Ethical Dilemmas of Emerging Latina Researchers: Studying Schools Serving Latina Communities

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Abstract

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Keywords

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Ethical Dilemmas of Emerging Latina Researchers: Studying Schools Serving Latina Communities

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This article explores some of the ethical dilemmas we have encountered as emerging Latina researchers in dual language school contexts. Informed by Chicana Feminist Theory, we attempt to analyze power in more nuanced ways, shifting the analysis of ethics away from traditional notions of power based only within the researcher rather than the participants. While we do not offer solutions to these dilemmas, we raise questions that we hope will spur thoughtful reflection and move the field of educational research into more equitable and ethical research practices across contexts. Keywords: Latina Researchers, Ethics of Research, Research Methods, Latina Communities, Researcher Positionality

As researchers, we enter our work with our own particular values, biases and interests–which is how many of us end up studying the communities that we do. Who we are shapes our interactions with our research participants and what we want to accomplish in our research projects. As early career Latina scholars engaged in qualitative research in communities predominantly of color, we have wanted to make positive contributions to the communities that we feel an affinity to. Within our role as researchers, we have wanted to improve learning conditions for both students and teachers – which is part of the overall goal of educational research – without disregarding the immediate complexities that we notice as critical scholars. This often creates ethical dilemmas for us as Latinas, in terms of whose agenda we ultimately serve when we critique, and how these dual goals of improved educational conditions and critical analysis are best accomplished.

Many researchers have explored the idea of positionality – the fact that who we are and how our various subjectivities affect our perceptions, interests, interpretations, and therefore, even our findings (Behar, 1996). This is true in both qualitative and quantitative work, as our ideas and beliefs affect what questions we choose to study, our method for studying those questions, and to whom and how we present our findings. Even as many researchers have given up the claim of research objectivity, they have not always been willing to discuss the ethical, emotional, and political aspects of their work, believing that it interferes with validity (Riddell, 1989). An area that has not been well examined is how one's various subjectivities affect how we are perceived, and therefore, our ability to conduct our research work in the first place.

In addition to how our own subjectivities affect who, what, and how we study, they also influence the particular ethical dilemmas we face as researchers, issues that other researchers (in other bodies) may not face. Perhaps influenced by who we are, and by our own intimate understandings, we have specific concerns for communities of color, immigrant communities, and working-class communities. We believe in contributing to the creation of more equitable educational opportunities for these communities. Perhaps because we have benefited from becoming educated ourselves, we realize its importance in the broader sense of creating a more

just society, but also the impact it can have immediately on the social and material reality of one's life.

As Spanish-speaking Latinas (Zitlali of Mexican heritage and Lilia of Cuban background), both with parents who (im)migrated to this country, we find ourselves caring about communities we feel connected to and therefore may know very well. However, this can act as a double-edged sword. We may assume to understand phenomena that are similar to our experience, when it may actually be very different to the people experiencing it. Ideas that we bring based on our own experience may turn out to be incorrect. This is no different from other researchers who must also constantly check and revisit their own biases. But our understandings as women of color from linguistic minority backgrounds give us valuable insight that should be utilized, even while we acknowledge those possibilities for misunderstanding.

As emerging Latina scholars, we are committed to finding the most ethical approaches to securing the rights of those we study in ways that parallel the rights secured by those who work in more affluent schools and communities. Unfortunately, we have noted in retrospect of some of our previous work that access, confidentiality, and other issues related to research design and method are often determined by the level of power that those being studied hold, vis-à-vis our own power as researchers with specific academic credentials. As Latina scholars, our social positioning as linguistic and racial minority women has also been a factor in determining the extent to which our views as researchers were accepted and access constrained. That we were emerging scholars added a new layer of uncertainty in both our and the eyes of participants.

This article is largely reflective, based on our collective research experiences, bringing to light particular dilemmas we have faced regarding issues ranging from bilingual education debates to developing relationships with teachers and researching students who look like us. How does our positionality help us and what blind-spots does it give us? The goal of this paper is to illuminate the constraints and affordances of conducting research in a community where the researcher both personally identifies with the research subjects based on shared experiences, but also has critiques of their practices.

Latina Ethics

Chicana Feminist Theory, spawning from the work of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and developed further by Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998), has helped us understand that our own ways of knowing have been excluded from the dialogue about what counts as research and what are best ways of knowing and engaging in research (Calderón, Delgado-Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012). One of the major tenets of this theory is the concept of *cultural intuition*, that acknowledges the unique viewpoints that Chicana scholars bring to the research process, but which has not always been validated by academe. Cultural intuition involves an implicit understanding based upon the use of our multiple epistemological repertoires including our community knowledge (such as personal experience, community memory, and collective experience), our professional experience, and what we can glean through research (Calderón et al., 2012).

Indeed our educational experiences did not always prepare us to be authentic to ourselves as researchers or to interact with research participants in ways consistent with our own epistemologies. We learned, instead, to engage in research through the expectations set forth by an academy entrenched with dominant values for "objective" work (Dillard, 2000). Even in qualitative research, we were not encouraged to bring to dissertation committees issues related to the co-construction of knowledge, concern for participants that went beyond the traditional but insufficient establishment of minimal reciprocity, member checking, and sharing

our findings with participants – efforts that get at making research studies trustworthy (a sort of validity) but not necessarily the researchers or the academy. Instead, we as Latina researchers have been concerned with doing ethical research that counts, that makes a difference to the lives of participants and has an impact on Latina communities.

Anzaldua (1987) describes "borderlands consciousness," as a social and sometimes physical space that lies between power and powerlessness. This is a space inhabited by those who live always on the margins, not fully inside or fully outside and yet sufficiently engaged within both that it facilitates a new consciousness, an insight into the other and the self that may reveal the structure of oppression and its manifestations (Hurtado, 2000). In a number of ways, our experiences as researchers in schools have been marked by this positioning. As Latina junior faculty, we do not carry the same cultural capital or carry the status that often marks the typical white researcher and professor. This is especially evident in our interactions in schools where participants who are teachers and other educators may enlist the institutional power of the school and its symbolic whiteness to offset our "academic" knowledge that can be seen by practitioners as out of touch with the realities of schools and of teachers and students.

Problematizing Power in Research Contexts

In general, ethical concerns have narrowly focused on the rights of participants and the potential to violate, willingly and unwillingly, their rights to confidentiality (McLaughlin, 1999). Indeed, there is a differential power dynamic inherent in the relationships between the "researched" and the "researcher," one that often renders those who are "studied" vulnerable and in need of "protection" (Bourdeau, 2000). What we will argue is that this becomes more complex when one studies communities of color or other "vulnerable" communities who have often been exploited in the past. Indeed, one of the main reasons for the current IRB process is due to the harm that was inflicted on men and women of color from impoverished communities when they participated in research without their knowledge or consent. Although we, as Latina researchers, balk at the implications of words such as *vulnerable, researched,* and *protection* – which serve to highlight our own profession's oppressive stances toward the communities at which such terms are hurled, marking them as passive and powerless – we cannot deny that the research process is very different for communities of color and non-color. Soohoo (2006) refers to people of non-color, such that the non-dominant group not be the group always marked as the "Other." Participants with power and privilege are often able to influence the research process in ways that communities of color often cannot. The goal of this paper is to shift the analysis of ethics away from totalizing notions that in and of themselves lead to disempowering conclusions about a studied population, particularly people of color in the U.S.

Ethics in research are often set standards that must be followed in a profession (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). However, ethics are also about a set of values and beliefs regarding what is right and wrong, what is moral, what is just (Clark, 1995). In educational research, ethics are often secured in formal ways through university institutional review boards that oversee the protection of human subjects by examining proposed research for sound method and determining whether any risks for participants are worth the potential benefits, and securing informed consent (Burgess, 1989; Evans & Jakupec, 1996). However, much of what is ethical in research is left up to the researchers to manage, including the amount of disclosure about the study purpose.

This paper is based predominantly on our experience doing research in one bilingual program that served both dominant group children from affluent communities and low-income Latina children traveling to the school from low-income communities. However, we also draw on our involvement in other research projects in urban schools and communities to make distinctions and embed our notions of ethics in specific research contexts. We discuss the

various issues and questions related to ethics that we have faced early in our research careers, with an emphasis on comparing how ethics in research become symbols of difference which privilege more affluent, white communities and the schools that serve them.

In this paper, we therefore problematize the notion of power as always residing *within* the researcher. Indeed, power is manifested in complex ways in educational settings and constructed through multiple intersections that include the status of the researcher, race, class, gender, and community privilege. Drawing on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1987), we consider power as residing not *within* individuals, but as a product of the social context, manifested in the doing of cultural activity in ways that privilege some people over others. For example, as relatively young female researchers of color, we may be questioned for methods or conclusions whereas established male White researchers might not. Race, class, age, and other social characteristics always play a role in how we are received as researchers in any context. In the process of reflexivity (Kleinsasser, 2000), researchers must take into account their own positionality when examining power dynamics and how they affect the entire research process. This may be especially relevant for qualitative researchers who spend time "in the field," in settings to which they are, to varying degrees, "outsiders," and where they may need assistance with understanding and interpreting the contexts, the history, and the phenomena they are observing. Indeed, an important epistemological position for qualitative researchers is that they must enter the research site with a clear understanding of their own limited understandings and present this vulnerability as a conduit for building respectful and reciprocal relationships. This positioning among those who may not meet the expected criteria of a "typical" researcher, such as young or novice researchers, women researcher or researchers of color, may be misperceived as less "expert" and may reverse the typical power relationship.

Our goal is to raise questions and look at ethical issues across communities in more nuanced ways. We problematize the interests that education research serves and/or ought to serve. Does ethical research mean that all facets of the research must be transparent to participants or is there a need, perhaps even a responsibility, to tailor findings to the audience? When we study teachers, do we have a greater responsibility to the teachers or to the children they teach? How are researchers influenced by the power or lack thereof of communities studied to examine difficult questions? Although studying best educational practices is important, should we not keep examining the processes that maintain oppressive structures in place even though this is uncomfortable work? Although we have few answers to these questions, we explore their implications. For example, when school communities exert the power to structure, redirect, and/or even stop unwanted research while other schools cannot exert this power, we are left with a dichotomous view of diverse educational communities— with innovative and progressive educational practices coming out of white, middle-class communities and poor educational practices coming out of urban or "minority" schools.

Who We Are

We are Latina researchers working primarily with Latina immigrant communities and the schools that serve them. We are also faculty in schools of education at two different institutions preparing teachers to work effectively with English learners and their families and communities. We have a personal interest in these communities because in many ways they are similar to those we grew up in and we can see ourselves in the Latina immigrant children growing up in these communities and struggling to make sense of their hybrid identities. We understand firsthand what it is like to be racial and linguistic minorities in the United States.

I (Zitlali) am the eldest of four daughters to immigrant parents from Jalisco, México. Born and raised in the Midwest, my first language was Spanish but did the majority of my schooling in English. As one of the few Latina/os in my Catholic school, I realized that while

I was a "minority," I also benefited from a relatively privileged educational experience. At the age of ten, I began visiting relatives in Mexico with my family, improving my Spanish language skills and giving me perspective about my parents' upbringing in another country, so different from my own. This experience allowed me to develop pride about my own heritage, rather than feeling like being different from the dominant mainstream was somehow detrimental. But seeing the disparities between my own education and other Latinas' experiences made me committed to working towards greater equity for more working-class students of color.

I (Lilia) emigrated from Cuba at the age of four with my family and settled in Miami, Florida for ten years before moving to the Los Angeles area. Miami is a context in which Cuban-Americans have significant economic and political power because their incorporation into the United States was, at the time, automatically protected under political asylum laws and because the first waves of Cuban immigrants had both cultural and economic capital that they used to establish a strong political and economic presence. As a result, Spanish was (and in many ways continues to be) viewed with greater status in Miami than in other parts of the United States. I benefited from the first bilingual programs that emerged in Miami, which included a daily period of Spanish instruction for native speakers throughout elementary school. Although my parents brought with them little education and few financial resources, their affiliation to the Cuban American community in Miami buffered my sociocultural experiences as a Latina immigrant.

Our move to Los Angeles at the age of fourteen brought forth a shocking awareness of the broader positioning of Latinas in the United States. The predominantly Mexican and Central American Latina communities of Los Angeles struggle to legitimize their presence and secure their rights in the United States. Through my experiences of isolation in communities of color, I experienced first-hand how racism and classism mark most of our interactions in both structural and individual ways. As a previous bilingual teacher and now as an ethnographer, my goals are aligned with improving access and providing spaces for our Latina voices to be heard.

What We Stand for: Our Focus on Latina Schools and Communities

Our stories have much to do with our academic work. We are Latina immigrant women who have had, albeit in different ways, experiences that have shaped both our understanding of oppression and our desire to work with Latina communities and the schools that serve them. Inevitably given the geographic segregation of communities of color, particularly those that are working class, we work in urban schools, often called "minority schools" because they are made up almost entirely of students of color. Because of the high concentration of particular ethnic groups in enclaves, we often find ourselves in "Latina schools" that serve over 90% Latina students. These schools provide for us an opportunity to focus our efforts at creating equity among our own communities. This is not to say that other communities of color are not in need of similar supports but rather that we feel strongly that given our personal understandings of the Latina experience and our knowledge of Latina cultures and the Spanish language, that we may have a greater grasp of the issues these communities face and, thus, may be more effective in these communities.

As Latina, Spanish-speaking scholars of color, we recognize the benefits of multilingualism, as well as primary language instruction: cognitive (Bialystok, 2001), social (Genesee & Gándara, 1999), and academic (Slavin & Cheung, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Willig, 1985). We also recognize the benefits of heritage language maintenance: family intergenerational communication (Fillmore, 1991) and retention of skills and knowledge accumulated in the first language. We come to the field not as dispassionate, neutral observers but as well-read researchers, purposely choosing to look at immigrant communities and Latina

communities from an assets-based perspective. Rather than looking at students whose first language is not English as English language learners, which puts the focus on one sole component of their education, more and more scholars are changing the terms they use and considering these students dual language learners, multilingual learners, or emergent bilinguals – emphasizing the skills and abilities that students have or have the potential to develop, if their heritage language is developed and maintained, alongside the development of their academic English.

We recognize that this perspective is informed by our backgrounds. Additionally, we have over thirty years of research demonstrating the benefits of primary language instruction and the benefits of multilingualism particularly in the increasingly globalized nature of our society. Finally, we also know some of the consequences of heritage languages not being maintained by younger generations, including a loss of intergenerational communication – grandparents not being able to communicate to their grandchildren, children not benefiting from the knowledge and understanding held in the first language that often-times cannot be translated, including particular worldviews. These are some of the perspectives we hold, going into our research sites.

Ethical Dilemmas: Drawing From Specific Research

The dilemmas we discuss below come from our research experiences in dual language programs. Between the two of us, we have conducted qualitative research in four different dual language programs across the state of California, focusing on all levels of the school ecology: students, teachers, leadership, classrooms, parents, and language program models. In all cases, our work has involved long term (at least a full year) of intense work within the schools. Our data has always been constructed in large part through relationships that are necessarily impacted by each person's position, the contexts, the level of trust, time availability, and many other factors.

We use the term, dual language program, loosely as we have found that although there are some specific types of dual language programs after which the programs have studied claim to model themselves, a number of features of the program were often not being clearly practiced. We are using the term here to describe programs that aim to develop bilingualism– English and Spanish– among students. Instead of the more traditional approach of using primary language instruction for the purpose of facilitating English development and academic content, as in transitional bilingual programs, dual language programs are embedded with a value for the minority language and both languages are used for instructional purposes, albeit in different ways across programs. An important aspect of these dual language programs were that they aimed to include in each class students who were English fluent speakers and Spanish fluent speakers. The school community in each research setting was, thus, a mixture of white, middle to upper class families and Latina working class immigrants to sometimes middle class second or third generation immigrants. A sprinkling of other racial/ethnic groups were also present in each school. Another aspect of the dual language programs in most of these schools was that they were strands within a larger school that included regular English only programs. At each site, the teachers of the dual language program were predominantly Latina because of the need for Spanish fluency as it was used (along with English) for instruction throughout K-5th grades.

Our own social positions at such sites with respect to our lower status as new and emerging scholars and in previous studies as research assistants vis-à-vis that of established teachers and/or parents with significant capital plays a pivotal role in our discussion. In all, we are concerned with bringing up issues and discussing them thoughtfully and critically. We do not provide answers but discuss the complexity we have found in considering the ethics of

conducting research in diverse communities when there is an imbalance of power – sometimes favoring the researcher and other times the research participants. Our hope is that the issues we present here will be carefully considered by the educational research community so that it may inform more ethical practices in research, particularly with respect to how we engage in research with communities of color.

Should we avoid the critique of bilingual programs to deflect negative fallback?

Based on our experiences as bilinguals, we strongly support primary language instruction and the maintenance of native languages. This stance is supported by extensive research demonstrating that teaching students more than one language enhances their educational experience and facilitates academic success (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Our personal experiences position us to empathize with those teaching in bilingual situations, while also being very attuned to the students' experiences in instructional settings. As researchers, we have multiple and competing ethical commitments, including critiquing policies and practices that may overlook, marginalize, or underestimate students of color, typically Latina students in these contexts.

We believe strongly that almost all teachers care about their students and go into the teaching profession to support student success. We believe this to be especially true among teachers teaching in bilingual settings. However, we are also highly influenced in our work by theories that emphasize schools and teaching as highly impacted by broader social relations of production and sociocultural and political factors that stem from these relations, including language ideologies, differences in cultural capital and symbolic violence, and racialized microaggressions (Bourdieu, 1991; McLaren, 2006; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). We have found evidence of these structural factors in place in the social contexts of our research and have attempted to bring light to these as symptoms of broader social relations – careful to not blame the specific programs or the teachers whose goals are above reproach but who may not be looking at their practice through critical lenses.

In one study, for example, we documented the "minimal" use of Spanish in a program touted as bilingual and we argued that in our society, we needed to be strategic in any program design that sought to use Spanish. We argued that because English is privileged in our society in invisible ways, programs that seek to use Spanish must structure its use at specific times and in specific classroom contexts. The teachers of this bilingual program were displeased that we had revealed any negative findings associated with the program, indicating that given the increasing trend to attack bilingual programs, we needed to refrain from any public criticisms of bilingual programs. These bilingual program teachers were the Latina teachers in an otherwise almost entirely white faculty. They were protective of their program and hyperaware of the criticisms leveled against bilingual education in a post-227 world and felt that even within their own school, their program held tentative ground. California proposition 227 passed in 1998 and banned bilingual education for many English learners (Gándara, 2000). Instead, a "sink or swim" English immersion program was required for English learners in which all instruction and materials needed to be in English. A loophole in the law was later found and waivers to this English immersion were developed for parents to sign so that their children could continue to receive bilingual instruction if they so choose.

We agree that there is a clear need to make the public aware of effective bilingual programs and their positive impact on multiple factors that support bilingual children. However, we also feel that we do a disservice to bilingual programs when we "hide" the problems that exist, particularly when they are ones that have some clear direction for remedies. In this case such remedies were the increase of awareness of the privileging of English among the teachers and a more structured program that would clearly lay out when Spanish and

English would be used for instruction. We find that there is space to be advocates for bilingual education in general, and still offer a critique for improvement.

Is research on best practices the new trend?

Related to the previous discussion about bilingual programs, we have sometimes been advised to minimize problematic results in research while focusing primarily, or even exclusively, on "best practices." We agree that best practices are important to study and that such contexts are especially fruitful for teacher-researcher collaboration. It's a win-win situation since practitioners (teachers) are heralded for their use of such practices, their commitment to sharing it with others for increased student support, and researchers are able to analyze and write about such findings with few, if any, ethical dilemmas or any censoring (from self or others) of the findings. Indeed, we want the world to know what works for students. However, we live in a society where social structure serves the interests of particular groups and where race, class, primary language, sexuality and other factors play a significant role in who has access to best practices and even whether such best practices are likely to be used or even work similarly in some contexts.

We believe most (perhaps all) teachers care about their students and want them to succeed, but we also see teaching as a political act that is constrained by various sociocultural and political factors that must continue to be fore-grounded and interrogated. Simply because we know all of these problems exist already and studying them further perhaps brings down teacher morale or makes people feel hopeless is not a reason to stop doing this critical work. It is too easy to forget that structural inequities still persist in urban schools to turn our attention solely to those programs that will provide us researchers with easy access and rewarding results. The reality is that many of those "best practices" are found in innovative programs that receive special funding or have other resources at their disposal that support additional teacher education through mentoring and in-services or other programs. Although there are best practices occurring in some of the poorest of urban schools, this is not the typical case and there are structural reasons for this – lack of resources, less experienced teachers, etc. When we focus on best practices, we are typically focusing on students that are able to attend schools with these types of supportive structures in place, and we are turning our attention away from the neediest schools and the neediest children.

How do we as novice Latina researchers negotiate the power dynamics of studying classrooms with experienced teachers?

We have participated in research in the roles of graduate research assistants, research fellows, and as new university faculty. Our roles as novice researchers working with often experienced participant teachers has sometimes put us in precarious positions when attempting to relate research findings which may not have been welcome or may have sounded critical to the ears of a teacher we had been observing. For example, we have at times been questioned on sound method, including the number of observations conducted for qualitative research, the kinds of questions asked or the tone in which they were asked (even when we were careful to be polite and non-judgmental), and whether classroom observations were conducted primarily by doctoral students instead of the primary investigator. Although we recognize participants' rights to ask such questions, we also recognize that to a large extent these questions are not generally posed to tenured faculty with associate or full professor titles and likely less so to those who are socially seen as having greater cultural capital and status in our society, specifically white male professors. Our knowledge of method as researchers was questioned even though it was evident that the teachers did not have much understanding of qualitative

research methods or of typical research practices as conducted by faculty in large university settings.

An important concern for us is the discounting of our knowledge of educational practices and teaching practices and learning theory, which was the basis of our interpretations of the data collected. Rather than "hearing" our findings and considering how these issues may be present and whether we should have sought more data, asked other questions, etc. – their focus was only on discounting what was there on the basis that the data was not enough. How can we as researchers find our critical, yet constructive voice? How do we give feedback from our lens of researcher or outside perspective that may be valuable to teachers, when a teacher may not want to hear that there may be room for improvement? We wonder what the delivery format should be to promote critical reflection among teachers rather than a defensive stance that reflects their feelings of being attacked.

This is the question of the divide between research and practice, a divide that perhaps is exacerbated when the researchers are novices and in bodies that are not typically found in academia and when the teachers are experienced, regardless of their own ethnic backgrounds. Here we want to stray from the convention of blaming teachers for not "hearing" us. Rather we want to consider our own complicit role as researchers in this miscommunication. What could we have done differently? Although we followed standard research policy as we had learned it in our own institutions, we realize now that such standards may not be taken by teachers as respectful or collaborative.

Although we were careful to present the teachers in our preliminary findings as "caring" and "committed" teachers who faced broader structural constraints, such as demands made by dominant group students and their parents, it seemed that their focus was primarily on the problems that we noted as needing improvement. Like so many of us often do, they read the report and seemingly only saw the problems with their instruction rather than the positives aspects of their teaching and the program that we tried to note. It could be that a focus on broader social constraints when talking to teachers whose profession is increasingly based on the practice of immediately observable results – is disempowering or overwhelming.

Where does our allegiance lie as Latina researchers?

Often in educational settings an important ethical dilemma stems from our positions of power and the impact of it with respect to various constituencies. Multi-faceted research projects that involve the researcher in the lives of teachers, students, and families sometimes bring about the question of whose interests we align ourselves with most. Although we see each of those identities as formed through broader sociocultural discourses we nonetheless experience the question of whether we focus our data and writing on the needs of the students, the teachers, or the parents. We do not presume to be "objective" researchers merely reporting what we "find." We are very aware of our active role in the production of data, analysis, and reporting.

Because the contexts we are discussing were dual language strands in larger schools, many of the students coming to the school from outside the community were Latina and low-income, and therefore, different than most of the rest of the students. Certainly differences in power and cultural capital existed between these populations of students, but the question that arose for us was whose interests should take our primary concern – those of the dominant group students that came from the middle and upper middle-class communities (typically English fluent students) in which the schools resided, or the low-income Latina students who traveled to this school? Across research sites, we have noted that often the needs of English dominant students seem to take precedence in the classrooms because their needs seem more evident as English speaking students with the cultural capital to make demands on the teacher and exercise

power in the classroom (they often seek more assistance and participate more – even during Spanish instruction). Pointing this out, especially given that we are Latina researchers and that the bilingual teachers are almost always Latina teachers, can often be interpreted as showing favoritism toward the Latina students and may be the reason why we have sometimes seen the deference to the English speaking students and families. In research with families and teachers we have sometimes been caught between our allegiance to parents and students who express feeling disempowered by teachers and teachers who struggle to do a very difficult job, often without much support and in the face of numerous institutional and social, economic, and political constraints.

Research transparency – To what extent?

One of the obstacles to engaging in research at a school site can be access. In order for teachers to allow a researcher into a classroom, teachers must be at least nominally comfortable with the idea of someone observing their teaching, and possibly judging their instructional decisions. While it is only right to be truthful about the topic of research, how much should a researcher disclose of the research purpose and expected findings, particularly since this may affect what is found? If researchers were completely honest about possible problematic discourses and inequities they might find in a classroom, what teacher would happily welcome them into their classroom?

Researchers also may be interested in looking at the educational context with an eye for more than what the teacher is doing. For example, structural inequities may be in existence at a school site that teachers may not see and is beyond any one teacher's control. Conversely, what may interest the teacher could be precisely what is in her or his control in regards to the instruction that students experience. This may put researchers and teachers at odds with one another in terms of what the object of analysis is. However, we do believe that looking at instruction to make claims about broader structural inequalities including such concepts is important. Is it unethical to frame the research study in the initial stages of participant selection in ways tied to specific instructional practices even though we know that as critical researchers we will be linking our findings to speak to broader critical theories? Or is this a question of framing the findings differently for different audiences?

When researchers arrive at their preliminary findings, there are phenomena of interest primarily to the research community, and other findings of primary importance to teachers. (And there may be still other stakeholders, such as funders or a more general audience.) While some may argue that this is a false separation between researchers and teachers, they are really doing different jobs, in service of promoting more equitable education for students. Shouldn't it be expected that there are different roles to fill in this endeavor, and so how do we best work together towards this goal?

One possibility to take into consideration when prioritizing allegiances is that a researcher can be supportive of both a teacher and his or her students. If the concern for students conflicts with the appearance of supporting a teacher, then there may be a need for educating the teacher in the way of a Freirian "conscentizacion." There may be times when the outside perspective of a researcher catches a moment of marginalization of a student. Teachers must acknowledge that there are structural forces operating in their classroom – as in the rest of society – and these are not always entirely in a teachers' control. Thus, it is not the fault of the teacher that oppressive interactions may happen in the classroom, but how can teachers learn to "see" these moments and perhaps understand them as opportunities for learning and transformation? What is our role as researchers in facilitating this process?

How can we maintain confidentiality in the information age?

A different issue with regards to confidentiality is how to maintain anonymity in protection of the research subjects, in this age of information where most information about a scholar's research – including past research projects, occupational affiliations, and published articles – can be found online, if one knows where to look. Schools with which we have worked that serve affluent communities often seek information on research projects. In these sites, participants are more involved in the research, asking questions and showing off their "stellar" projects. Often, they seek out researchers to study their practices.

Thus, this is a question of access. What sort of cultural capital is necessary to impact the researcher via access to information? Who has access? Again, teachers working in high-poverty, resource-deprived school settings may not have the time or inclination to peruse the biographies of researchers working at their school sites. Neither would they necessarily know when important educational conferences aimed primarily at researchers will occur. But when teachers working in more affluent school sites know that a researcher will be attending a conference to present work from a project at his or her school site, how does that affect the manner and the content of the presentation when the researcher must now pay attention to how statements regarding the research may affect ongoing relationships with the school site? In one example, the principal and some teachers from an affluent school attended the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association and were offended because we did not have the prior mindset to advise them that we were making a presentation. Unbeknown to us, the participants felt it their right to attend and learn about findings in progress, even though the presentation had been prepared for a different audience in which anonymity was attempted.

There is a certain freedom that comes with masking the site of research, as this may allow for a more critical voice with regards to problematic processes at play. For the research audience, this is nothing more than a phenomenon of interest to learn about. For a teacher or staff from the school in question, it is their professional practice under scrutiny. In this case, a better situation for receiving information about research findings could be a meeting at the school designated to reflect on the research process and possible member-checking regarding the initial findings, explicitly stated as open for revision.

In our work with low-income Latina communities, we have never been questioned by participants with respect to method or findings. Teachers in urban schools rarely have time to read research journals. Their practice is often informed through professional development efforts and/or practitioner-based journals. As such, they may be less familiar with research-based conferences and the like. In our reporting back to these schools, we have often been told to simply provide written feedback in the way of bullet points to the faculty and have often not received a response. Teachers seldom have either the time or the energy to become highly involved in the research projects in which they participate, due to the increased demands of their jobs. The result of this difference in context is that urban schools with limited power and resources to question researchers are presented in data perhaps with greater attention to the researcher's interests, which is not to say that this is problematic, only that it is likely less scrutinized. However, research in more affluent contexts are limited in what they may report and are likely to report only "best practices" or present findings that have been more scrutinized by participating teachers. It may be, then, that affluent schools come out looking more progressive whereas urban schools are presented more critically in research presentations and reports.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed various ethical dilemmas that we have faced in the process of conducting educational research as novice Latina scholars. These dilemmas presented themselves in our work examining the contexts of instruction in various dual language programs across the state of California. We do not presume to have any clear resolution to many of these issues but rather leave them up for readers to think about, discuss, and anticipate. One thing we have learned from our experiences is that ethical dilemmas are sources for important discussions and reflection in research methods courses and among new scholars entering the field. While these discussions many not always yield solutions, they would at least prepare novice researchers to tread carefully and recognize how miscommunication with research participants can easily occur.

What does all this mean for us as Latina researchers of urban schools and our ethical stances? One implication is that there must be an informed negotiation between the researcher and the researched – whether or not the research is taking place in a predominantly affluent setting or not. As researchers with a desire to respect the teachers whose practices we observe, perhaps this means exploring different research methods that take decolonizing or critical stances, where teachers and researchers can learn to "see" together. Although this may address some of the concerns, it is not always a clear solution since teachers are often already pushed to the limits of their working capacity in the important work they do as teachers. We are not sure that burdening them with helping us do our jobs is ethical either. As researchers, we seek to also be advocates for the communities in which we study and realize that this can only be done working *with* participants rather than *for* them. However, even this stance is not uncomplicated. We hope the issues we have raised spur thoughtful reflection and move the field of educational research into more equitable and ethical research practices across contexts.

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