sit in the tension to know that problems are not easily solved. It takes a lot of untangling and community effort to find actual solutions to problems, which are much more complex once we take the time to understand the webs of interconnections that we hold with one another and our environment. We also must be weary of solutions, since sometimes solutions can turn into problems further down the line." Again, the result of our project was the development of further inquiry questions, which honored the complexity of the relationships they were building and the deep reflection that they were engaging in to develop their identities.

Conclusion

While PBE research in the United States over the last 20 years has largely focused on quantitative and measurable outcomes, studies in Australia and New Zealand, grounded in Indigenous communities, focused on social justice, critical thinking, and decolonization (Yemini et al., 2023). Our course and duoethnography, situated in Los Angeles, California in the United States grounded in Indigenous and critical perspectives, allowed us to build upon the extant literature. Although PBE scholarship has been narrowly concerned with environmental and scientific subjects in schools (Yemini et. al, 2023), our course was interdisciplinary, as students researched the history and complex community interactions of a place to then develop further inquiry questions into topics of their choice. Our course was also centered on students' identity development, which has not historically been the focus of PBE (Yemini et. al, 2023). In the context of global research, operationalizing critical and Indigenous PBE perspectives (Seawright, 2014) within the locality of Los Angeles offered a potentially transformative experience for our students and ourselves.

Responsibility is intergenerational. How we build responsibility and love for a place (kuleana and aloha) into learning is through cultivating pilina or connection to the land. Seawright (2014) contends that place-based education can resist settler traditions of place and promote more just and equitable interactions within localities, if it includes epistemic introspection to the ways that we are socialized across generations into oppressive ontological relationships with the natural world. Prioritizing Indigenous perspectives, making time and

space to study the complexity of place, and deeply studying place–the webs of interactions within a community across past, present, and future, has the potential to develop kuleana and aloha. Alohaʻāina in Hawaiian is love for the land–to respect and physically care for a place, establishing a reciprocal relationship. Kuleana with aloha is the idea of how we connect to each other, the stories, the self, and the community. At the end of our course, students left with further questions to explore and build relationships with their community. They, and we, sat in the tension that fluidity offers, like water on the verge of change, as we studied the histories of places, shared power, engaged in epistemic introspection, and developed our identities. Through this experience, we were transformed, and we hoped that our students were transformed as well to realize Alohaʻāina.

In a time where education is under attack and students' respective histories are being erased from classroom curriculums, Indigenous PBE perspectives offer an opportunity for students to connect to their context and asserts their power in their own learning. Additionally, this study underscores the importance of teacher self-reflection to center student identity development in their own classrooms. Finally, this study serves as an example of how teachers can mitigate the rising tensions in educational settings by incorporating more PBE interventions and practices that transform student experiences.

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6

Empowered Authenticity: Promoting Collective Consciousness Raising in Educational Settings

Anna Baird, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School & College Counseling Department, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Abstract

Amid the ongoing turmoil of the current political climate, creating community within our classrooms is of vital importance. Creating safe spaces for students to show up authentically and have opportunities to discuss collective consciousness raising is an important step that faculty within the counseling profession can take. This allows our students to show up authentically and feel empowered within the classroom. In this article, I propose two ways that faculty can create safe environments for students to show authentic expressions of creativity and emotion, with the end goal of creating community and collective action within these educational settings.

Keywords: student empowerment, safe spaces, community-building

As an emerging feminist scholar and newly appointed assistant faculty member, I am consistently thinking about creating safe spaces in my classrooms. I chose to be a counselor educator because I want to see positive changes occur within counseling and higher educational settings. The counseling profession has done well in attempting to integrate multicultural competencies into our field (Ratts et al., 2016), but there is a long way to go before we reach equity for marginalized populations (CACREP Vital Statistics, 2024). Within the charged political climate today, many students rightly feel anxious about the future and the impact of potential legislation that could negatively affect certain rights if changed (Wood, 2024).

According to a recent study, students from historically marginalized backgrounds who are more engaged in socio-political activism suffer greater levels of psychological stress (Suzuki et al., 2023). Additionally, not only are students engaged in US politics, but they are also engaged in activism surrounding the many armed conflicts, wars, and genocides affecting multiple parts of the world, including but not limited to Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Haiti, Ukraine, and Syria (Davies et al., 2024). At the forefront of many college activists' efforts is the ongoing genocide happening in Palestine and the erupting war in surrounding countries like Lebanon and Yemen (Rubin et al., 2024). It is important to note that students engaged in advocacy specifically surrounding the genocide in Gaza (B'Tselem, 2025; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2025; Amnesty International, 2024; United Nations, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024) are suffering from increased psychological strain due to multiple factors, including potential retaliation, expulsion, suspension, social isolation, anxiety and depression (Buheji et al., 2024).

Additionally, many students who are affected by immigration issues, whether directly or indirectly, are personally affected by the current administration's anti-immigration legislation (U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, 2025). It is imperative to note that research regarding this specific era of anti-immigration legislation is limited due to its emergent nature. However, prior tangential research shows an increase in distress and a decrease in enrollment and matriculation among undocumented students and students impacted by increased anti-immigration activity (Gonzales, 2011; Martínez-Calderón, 2009).

To borrow an overused analogy, if a flower is not blooming, we do not blame it for failing to thrive; rather, we examine the soil and the environment in which it is planted and make adjustments to help it successfully grow. Therefore, what can we do to help our students grow in the midst of sociopolitical unrest and turmoil that affects them as emerging professionals? Our field needs to unite under a common banner of social justice advocacy for our

clients, students, peers, and fellow professionals. It is extremely difficult to come together under a single cause without organizing, however. I look to the feminist tenets of collective consciousness raising and promoting authenticity within the educational setting as a guidepost for how to create spaces where students feel supported and empowered (Mahoney, 2018), particularly in discussing polarizing subjects like those aforementioned.

Blackmore (2023) describes collective consciousness raising has having its roots in the Women's Movement of the 1970s and specifically refers to the sharing of experiences of individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds to increase awareness of how personal experiences are connected to the political. It also allows folks to understand that their struggles are interconnected and that they are not alone (Blackmore, 2023). Additionally, the collective understanding of oppression leads to social change (Mahoney, 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore ways in which counseling faculty in particular, and faculty in general, can work toward building safe spaces within our classroom communities that promote and allow for collective consciousness raising. This will allow students to build community and create spaces for them to take steps toward collective activism as they share their experiences with one another.

I would like to begin this exploration by exploring the definitions of authenticity and empowerment. Authenticity, as described by bell hooks (1994), refers to the process of self-actualization. As teachers model their professional and "human" selves in the classroom, this opens the space for students to bring their whole selves, not just their academic selves, into educational spaces (hooks, 1994). Exploring collective consciousness raising could also lead to a development of authenticity within certain contexts (Mahoney, 2018). By exploring how students have had to keep parts of themselves outside of the classroom (commonly referred to as "code switching"), and opening up the space for their whole selves, this leads to better outcomes for students in educational environments (Moula et al., 2024). Empowerment is the process of increasing ones' political, interpersonal, and personal power (Gutiérrez, 1999). In the classroom, an example of empowerment can look like educators inviting students whose first language is not English to bring their language into the classroom setting (hooks, 1994). For example, if a student wants to express an idea, but it is rooted in another language, the educator could invite the student to explain the idea in their first language and then translate as they see fit. Essentially, an exploration of the interplay between collective consciousness raising, authenticity, and empowerment within the classroom setting could lead to community-building and advocacy opportunities in educational spaces.

In traditional educational settings in the United States, classroom norms often hinder authenticity and collective consciousness raising (hooks, 1994). There is a decorum that is followed regarding what is considered "professional" appropriacy, and these norms are rooted in patriarchal structures that hinder creative and emotional expression (Pasque & Nicholson, 2023). However, showing up authentically in spaces like the classroom- spaces that have traditionally discouraged individual emotional and creative expression- actually increases student engagement within the learning environment (hooks, 1994). Importantly, students will more fully engage in authenticity if they feel safe enough to do so. Therefore, it is incumbent upon educators to provide such safe spaces for students to feel empowered to share their collective experiences and build community. I suggest two ways in which faculty can do so.

The first example involves creating assignments that honor a student's freedom of creative expression. In the pursuit of my degree as a counselor, I had the opportunity to demonstrate how I learned advocacy in one of my courses. The assignment gave students, me included, full creative freedom to show how I engaged with the course material and how I interpreted and internalized the information presented throughout the semester. For this assignment, I decided to learn a new song on an instrument that I had recently begun learning, and I performed the song in front of my peers. This was a terrifying experience for me, one that pushed me out of my comfort zone in ways I hadn't experienced before. However, the process mirrored my own experiences with learning how to advocate within the counseling profession, and I consider it to be one of the most impactful learning experiences I had while pursuing my degree. I internalized the message of pushing myself to get uncomfortable, trusting in my peers that they would honor my experience, and thoroughly exploring the impact of the course content on my development as an advocate in my profession. This also built intimacy between myself and my peers, and deepened the mutual trust we had with each other, because all of us vulnerably engaged in the assignment and held space for one another. Trust is integral in community building.

Other students expressed similar experiences with the assignment, and completed it in a variety of creative ways, including creating PowerPoints with artwork, infusing humor to their personal growth in the class, and using other mediums like poetry and videos to share their experiences. There was no limit to the ways in which we were encouraged to show our creative expression and learning for this assignment. It is important to note that educators should always lean on the values of autonomy and consent when inviting students to show up authentically, which creates safety for students who may feel uncomfortable engaging in these processes. We encourage

them to show up how they want to show up.

The second way that faculty can promote a safe space for creative and emotional exploration is to first) be willing to discuss difficult subjects that are relevant to student experiences, both personal and political, and second) make room for students to express the emotions that those subjects elicit. To do the first, bring in current events that affect student well-being. Facilitate discussions surrounding how these current and past events have personally affected students. Often, these discussions could be considered taboo in educational spaces. After doing so, allow space for students to express emotion. Avoid discouraging raw feelings in the classroom. Model what it looks like to express feelings that are normally discouraged, such as anguish, anger, fear, and sadness. Cry in front of students if you feel those emotions. This is one way to attend to the power differential and promote showing up authentically. Destigmatize showing raw human emotion in educational settings. Tell students that there is no need to apologize if they get emotional. We are human, after all, and all human emotions should be welcomed in spaces that elicit deep feelings.

In a truly liberatory environment, an environment that "offers space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts," and freedom to show up authentically (Specia & Osman, 2015), all emotions are honored. In allowing students to engage in an authentic way, this promotes empowerment and a deepened sense of community and comradery, because students are able to build trust with their peers and with the educational environment (hooks, 1994). It also promotes collective growth, collaborative learning, and empowered action (Belenky et al., 1997; Robert & Kay, 2000). Another way to encourage students to feel safe expressing themselves authentically is to establish group "norms" that are universally agreed upon. These "norms" are predominately created by the students and can act as a safety net so that the group can refer to acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the discussion setting. For example, one group "norm" I frequently suggest is to prohibit hate speech and slurs within the classroom, which allows students to know that while free speech and heightened emotions are permissible, harm in the form of hate speech is not allowed in the space. Another group norm that students frequently suggest is that if one student is speaking, interruptions and speaking over one another is unacceptable.

After the results of the most recent presidential election in 2024, I knew that many of my students would be feeling a range of strong emotions. The majority of my students are from predominantly minoritized populations, and I had an inclination that, many or most, would understandably react negatively to the results of this election. Some of my students were

D.A.C.A. recipients, some have undocumented family members or friends, the majority of my students are women, and some identify as queer. Rather than ignore or have them process these experiences alone, I created what I call "Solidarity Circles" in each of my classes. I invited my students to hold space for one another, and for themselves, during this tumultuous political climate.

If my students were feeling anything like what I was feeling, I knew that coming together and strengthening their community was going to be important. I prefaced these Solidarity Circles by explaining that the purpose was not to push any political agendas, or to point fingers of blame at anyone, but to simply hold a safe space where each student could show up authentically and honor the emotions that they were experiencing. There were only two rules. I would not allow hate speech, and there would be no apologizing for the emotions that were expressed. These circles were powerful. The students held each other's grief, anger, frustration, fear, and anxiety. Many cried. All held space for one another. The overwhelming feedback I got from the students was gratitude for the opportunity to sit in community with one another rather than ignoring the current political climate.

While I did not initially ask for direct feedback about each student's reactions to the solidarity circles, I did have some students express their thoughts about the process. With their consent to share, one student emailed me and said

"I want to express my gratitude for allowing us to share our thoughts and feelings about the election's outcome. It has been challenging for many of us, and many students have not had the opportunity to express their feelings".

Another student emailed and said,

> "To hear others share my frustrations and sadness, and alternatively, to hear different viewpoints about the political system was both necessary and interesting to experience...I knew I was angry and disappointed coming into session, and reflecting on it now, that anger stems from those feelings of sadness. I felt sad thinking about how the election results can negatively impact women's bodily autonomy, policies regarding the Department of Education (which directly impacts the careers we are heading into), and the safety and security of marginalized populations".

At the end of the last solidarity circle, one student stated they felt grateful that they had this space because they thought other faculty wanted to talk about the election results but didn't know how to go about it and ended up not providing space to do so. Therefore, the takeaway I gleaned was that these spaces were an important part of honoring the students' experiences and creating space for them to process together.

Some obstacles that educators could face relate to their own comfort in showing up authentically, as well as working with students who are hesitant to express their experiences. To model engaging in the educational environment in an authentic way, it is important for educators to challenge themselves to get comfortable with feeling uncomfortable. This requires an exploration of their own understanding and involvement with power dynamics in the classroom, as well as a willingness to relinquish a certain amount of control. Introspection is a key part of exploring their own sense of self, and how comfortable they feel showing up authentically with students. Additionally, working with students who are resistant to change, and authentic engagement is likely. As mentioned above, it is imperative that educators lean on autonomy and consent when inviting students to be their authentic selves in the classroom. This promotes a sense of safety for students because they will come to understand that they can show up in a way that feels comfortable and congruent to who they are.

While many professors may not feel adequately trained in leading a group discussion like Solidarity Circles, I would like to offer some practical suggestions in facilitating safe group spaces. First, establish safety for the students by discussing informed consent. This includes a rough outline of the discussion timeline (introductions, approximate length of the group discussion, ensuring that what is discussed in the group stays in the group as much as possible, etc.). Second, establish group norms, as previously discussed in this article. Third, as the facilitator, allow space for flexibility. Try not to intervene to allow students to take up most of the space. Lean into silence and discomfort. Practice appropriate self-disclosure related to prescient topics. Lastly, after closing the discussion, I suggest a short water or bathroom break before resuming normal classroom activities for students to comfortably transition back to scholastic topics. For further guidance on leading group discussions, see links provided on Appendix A (however, please keep in mind the limits to your expertise and scope of practice; these are guidelines for counseling professionals but may still be helpful in guiding group discussions).

Empowered action is the ultimate goal of facilitating collective consciousness raising and promoting authenticity within the classroom setting. By creating

these safe spaces, students will have the opportunity to address complex issues and controversial topics with the hope of maintaining respect for each other and growing together (Pan & Mulcher, 2000). With enough of these liberatory experiences, the goal is for students to feel empowered enough to enact collective change through community building within the classroom environment (Wilson et al., 2010).

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7

Preventing Bullying of Students with Disabilities: Teachers' Definitions of Bullying and Use of Anti-bullying Strategies

Jenny C. Chiappe, PhD., Associate Professor & James Koontz, Ed.D., Faculty
Special Education Program, College of Education,
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Abstract

Students with disabilities are at a higher risk of victimization compared to their peers without disabilities, yet limited research has explored how general education teachers address this in inclusive classrooms. This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to investigate teachers' strategy use and disability category, views on social exclusion, the relationship between strategy type and bullying type, and the role of bullying definition completeness as a moderator. A total of 114 teachers completed the survey, and six participated in follow-up interviews. Results indicated that participants were less likely to use individual level strategies. Completeness of bullying definition moderated the relationship between years of experience and strategy use. Common themes included varied reasons for bullying, lack of support, and a tendency to overlook social exclusion. Implications include improved training and additional support to address the bullying of students with disabilities.

Keywords: bullying, students with disabilities, teachers, inclusive classroom

Preventing Bullying of Students with Disabilities: Teachers' Definitions of Bullying and Use of Anti-bullying Strategies

Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied than students without disabilities (Hartley et al., 2015). Bullying or victimization is defined as repeated exposure to negative actions from one or more students, typically when there is an imbalance of power between individuals or groups (Olweus, 1993). The prevalence rate of bullying among elementary students with disabilities is 24.5% (Blake et al., 2012). Over time, students with disabilities experience higher rates of bullying compared to their peers without bullying (Rose et al., 2016). School must foster a sense of belonging and inclusion, especially for marginalized groups such as students with disabilities. Bullying can hinder a student's ability to learn, making it essential to establish a positive school climate. A positive school climate is important in preventing bullying and encouraging students seeking help when bullied (Thapa et al., 2013). This article addresses the sociopolitical turmoil that may be associated with recognizing the victimization of students with disabilities in school settings. At a time when support structures for students with disabilities are being re-evaluated, the importance of preparing all teachers to foster safe and inclusive classroom environments is greater than ever.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is essential in advancing inclusive education by ensuring students with disabilities receive appropriate services and are educated alongside their peers. IDEA (2004) emphasizes students with disabilities should have meaningful access to the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible. This inclusive approach helps create a diverse, equitable, and supportive learning environment for all students. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive learning environments (Shogren et al., 2015), underscoring the importance of enhanced training and resources to realize the inclusive vision set forth by IDEA.

Teacher Role

Teachers are essential in creating inclusive environments and foster the webs of care that their students need when they come to school. When asked to define bullying, teachers were more likely to include verbal and physical bullying but often omit social exclusion, intention, power imbalance, or repetition—elements recognized in the literature as key components of bullying (Naylor et al., 2006). This may lead to missed opportunities for intervention. A teacher's likelihood intervening in a bullying situation

is based on their confidence in resolving the issue, their perception in the seriousness of the bullying, and their level of empathy toward the victim (Yoon, 2004). Teachers with more than 25 years of teaching experience were more likely to work with both bullies and victims compared to teachers with less than six years of experience (Burger et al., 2015). Approaches to addressing bullying included fostering self-esteem, providing choice making, and facilitating a meeting to address the bullying. Creating a web of endurance among teachers and students is critical in changing the academic and social landscape of education for students with disabilities.

Bullying of students with disabilities

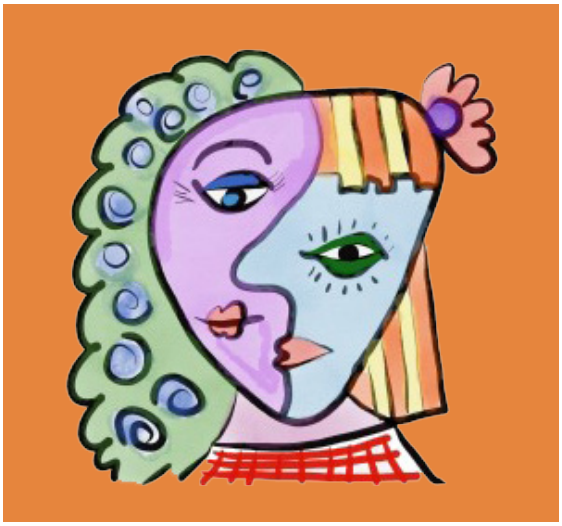
Students with disabilities who have experienced a prior bullying incident are more likely to be bullied in the future (Blake et al., 2012). Factors that contribute to bullying of students with disabilities may include a lack of age appropriate social skills, dependence on adult for assistance, and educational placement (Rose et al., 2011). Teachers create opportunities for interaction between students with and without disabilities and teachers need to be cognizant of potential exclusion based on groupings (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012). Additionally, teachers can provide structured social opportunities for students with with disabilities to learn and practice social skills (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Multi-level Supports

Anti-bullying strategies should include a multi-tiered approach to address the diverse needs of students (The Academies, 2016). The School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) framework involves posting consistent rules and creating a positive school environment (Good et al., 2011). By implementing SWPBS alongside a bullying prevention program, a middle school observed a 41% decrease in office discipline referrals for bullying (Good et al., 2011). The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (The Academies) defines the universal level of SWPBS as one in which all teachers conduct social-emotional lessons and teach behavioral expectations, while counselors model how to respond to bullying. SWPBS is effective because bullying often occurs outside of the classroom (Ofe et al., 2016), particularly in unstructured environments such as playground and restroom (Shogren et al., 2015).

Classroom strategies include lessons on communication, empathy, and how to identify and respond to bullying. One curriculum in use is *Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention,* which teaches skills such as communication, empathy, emotion and regulation, and problem solving (Espelage et al., 2015).

The individual level consists of intervention for victims and their parents (Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015). School psychologists reported using individual counseling to address bullying (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). Specific individual strategies included in the *Handling Bullying Questionnaire* involved telling the bully to "cut it out," talking to counselors and parents, and discussing the matter with colleagues (Bauman et al., 2008).



Multi-level strategies promote social justice for students with disabilities by providing access to both academic and social inclusion with school communities. However, there is a paucity of research on how teachers address the bullying of students with disabilities in inclusive elementary classrooms. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used in the study. It began with collection and analysis of quantitative data, which then informed the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014), addressing the following research questions:

(1a): How do strategies used by general education teachers to address bullying of students with disabilities differ by disability category?

(1b): What are teachers' views on the different types of bullying, specifically social exclusion?

(2a): When teachers address the bullying of students with disabilities, what is the relationship between the type of bullying (direct and indirect) and strategy type (school, class, and individual), while controlling for demographic information?

(2b): How does a teacher's definition of bullying moderate the relationship between the years of teaching experience and individual level strategies used for indirect bullying?

Methods

The study was completed in two phases (see Figure 1) and the benefits include quantitative analysis followed by further probing the results in the qualitative data (Ivankova et al., 2015).

Participants

The participants in the survey included 114 general education teachers, with 86.8% identifying as female, mostly from across California. The race/ethnicity breakdown of the sample was 55.4% White, 14.9% Hispanic/Latino, 11.4% Asian, 3.5% Black or African American, 8.8% biracial/multiracial, and 1.8% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Teachers had varying years of teaching experience (M = 13.7; SD = 8.5) (see Table 1). The sample comprised 55.3% third grade teachers, 0.9% third and fourth grade combination teachers, 20.2% fourth grade teachers, 2.6% fourth and fifth grade combination teachers, and 20.2% fifth grade teachers. Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 67 years (M = 40.9; SD = 10.1). Most participants (94.7%) worked at public schools. Ninety three percent of teachers indicated they have SWPBS as a resource at their school.

Out of the sample of 114 participants, six completed individual interviews. Interview selection was determined by the convenience of the location and the participant's grade level. The interviewed teachers included 4 female teachers and 2 male teachers from 3 different school districts in Southern California. There were 4 third grade teachers, 1 fourth grade teacher, and 1 fourth and fifth grade combination class teacher.

Procedure

Recruitment involved meeting with principals at public elementary schools in Southern California, using snowball sampling, and contacting teachers through publicly available email addresses. Interviews were conducted one on one until saturation was reached.

Measures

The completeness of teachers' bullying definitions was coded based on the bullying definition by The Academies (2016). Each teacher's definition was coded and converted to a percentage. Participants rated ten strategies: change seating arrangement, refer to counselor, communicate with parents, refer to school rules and expectations, teach lessons on what to do when you are bullied, ask the special education teacher for support, refer to classroom rules, handle it myself, refer to the administrative team, and teach communication and social skills to student(s) with IEP. They rated how often they used each strategy in the last 12 months

The survey also focuses on the educational landscape between teacher and students when teachers observe bullying situations and the interactions among students with and without disabilities. Participants were asked if they observed bullying in the last 12 months. If they answered yes, they were presented with six

answered yes, they were presented with six questions that asked them to describe a bullying.

The interview protocol used an ethnographic, semi-structured approach to understand group perspectives through in-depth interviews and observation (Creswell, 2014). The interview questions expanded on the survey results and included questions for examples from their classroom. Teachers received a gift card for their participation in the interview.

Data Analysis

Data were downloaded from Qualtrics and transferred to I*BM SPSS Statistics*. The main analysis focused on the survey data using Pearson chi-squared test, ANCOVA, and moderation analysis. Forty eight participants observed bullying within the last 12 months. Due to the limited number of disability categories listed by participants, disabilities were coded as Specific Learning Disability, SLD (n = 17) and non-SLD (n = 31). For the qualitative component, the transcripts were coded on Dedoose. Descriptive coding was applied to create the codes (Miles et al., 2014) and a *priori* codes based on the literature. Ten codes were created in Dedoose, and thematic analysis was used to integrate the content and derive meaning in the codes (Bazeley, 2013). Inter-rater reliability was established through two tests with a Cohen's kappa of 0.61 to 0.80, indicating substantial agreement (Viera & Garrett, 2005) with a second coder.

Results

Strategies differ by disability category

Forty-nine participants indicated they observed a student without a disability bullying a student with a disability in the last 12 months. The participants mainly selected bullying situations involving students with SLD (n = 17). Other disabilities identified included Emotional Disturbance (n = 5), Speech and Language Impairment (n = 4) and Autism only (n = 2). Additionally, participants indicated 18 students had more than one disability. Due to the limited number of disability categories, disabilities were coded to 0 for SLD (n = 17) and 1 for non-SLD (n = 31).

Since participants described a limited number of strategies used in the bullying situations, a Pearson chi-squared test was conducted to assess whether teachers used different strategies (individual level strategies versus multiple strategies) based on whether a student had a SLD or non-SLD. The test indicated no statistically significant association between disability and strategy χ (1) = .24, p = .62. There were no differences between the types of strategies used and the type of disability. Cramer's V was not significant at p < .05

which means there is no significant association between disability and strategy (see Table 2).

Participants did not report relational bullying in the bullying situation examples. However, the qualitative data revealed a theme consistent with past research: social exclusion is often subtle, and participants tend to address it by talking to students (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Ms. Liu noted that social exclusion is easy to miss because "you wouldn't see it outright like a fist fight or anything, a constant teasing, because they'll be really subtle." Participants also mentioned having a suspicion or a "Spidey sense" when observing students who may be conspiring or planning to bully. Mrs. Benny explained, "I'm going to keep an eye on it and I'm going to keep you close and I'm going to talk with you informally so I maybe get a better sense of what's going on."

The strategies participants used included asking students to allow others to join the group or identifying classroom champions—popular students who could take the lead in including the student who is left out. Ms. Liu said:

> From the beginning, constantly just reinforcing the respect and the fact that you may not have to get along with everybody, but at least try to give respect to everybody … also when we do collaboration, try to get everybody to work together in in some other situation that you would ideally would never see them [in]. I think, as teachers, we kinda make a choice of which kids we want to place where so they understand the idea of collaboration.

Participants would then praise the students who acted as role models to encourage other students to include their peer.

Relationship between the type of bullying and strategy type

A repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between the type of strategy and type of bullying. Covariates included years of teaching experience, anti-bullying training support, and observation of bullying in the last 12 months. Since the years of experience with students with disabilities variable was highly correlated with years of teaching experience, the variable that included years of experience with students with disabilities was removed.

While controlling for years of teaching experience, training support, and whether bullying in the last 12 months was observed, the interaction between type of bullying and type of strategy was not significant $F(1, 665) = .16$, $p = .86$. The model without the interaction effect was tested. There was a significant association between type of strategy and frequency rating $F(1, 665) = 7.56$, $p < .05$

but not between the type of bullying and frequency rating F(1, 665) = 1.63, p = .20. Subsequent tests were conducted using pairwise comparisons with a Bonferonni correction to determine how strategy level differed. The results showed that teachers were 0.274 times more likely to use school level strategies on average compared to individual strategies (p = 0.02). Likewise, teachers were 0.275 more likely to use class level strategies on average than individual strategies (p = 0.02). However, there was no significant difference in average use between classroom strategies and school level strategies (p = 1.00) (see Table 3).

Bullying definition moderates the relationship between years of experience and individual level strategies

To test the moderating variable of completeness of bullying definition, the two-way interaction with years of experience and completeness of bullying definition was tested. For the rating at the indirect bullying individual strategy level use, years of experience-by-completeness-of-bullying interaction was significant b = -0.002, 95% CI [-0.003, -0.001], t = -2.70, p < .01. The relationship between years of teaching experience and strategy use was moderated by completeness of bullying definition. PROCESS in SPSS created conditional tables for the values of the moderator at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentile. When completeness of teacher bullying definition is low (10%), there was a significant positive relationship between years of teaching experience and strategy level use, b = 0.046, 95% CI [0.018, 0.075], t = 3.26, p < .01. However, there was not a significant relationship between years of teaching experience and indirect bullying individual strategy level use when completeness of teacher bullying definition was at the mean or high (one standard deviation above the mean) (see Figure 2 for interaction graph). Strategy use for participants with high completeness of their bullying definition were similar regardless of their years of teaching experience. At approximately 20 years of teaching experience, the frequency of strategy use is similar for participants with low and high completeness of bullying definition. Additionally, participants with less than five years of experience and low completeness definition were less likely to use strategies.

Similarly, the qualitative data showed themes that demonstrated how participants viewed bullying as multi-faceted but did not have the resources to appropriately support students with disabilities. The participants stated students with disabilities were more likely to be bullied based on their differences in abilities. Ms. Liu said one of her students with RSP support

“feels [she’s been bullied] because other students see her differently. She’s always just been the one.”

In addition, participants discussed the need for more training and support in bullying prevention, reinforcing the quantitative findings related to the completeness of bullying definition and years of teaching experience. Four participants stated that they had not received any additional training to effectively support students with disabilities beyond the one course required for their credential program. The supports participants provided included students' accommodations such as more opportunities for wait time and repetition.

Participants discussed administrative support by sending students to the office when bullying occurs but the types of support differed. Mr. Cooper added:

> Sometimes when you get administration involved or parents involved, they make it more than what it really was. So, I feel like I just want to make sure that the students feel comfortable with it being handled.

Nonetheless, participants said they would try to "handle" bullying situations before referring to administrators. Handling bullying in their classroom included using behavior contracts and talking to the students individually, in small groups, or whole groups when necessary.

Discussion

Teachers and administrators play a crucial role in creating a positive school climate that embraces the diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly for students with disabilities. A community of care where people come together in webs of endurance is essential for students with disabilities. Bullying prevention is a focus on school reform (Cohen & Freiberg, 2013), but it is also important to highlight the strategies teachers are using within their classrooms when bullying arises. Teachers tend to observe more behavioral problems for students who engage in direct bullying compared to students engaged in relational bullying (Smith et al., 2012), which could explain why direct bullying is easier to address. In addition, teachers who receive training feel more confident addressing bullying (James et al., 2006). The completeness of bullying definition and years of teaching experience played a role in addressing indirect bullying. Novice teachers did not feel they were prepared to handle classroom management, discipline situations or differentiate instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). This knowledge is critical to support teacher and student interactions when addressing bullying.

In addition to students having social supports, research also discusses the importance of incorporating SWPBS with anti-bullying programs (Good et al., 2011). In order to use multi-tiered supports, all

stakeholders at the same school site should agree on how to address bullying and implement the anti-bullying program (Yell et al., 2016). However, instead of referring to other staff, participants tended to "handle it" themselves. Participants discussed that they would pull the students aside and talk to students individually. Similarly, the questions on the *Handling Bullying Questionnaire* indicated specific strategies such as talking to the bully and telling the bully to "cut it out" or telling the victim to ignore it (Bauman et al., 2008). This further speaks to the need for all school community members to collectively address bullying on their campuses o that they create a stronger social fabric of inclusion and community care amongst students.

Limitations

Intersectionality was explored by attempting to understand bullying situations and the characteristics of both the bully and the victim. The first limitation is that the strategies teachers use may change based on a range of characteristics. Factors such as race, gender, and ability, as well as the location and duration of the bullying, were not considered, and bullying may not follow a linear pattern. A second limitation is that teachers mainly identified students with SLD in the bullying situations section of the survey. Nonetheless, students with developmental disabilities are more likely to experience social exclusion compared to other disability groups (Andreou et al., 2015) and teachers may use different strategies for students with more significant disabilities. The third limitation is that participants rated strategies based on frequency but did not rate strategies for their appropriateness or effectiveness in resolving bullying.

Implications and Future Directions

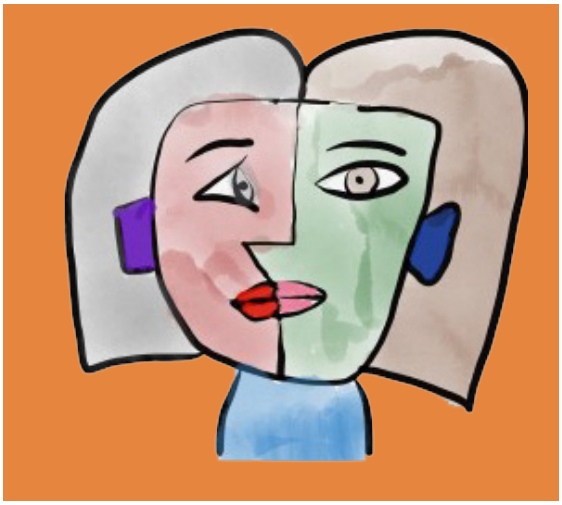
The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) released a position statement on creating a safe and positive climate in school for students with disabilities, which recognizes the first step to eliminating the bias that school leaders and teachers may hold (CEC, 2020). Future teacher preparation and professional development can be informed by the knowledge gained from this study. Potential topics include developing a consistent bullying definition, increasing training on how to address bias-based bullying, when a student is bullied due to different social identities (Mulvey et al., 2018)—strategies to help students with disabilities acquire pro-social skills, and teaching how to use accommodations and modifications while using a multi-tiered approach to addressing bullying. These types of training can be incorporated into inclusive education training programs to ensure all students have academic and social access at their school.

Practical implications include ensuring the implementation fidelity of anti-bullying interventions (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019) and providing appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. Classroom time should include teaching and practicing communication and social skills to address social miscues by students with disabilities (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Future directions include expanding the participant pool to include special education teachers and other stakeholders to better understand the support is provided to students with disabilities to prevent bullying. Additional research questions should address the school context, the effectiveness of various strategies, and the diversity of ability levels and placement settings. Furthermore, teachers' responses may vary based on teacher and student characteristics (Yoon et al., 2016); future studies should examine how these characteristics influence the responses to bullying of students with disabilities. Cyberbullying in elementary schools also need to be examined, as the prevalence rates have increased from 16.7% in 2016 to 26.5% in 2023 (Patchin & Hinduja, 2024).

Conclusion

Students with disabilities represent a marginalized group within schools, making it essential to promote to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion to foster a positive school climate for all learners. To meet the academic and social needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, teachers must receive the adequate support and training. In turn, the webs of endurance that teachers create are affected by the sociopolitical turmoil in schools as it relates to students with disabilities. Inconsistencies in bullying definitions can create challenges in addressing bullying situations and implementing strategies. To better support teachers to address bullying situations, ongoing training for all members of the school community is necessary. The trainings should focus on supporting students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and implementing a range of strategies tailored to different forms of bullying, in order to build a more inclusive school community. The trainings may generate a new social fabric of change amongst students and between teacher-students.



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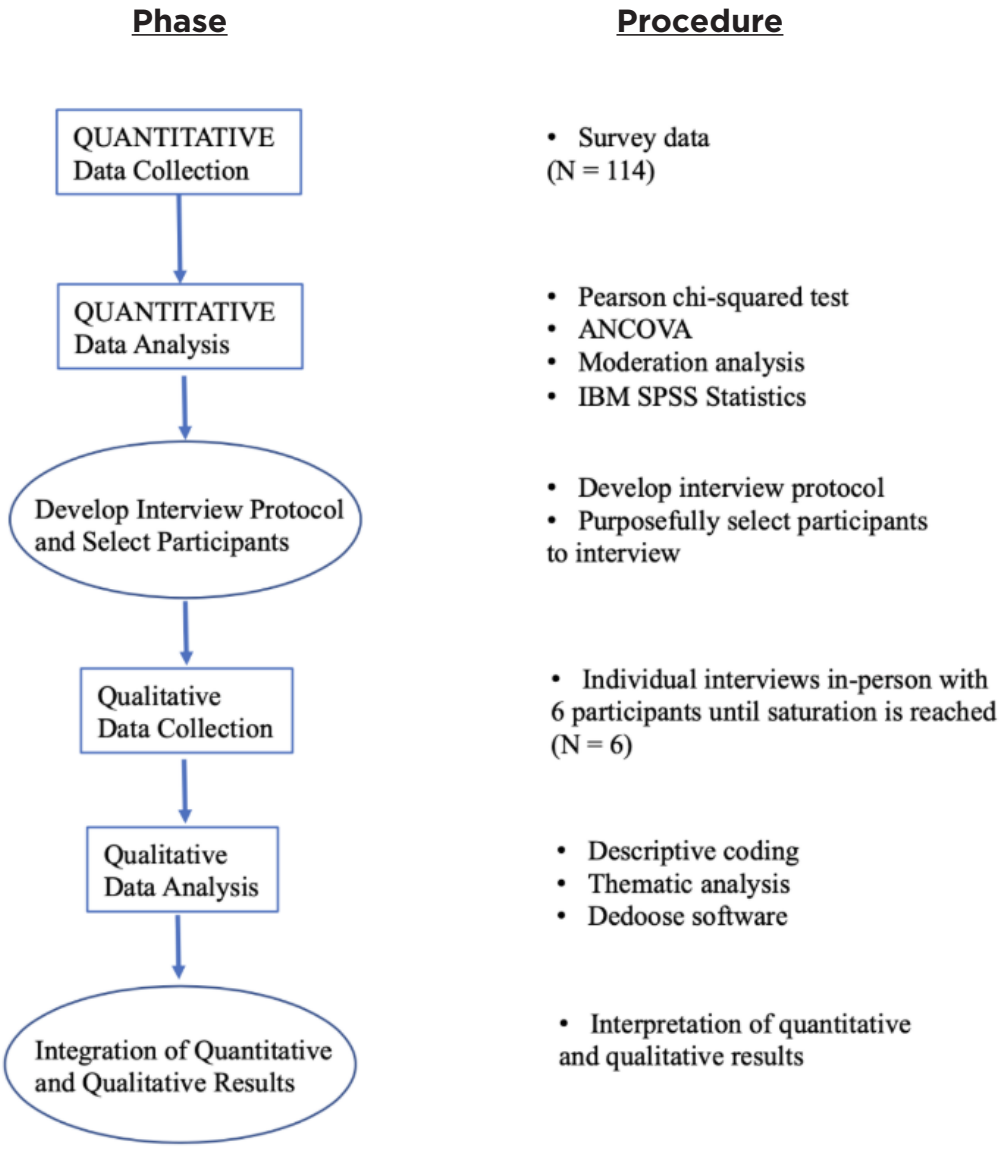

Figure 1. Procedure for Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

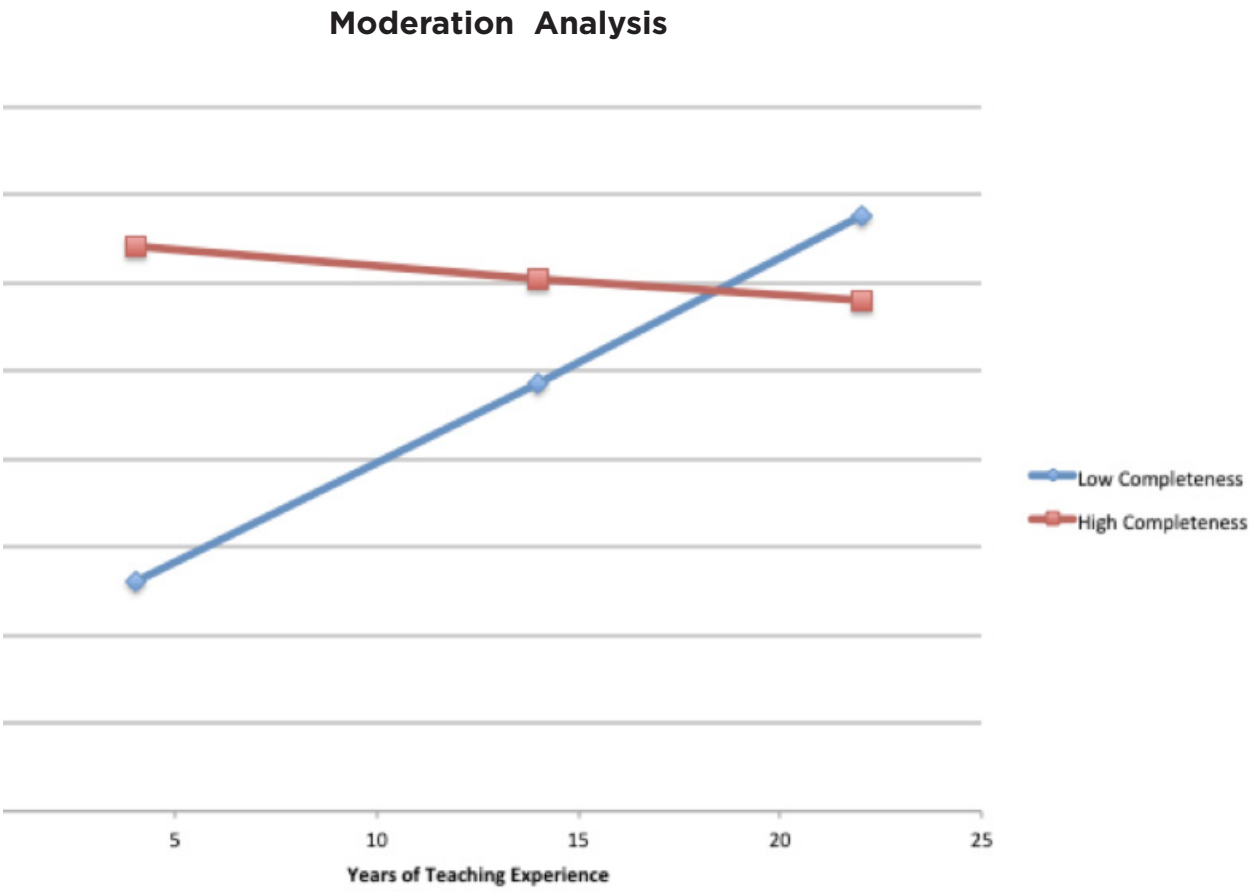

Figure 2. The Interaction between Years of Teaching Experience and Strategy Use on Completeness of Bullying Definition

Table 1

Survey Participants Demographics

Race	*n*
White	62
Hispanic/Latino	17
Black or African American	4
Asian	13
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2
Biracial/Multiracial	10
Prefer not to answer	6
Teaching experience	
1-5 year	13
6-10 years	15
11-15 years	20
16-20 years	22
21-25 years	19
26-30 years	6
31-35 years	1
36-40 years	1

$n = 114$

Table 2

Results for Testing the Association between Disability and Strategy

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.242	1	.622
Likelihood Ratio	.243	1	.622
Linear-by-Linear Association	.236	1	.627
N of Valid Cases	40		

Note. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.75

Table 3

Pairwise Comparisons

		Mean Difference	SE	Sig	CI	CI
Class	Individual	.275	.081	.002	.08	.47
	School	.001	.081	1.000	-.19	.20
School	Individual	.274	.081	.002	.08	.47
	Class	-.001	.081	1.000	-.20	.19

Note. Bonferroni correction

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